

Chicago and Wisconsin Armenian Community Helping Each Other and Armenia during the Pandemic

By Harry A. Kezelian III

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

CHICAGO/RACINE, Wisc. – “Can I just add one thing before we go?” said Fr. Yeprem Kelegian, retired pastor of St. Mesrob Armenian Church in Racine, Wisconsin, on a diocesan-wide Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) Zoom conference a few weeks ago. “Armenia is really having a hard time with this crisis. It needs our help.” Der Yeprem has been doggedly repeating the same mantra since the COVID-19 crisis started. Armenia needs our help. His suggestion has been to donate to Ayo – the special-project fundraising arm of the Fund for Armenian Relief. (Visit their website at weareayo.com where a link to donate for the COVID-19 Emergency Fund is the first thing you’ll see.)

Der Yeprem, a beloved figure among



Armenian exchange students going home in Chicago airport, with Oscar Tatossian, kneeling in suit and mask at right

many in the Armenian Church’s Eastern Diocese – especially the youth, has been known for his activism for many years. He

was, after all a child of the protest and social-change era of the 1960s, and his calm and gentle, yet genial and friendly demeanor has not only brought a whole generation deeper into the spirituality of Armenian Orthodoxy, but spurred many to action in the area of service. The Bible’s Letter of James tells us that true religion is “to care for widows and orphans in their distress,” and no one exemplifies this better than Der Yeprem. Der Hayr would be doing this good work whether there was a crisis or not. But as the COVID-19 crisis has taken on world-changing proportions, he isn’t the only one who has been stepping up and giving back.

The states of Wisconsin and Illinois combined are home to some 10,000 Armenians, with 5,000 in the Greater Chicago or “Chicagoland” area of Northern Illinois. Aside from the small enclave in the St. Louis area, most Armenians reside in a 100 mile strip along Lake Michigan, starting from parts of Northwest Indiana and the South Side suburbs of Chicago, throughout Chicagoland’s North Side and up to Waukegan, Illinois, then across the state line to the storied community of Racine, Wisconsin, and ending in the Milwaukee metropolitan area.

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Making Art and Music in A Lockdown In Armenia And Germany

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

ARMENIA/GERMANY – “It’s so hard to give vocal lessons by Skype. It’s terrible!” Lusine Arakelyan is an opera singer who teaches at the Aleksey Hekimyan Music School in Yerevan. Since the lockdown started in response to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, she, like most other Armenian teachers, has been forced to expand her pedagogical skills with patience and creativity. She and her students bridge the social distance through the computer, and the challenge is significant.

“I play their exercises and songs on the piano,” she explains, “record them and send

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Lusine Arakelyan, Berlin, 2017



Moderna Therapeutics’ COVID-19 Vaccine Approved For Phase 2 Clinical Trial

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – Biotechnology company Moderna Therapeutics, based in Cambridge, announced on May 7 that mRNA-1273, its vaccine candidate for COVID-19, has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to enter a second phase of development in a clinical trial involving approximately 600 people.

The goal of the Phase 2 tests is to ascertain safety of the vaccine and attempt to replicate positive results. Two vaccinations of mRNA-1273 at one of two dosages, or placebos, will be given to healthy adult volunteers 28 days apart, and their condition will be tracked for 12 months after the second vaccination. It

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Lebanese Armenian Heritage Club flag at a pub in Batroun, Lebanon (Sept. 2019) where the club welcomed new members.

Lebanese Armenians Managing Life Despite COVID Pandemic

By Taleen Babayan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BEIRUT, Lebanon – Perhaps the most resilient country in the Middle East, this sliver of land enveloped by the glistening Mediterranean has faced adversity time and again throughout its storied history. Thousands have taken to the streets since last fall to protest government corruption, casting all

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Armenia Reports 146 New COVID-19 Cases, 47 Deaths

YEREVAN (Ministry of Health, Republic of Armenia) – Armenia has reported 146 more cases of coronavirus, bringing the total number to 3,538 on May 12 at 11 a.m. The results of 606 tests have been negative. A total of 33,313 tests have been conducted in the country.

According to the data of the National Center for Disease Control, 71 patients have recovered, making for a total of 1,430 recovered patients.

Forty-seven deaths have been reported in all, while 19 patients with coronavirus have died because of other diseases. The number of cases under treatment is 2,042.

35 Citizens Return to Armenia from US

LOS ANGELES – Thirty-five Armenian citizens returned to Yerevan on two flights from the United States in early May, according to a Facebook report of the Consulate General of Armenia in Los Angeles. The route was Los Angeles-Amsterdam-Minsk-Yerevan. The Consulate General of Armenia in Los Angeles, collaborating with the Armenian embassy in the Netherlands, solved issues concerning logistics and their travel document. Flights are taking place via this route weekly, and the next one is scheduled for May 18.

Thirteen Armenian citizens left Los Angeles on May 2, and 22 more departed on May 9.

Armenian Democracy Praised by US Embassy, Yet Still Categorized as Authoritarian

YEREVAN – “The US Embassy in Yerevan is pleased to see that Armenia continues to make impressive progress on its path to a democratic society, achieving the largest two-year improvement of any country in the history of Freedom House’s Nations in Transit Democracy Score. Along with USAID Armenia we are committed to supporting the reforms needed to move Armenia forward in its path to democracy and rule of law,” the Embassy said in a Facebook post on May 11.

Armenia improved its “democracy score” from 2.93 to 3.00 out of 7 in the Nations in Transit 2020 report published by Freedom House. Its “democracy percentage” is only 33.33 out of 100. Consequently, the same report categorizes Armenia as a “semi-consolidated authoritarian regime.” See https://freedomhouse.org/country/armenia/nations-transit/2020?fbclid=IwAR3KTH_ZKnYGX1QAZ0AopYy349xXasFmA2zAJuqK-7KJe2ELGRc-63h50.

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Stand Up, Be Counted

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

EU Provides Agricultural Machinery to Northern Regions of Armenia

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – Given the current state of emergency of Covid-19 and the needs of vulnerable producers for small-scale agricultural machinery, the European Union and the Austrian Development Agency within the EU Green Agriculture Initiative in Armenia (EU-GAIA) project, will provide small-scale tillage machines (motoblocks) to the communities of Shirak, Tavush and Lori regions.

The equipment will be used in a rotating manner by vulnerable producers identified in the communities, who are ready to expand the production of vegetables and directly use the provided support.

The first visit to hand over the agricultural machinery will take place on May 13 in Amasia and Sarapat communities of Shirak region. The project will deliver the equipment to the mentioned communities of Shirak region and will provide an educational demonstration on the operation of the equipment.

The beneficiary rural settlements of Sarapat community are: Goghovit, Sarapat, Musayelyan, Arpeni, Tsoghamarg, Torosgyugh. The European Union will provide 5 motoblocks here.

The beneficiary rural communities of Amasia community are: Amasia, Aregnadem, Bandivan, Gtashen, Jrajor, Hovtun, Voghji, Meghrashat, Byurakn. Here the European Union will provide 6 motoblocks.

The delivery of the agricultural machinery will be an open air event. This event is part of the European Union's immediate assistance in mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 crisis in the agricultural sector.

Construction Workers Given Seasonal Work

YEREVAN (ArmenPress) – In an effort to mitigate the economic consequences of the coronavirus-related crisis, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and provincial governments in Armenia are offering seasonal workers who are unable to depart to foreign countries at this moment employment in construction projects.

Minister Suren Papikyan has tasked authorities to collect information of the labor force willing to participate. The information on the available construction workers will be forwarded to contractors for potential employment.

Jailed Former Armenian President Kocharyan Underwent Surgery

YEREVAN (RFE/RL, aysor.am) – Armenian ex-President Robert Kocharyan, who is currently in pre-trial detention, on May 12 underwent surgery for the second time in seven months.

Kocharyan's office did not reveal what medical condition the ex-president had, but said he was now in a "satisfactory" state.

Kocharyan underwent surgery at Yerevan's Izmirlyan Medical Center in October 2019 and was taken to the private hospital again in late April for what one of his lawyers described as a "postoperative checkup."

Earlier this spring, Kocharyan spent more than three weeks in another hospital after suffering from fluctuating blood pressure.

Kocharyan, who ruled Armenia from 1998 to 2008, is currently on trial on charges stemming from his alleged role in a 2008 postelection crackdown on the opposition, as well as for taking bribes. He rejects the charges as politically motivated.

A Yerevan court resumed the high-profile trial on May 8, with Kocharyan's lawyers reiterating their demand to release their client from pretrial custody on health grounds. They argued the 65-year-old is at high risk from coronavirus given his age and health problems.

The presiding judge, Anna Danibekyan, is set to respond to the petition on May 13.

Kocharyan is standing trial along with three other former officials.



PM Nikol Pashinyan's group with NKR President Bako Sahakyan, President-elect Arayik Haroutunyan, and other officials

PM Pashinyan Visits Defense Army Units And Border Positions, Farms in Artsakh

STEPANAKERT (primeminister.am) – After visiting Artsakh for the celebration of Victory Day on May 9, accompanied by incumbent President of the Republic of Artsakh Bako Sahakyan, President-elect of Artsakh Arayik Haroutunyan, and Minister of Defense, Defense Army Commander Jalal Haroutunyan, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his spouse Anna Hakobyan visited several military units and border positions.

The heads of the two Armenian states were introduced to engineering and fortification infrastructures, new defense technologies and armaments. They were briefed on the ongoing activities aimed at achieving enhanced service security and upgrading military equipment.

Nikol Pashinyan, Bako Sahakyan and Arayik Haroutunyan talked to the soldiers to get acquainted with servicemen's living standards and service con-

ditions. They visited one of the Defense Army's military units where a new food system was introduced just a few days ago.

After inspecting the menu and the quality of food, the Prime Minister emphasized that the new army catering system was a successful undertaking. Nikol Pashinyan stressed the need for continued development of the Armed Forces and the military industry.

The leaders of Armenia and Artsakh next visited a number of local farms and a vegetable oil production plant. In particular, corn crops and pomegranate gardens with drip irrigation systems were presented to Pashinyan. The responsible persons explained the details of the introduction of the drip irrigation system, its efficiency and the planned programs for the expansion of areas under crops and gardens with such a system in Artsakh.

The premier welcomed the ongoing efforts to develop modern agriculture in Artsakh and emphasized the importance of close cooperation between governments and the implementation of joint activities in this direction.

Pashinyan also visited the vegetable oil production plant in Tagavard village of Martuni region of Artsakh to get acquainted with its activities and upcoming programs. The production process is organized with modern German equipment on the basis of local raw materials. The output is being marketed in Artsakh and Armenia. Strong with more than 70 employees, the company is going to expand its activities in the near future owing to new investment programs.

Victory Day commemorates World War II, the formation of the Artsakh Defense Army, and the liberation of Shushi.

Armenian Parliamentarians Exchange Blows After Coronavirus Aid Criticism

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenian parliamentarians from opposing parties exchanged blows amid a disagreement over the government's economic response to the coronavirus crisis.

During a debate on May 8, Edmon Marukyan, the leader of the Bright Armenia opposition faction, accused the ruling My Step faction loyal to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of failing to help ordinary citizens amid the economic shutdown.

The opposition has called for larger cash payments to citizens.

Marukyan's criticism triggered angry remarks from My Step lawmakers, including Sasun Mikayelyan. Displeased by what he heard, Marukyan stepped down from the podium midway through his speech and approached Mikayelyan, who stood up from this seat. The two threw punches at each other before it was broken up by other members of parliament.

"No matter how hard you hit me, I will continue to speak up," Marukyan stated once he returned to the podium.

"The [2018] revolution took place also to establish a culture of debate here in this parliament," he said, refer-



Fight breaks out in Armenian parliament

ring to the events that brought Pashinyan to power two years ago.

Parliament Speaker Ararat Mirzoyan, seeking to cool the tension in the chamber, soon interrupted Marukyan's speech to announce a break.

Pashinyan later condemned the fistfight, but blamed the opposition lawmaker for picking the quarrel.

Pashinyan said Marukyan's decision to step down from the podium indicated he was intent on fighting.

"Having watched the video of the incident, I cannot but describe what happened as a miserable provocation," said Pashinyan.

However, Pashinyan also lamented that his party members "give in to provocations."



INTERNATIONAL

Erdogan Files Criminal Complaint against Human Rights Activist Zarakolu

STOCKHOLM (Stockholm Center for Freedom) – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's lawyer has filed a criminal complaint against journalist Ragip Zarakolu for a column he wrote, accusing him of "instigating a military coup d'état," Deutsche Welle Turkish service reported on May 6.

Zarakolu's column, titled "No Escape from Ill Fortune," was published in the Evrensel newspaper and on the Arti Gerçek news website on May 5, drawing comparisons between Erdogan and former Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, who was hanged by a military junta after a takeover in 1960.

In his petition to the prosecutor, Erdogan claimed that Zarakolu openly threatened him with a military putsch and execution, requesting that authorities investigate and charge him with crimes against the constitutional order and the president.

In addition to Zarakolu, Erdogan's petition also requested investigations into the executives of the Evrensel newspaper and the Arti Gerçek news website.

Erdogan's communications director Fahrettin Altun has also filed a criminal complaint against Zarakolu over the same article.

Zarakolu made a statement in response to the accusations, claiming that his column has a content that goes against military coups and that he spent his life opposing them. "It is simply inexplicable that the article is misinterpreted to such an extent. It is understood that the Presidential spokespersons did not read the article adequately," Zarakolu wrote.

Underlining that everyone will need human rights and justice one day, Zarakolu has indicated that "he has struggled against coups and putschist tendencies all through his lifetime."

Noting that he was also oppressed



Ragip Zarakolu

and threatened during the military coups on March 12, 1971 and on September 12, 1980, Ragip Zarakolu has said, "In 2006, I was threatened along with Hrant Dink by a circle which is now the pillar of the government" and added the following in brief:

"If the chaos plan did not come to fruition in 2007, it was because of the outburst of conscience that took place in all segments of the society in the face of Hrant Dink's heinous assassination. The pro-coup circles shot themselves in the foot by massacring Hrant Dink.

"In 2011, I was taken into custody and arrested on ridiculous grounds. The group who arrested me, but then had to release me before even the trial began due to national and international outrage are now behind bars with their police, prosecutor and judge."

In 2008 Zarakolu was convicted of "insulting the Turkish State" under Article 301 for acknowledging the Armenian Genocide. He was sentenced to a five-month prison term, which was subsequently commuted to a fine.

Turkey is a world leader in jailing journalists with more than 100 who are currently convicted or in pre-trial detention for their publications or social media posts. The country ranked 154th out of 180 countries in the 2020 World Press Freedom Index, published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF). (turkishminute.com)

Coronavirus Infects Armenia-Georgia Rivalry

By Joshua Kucera

TBILISI/YEREVAN (Eurasia.net) – The couple in what has been called the "Caucasus' most legendary love-hate relationship," Armenia and Georgia, now has a new topic to argue about: the coronavirus.

The two neighbors have had substantially different experiences under the global pandemic. In Georgia, COVID-19 has been largely kept at bay, and the government's response feted worldwide. In Armenia, meanwhile, the number of cases continues to shoot up and the country has the highest per capita rate of the disease in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

It has been an unlikely turn of events. Armenia's post-"Velvet Revolution" government brought a new, dynamic leadership to the country, while Georgia's has been heading in the other direction, distinguishing itself above all by its lack of accountability and indifference to governance.

So many Armenians are asking: how did it turn out this way?

As a May 5 commentary on the Armenian news site CivilNet put it: "For onlookers in neighboring Armenia ... Georgia's approach to the outbreak raises some uncomfortable questions: namely, what has Georgia done right, and why has Armenia, so far, been unable to follow suit?"

The answers from Armenia have been varied.

The popular Armenian Telegram channel Bagramyan 26 spread fake news that Georgia was "hiding" its true number of cases. Health Minister Arsen Torosyan suggested that Georgia had benefited from a "lucky coincidence" in that it had avoided a couple of early super spreaders, including one notorious woman who hid her symptoms after returning from Italy and then attended a big party in the city of Echmiadzin. (To be fair: this reporter also initially explained the discrepancy that way.)

Others pointed to the discrepancy in testing: Armenia has been testing roughly double the number of people that Georgia has. (As of the end of April, Armenia had tested 21,125 people and

Georgia, 12,593.)

The real difference, though, is not that complicated: Georgia implemented self-isolation regimes and controls on movement significantly sooner than Armenia did. Georgia barred flights from Italy starting March 6, and even before that it was forcing arriving passengers from Italy and other hot spots into two-week quarantines. Armenia didn't stop flights to and from Italy until March 15; the notorious Echmiadzin party-goer arrived on March 8.

"That is, this 'bad luck' was preprogrammed, and was not bad luck but a natural consequence of the mistakes made," wrote economist Hrant Mikaelian in an exhaustive blog post

subject of much discussion.

In general, the CivilNet commentary concluded, "Armenia's limitations have often been less strict and have come days or weeks later than Georgia's. As a result, social distancing has been less comprehensive in Armenia, providing more opportunities for the coronavirus to spread."

That discrepancy appears slated to continue.

On May 4, Armenia – even as the disease continued to spread rapidly – lifted most of the lockdown restrictions, allowing residents to again go to cafes and restaurants (as long as they are open air) and all factories to open. In Georgia, by contrast, open-air establish-



Georgian police have been more aggressive than their Armenian counterparts in restricting movement amid the novel coronavirus pandemic. (photo: MIA, Georgia)

comparing the two countries' responses. The testing numbers, too, are a canard, Mikaelian argued. He noted that Georgia actually gets a higher percentage of negative tests than Armenia does, suggesting that if anyone is under-testing, it is Armenia.

While Armenia for a time only allowed residents out of their homes if they filled out a form expressing the reason, the system was easily circumvented and not strictly enforced. Georgia has never restricted residents from leaving home freely, but its other novel restrictions – a 9 pm to 6 am curfew, and a two-week period where private car travel was banned – have in fact been well enforced. Threats of a 3,000-lari fine (about \$930) are well publicized and the

ments aren't scheduled to open until June 7.

And the political comparisons are bound to continue, as well. On May 5, a former prime minister of Armenia, Hrant Bagratyan, said that he was hoping for direct Georgian intervention in Armenia's coronavirus response.

Noting that in the 1990s, an Armenian energy minister was dispatched to Georgia to help sort out a problem with the neighbor's energy system, Bagratyan said the reverse should happen today: "Today I am dreaming that [Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi] Gakharia would come to Armenia for two weeks and take the post of the head of government and show how you need to fight with the epidemic."

International News

COVID-19 Statistics in Iran and Turkey

ANKARA/TEHRAN(DailySabah.com, Xinhua, worldometers.info) – Turkey reported 47 daily deaths from COVID-19 and 1,542 new cases, Health Minister Fahrettin Koca announced May 10. The total number of active coronavirus cases in Turkey has dropped to 42,180, Koca said on Twitter. The total COVID-19 death toll in Turkey is now 3,786, while 138,657 cases have been confirmed.

The number of recovered coronavirus patients in Turkey reached 92,691 on May 10 with 3,211 additions in the past 24 hours, Koca said. During the same 24 hours, 36,187 tests for COVID-19 were performed across the country, he added.

Turkey has not imposed a stringent nationwide lockdown since reporting its first positive case on March 11, resorting instead to weekend curfews in 31 provinces and cities. It also limited travel between those cities. Yet during the first week of May it announced some loosening of restrictions.

Meanwhile, in Iran, on May 12 there were 6,733 deaths total deaths out of 110,767 cases, with 15,677 active cases of which 2,713 are in serious condition. Overnight 48 people had died. Kianush Jahanpur, head of Public Relations and Information Center of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, said 1,481 new cases have been confirmed.

Iran's first case was announced on February 19 and so far 615,477 tests have been administered.

Attempt to Burn Door of Armenian Church in Istanbul

ISTANBUL (Ermenihaber, Normarara, Bianet) – Istanbul police have detained a man for attempting to burn the entrance door of the Armenian Sourp Asdvadzadzin Church in the Bakirkoy district.

The incident had taken place on May 8. The fire was quickly extinguished and the police initiated an investigation into the incident. The police found out the identity of the suspect from the security cameras and detained him by that same evening. "I burned it



because they brought the coronavirus [onto Turkey]," the man was quoted by local sources as saying in his testimony to the police. The individual known by the initials M.K. is said to suffer from mental problems.

Turkey's Armenian Patriarchate released a statement regarding the issue, saying Istanbul's deputy chief of police has contacted them and expressed his sadness regarding this incident. "He also said that the suspect would be apprehended in the shortest time possible," the statement said.

The walls of the same church had been defiled by graffiti in February 2019.

Garo Paylan, People's Democratic Party (HDP) parliamentary deputy of Diyarbakir, submitted a parliamentary question several days after the attempted arson directed to Minister of the Interior Süleyman Soylu. He reminded Soylu of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's May 4 speech in which he uttered the words "remnants of the sword," which is a derogatory expression used for survivors of the Armenian Genocide (see Raffi Bedrosyan commentary bearing these words as title in this issue). He asked whether this hate speech has any role in the attack on the Bakirkoy church or other places of worship of religious minorities.

He added, "I am of the opinion that these hate attacks are directed by visible and invisible groups within the state, as it was the case in the past. Can you easily say the opposite?" Paylan also asked what precautions are taken to ensure the security of these places of worship.



Lebanese Armenians Managing Life Despite COVID Pandemic

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divisiveness aside as the country battles its worst-ever economic recession. From the shadows emerged another threat when the coronavirus pandemic broke out earlier this year. Already facing inflation, unemployment and poverty, the country's leaders implemented a strict lockdown, successfully resulting in the mitigation of a potential disaster, citing 809 cases and 26 deaths among the population of just about 6 million. Although the curve has flattened, economic problems persist and protesters are returning to the streets to demand economic and political reforms.

Despite the daily conflicts and years of a senseless civil war, the spirit of the people has not dimmed. For Armenians, Lebanon signified a haven from hell. Genocide survivors arrived in the country by way of Syria, battered and bruised, ragged and ravaged. Lebanon welcomed them at the turn of the 20th century and offered the chance for a new life. Armenians soon transformed the swamps of Bourj Hammoud into a bustling enclave on the outer banks of the city center, implementing their work ethic, ingenuity and industrious nature. At its peak, a quarter of a million Armenians lived in Lebanon, a number that heavily decreased because of emigration during the civil war that raged on from 1975-1990. The contributions of Armenians to Lebanon, however, have not dwindled and they remain a force to be reckoned with in every sphere, from performing arts to education to politics to entrepreneurship - particularly during times of crisis.

■ Lebanon's swift and strict response to the pandemic avoided a catastrophe, under the leadership of representatives like former Minister of Tourism Avedis Guidanian, who led the Armenian community's task force. Organized by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), with strong cooperation from other organizations, the cohesive group excelled in providing relief, aid and food assistance to low-income families across the board, while honing in on the health, living and social



Minister Avedis Guidanian

conditions of the Armenian community.

"Lebanon is now considered one of the fifteen top countries in the world that had success in overcoming the coronavirus pandemic," said Guidanian.

When the first case was diagnosed on February 21, he said "the government took very severe measures concerning the highest level of precautions."

Testing sites, preventive actions and concentration on discovering silent cases and clusters were enacted quickly throughout the city.

Lockdowns and curfews were imposed, schools and universities closed and all restaurants, pubs and nightlife were shut down, leaving only supermarkets, pharmacies and essential businesses open.

"This is a double pandemic for Lebanon," said Guidanian. "We have been in a critical situation as a community because of the revolution over unemployment since October."

He noted the task force distributed close to 5,000 sanitizer units for families and prepared food parcels and vouchers. Thanks to philanthropists and the Armenian Prelacy, an additional 3,000 food parcels were earmarked for families in a humanitarian initiative that includes the participation of the younger generation, who help deliver groceries and medicine to the elderly and immunocompromised.

"Everyone is working together and coordinating to do our best so each and every family can have their share," said Guidanian, who acknowledged there is a deep need to distribute 5,000 food parcels per month.

On the medical side, clinics have been set up in Bourj Hammoud and other regions to provide patients with services and medication at no cost, in coordination with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Affairs, Lebanese Red Cross and local hospitals. Guidanian, who estimates that there were five positive cases in the Armenian community and three deaths thus far, said there is a hotline for residents to call and speak to doctors who are on standby.

Awareness campaigns and orientations were also activated to help limit the spread of the coronavirus, mostly through social networking sites such as Facebook, so residents can educate themselves on how to prevent themselves from getting sick.

"The government has done substantial work and achieved positive results," said Guidanian. "The Armenian community is a powerful presence in Lebanon and we are at a good level of cooperation."

Regarding reopening, he said it will be done in phases "very slowly" to minimize the risk of recurring waves. Businesses, such as barber shops and restaurants, will be subject to significant sanitizing measures and will operate at 30% capacity at first to ensure social distancing.

"The people in Lebanon are able to adapt to any kind of situation and we have done our part by providing these services," said Guidanian. "The majority are aware that there will be a new way of life after the coronavirus, but we will come back to life again."

■ Music has long been an outlet and source of refuge for people around the world, particularly in Beirut, an epicenter of cross-cultural fusion. During times of strife, the music community adjusts and brings people together, like the acoustic music band Garabala, that has revitalized Armenian folk music with an inventive approach by modernizing Armenian songs for the contemporary generation.

Finding popularity at home and abroad, the band focuses on traditional Armenian tunes and mixes up their repertoire by dipping into Tsigane, Jazz and other genres in their musical arrangements for a purely unique sound. The seven members live all over the globe, from Lebanon to Germany to France to the United States, due to their professional careers, but maintained their passion for music by seizing every opportunity they had together to rehearse, perform and compose.

Garabala, which was founded in Beirut in 2011, includes Hrag Karakashian (guitar and vocals), Khatchig-Hrag Demirdjian (violin), Aram Papazian (percussion), Sebouh Aintablian (accordion), Aline Naccashian (vocals), Hagop Harfoushian (saxophone, bass guitar) and Shahan Kilaghbian (double bass, keyboard, melodica), who have all become accustomed to working remotely, a practice they continue dur-

ing the pandemic.

"The members in Lebanon usually met and recorded arrangements together and shared the content with the ones living abroad and vice versa," said percussionist Aram Papazian. "Since the pandemic doesn't allow any of our members to get together right now, our goal is to develop original content digitally and plan ahead for post-pandemic."

Instead of waiting for travel bans to be lifted, the band became proactive and decided to meet on a weekly basis online to discuss new arrangements and upcoming projects. Each week members record and share their audio files with the rest of the band. Although it's not ideal, the group is managing as best they can, given the current circumstances.

"The lockdown pushed us to realize that regardless of barriers, such as physical distance, it's always possible for people to communicate and create," said Papazian.

While the scheduling of upcoming performances remains unclear due to the pandemic, vocalist Aline Naccashian said the band has been doing its utmost "to stay creative and craft a way to work on arrangements using different technologies," while appreciating the solitude as an artist.

Social media and the virtual medium are effective channels for Garabala during the lockdown, as they record and share fresh arrangements with their listeners.

"To keep engaging with our audience, we launched a remotely recorded version of Ara Vay, which was also a good learning experience for the band," said Hagop Harfoushian, who plays the saxophone and bass guitar.

Band members say they have been living in unprecedented times in Lebanon since October 2019 because of the economic crisis that paralyzed the nation and halted its vibrant nightlife and celebration of art and culture - at least on the surface.

"The music did not stop," said Papazian, who praises the efforts of individuals who spread their message in the face of difficulties. "Most bands are collaborating online, recording homemade videos for social media and engaging with the community and the fan base more than before."

"There is no doubt that music has been a means to evade reality, to cope and to create, in order to stay sane and alive," said Naccashian. "It is also an attempt to unite people, in a city that is constantly bombarded with rhetoric that aims to divide people."

Over the last couple of months, the lockdown has altered the environment and the thought process of citizens, giving them time to assess their lives and circumstances, a notion that also impacted the band members.

"We hope that once the lockdown is over people don't go back to the same rushed routine and instead value the simple things," said violinist Khatchig-Hrag Demirdjian. "The lockdown helped us remember how to live."

The concept of working remotely has also become more favorable to Garabala, who recognizes its plausibility on a wider scale, particularly with the increasing influence of social media.

"Prior to the pandemic, we thought less of remote working and waited for band members to be in one place to arrange new songs and practice," said Harfoushian. "But this has changed now and we are almost as productive as working in person when it comes to arranging new music."

■ One of the most legendary vinyl record shops found its doors closed and its 10,000-piece collection untouched as the threat of coronavirus loomed over Beirut. The generational Chico Records ceased physical operations for the last two months as business "is at

a standstill," according to Diran Mardirian, whose father Khatchik founded the musical haven in 1964.

"Even my online sales have suffered as the lockdown includes the airport and our postal service," said Mardirian. "What makes matters worse in our case is that the country is in the throes of financial collapse, something that preceded the whole coronavirus lockdown debacle."

Chico Records is known for having the finest collection of Middle Eastern records in the world, as well as rare records and albums that are in demand by well-known DJs and producers.

Amidst the pandemic, Mardirian is staying positive, observing that the spring has a "wonderful flavor" in Beirut where windows and balcony doors open up and "a liveliness exists after sunset that is at odds with the eerie quiet dur-



Diran Mardirian at Chico Records

ing the day, translating into an excellent assertion of continuity and normalcy."

The longest running record shop in Beirut, Chico Records was witness to the 15-year civil war that played out in neighborhoods across the city, including a bomb that went off near the business in 1976. Despite the violence, the Mardirians stayed in the same location for 40 years, until 2004 when they moved to their current location near the American University of Beirut in the Hamra neighborhood, once hailed as the city's intellectual center.

"I'm sure some shoots will bloom through the cracks and flourish because that is the nature of things," said Mardirian. "Life goes on."

■ Laughter has always been a welcome distraction in Lebanon, setting the stage for performers like Pierre Chammassian, an actor and comedian who made a name for himself during the civil war and in the decades since. The full line-up of Chammassian's 20 shows planned for Lebanon, the Middle East, Europe and Armenia this year were cancelled because of the pandemic. While others have opted to live stream performances, Chammassian prefers to have a live audience to feed off their energy.

"I can't get interaction from the audience digitally, except through the comments section, which does not have the same impact," said Chammassian, who is known for reviving the Le Théâtre de Dix-Heures towards the end of the civil war that brought their comedy troupe international acclaim.

"The Lebanese civil war, for me, was the golden age of my theater," said Chammassian, who is known for his comic Batale theater performances and who writes, directs and performs in Arabic and Armenian. "The Lebanese audience prefers to go out and have fun, and even to laugh underneath the bombs."

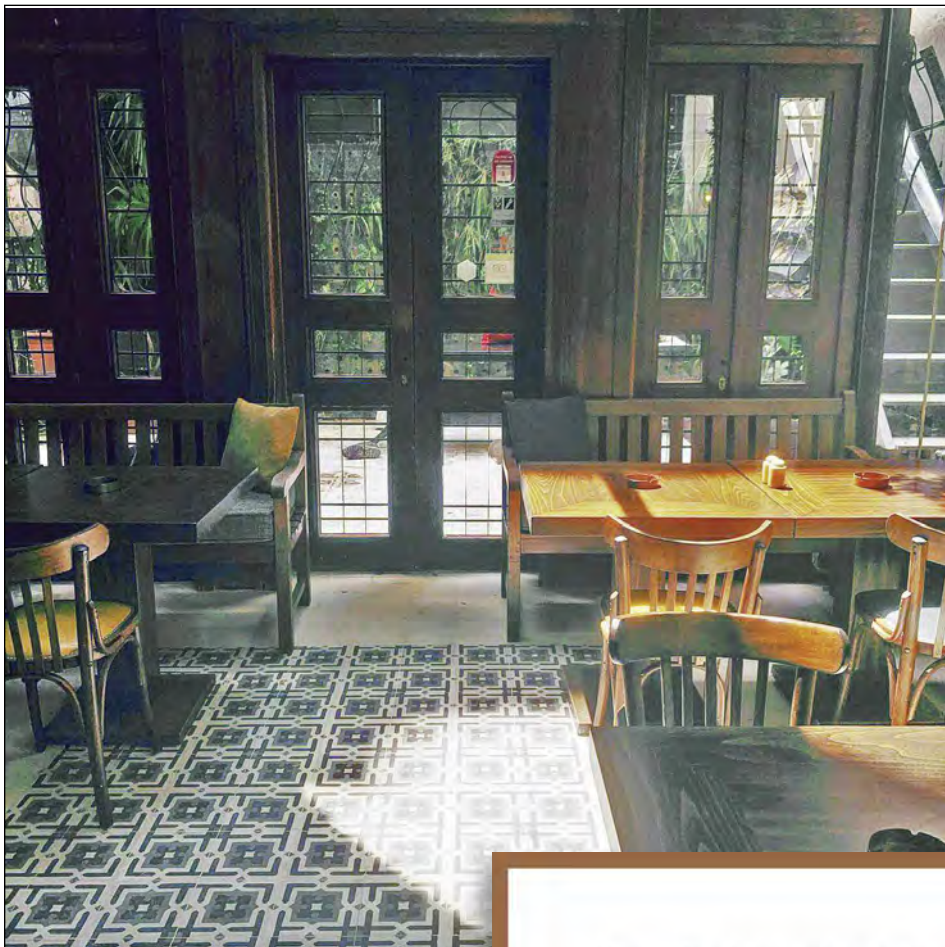
Although there have been changes in daily life during the lockdown, Chammassian continues to write jokes, make astute observations and provide political commentary through humor.

Despite the hard times, he focuses on what has gotten him, and the Lebanese people, through chapters of discord and suffering.

"It's very important during the pandemic to help people remember that a day without laughter is a lost day," he said.



INTERNATIONAL



Mayrig restaurant

■ The Lebanese are known for their hospitality, accented with generous portions of Mediterranean cuisine and a warm ambiance, making Beirut's restaurants a hub of the social scene. As a result of the shutdown, notable restaurants such as Mayrig, with its sizzling plates of mante, crispy souboureg, and its famous sour cherry kebab, closed its dine-in service at its fashionable Mar Mkhail location.

Executive Director Ramy Nehme said the restaurant scene in general was "deeply affected" by the lockdown of employees and clients and Mayrig chose to continue to provide meals through take-out and delivery.

"Our kitchen employees, many of whom are mothers, work hard everyday to prepare our orders, with the highest and most effective hygiene measures," said Nehme. "Our delivery services reach all mobile applications and websites, making sure our food is still on the market."

Management also became creative in its approach to adapt to the pandemic by creating frozen dishes as an option for customers who crave their signature menu items.

"We prepared the frozen meals that can be cooked and enjoyed in the vicinity of your own safe space," said Nehme. "These are available at all gourmet grocery shops around Lebanon."

Established 15 years ago, Mayrig Restaurant focuses on time-honored recipes from the Armenian Diaspora and is housed in a charming building from the Ottoman period. Over the years, its commitment to their society hasn't waned.

"In order for us to give back to the community in Lebanon, especially during the economic crisis, we are donating food and cooking for the elderly and those who are less fortunate," said Nehme. "We're trying as much as we can to help families in need by bringing food to their tables."

■ A number of lauded Armenian schools in Beirut, including the Vahan Tekeyan School, have faced the dual challenge of continuing to educate students during a pandemic and economic crisis that has caused uncertainty for the future of these institutions.

The school, which has been closed since March 1, has been following the Ministry of Education's recommendations and plans for all grades to be back in session on June 8, only if the situation stays stable, according to principal Galina Shememian Nadjarian.

Over 100 students comprise the nursery through intermediary grade levels, who are now all learning remotely to stay on track and complete the digital lessons teachers submit to students on a daily basis.

"Distance learning has been a suitable option to carry on through temporary school closures," said Nadjarian. "But with the absence of interaction, we believe that e-learning is not a solution to the emotional instability students are facing because of this devastating pandemic."



Nadjarian acknowledges the toll the closure has taken on the students' mental and emotional health and ascertains that school staff, students and families remain in constant communication.

"We are all trying to stay connected through this hard time," said Nadjarian. "The board of trustees, the board of education, the teachers and the administration all have regular meetings online."

The Vahan Tekeyan School, founded in 1951 by the Tekeyan Cultural Association and located in Bourj Hammoud, recently received an emergency donation of \$10,000 from The Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada to help combat the economic and political situations.

"We are forever grateful to the TCA during this critical time, as we have no other sort of income for our school," said Nadjarian.

■ Higher education in Beirut has also been affected and forced school closings. Haigazian University, which offers undergraduate and graduate degrees, closed in late February and switched most of its 220 courses online by using various platforms, including the school's Course Management System and Zoom.

"Two dozen courses, such as science lab sessions, community service, classroom observation training in schools, therapy sessions, were more challenging or impossible to offer online, and we are currently trying to see how we will solve the related problems," said Rev. Paul Haidostian, Ph.D., President of Haigazian University, who noted that new assessment and grading methods have been introduced in relation to the online classes.

As Haigazian University's geographical location is central to government headquarters and banks, Haidostian said the neighborhood has witnessed many incidents and protests since last Fall.

"COVID-19 simply added to the accumulated problems, and especially the economic ones," he said. "As a consequence, close to half of our students have not been able to complete tuition payments, thus putting extreme pressure on our budget and cash flow."

The leadership, administration and board of trustees, however, have taken contingency measures and succeeded in maintaining a sense of balance, at least in the short-term, for its 600 students and 500 school teachers and adults who follow certification programs or continuing education courses.

"Lebanese society has been polarized in new ways, but Haigazian University, with its usual Armenian positive attitude and peaceful nature, has been able to keep a strong sense of peace on campus among Armenian, other Christian, and non-Christian members of our community," said Haidostian, who has kept in constant communication with students, faculty and staff by sending email messages on key issues, setting up hotlines for student matters, and addressing psychological concerns.

The school's public and community events, including international conferences, its 65th anniversary and commencements have been postponed or cancelled and the majority of students living in the dormitory returned home to Kessab, Lattakia, Yerevan and Dubai before the borders and airports closed, according to Haidostian.

Research activities are continuing during the crisis, however, including three volumes in Armenological studies that are being prepared for publication in the coming months.

"As a university, the pandemic has limited our direct links with the global academic community, but our strong IT abilities on campus have kept us somehow connected," said Haidostian.

Founded in 1955 with ongoing support from the Armenian Evangelical community, Haigazian University welcomes students from Lebanon and internationally, from regions like South America and Africa and countries such as Kuwait, the UAE and Armenia.

"As Lebanon seems to have controlled the spread of the virus somewhat successfully, an official five-phase plan has started to ease the lockdown and open-up the country gradually and carefully," said Haidostian, noting that universities will be allowed to open after May 25. "Our inability to foresee how 2020-2021 will look like academically and financially, however, has created anxiety on campus."

■ The American University of Beirut (AUB) is known as one of the Arab world's oldest universities, where Armenians have studied and become part of the institution's mosaic over the decades. Their presence on campus remains effective, particularly through the Lebanese Armenian Heritage Club of AUB that upholds the mission of promoting the Armenian culture to the AUB community and Lebanese public at large. Over the years, the club has organized cultural and social events such as concerts, picnics and the annual Armenian cultural day, as well as academic discussions, lectures, exhibitions and documentary screenings, resulting in one of the most active clubs on campus, according to senior Narod Seroujian, who leads the robust organization.

"We are driven to promote our culture because of the emotional satisfaction it brings us when we see others become interested," said Seroujian, who collaborates with other clubs on campus by helping newly admitted students with course registration and organizing charity events. "Being part of a culture that is so rich yet not so familiar to others motivates us to share our heritage."

Although the club was unable to organize in-person events, they remained steadfast in commemorating the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide and organized a live webinar, "Recognition, Justice, Activism" on Wednesday, May 6, 2020 featuring speakers Aram Hamparian, Executive Director of the Armenian National Committee of America and Bedo Demirdjian, Secretary of the Armenian National Committee of Lebanon and former PR and Communications officer at European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy. The webinar was a success and reached more than 6,000 views during and after the live event.

"Our aim is to shed light on one of the biggest injustices humanity has ever seen," said Seroujian, who studied sociology and anthro-

pology. "We need to educate others about the Armenian Genocide, especially in dire times like these when we are witnessing the daily oppression of minority groups, individuals being racially profiled, inaccessibility to health and basic human needs, and millions facing socioeconomic inequalities."

As classes have shifted online, Seroujian acknowledges the struggles that come with virtual learning, particularly in Lebanon "where the country's electricity shortages have contributed to cuts and poor internet connection."

"The academic year of 2019-2020 was a tough one for the Lebanese Armenian Heritage Club members, and for all students in Lebanon since they were affected by Lebanon's October revolution, the economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic all at the same time," said Seroujian.

Students who were looking forward to their graduation ceremony are also dismayed, as the milestone has been postponed indefinitely.

"Many seniors attended their last college classes from their homes, sitting on their couches," said Seroujian. "I was very emotional because I'm the first in my family to attend University and my parents were dying to see me wear my graduation gown."

■ During a time of unease, the need to stay mentally healthy is a priority. As a response to the uncertainties that have plagued the country, entrepreneur Yervant Shallagian launched a health and fitness startup, LocalSpace, a platform that combines the elements of mindful living with the purpose of "making health and consciousness accessible and effective to everyone in society, while striving for a balanced environment that ensures sustainability."

According to Shallagian, the fear and distancing brought on by the lockdown will motivate people to invest in smarter and healthier choices to achieve a more tranquil and meaningful lifestyle. Prior to the pandemic, Shallagian helped organize in-person events, from hiking to yoga to pilates, to spur energy renewal. The LocalSpace app also provides insights for healthy eating, holistic medicine and a network to share knowledge. Since the lockdown, Shallagian has digitally connected users to various yoga studios in Beirut that offer classes online through Zoom, allowing "movement in your own space and your own place." Having seen divisiveness in his home country and "the power to fight wars in the name of religion, sect and color," Shallagian maintains the importance of "embracing the harmony of creation."

Interacting with his community has always been of keen interest to Shallagian, who conceived the idea of the Bourj Hammoud Walking Tour, taking participants on a tour of the lively district to explore and engage with the Armenian culture. Shallagian, who studied human resources at Haigazian University, asserts that the residents in the neighborhood have been "able to support and cultivate a sense of belonging to their ancestral origins."

"Although Armenians have been dispersed throughout the Diaspora, I believe they are a symbol of how a culture can sustain strong roots while blending within diverse regions of the world," he said.

He finds "great purpose" in providing the tours to teach others about Armenian history, food, culture, lifestyle and their ability to remain united while adapting to foreign surroundings.

"Armenians are masters of coexistence and understanding, as they built their own churches, schools, theaters and artistic communities, which still thrive today," said Shallagian. "Lebanon has never been an easy place to live, not only for the Armenians, but also for its own people."

Shallagian affirms that the economic imbalance and the repercussions from the coronavirus pandemic has caused unemployment to soar as the country grapples with "inflation and debt that have been eating up the country from all directions."

Nevertheless, Shallagian maintains a peaceful and evolved demeanor to overcome adversity in his community and brings that same mindfulness to his community.

"My life has felt like an ever-moving sea, full of unexpected waves, and I learned to flow with uncertainty and trust the unknown," said Shallagian. "As we arise each morning, we determine to respond with love and kindness to whatever might come our way."

Community News

Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center Grapples with COVID-19 Epidemic, Thankful for Community Assistance

JAMAICA PLAIN, Mass. — The Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center (ANRC) has regularly been providing updates on its situation as it deals with the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic. Continuing community support is helping it through this crisis period.

While normally ANRC expects 2-7 deaths per month, Chief Executive Officer Stewart Goff reported on May 8 that there were 24 deaths in April, of which only two were inconclusive concerning COVID-19, and 5 more in May, of which only one individual had tested negative for COVID-19. Therefore there have been 26 deaths in total from April 1 to May 7 due to COVID-19.

While contact with residents has been restricted, Goff said that if a resident appears to be in such a condition that he or she may pass soon, ANRC will arrange a FaceTime or Skype visit with loved ones.

All residents were recently retested for the virus and 14 positives remained positive, while 12 converted to negatives. One person tested inconclusively and a few refused testing, Goff wrote.

Soon the entire workforce, which has three shifts, will also be tested. Goff had stated on April 23 that 23 employees were out with verified COVID-19 infections but all were stable. Five employees who were sick had returned to work after quarantine. When employees come their temperatures are checked and they are asked about any symptoms of viral infection. The lower number of residents left in the home have made the smaller workforce able to handle the workload, Goff said. Separate teams work with COVID-19 infected residents and with those who are uninfected.

At present, ANRC has been able to meet most of its personal protective equipment needs (PPE). However, two ways that people can directly help the home is by finding large or extra-large nitrile or vinyl gloves (no powder or latex), which ANRC has not been able to obtain, and providing meals to the workforce. Meals help employees who do not need to buy groceries or go out for their meals and it also helps lighten the load of the ANRC kitchen staff. Those interested in either delivering meals or donating for the employee meal fund may contact Carolyn at help-line@armenian-nursing.org or (857) 273-9958. Donations can also be made at this website: <https://www.awwa.us/donate>.

Community Campaigns

The Armenian American Pharmacists' Association and the AGBU Young Professionals of Boston together on May 5 have launched a GoFundMe campaign for the ANRC to help purchase N95 masks and contribute to the employee meal fund. See https://www.gofundme.com/f/m8sfje-armenian-nursing-home-fundraiser?utm_source=customer&utm_medium=copy_link&tip&utm_campaign=p_cp%20share-sheet&fbclid=IwAR2TxeQXnPUH7Bo_-5h_87QQaqvT5_edKEgBInHmBctBfLii5CZc8ysPW0. As of May 12, about \$3,000 out of the goal of \$5,000 had been reached.

Two well-known Armenian musicians, John Berberian (oud) and Garo Papazian (doubek), generously donated their time to provide a Facebook Live Stream Benefit Concert on Thursday, May 14 from 7 to 8 p.m. to support the residents and staff of the ANRC.

Goff noted, "We cannot overstate how your support makes such a difference in the morale of our staff and in our ability to support our staff with the right PPE. It is amazing to see how the Armenian community through both its formal and informal agencies and networking, can come together to bolster our little community here at the ANRC. So, we thank you!"



Greg Melikian posing for a picture in the room that the surrender of WWII took place at Musée de la Reddition in Reims, France, 2018 (© The Greatest Generation Foundation / Greg Melikian)

Melikian Joins Trump to Commemorate 75th Anniversary End of World War II Despite COVID-19

WASHINGTON (*Arizona Republic*, *Guardian*, *Washington Post*, *NYT*, US Department of Defense) — Gregory Melikian was one of seven World War II veterans, ages 96 to 100, who joined President Donald Trump at a wreath-laying ceremony at the World War II Memorial on Friday, May 8, to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The ceremony took place only a day after a personal valet to the president was reported to be infected with COVID-19. On that same Friday, it was also disclosed that Katie Miller, Vice President Mike Pence's press secretary, also tested positive for the virus.

The 96-year-old Melikian was selected in 1945 while in Reims, France, by General Dwight Eisenhower as the youngest of three radio operators to send the coded message announcing Germany's unconditional surrenders. Melikian said that Eisenhower declared, "I want Melikian to send this coded message and talk about it for the rest of his life."



Gregory Melikian as a soldier

this could be the end...I know it's his choice to go, but it's irresponsible to even have an event like this in the first place."

At the ceremony, President Trump, Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper and Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie did not wear masks, nor did the seven veterans. While Trump greeted the veterans from a distance of several feet, Esper did not always keep his distance. The Vietnam Veterans of America, a veterans advocacy group, criticized the lack of masks by officials as risky.

Director of the Greatest Generation Foundation Timothy Davis told the *Washington Post*: "They understand the stakes and the risks involved. All we did was pave the way, and they just delivered. They're proud to be a voice of history and for those who are no longer with us."

White House spokesman Judd Deere similarly declared in a statement: "As young men, these heroes stared evil in the eyes and liberated nations — no pandemic stopped them from joining their Commander-in-Chief for this momentous occasion." He said they were "choosing nation over self" by attending the ceremony.

Emma Melikian said to the *Arizona Republic* that while she was sorry to read of her granddaughter's comments, she understood, and exclaimed, "She has love for her grandparents. We're very lucky that our grandchildren honor and respect and love us."

A real estate developer and lawyer, Gregory Melikian and his wife Emma are the owners of the historic Hotel San Carlos in downtown Phoenix and are well known for their philanthropy in Arizona. Among other things, they endowed the Melikian Center for Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies at Arizona State University, which includes Armenian language instruction in its purview.

Eric Papazian

"Having an Armenian surname was unusual in Norway"

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/OSLO — Professor Eric Papazian, 80, lives in Bærum outside Oslo. He has a master's degree in philology with Scandinavian as the main subject. For almost 40 years, he has served as associate professor at the Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies at the University of Oslo. He is specialized in Scandinavian languages, especially Norwegian dialects. He has written an introduction to this subject together with Botolv Helleland (*Norsk talemål. Lokal og sosial variasjon*, 2005) in New Norwegian (see below). He is also interested in general linguistic theory and has written books about language learning and the relation between speech and writing.

We have been in touch since 2001, when I was working on my research on Armenian-Scandinavian historical and cultural relations



and the Armenian presence in Nordic countries, and met twice — in Armenia and Norway. He has helped me to translate a 15th-century Armenian poem into Swedish (published in the Armenian-Swedish magazine *Nor horizon*) and also translated Armenian writer Elda Grin's short story, "The Hands" from English into Norwegian, which was included in this story's multilingual edition, published in 2010 in Yerevan.

Eric, I would like to start our conversation discussing some issues regarded your profession. In the Armenian language, many dialects disappeared during the past century. What is the situation in Norway? For instance, in Italy the dialects are under state protection and there are publications and plays in various dialects.

Norway is often called "the dialect paradise of Europe" because here the dialects are still alive and socially accepted. They are used publicly in speech, also by intellectuals and politicians and in theaters, films, radio and television. Many young people use dialect in writing on the Internet (Facebook and the like). The situation is quite different from that in Sweden and Denmark. The reason is Norway's political and linguistic history, which is different from that of the neighboring countries.

Norway was dominated by Denmark in a see PAPA ZIAN, page 9



COMMUNITY NEWS

Making Art and Music in A Lockdown In Armenia And Germany

GERMANY, from page 1

these files to my pupils. Then, they sing to the recorded music and send back their recording. I listen to their presentations, try to correct their mistakes, and so it goes on."

Lusine's mother is also a teacher, not of music, but Armenian language and literature. She works along similar lines. She calls the group of pupils via Zoom program and presents her lectures. She sends them exercises which they complete and send back for correction. It is all very tiring, Lusine notes, because this kind of interchange requires much more time and energy. But this is the case everywhere, and such online teaching is absolutely necessary to ensure that the pupils keep up with their studies.

In Geghashen, Mariam Kazaryan, who is director of the music school there, confirms this is the case. Not only music, but all subjects offered are being taught online. Teachers assign their students homework, and they write all

their courses, they will receive certificates which will allow them entrance to universities for higher education. The school offers instruction in English, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese for German students who plan to study abroad.

Her foreign students, who come from Dubai, China, Peru, Brazil, the USA and Lebanon, have all gone online to continue their courses. For them, there is the added concern for their families back home, "not only for their health," Ehlers-Kerbekian explains, "but also for their financial situation, because they come from countries that may not have such generous emergency aid programs." She added, "Just this morning, I received the news that one student couldn't attend class by Skype today, because she had learned an hour earlier that a close friend in Madrid had died of Covid-19." The students are in constant contact with their families, she added, "and our morning ritual greetings begin with the question, how everyone's family members are."



Art exhibit in Geghashen

their exercises in notebooks, which they will hand in as soon as classroom instruction can resume.

In the arts the process is more complicated. Children taking music lessons – dance or instrumental or vocal – perform their assigned tasks, and record themselves, then send their photos or videos back to their teachers, for corrections and comments.

Before the coronavirus pandemic reached Armenia, pupils at the Geghashen school participated in an international art and music festival, winning first, second and third prizes. This year, they have put their works on exhibit – even though it is not yet clear when the public will have the chance to visit and admire their creations.

Berlin Artists Yearn to Perform

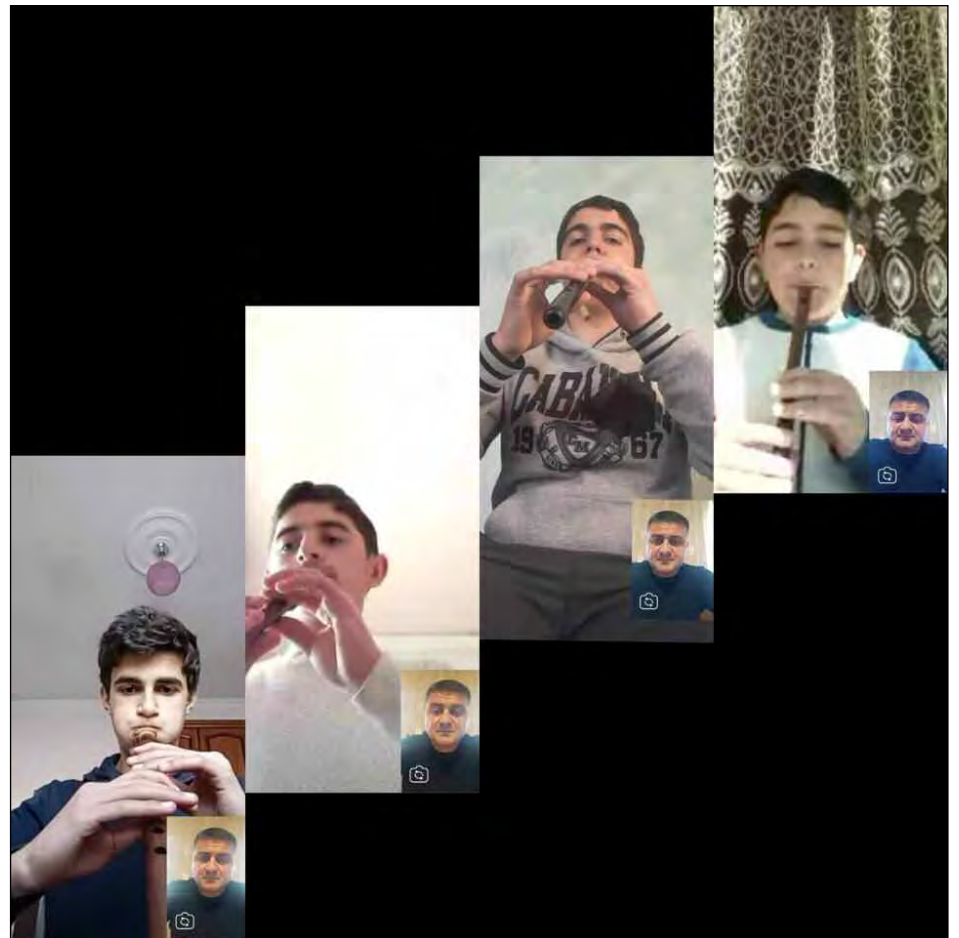
Bea Ehlers-Kerbekian works as a teacher in Berlin and, since the lockdown, has been holding her lessons online. At the Anda private language school, she teaches German to students from all over the world, who have come to the capital to learn the language. On completion of



Bea Ehlers-Kerbekian

Bea Ehlers-Kerbekian is also an actress, who has experienced firsthand what the crisis has meant for performing artists. All cultural activities, concerts, operas, plays, cabaret, have been suspended. "The uncertainty regarding when performances will be allowed again," she said, "presents an enormous challenge for event organizers and artists." These productions are planned at least a year in advance, she explains, and rehearsals take at least 6 to 8 weeks, depending on the works selected. The problems for free-lance artists are the most serious. "Many artists, like musicians, dancers and actors, find themselves financially in an existential crisis. The safety net that the government has established for independent artists unfortunately does not apply to this group." Those who organize concerts, plays and other cultural events have ended up in similar straits, especially if they do not have their own facilities. "A friend of mine," she cited as an example, "directs the Monodrama Festival in Kiel, for which the city theatre was always made available. Now, due to the crisis, the city will reserve its stages for its own theatre companies," which will reduce the availability for guest performances.

In Germany, life without cultural life is hard to imagine. One-third of all operas worldwide are performed here, where there are 80 opera houses; there are 128 orchestras in the country. And under the current circumstances, both performers and audiences have begun to seek ways of filling in the vacuum. On May 8, to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, conductor Daniel Barenboim presented a televised concert in the Berlin Staatskapelle, with a short program and a much-reduced ensemble. Before the music began, he came on stage before an empty hall, and appealed to political figures to acknowledge the important role cultural life plays in a healthy society, and to address the need to find creative



Music lesson online in Geghashen

solutions. At the same time, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported on a study completed by a team of medical experts, as a contribution to this discussion process.

Entitled "Trumpeters don't blow out candles," the article presented the results of research carried out at the famous Berlin Charité hospital. Doctors from several institutes, the Institute for Social Medicine, for Epidemiology and Health, and for Hygiene and Ecology, joined with members of the

without endangering the health of musicians or audience members?

The paper refers to new studies in Vienna, the Netherlands and by Freiburg medical and music expert Dr. Bernhard Richter. The findings relate to airflow and contagion from viruses. For example, it was shown that wind instruments, like trumpets, do not emit enough air to extinguish a candle, whereas a child can do so with little effort. This means a virus can be transmitted through speech but not necessarily through

a wind instrument. They suggested ways of arranging ensembles to prevent possible transmission of the virus between performers. Orchestras could be reduced in size, so as to maintain a 1 ½ - 2 meter distance (depending on the instrument) between individuals, whether seated or standing. Musicians are generally arranged in rows, one behind the other, avoiding any face-to-face position. Where necessary, plexiglass shields could be mounted.

Although vocalists and choruses will be the last to return to the public stage, the suggestion is that concerts could be organized, with smaller ensembles, who could prepare shortened programs. Audiences could observe the medically required two-meter distance, sitting in every other row and several seats apart; with shorter programs, performers could offer two concerts on the same date.

These are only some of the ideas generated by the dialogue among medical and musical experts. Their primary concern, as they stated in the paper, was to revive some form of cultural life. Art and culture, they write, "have an indispensable meaning for the population. On the individual level, art functions to enhance health and development, music has a specially healing effect. On the public level, art and culture function to develop identity, education and well-being."

Such considerations underline how important and laudable the efforts are of those teachers in Armenia and elsewhere who are maintaining the continuity of education in the arts, even online. "It's terrible," to be sure, but vital for the future.



Dance class online in Geghashen

boards of seven city orchestras, to examine the matter. How is the virus communicated in rehearsals and on stage? How might it be possible to organize concerts, for example,



COMMUNITY NEWS

Chicago and Wisconsin Armenian Community Helping Each Other and Armenia during the Pandemic

MIDWEST, from page 1

There are 11 Armenian houses of worship in this region of the country, some of them quite small and dating back to an era when Armenian immigrants congregated in small communities in the factory towns that dotted the Lake Michigan coast. Even the Chicago parish has the feel of a small tightknit village on holidays rather than a large urban community (the biggest Illinois parishes are actually St. James in Evanston, and All Saints in Glenview, affiliated with the Prelacy). One of the benefits of this state of affairs is that a good deal more people are asked to get involved, since each of these 11 parishes needs to have its priest, deacons, choir, organist, women's guild, youth groups, and so on. People feel that they owe it to community to step up and help out.

In addition to the 7 Diocesan churches, 3 Prelacy churches, and one Armenian Protestant church, there is an AGBU Center in Chicago, numerous organizations, and most interestingly, an Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Armenia. The honorary consul is the dedicated Mr. Oscar Tatosian, oriental rug dealer (Oscar Isberian Rugs), philanthropist, and community leader extremely involved in Armenian affairs. He is actively involved in the Eastern Diocese, the Armenian Assembly, and the Fund for Armenian Relief. Mr. Tatosian is one of the precious few rug dealers whose family has been in the business since the 1920s in this country and who continues the tradition of the leadership role that members of that profession have often played in Armenian-American life, especially in the early years. In fact, his company is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

Appointed to the consulate in 2017, the dynamic Mr. Tatosian has been involved in strengthening the economic ties between the US and Armenia. He has stressed that in the 21st century, the Diaspora's role needs to shift from "relief" and charity work, to investment and economic ties, helping to create jobs in the homeland. Of course, the worldwide pandemic has shifted everyone's focus, hopefully temporarily. The consulate had a very special task to perform when the pandemic began – rounding up 13 exchange students from Armenia who were scattered around the United States and making sure they got home. The students were flown from all over the country to Chicago's O'Hare Airport, where they were welcomed by Mr. Tatosian and two members of the clergy, Der Andreas of St. Gregory's in Chicago and Hayr Ghevont of All Saints in Glenview, Illinois. The delegation stayed with the kids until they were put on a plane to Europe, bringing them masks, food, and anything else they needed, according to Mr. Tatosian's assistant, Ms. Irina Petrosyan, who said "we had to work hard with O'Hare" to make all of this possible.

Ms. Petrosyan, a native of Yerevan, also works as the youth director and church administrator of the Evanston, Illinois parish of the Eastern Diocese, St. James of Nisibis Armenian Church. We spoke with her and with the parish's devoted pastor, Fr. Hovhan Khoja-Eynatian, to find out how the parish and community was dealing with the pandemic.

Though unlike some other churches, Der Hovhan is not livestreaming Badarak on Sunday morning, due to the desire not to have too many people in the sanctuary, he is offering other services. He has a Saturday night and Wednesday night service that people can tune into and he also livestreams Sunday's Morning Service (Zhamerkoutiun) at 9 a.m. He then leads a prayer service which he has prepared for congregants to participate in at home. The service has been emailed to parishioners and is also on the church's mobile app (yes, they have their own mobile app). The service is about 20 minutes and begins with a prayer led by Der Hayr, after which he plays background melodies on the organ while parishioners continue doing the readings and songs from their homes. Fr. Hovhan is assisted by his son Alexander as deacon and wife Yeretzgin Narine as choir singer.

Der Hayr's utmost concern is for the safety of his flock and he wants to make sure no one goes out of their house. He also doesn't want

anyone else to be in the church at this time other than his wife and child assisting with the service, and since this makes livestreaming difficult, he has chosen not to livestream, especially considering that there are many parishes around the country livestreaming and worshipers have an abundance of choices.

Fr. Hovhan has also been making phone calls and during times when parishioners strongly want to be able to see him, he has met them in a public park, making sure to practice social distancing and staying at least 6 feet away. Fr. Hovhan informs us that several people came to meet him in the park for confession, especially around Easter. He also tells us that families have been reaching out to help one another. One of the first calls he received was from a single mother who called and offered help, and has been cooking and distributing meals. The parish has been contacting all elderly parishioners who live alone, and providing food to whomever asks for it.

Meanwhile, Ms. Petrosyan, in her capacity as youth director, has been working with Evanston's ACYOA Junior Chapter (the 13-18 age group). The chapter has been meeting online for discussions as a youth group, and even begun to read short stories by Armenian authors and discussing them. Dr. Artin Goncu of the University of Chicago, an educator and psychologist who specializes in youth and infants, joined one of the online discussions last week to talk with the group about what youth are going through during the pandemic. But the youth aren't just keeping in touch with each other – they are reaching out and under the guidance of Ms. Petrosyan and Fr. Hovhan, they are making phone calls to elderly parishioners, just so they have someone to talk with. Ms. Petrosyan calls and talks to them as well, and she also keeps in contact with the parents so that they know who their kids are talking to on the phone. Ms. Petrosyan has also been continuing to print out the church bulletin and mailing it to elderly members who don't use email or social media.

Just an hour north in Wisconsin, the tight knit Armenian community of Racine is also dealing with the virus. Like Der Hovhan, Fr. Avedis Kalayjian of St. Mesrob Armenian Church (affiliated with the Eastern Diocese) is



Fr. Avedis Kalayjian, Racine, Wisconsin

not livestreaming the Badarak, though he is continuing to celebrate the liturgy on behalf of his congregants. However, Der Avedis has been doing zoom conferences with his parish three times a week. He does a session on Sunday afternoon discussing the Divine Liturgy, a Bible study on Wednesdays, and prayer time on Fridays. The parish's flagship event, their summer Armenian Fest, has been postponed until the fall, conditions permitting. Local food banks are hard up, and since some of the parishes that normally provide labor are not able to do so, St. Mesrob's has been stepping up to help out the broader Racine community. Der Avedis has made all parishioners aware that they have a team of volunteers ready to meet their needs in regards to shopping and other assistance. Der Avedis tells us that everyone seems to be respecting the lockdown, and that while community members were displaying a

lot of anxiety at first, frustration has now begun to set in.

Fr. Tavit Boyajian of Sts. Joachim and Anne in Palos Heights, Illinois, pastors a small parish that serves the south side suburbs of Chicago as well as some parishioners from Indiana. Like the others, he has not been livestreaming the Badarak, though two or three are coming together on Sundays to celebrate the liturgy. Instead he has been giving messages and homilies by video and producing videos for kids.

His plan as the weeks go on is to do more children's videos and teach them some Christian songs. This has been a longtime passion project for Der Hayr, who feels that simple songs explaining the teachings of Christianity, performed in English, are an important educational tool that we as Armenians in America are in need of in order to teach the faith to the next generation. He has written several of these songs himself and is working on a book of songs with Ms. Elise Antreassian of the Eastern Diocese staff.

Der Tavit, who has always been focused on the well-being of our children, feels concerned about the fact that diocesan camps, Hye Camp and St. Vartan Camp, have to be cancelled. Most children from the Midwest attend Hye Camp, and so Der Tavit is hopeful that some of its programming will be offered in an online format.

Sts. Joachim and Anne has been offering a weekly bible study via Zoom, and Der Tavit has been making a lot of phone calls. "Much longer phone calls," he says, with obvious concern in his voice. Parish council also met via a conference call. In this small, tight-knit community, "we'd never done that before." Like all the other communities in the region, their flagship event is their annual picnic, and that's been pushed back as well. But, parishioners have been supporting one another, Der Hayr said.

The ACYOA Seniors belonging to the parish have joined the national "Diving Deep" web conferences and Der Tavit has also joined some of these. He also noted that the Primate, Bishop Daniel Findikyan has been having conference calls with the clergy periodically. Der Tavit reflected that "It's sad that there's this disease, but thank God people are being careful, and being loving by wearing masks and reaching out via zoom and social media." Der Hayr has been calling everyone in the parish, and the church is available to help anyone who needs anything, he says.

As for the future? "People will be a bit apprehensive to gather in groups, so a transition back to a full parish is incremental." Fr. Tavit, while deeply affected emotionally by what is going on, has been able to see the good that shines through the pain and suffering. In an ACYOA Zoom conference, the subject turned to the masks that many states are requiring people to wear when going into public places. The masks were an unnerving sight to many of the 20-somethings in the discussion group. Der Tavit, who was also on the call, offered his feelings about the subject. "When I see a mask, I see love."

Finally, we spoke to Fr. Andreas Garabedian, pastor of St. Gregory Armenian Church in Chicago. A young, newly ordained priest who has been a Der Hayr for less than a year, Der Andreas is a native of Vancouver and was educated both at the Jerusalem Convent and at St. Nersess in New York. His dynamic leadership has brought new energy to this small, family-like parish, which is proud to be the only Armenian Church within the city limits of Chicago, and the oldest organized Armenian Orthodox parish in the Midwest.

The church has offered help to parishioners, for example to those who are unable to go shopping. The parish's resources are limited, but the offer stands – though the pandemic as a whole is going to have a financial impact on the parish, as it loses a source of income from the regular Sunday collection plate. Der Andreas has been calling parishioners individually, and has done visitations in emergency situations, although unfortunately he is unable to visit church members in the hospitals. However, he is prepared and trained to offer chaplaincy ser-



Fr. Andreas Garabedian

vices there when called upon. He shared that he had done several visitations one Sunday by driving to peoples' houses, standing outside and talking to them. Der Andreas has also been doing ecumenical things online; for example, responding to a query from the Roman Catholic Church about the Orthodox Church's response to COVID-19 in regard to yielding to state and governmental authorities.

However, the youthful Der Andreas' focus has mostly been on online resources. Badarak is being livestreamed and Der Hayr has recently started an online Bible study on Wednesday evenings. He wants to continue this online resource even after the pandemic is over.

Der Andreas hosted a Facebook Live session answering any questions about the Armenian Orthodox Church and Faith that are posed to him. He says, "We don't often take advantage...people follow [the online resources] from all over the world...It's showing the unity of how we are doing the same worship toward the same God regardless of where we are geographically." "The understanding of a parish church has changed," added the deeply traditional, yet forward-thinking young clergyman.

Fr. Andreas has parishioners that log onto their computers, and, for example, watch the Badarak livestreamed from St. John's in Detroit, then watch him celebrate Badarak in Chicago. Armenians are increasingly becoming connected with parishes in other geographic areas. This is nothing new for young people who are no strangers to social media, but in many ways it's new territory for the church and especially older members. Yet in many cases they are the ones who really need these resources. "There are people who are elderly and can't drive," Der Andreas said.

The ACYOA Seniors of St. Gregory have not been quiet either. Many of their members, along with other young people from the Chicago area, have been continuing their popular "Theology on Tap" monthly meetings via Zoom, led by Der Andreas. ACYOA members, twin sisters Cindy (co-chair of the group) and Maria Panthier have also been promoting the efforts of Ayo to raise funds for COVID relief efforts in Armenia, via the group's Instagram account. Ayo has been reporting positive results from their work being done in Armenia, and the indefatigable "retired" Der Yeprem is continuing to promote the group and to appear on their Instagram Live feed.

Der Andreas brought to our attention a unique service that he had participated in, an online zhamerkoutiun in multiple locations at once, through Zoom conference. Organized by the St. Nersess Alumni Board chairperson Ms. Arpi Nakashian of the Diocese in New York, the Zoom zhamerkoutiun was participated in by alumni of the seminary from all over the United States, showing the integration of the Armenian community across the country in their response to the current situation. Der Andreas thinks that this will continue throughout the time of coronavirus. "Everyone is trying to find an innovative way of doing something."

Stand Up and Be Counted

as Armenian in the US Census

All kinds of figures are bandied about concerning the numbers of Armenians living in the United States. Some say there may be as many as two million but in the 2010 US Census's American Community Survey, only 474,559 Armenians were estimated, while in the 2017 American Community Survey, the number of Americans with full or partial Armenian ancestry was given as 485,970. That is a huge discrepancy.

By **Aram Arkun**
Mirror-Spectator Staff

Having more reliable figures would be very useful for many things. It would help Armenian organizations be able to plan better to meet the needs of their community. Knowing the population's age distribution, and countries of origin, would be helpful.

If there is an undercount, then more accurate figures would increase the political clout of the Armenians to a certain degree, and would also increase the resources that Armenians would receive through various local, state and federal government programs. Armenian schools, educational programs and Armenian-language resources and services will receive greater funding as will healthcare, medical services and various programs for the Armenian elderly. Armenian representation in various bodies which are connected with their proportion of the population would increase, as would certain job positions.

The decennial US census up through 2000 was conducted with two forms, long and short. Only one out of six people would get the long more detailed survey form at random, which would include socioeconomic questions. After 2000, the American Community Survey was created to investigate the more detailed information yearly. It is based on sampling a small percentage of the general population and then making extrapolations. Consequently, it is not as complete or reliable as the decennial census in its results. The aforementioned census estimates of the Armenian population have been determined through this same sampling process.

The 2020 decennial census is different than the last two decennial ones because it asks for those who identify as white (or black, American Indian or Alaskan native) to specify their origins. In other words, in the past if Armenians considered themselves part of the "white race" they might have felt reluctant to use the only way to identify themselves as Armenian, by claiming that Armenian was a separate race. This has changed in the current census form.

The leading organizations of the Armenian-American community, whether churches, philanthropic organizations or political organizations, have never pursued the alternate approach of sponsoring a census individually or jointly either on a national or regional level. Other ethnic or religious groups in the US have done this in order to gather demographic and socioeconomic information to improve their planning and operations. It is expensive even on a local level and would cost millions of dollars, but in the long-term the benefits would be more than commensurate. All kinds of useful information could be gleaned from such efforts, but unfortunately it does not seem likely to occur at pre-

9. What is Person 1's race?
Mark ☒ one or more boxes **AND** print origins.

☐ White – Print, for example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian, etc.

☐ Black or African Am. – Print, for example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native – Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.

<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese	<input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian
<input type="checkbox"/> Filipino	<input type="checkbox"/> Korean	<input type="checkbox"/> Samoan
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> Japanese	<input type="checkbox"/> Chamorro
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Asian – Print, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc. <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Pacific Islander – Print, for example, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, etc. <input type="text"/>	

☒ Some other race – Print race or origin.

A R M E N I A N

sent. Why this is so is a topic for another editorial.

Under the circumstances, then, the US census is the best way for Armenian Americans to find out more about themselves demographically. The information is confidential. Contrary to common misconception, there is no question asked about citizenship or immigration status and no harm can come from filling it out.

There is still time to fill out the short questionnaire online ([https:// my2020census.gov/](https://my2020census.gov/)), telephonically (call 1-844-330-2020), or by postal mail (a form was mailed already to you). The ninth question asks your race. If you consider yourself white, you can mark that off and then below it print Armenian as your origin. You could also choose the answer "other" to that question and print Armenian as your race/origin.

No matter where they are from, Armenians in the United States, if they place any importance at all on their Armenian identity, should take advantage of this opportunity to stand up and be counted on a national scale.

Eric Papazian: “Having an Armenian surname was unusual in Norway”

PAPAZIAN, from page 6

union for 400 years (ca. 1400-1814), and used Danish in writing (the Scandinavian languages are closely related – like dialects). Because of this, the upper classes developed a mixed Dano-Norwegian spoken language, which, after the union with Denmark was broken in 1814 and because of national romanticism, gradually replaced Danish in writing. This Dano-Norwegian spoken and written language is now officially called Bokmål (book language). The lower classes continued speaking Norwegian dialects, and in the 19th century a written language based on the dialects was constructed, called Nynorsk (New Norwegian). But it never succeeded in replacing Bokmål, and has always been used by a (diminishing) minority.

The result of this is a majority standard language (Bokmål) that has social but not national prestige (because of it is partly Danish origin), while the dialects are recognized as genuinely Norwegian. But nationalism means less today, and because of the social prestige of Bokmål and internal migration the dialects are being influenced by Bokmål, and some of them are threatened. So it seems we may be following the example of the rest of Europe, with the standard gradually replacing the dialects, with a delay of 150 years or so.

For me it was interesting to find out there is a Norwegian linguist with Armenian family name. Could you please tell us your family story?

My mother was a Norwegian girl from Oslo who went to Paris after school, in the 1930s. There she met my father, who was an Armenian born in Varna in Bulgaria. His parents came from Istanbul, but moved to Bulgaria and later to Romania before the genocide. His sister married a wealthy French Armenian who owned a factory, and after school my father joined her in Paris to work with his brother-in-law. He married my mother, and I was born in 1939. Soon after, my father was called out as a French soldier, was taken prisoner and spent three years as a prisoner of war in Germany. During this time I and my mother lived with his parents in Bucharest. They spoke both Armenian and Turkish, but could also speak French, and that became the common language, since my mother did not know the other two. So I grew up speaking French. When my father was released, we joined him in Paris and later went to Norway, in 1946. My parents bought a house in a remote valley in the middle of southern Norway, where I went to school. I had to learn Norwegian in two varieties: Bokmål – my moth-

er's language – at home, and the local dialect outside. After more than 70 years, I still can switch between the two. That is the source of my interest in dialects.

I assume you are connected to Vahram Papazian – the greatest theater actor of Armenia in the 20th century, who was also from Constantinople.

I am probably not related to Vahram Papazian; otherwise I would have heard of him.

Now there is a small Armenian community in Norway, but in the past Norwegians bearing non-Norwegian surnames should have been something unusual, right?

I am Norwegian, although I have an Armenian surname. Having an Armenian surname certainly was unusual in Norway, and still is, although people nowadays are more accustomed to foreign names. I usually have to spell it. My father was not interested in his Armenian background, and never told me about it. He was sometimes contacted by Armenians in Norway, but never followed up, and the same goes for

me. My father's name was Hatchik (I do not know if the spelling is right), but he managed to change it into Axel, which worked as well in Norway and South Africa as in France. And my second name was Jirair: fortunately, I managed to get rid of it, which always was a burden. "Papazian" is strange enough in Norway. So none of us were fond of our first names.

Although your father was not interested in his Armenian background, in your first letter you mentioned you have had a certain interest in Armenian history.

I became interested in the dramatic story of the genocide, after reading Franz Werfel's novel *The Forty Days on Musa Dagh* and Fridtjof Nansen's book *Gjennem Armenia* [Through Armenia] from 1927. In particular, I wondered how such hatred between populations could arise. So I have read books about it, by both Armenian and Turkish (Taner Akcam) historians.

In 2003 you traveled to Armenia with your family. Was it something special to you or it was just one of trips you did?

I have been to Armenia once, just to see the country and the memorial for the genocide. Ararat was a terrific sight from Yerevan – too bad it lies in Turkey! But my youngest son Sjur is much more interested in his Armenian background, although he is only a quarter Armenian. He has contacts with Armenians in Norway, and is presently living in Yerevan, where he rents a flat. So maybe blood is thicker than water!

NORWAY IS OFTEN CALLED “THE DIALECT PARADISE OF EUROPE” BECAUSE HERE THE DIALECTS ARE STILL ALIVE AND SOCIALLY ACCEPTED.



OBITUARIES

Shenorig Minassian

1934-2020

FORT LEE, NJ - Shenorig was born in Beirut, Lebanon in March, 1934, to a genocide-orphaned mother, Siranoush Samsonian, and an extermination-escaped migrant father, Setrag Djandjanian.

Childhood wasn't easy for her and her other three siblings, Harout, Sona and Gulabi. She used to tell stories about walking for miles to give her father a hand in casting concrete tiles.

Shenorig had excelled in primary school, especially in writing essays. Some of her essays



were published in local literary magazines. She was not able to pursue higher education due to her family's limited means.

At the age of 26, she was married to Krikor Minassian, an Armenian immigrant from Palestine. Their first child, Garo was born in 1961 and their second son Vatche was born in 1963, and in 1969 they had twin boys, Hratch and Shahe. She was a very devoted wife and mother.

Shenorig was a resourceful and creative lady, and among her impeccable talents were sewing anything from beautiful dresses and costumes to aprons and mittens, and making beautiful flower arrangements.

She was socially very active. The range of her activities expanded starting from the Vahan

Tekeyan School's benevolent ladies' association, Shoushanig Club (promoting Armenian causes and Genocide commemoration and recognition).

In 1974, when civil war erupted in Lebanon, the whole family, going through financial, physical and psychological difficulties, through a decade, resettled in the United States by 1986-1989 with her encouragement.

Surviving in the new situation in the United States needed the efforts of all members of the family including Shenorig, who was creative and entrepreneurial. She took up every job opportunity including babysitting, sewing, cooking and beading.

Shenorig continued her membership in the USA at several non-profit organizations, particularly at the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (Ramgavars), the Tekeyan Cultural Association and the Mher Megerdichian Theatrical Group. She participated in several church activities, including the Choir and the Women's Guild at St Thomas Armenian church, and teaching Armenian at the Kirikian Armenian School.

Shenorig was a very religious lady and raised her sons in that environment. They prospered and excelled in their schools and businesses. They each weremarried; Garo and Baydzig, Vatche and Sana, Hratch and Rosette, Shahe and Claudia and their children; Nicole, Grace, Alex, Tatiana, Nareg, Arame, Naira, Gaia and Zeno. She loved and adored her grandchildren.

Shenorig's husband Krikor passed away in 2013. Shenorig spared no effort to keep him comfortable till the end. Since then, she lived alone, and socialized with the seniors in the town of Fort Lee where she lived. Taking yoga and aerobics classes, she continued her devotion to the church and all the organizations mentioned above.

Shenorig was kind, elegant, creative and full of vigor in whatever project she was involved in. She was loved by everyone, and had a very soft spot for nature and God's creations. She was a faithful believer of God and in her darkest hours she found spiritual guidance and solace in the words of the Bible. She passed away on April 25, 2020.

May God enlighten her soul.

Evelyn Astorian

Caring Daughter, Sister, Mother, Grandmother

WATERTOWN - Evelyn Astorian of Watertown, Mass., born on March 27, 1930, daughter to her late parents George and Agnes Nason of Malden, Mass., passed away on May 8, 2020. She was the caring sister of her late brother Harry G. Nason, CPA (Bentley College) and is survived by her two sons and granddaughters.

Son David J. Astorian, with a degree in accounting from Northeastern University, visited her every day with loving caring over the past years to provide comfort and support - the same type of support she provided while raising her two children with the assistance of her parents and brother. Her son Donald Astorian, MD, received his degree in medicine from Boston University and is a practicing anesthesiologist, sharing his life with spouse Michelle Dunlevy, CRNA. Evelyn is blessed with two grandchildren from Donald's previous mar-



riage, Emily Astorian and Kristen Astorian, who are graduates of Boston University and Ohio Wesleyan University. Evelyn's life was filled with adventure that revolved around her family. She would work hard every day to make sure everyone was well cared for and at the same time she was using her associated degree in bookkeeping from Boston University to provide support to her brothers thriving CPA business. Evelyn continually made sure that her family was the focus of her attention and received her gratification knowing she was caring for them (parents, brother, children, grandchildren) Evelyn actually would drive over a hundred miles to just babysit the girls when they were only two-years old, bringing her such joy.

The funeral will be private and in lieu of flowers, please donate to the Armenian charity of your choice.

Bayside Funeral Director Dies Following Long Battle with Illness

BAYSIDE, New York (<https://qns.com/>) - He fought cancer valiantly for more than two decades, but on the eve of a new round of chemotherapy was about to begin, Edward D.

Jamie Jr. lost his battle due to complications, according to his family. He was 76.

By Bill Parry

Jamie was the second-generation funeral director in his family following in his father's footsteps and he operated the Edward D. Jamie Jr. Funeral Chapel on Northern Boulevard in

Bayside since 1969. His daughter Marissa Jamie is studying for her funeral director's license, and she, like her father, will take over the family business.

"I worked with him since I was 13 and I will make sure his legacy will carry on," Marissa Jamie said. "Everyone loved my father. He was a pillar in the Armenian community. Anyone who needed help he was there no matter what time of day or how far he had to travel. We will keep the funeral home and we will run it the way he always wanted it run."

Her brother Christopher passed away in 2001, when Christopher was attending funeral directing school.

"My father got an honorable discharge from the U.S. Army and took over my grandfather's funeral home in Elmhurst and now it's my time to do the same," Marissa Jamie said. "Because of him, I know how important it is to be a funeral director and it's very important to me to keep everything he believed in alive."

Edward D. Jamie Jr. knew compassion, service and dedication to those in need and would often go to a decedent's home to meet with the family to make all of the arrangements and ease the emotional burden of making the final arrangements for a loved one. He also knew that price and budgeting are also important decisions in planning a direct burial, cremation or full services.

"These things were very important to my father and they are also very important to me as well," Marissa Jamie said.

Jamie Jr. is survived by his wife Lynn. They were married in 1969. [In addition to his aforementioned daughter Marissa, and his grandson Carter Edward Jamie, he is survived by his mother Lucy Jamie Bongarzone, sister Juliet Jamie Gregorio, brother Leon Jamie (spouse Nancy), brother-in-law Alan Arifian, and many more family and friends.

A church service will take place at the Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs in Bayside, Queens]. He will be laid to rest next to his son on May 12 at Nassau Knolls Cemetery in Port Washington, New York.



ADL Member Hratch Manoukian Passes Away

MISSION HILLS, Calif. - Teacher and Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) member Hratch Manoukian passed away on April 27 at the Holy Cross Hospital in Mission Hills, California, after being infected with COVID-19. Prior to emigrating to California, he was a teacher for many years in Lebanon at the AGBU Hovagimian-Manougian School and in Cyprus at the Melkonian Educational Institute, and a stalwart member of the Armenian General Benevolent Union and ADL. He also was a strong supporter of the Tekeyan Cultural Association.



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OBITUARIES



Anazik Jakras Oghlo

WESTON, Mass. — Anazik Jakras Oghlo passed away peacefully on April 24, 2020 at Wingate in Weston. She was 86.

Anazik was born on January 13, 1934 in Arapgir, Turkey to the late Hovanes and Lucine (Chagasbanian) Jakrazian.

She was the wife of the late Hovanes Kanbourian. She is survived by her children Haroutioun Kanbourian and his wife Lucy of Waltham and Shushan Kehyeian and her husband Hovanes of Syria. She was the grandmother of Hovanes and Christine Kanbourian and Bedros and Betty Kehyeian. She was the dar sister of Vergine Malkazian of Turkey.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic and current public safety measures, private graveside services were held at Mount Feake Cemetery in Waltham. A celebration of life will be held at a later date and will be announced.

Torgom Aftandil Kocharians

October 13, 1925 – May 6, 202

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Torgom Aftandil Kocharians died of heart failure at home on May 6, 2020. He was 94.

He was born in Tehran, Iran, to Abraham and Mariam (Jerrahian) Kocharians. After graduating from high school in Iran, he attended the University of Stuttgart in Germany and graduated with a degree in civil engineering. He returned to Iran, where he worked for decades at the Ministry of Roads, overseeing the creation of new roads throughout the country, as well as responding to earthquakes and avalanches, where new roads had to be created to connect residents back to the rest of the country.

He married Loosia Stepanians in 1959. The couple had two daughters, Anahid and Alin. Anahid and two cousins moved to the US to attend Boston University in 1978, before the Iranian Revolution. Once the revolution seemed imminent, the rest of the collected family followed suit and relocated to the Boston area, settling in Cambridge.

He soon reestablished himself as a pillar of his family and the community. Almost every member of the family has a story about his generosity and kindness as well as wit and humor. He gave his time freely, always putting his children and all who needed him before himself. He loved to dine out with his friends and family and made it a point to always tip generously because he knew the waiters were depending on those tips.

He donated often to a variety of causes, thinking it was important to support those who needed help. Every year, without fail, he would deliver a couple of turkeys and bags of rice to

the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Boston, and sometimes also to a homeless shelter. This last year, when he could not drive, he had his grandson drive him to buy food and deliver it.

He loved traveling. He relished visiting Armenia and Artsakh with his wife, going there more than 10 times. While there, he would always visit orphanages and make donations. Though he had grown up going to Iranian schools and did not know how to read or write Armenian, he was a very proud Armenian, always taking pride in the country and fellow Armenians.

He took great pleasure from classical music, listening often on his computer while he played solitaire or scrolled news websites. He took special delight in attending concerts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

However, he reserved his greatest love for his grandchildren, sharing naughty stories of his childhood with them, encouraging them to play tricks on their parents, much to the chagrin of his daughters. He finished every conversation with them with the phrase “I love you.” In the past four years, he had suffered increasingly from a variety of health issues, which led to frequent medical visits, as well as hospital and rehab stays.

He leaves his wife, Loosia; daughters Anahid Kocharians (husband Alfred Gharakhanian) of Redwood City, Calif. and Alin K. Gregorian of Belmont, Mass.; grandchildren Raffi Gharakhanian of Redwood City and Tenny Gregorian of Burlington, Vt. He was predeceased by his older siblings, Rosik and Mayis. He was



also predeceased by his brothers and sisters in law, Nelik and Avedis Stepanian's and Adelina and Dr. Stepan Stepanians. He leaves loving cousins and nieces and nephews in California, Ohio and Massachusetts.

An abbreviated funeral service for family only, led by Fr. Antranik Baljian of St. Stephen's Armenian Church, will take place on Thursday, May 14 at Cambridge Cemetery. A well-deserved celebration of his life will take place at a later time, after the current restrictions are lifted.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, 431 Pond St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130 or the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR), 150 N. Radnor Chester Rd., Suite F200 Radnor, PA 19087. Arrangements are by the Aram Bedrossian Funeral Home of Watertown.

Remembering Dr. Matthew Movsesian (1954-2020)

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah (University of Utah Department of Internal Medicine) – It is with a heavy heart that we share the news of Dr. Matthew Movsesian's passing on Sunday, April 12 after his battle with cancer. Dr. Movsesian, or his preferred moniker, Matty, was a beloved member of our Internal Medicine family.

Born and raised in Forest Hills, Queens in New York City to a loving and supportive family, Mark, Dr. Movsesian's brother, remembers their parents instilling many of the characteristics in Matty that he was known for in his later years: his intelligence, wit, musical talent, honesty, and above all, the belief to treat others fairly and with dignity.

Dr. Movsesian graduated with honors from Columbia University and later Harvard Medical School. He went on to have a successful career as a research cardiologist, with positions at

whose impact will continue to be felt through the years.” Dr. Movsesian's research focused on the role of cyclic nucleotide phosphodiesterases in the treatment of heart failure, and his interest led to the founding of Sirdus – Armenian for “My Heart” – a company to develop heart-failure drugs. Even during his illness, Dr. Movsesian remained focus on his work.

Judy Krall worked with Dr. Movsesian in his research lab at the University of Utah for nearly thirty years. Over these years, Judy recalls their dynamic relationship, filled with humorous “arguments she could never win,” that eventually blossomed into a true friendship. During the late stages of his illness, Judy graciously took him into her home to care for him.

Unable to be with him due to pandemic travel restrictions, Mark was deeply grateful for Judy's friendship and supportive care. “She showed him love beyond what anyone could expect,” he says, “and at great personal sacrifice, she made Matty's life as comfortable as it could be, and allowed him to stay in Salt Lake, his home of more than thirty years, where he had so many friends and memories.”

Above all, Dr. Movsesian considered his many friendships to be among the most important things in his world. He was a well-known comedian, an embodiment of the age-old saying “laughter is the best medicine” and equipped with an arsenal of “jokes meant for five-year olds, but still made him laugh,” according to Judy. He kept a file of jokes on his laptop, and could never enter or start a meeting without making one.

Dr. Stavros Drakos, a professor in the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, recalls how Matty infused his comedic talents into his work. “We were on the same plane travelling to a con-

ference and he was showing me the Power Point slides of his presentation requesting feedback,” he remembers, “so I suggested exercising one of his best skills and include a joke or funny cartoon depicting a particular concept. We spent the remainder of the flight thinking of how a cartoon should look like. I will never forget the fun we had during that flight while trying to create such a cartoon.”

“Authentic Matty” as Dr. Drakos describes him, “was very different in terms of personality, but he never tried to hide just how different he was, as if to say, “I'm different and I'm showing you all now. It's how I am!” He had a strong personality, often with unusual perspectives. I always admired his courage, even when it got



him into trouble.”

Dr. Movsesian was also a talented musician. Harvard colleague Dr. Harold Bursztajn recalls being his manager when he was a medical student performing at the Nameless Coffee house in Harvard Square. Mark fondly remembers him



performing an original song on guitar, “If We Had Only Had the Time,” at his graduation ceremony from Harvard Medical School.

Matty's love of comedy and music brought many people together, but it was his warmth, compassion, and generous human spirit that brought them even closer.

“He truly cared for others,” says Dr. Anwar Tandar, an associate professor in the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine. “I still remember the day when I did my first coronary intervention as an attending at the VA for a STEMI in 2007. He gave me a bottle of cognac the next morning to congratulate me, and I still have the cognac to this day. That simple act of care and kindness was louder than anything to me.”

“He had a huge heart,” agrees Dr. Shannon Odelberg, a research assistant professor in the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine. “He wouldn't think twice about giving the shirt off his back if anyone was in need. He was extremely appreciative of any small kindness or deed thrown his way.”

On April 20, a small burial service for Dr. Movsesian took place in Salt Lake, with plans to hold an in-person memorial when travel and gathering restrictions are lifted. Mark shared a eulogy, celebrating his brother's life and his many accomplishments, and has given permission for it to be published. His eulogy can be viewed online at <https://medicine.utah.edu/internalmedicine/news/2020/files/matty-movsesian-eulogy.pdf>.

The Department of Internal Medicine will remember Dr. Movsesian – not only his important work here, but of his authenticity, bravery, and humanity. As we continue into 2020 amidst the uncertainty of the COVID-19 crisis, we look to Dr. Movsesian as a beacon guiding our hearts with kindness and compassion, now more than ever before. He will be dearly missed.



Northwestern University, the National Institutes of Health, the University of California-San Francisco, and ultimately the University of Utah. For three decades, Dr. Movsesian was a valued faculty member in the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine and at the Salt Lake City VAMC, where he served as Director of Outpatient Cardiology for many years.

“Matty was a caring person with high ethics who was a true delight and privilege to have known,” says colleague, Dr. Miles Housaly of the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. “He was also a committed and innovative scientist who made significant contributions to the field and



COMMUNITY NEWS



Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian

Simit (adapted from Makruhi Movsesyan's original recipe)

Simit is a tasty sesame crusted bread (cookie, biscuit, or breadstick) that can be enjoyed for breakfast or at any time of day. Robyn Kalajian posted several simit recipes at thearmeniankitchen.com, but decided to make her favorite - Deegeen (Mrs.) Makruhi Movsesyan's savory version - for a special holiday event. Deegeen Makruhi, who recently passed away, was a long-time member of the Women's Guild at St. David Armenian Church in Boca Raton, Florida. She presented her simit recipe at a church guild meeting in 2013. "Her recipe," says Robyn, "takes little time to make (no yeast is involved), and has a good texture. Deegeen Makruhi's simit can be served at any time, but especially at the holidays and for special occasions."



Deegeen (Mrs.) Makruhi Movsesyan, left, in 2013 at the October Women's Guild meeting at St. David Armenian Church in Boca Raton, FL

"Deegeen Makruhi was very talented and skilled. She was from the old-school of traditional Armenian cookery in that she did not, I repeat, she did not use measuring tools," Robyn adds. "Instead, she relied on using basic kitchenware, such as coffee mugs and a variety of spoons. While watching the Simit being made that day at our church, I was reminded of my beloved grandmother who used her hands as a

measuring cups, and a watchful eye as she added ingredients to the mixing bowl. This type of food preparation, in an Armenian kitchen, is known as 'achkee chop' - where a recipe's success is determined simply by eye and feel - a method which, by the way, takes many years to master."

Simit is light with a buttery texture; in combination with sesame seeds, it will give your mouth a luxurious treat. Many Armenians grew up enjoying simit made by their mothers, aunts and grandmothers at the holidays. It is a traditional treat, and this savory recipe from the late Deegeen Makruhi is a treasure to be enjoyed for years. Simit can be frozen for future use, storing nicely for up to a month, so you can make them in advance and freeze



them in anticipation of a colder day or for a group of unexpected guests. Serve simit with coffee or tea, fresh seasonal fruit or an assortment of dried fruit and cheeses. Robyn's husband Doug suggests serving simit with a plate of Armenian string cheese, olives, and basurma to create a memorable presentation.



Makruhi Movsesyan, 96, of Deerfield Beach, Florida passed away on February 17, 2020. She was born in Istanbul, Turkey on January 12, 1924. She was a very devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and friend to many. She will be deeply missed by her family and friends. She was a longtime member of St. David Armenian Apostolic Church in Boca Raton, Florida.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup corn oil
- 1 cup milk (regular, 2% - or even skim milk will work)
- 1 stick unsalted butter, melted and slightly cooled
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground mahlab (see note below)
- 1 teaspoon ground fennel seed
- 1 teaspoon ground anise seed
- 6 cups flour

Egg wash: 1 egg, beaten
Garnish: Toasted sesame seeds and/or black sesame seeds, optional
Makes about 40 (1-oz.) pieces.

PREPARATION:

In a large bowl, mix all the ingredients together (except for egg wash and garnishing options) to form a workable, non-sticky dough.
Note: If you have a food scale, pinch off some dough and weigh 1-ounce pieces, rolling them into balls. If you don't have a food scale, pinch off pieces about the size of a golf ball. On an un-floured work surface, roll each ball by hand into a nine-inch rope. Twist each rope into a simple braid and place it on an ungreased baking sheet. These simit don't spread, so you can place them fairly close together.

An easy alternative is to divide the dough into 4 balls. Roll each ball on a lightly floured work surface using a lightly floured rolling pin, to about a 1/2-inch thick rectangle. Using a pastry wheel, pizza cutter, or knife, cut out 10-evenly-sized 'sticks' to yield 40 pieces in all.
Brush tops with egg wash and sprinkle with sesame seeds and/or black sesame seeds, if desired. Bake at 375 °F for about 20-25 minutes (depending on your oven) or until golden brown.
Note: Mahlab is the dried "heart" of the cherry pit. It can be purchased in most Middle Eastern stores. If you cannot find it, you can omit it; the taste will be slightly different, but still delicious.

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Photos and recipe by the late Mrs. Makruhi Movsesyan courtesy of Robyn Kalajian, a retired culinary teacher and food blogger at thearmeniankitchen.com, the essential Armenian recipe and cooking blog that has become an Armenian-American treasure.

Moderna Therapeutics' COVID-19 Vaccine Approved for Phase 2 Clinical Trial

MODERNA, from page 1
was also announced Moderna intends to begin the third phase of trials, testing on thousands of people to see how well the vaccine works, early this summer. Moderna hopes to have the final vaccine approved as early as 2021.
Moderna CEO Stéphane Bancel added, "We are accelerating manufacturing scale-up and our partnership with Lonza [a Swiss company] puts us in a position to make and distribute as many vaccine doses of mRNA-

1273 as possible, should it prove to be safe and effective." It hopes to make one billion doses per year.
Moderna is one of over a dozen companies throughout the world racing to prepare a vaccine for COVID-19. The Chinese company CanSino Biologics reported that it would start its Phase 2 trials in early April while some other companies, like Pfizer and its partner BioNTech, are beginning combined Phase 1 and 2 trials.

These companies are using various approaches to developing vaccines. Moderna uses messenger RNA to create COVID-19's spike protein, which in turn will hopefully induce the production in healthy humans of antibodies to recognize and fight the coronavirus. Its Phase 1 trial commenced in Seattle on 45 healthy adults in March and is also taking place at two other sites in the US. If it succeeds, this will be the first vaccine ever produced by means of messenger RNA.

Moderna was granted up to \$483 million of federal funds last month from the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) to develop the vaccine for FDA licensing.
Armenian-American Noubar Afeyan is the cofounder and chairman of Moderna as well as CEO of the venture capital firm Flagship Pioneering. He is also co-founder of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity and is an active philanthropist.



COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

Destabilizing Factors in Armenia's Politics

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Armenia is experiencing a crisis within a crisis. The global impact of the coronavirus has affected every nation, and Armenia is no exception. It has paralyzed the economy and turned upside down the public health system in every country. Armenia has been fighting the pandemic quite successfully. However, the fatalistic approach of the citizenry to the disease is not making life easy for healthcare providers.

Armenia is already in a no-war no-peace situation which is forcing people not seeing much of a future for their children to emigrate. This is a deliberate war of attrition, the outcome of which Turks and Azerbaijanis can gauge every day. This is low-intensity warfare. No amount of patriotism can stop this trend. Therefore, the war situation and the blockade must be considered external factors of destabilization.

Recently, Russia's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, added fuel to this uneasy situation with a declaration favoring Azerbaijan. That blow was long in coming, due to anti-Russian rhetoric and actions in Armenia. Mr. Lavrov shook the foreign policy establishment in Armenia when he stated that a settlement document was on the table and was being discussed between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan. He further added that the document called for a phased system of settlement, beginning with the evacuation of Armenian forces from some regions outside the limits of Nagorno Karabakh.

Armenia's foreign minister, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, denied the existence of such a document under consideration. Traditionally, breakthroughs or major developments in the negotiation process would be reserved for the three chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group. The unilateral declaration by Russia indicated that the Kremlin had scores to settle with Armenia. That assumption was further exacerbated by the fact that along with his declaration, Mr. Lavrov had an accompanying reprimand directed to the government in Yerevan because of the lawsuits that Armenia had initiated against Gazprom and the South Caucasus railway system, which are Russian-owned companies operating in Armenia.

This much suffices about external factors destabilizing the country, over which Armenia does not have much leverage.

The abovementioned external factors are compounded by internal ones which could have been controlled through good governance and wise policies.

To begin with, a campaign was conducted against the Constitutional Court, whose president Hrayr Tovmasyan did not budge. The extremist wing of the Velvet Revolution advocated outright dismissal of the court, but Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, restricted by his commitment to the international community, demurred. An indirect way was devised to hold a referendum, adopt new laws and deal with the impasse.

This controversy took its toll on the new administration, pushing for extreme measures, on the old guard holding on to its position and fighting back, and on the uninformed public caught in-between.

The other draft law which touched off a public debate was about the expropriation of illegally-acquired wealth. This was directed at the members and the clients of the former regime. Had the law not applied retroactively, it would not generate such controversy. Even when the law was being debated at the parliament, former business people (oligarchs) were being arbitrarily jailed and their properties seized to cheering crowds. Populism had hit its peak.

Now another law is being adopted to regulate the news media. In fact, it is a measure to control the runaway opposition media. The regulations contemplated border on censorship, because the former regime, after being overthrown, has taken refuge in the media outlets, from which it is waging quite effectively a media guerrilla warfare. This of course renders the regime very nervous and heightens tempers, leading legislators to engage in street brawls.

Had the new regime taken a more magnanimous position considering the collapse of the former regime sufficient punishment for the old guard and initiated a process of reconciliation, the

current polarization could have been avoided. But, true to the Armenian temperament, people were overtaken by maximalism and rancor, all along reassuring everyone that there will not be any vendetta.

Currently, there are two ongoing investigations; a factfinding commission headed by Andranik Kocharyan, president of the defense subcommittee of the parliament, investigating the four-day war with Azerbaijan in April 2016 and another one investigating the riots of 2008, wherein 10 people protesting election results were killed.

The latter investigation is running parallel to former President Robert Kocharyan's legal proceedings. He is already behind bars, even denied the presumption of innocence. The court and the public debate raging around the case have created a circus-like atmosphere in which the public, which has suffered under his rule, is venting its anger.

Robert Kocharyan himself has become a thermometer through which Moscow has been gauging sentiments about Russia in Armenia, while Kocharyan's tormentors have their one eye directed toward the West, waiting for dividends.

Had these two cases been conducted for the sake of the officially proclaimed reasons, they could claim legitimacy. But since they have been taken out of context to be politicized or to be used for the psychological appeasement of the public, they have



led to reactions, and very public ones.

The nervous reaction of the regime to provocations is betraying weakness, and weakness tempts aggression. Indeed, several instances took place recently. They seem unrelated but they certainly were the outcome of the heated situation.

The deputy speaker of the parliament Alen Simonyan had a street brawl with the head of an extremist political group called Adekvat (Adequate), Arthur Danielyan, whose nose was broken. Then there was an attack on Seda Safaryan and her family. Ms. Safaryan is an attorney on the factfinding commission on the March 1 massacre. A fight took place in the Noraduz region involving around one hundred people which resulted in the deaths of two.

The mother of all fights took place in the parliament, where Edmon Marukyan, head of the Bright Armenia group, attacked a national hero, Sasoon Mikayelyan (a member of the My Step alliance), while exchanging insults. The world used to watch such brawls in the Turkish parliament with dismay. Now it is Armenia's turn.

Marukyan and his entire faction were elected on the coattails of the My Step majority alliance, with the understanding that they will play the role of a docile opposition. But now Marukyan seems to have taken his opposition role seriously.

Following the brawl, the prime minister took the podium to castigate Marukyan for playing into the hands of Serzh Sargsyan and Robert Kocharyan, and concluded his tirade by stating that this was the first defeat of the revolution, and his own defeat, which should not have taken place.

Desperate groups are fighting the present administration, not allowing time for its consolidation so that it can face its challenges. Kocharyan, Mikayel Minasyan (Sargsyan's son-in-law, known as Mishik), and Hrayr Tovmasyan all have their tv channels and news outlets to fight the administration. Recently, Arthur Vanetsyan, former head of the National Security Service, joined this movement.

While Armenia is facing existential challenges, the public is polarized and fighting a partisan war.

There is no salvation from any outside quarter. Only common sense can reduce tensions, eliminate polarization and bring some sense of public accord.

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COMMENTARY

National Concord Plan Needed to Save Armenia



By Philippe Raffi Kalfayan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Modern Armenia may be facing one of the most dangerous periods since its creation. This is due to the conjunction of concurrent factors: two years of divisive and hatred speech that results in today's observed violence and totally divided society, on one hand, and the coronavirus pandemic crisis and its subsequent ineluctable economic wildfire for economies world-wide, rising international tensions and threats of global war.

Two years after the so-called "Velvet Revolution," the country appears more weakened than ever, while it will be subjected to a terrible economic shock, with no significant assistance to be expected from superpowers. Borders will remain closed to migrants, countries will conduct protectionist policies and most dependent and poor economies may collapse.

The situation must be assessed immediately by all political and responsible forces of the country. Consultations must be held inclusively, and not limited to parliamentary forces. This unprecedented situation implies talking about domestic and economic issues, and then foreign threats. It requires exceptional courage to confront and manage the internal and external challenges.

The worldwide coronavirus crisis precipitates the moment to make radical changes in policy and elaborate urgently an emergency plan to face the situation. Armenia encountered such difficult times at the beginning of the third republic in the 1990s that it has some experience and may succeed in this new test if some conditions are restored.

Anticipated Failures of Pashinyan's Methods

It must be reaffirmed very strongly that the Republic of Armenia is a small country of about 2.5 million inhabitants, whose population is shrinking year after year, and which cannot afford to go through a revolutionary divisive process, wherein half of the population hates the other half. Unless one wants to destroy the country or imperil its future, this policy must stop.

In a landmark article (<https://mirrorspectator.com/2018/08/23/pashinyan-needs-to-succeed-but-questions-remain-about-methods/>), most of the present damages to the rule of law and social peace had been anticipated in August 2018. Warnings have been expressed further by the author about the unjustified assaults against the principles of the rule of law.

The obstinate claim by the Executive to continue a "revolutionary" process and the echoing of it by some isolated and radical forces in Armenia or from some individuals sitting in their cozy salons in France or the USA, are just irrelevant and irresponsible. One must wonder in what respect the fight against corruption, the necessity of which is not challenged, may serve to cope with the newly emerged dangers. The confiscation of alleged "illegal property" from some people aims more at bailing out the exhausted public finances of Armenia, whose government redistributes cash money to some categories of people. For the last two years, the investigation into alleged unlawful enrichment of former politicians or oligarchs revealed disappointments in terms of achievements; the results are not proportionate to the ambitious forecasts of the government and its related judiciary efforts. One may hardly avoid seeing that redistribution as political clientelism: a price to pay for continued support of the "people," but a short-sighted policy which does not solve the fundamental structural reforms and investments that are needed to build the future. Solidarity is needed more than ever, especially for people who will suffer from the current crisis, while the shortage of public money should drive the government to invest appropriately and cleverly in order to reconcile the requirements both of the country's emergencies and its future economy.

The Ruling Authority's Strange Conception of Democracy

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan gave a speech at the National Assembly on February 6, 2020 wherein he emphasized at its end (after arguing for the dismissal of judges of the Constitutional Court) that democracy in Armenia has no alternative and is irreversible. One can only agree with this.

Meanwhile, it must be said first of all that democracy is no longer the exclusive criteria of good state governance in the international public order. Fair and free elections don't guarantee respect for fundamental rights.

In a report adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly at World Summit Outcome in 2005, the Secretary-General of the UN noted that "while freedom from want and fear are essential they are not enough. All human beings have

the right to be treated with dignity and respect." Such dignity and respect are afforded to people through the enjoyment of all human rights and are protected through the rule of law. Democracy, development and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

For example, Turkey is a democracy but it does not respect the rule of law, and tens of thousands of political opponents are in jail. Israel is a democratic country but its "constitution" indicates that if every citizen has human rights, national rights in Israel belong only to the Jewish people (On July 19, 2018, after a stormy debate which lasted for hours, the Knesset approved the Nation-State Bill by a vote of 62 in favor, 55 against. Those against denounced this "apartheid" based fundamental law). We could mention multiple examples of that kind.

In the Armenian context, one may question further the current "democratic" practice. Is the secretive decision to double the salaries of the ministers last year or the recent personal decision of the prime minister to raise the salaries of public servants, without referring to the parliament, the ruling authorities' conception of democracy? For a man who built his credit on transparency and supposedly respect for democratic values, the "people" must be blind or deaf, as they were when they accepted bribes for votes in the past.

In the parliament, democracy has also a strange flavor: the majority does not accept any challenge or discussion about the draft laws. The ruling party has reduced to silence the Prosperous Armenia party (BHK), the second largest party in the Parliament, thanks to legal proceedings pursued by the Prosecutor General against one of the business lieutenants of Gagik Tsarukyan. Bright Armenia Party (LHK) members, who are apparently spared by legal proceedings, try to play their normal role of opposition force in the parliament, by challenging and discussing the draft laws. They are now targets of insults and provocations from the ruling party members.

The infringements on freedom of expression are not accidental. Official attempts to restrict it have gone unnoticed by the public at large. At the occasion of the coronavirus outbreak and in the aftermath of state emergency measures, the Republic of Armenia rushed to register on March 19 a derogatory statement at the Human Rights Committee in Geneva and at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, in regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to the European Convention provisions respectively. Noteworthy is the section addressing the restrictions over mass-media, where it is clearly written that public dissemination, transfer of publications, information materials, interviews, reports on epidemics "must not contradict the official information and shall reproduce it as far as possible"; a genuine Bolshevik formulation. Even if the Armenian media reacted in a very opportune and mature manner (the prime minister finally suspended the implementation of those restrictive measures on freedom of expression), the derogation is still valid until the state emergency ends. When one links this measure to heavy criticism by the government of mass media, supposedly belonging en masse to former governments' members or protégés, then one must worry about the spirit and intent revealed by that administrative measure, especially in the current rising climate of violence in political life. Among the few states that have declared such derogations (Albania, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, North Montenegro, Moldova, Romania, San Marino, and Serbia), Armenia is the only one to have derogated from the freedom of expression (see https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/005/declarations?p_auth=rEz0z5lP)

Government is the Primary Legal Guarantor against Violence in the Public Sphere

A vindictive and violent tone is present in official speech since August 2018. This behavior worsened month after month with a divisive policy between the good and the bad, and the revolutionary and anti-revolutionary. It resulted in the exacerbation of aggressive and extremist behaviors in society, among supporters and opponents of Pashinyan. It also materialized in breaches of the rule of law.

First, by alleging that the judiciary, the police, the National Security Service (NSS) and all the former executives appointed by the former governments are all corrupt, and secondly by alleging that seven judges of the Constitutional Court must be dismissed by any means, even anti-constitutional, because they are hindering the revolutionary process, although nobody explained how they could or do hinder it. Within the last two weeks, we witnessed two vice-prime ministers involved in street brawls (Alen Simonyan and Tigran Avinyan), and on May 8, a general brawl in the parliament, similar to the ones that we usually observe in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey; a shameful symbol in itself.

It must be reminded that governments and the rulers are

responsible in international law for any speech or behavior inciting to violence, whatever form it takes. Arman Tatoyan, the Republic of Armenia's ombudsman rightly recalled (on May 9) that persons holding public office and carrying out relevant activities should show restraint in their political or other terms and not allow themselves words that generate hatred and cause tension.

The violence is omnipresent and growing in Armenian society: still too many non-elucidated non-combat deaths in the army (13 since 1st January 2020), the tabooed domestic violence against women, the social inequalities violence, the recent violent campaign by MPs against the Catholicos of All Armenians, a recent bloody and open settlement of scores between rival gangs in the streets of Gavar, unexplained "suicides" of the former chief of police or NSS deputy director, and other assassinations due to feudal rulings in the provinces are reflective of that violence. The words and behavior of officials at executive and legislative levels are setting wrong examples for society. The prime minister used at least twice the language of violence against members of civil society. The first target was the "Sasna Tsrer" party members who were threatening to use force to push their ideas and the second the former Republican Party people. Whether it is proper to react is not the issue, but the tone and words of violence or threat of violence are.

Hence, Mister Prime Minister, you are wrong in accusing others of provoking or plotting, or in trying to find roots of provocations following the recent draft law "On Confiscation of Illegally Acquired Property." I don't say that your opponents are innocent and passive victims, but you should wonder if all this is not the result of your methods and own behaviors and words. As head of state, you are invested politically and legally with some obligations. The creation of such a climate of violence in the Republic of Armenia is your direct responsibility and you should have kept your head level for the last two years. You recognized your responsibility after the parliament brawl, and this is fair enough. It is time for retrospective assessment of your global politics.

This political crisis is now doubled by an even more threatening situation in the immediate future: the collapse of the economy and employment.

The Shock Will Be Terrible but Manageable If Society Is Reconciled

The international political and economic situation shows that the premises for a global war, both economic and military, are getting serious and closer. The coronavirus crisis accelerates this process. One must remember that the depression of the 1930s was only halted by increasing tension as the Second World War loomed. Major Western countries are getting heavily indebted to face the consequences of this unexpected world-wide pandemic crisis, and everybody knows that most countries will not recover the same level of economy soon, for economic growth models may change due to the alteration of consumption and working behaviors, but also because of the drastic reduction of international trade, travel and exchanges. Western countries will move towards re-localization of strategic industries and will keep their borders closed. Many countries' economies will collapse, including the ones rich in natural raw materials because of low demand and low prices for the latter.

The economic shock will be terrible for Armenia; a landlocked and partly blockaded country, with a very small industrial infrastructure, will suffer most. Tourism season is jeopardized. It must be noted that many articles have been published recently in the Armenian press pointing to the dangers of the situation. Among others is the dark forecast of Andranik Tevanyan, who suggests that Armenia will be in a crisis situation because of coronavirus socioeconomic consequences at least until 2022 and that this will lead to security consequences (<https://mamul.am/am/news/177731>).

Armen Gevorgyan, the former Chief of Staff of Presidents R. Kocharyan and S. Sarkisyan, wrote a very comprehensive analysis of the upcoming consequences of the crisis for the Armenian economy and more importantly he proposed a very professional and pragmatic action plan, open to discussion (<https://www.tert.am/am/news/2020/04/23/armen-gevorgyan/3270879>). The positive attitude of Gevorgyan, while legal proceedings are ongoing against him, is constructive and worthy of a true statesman.

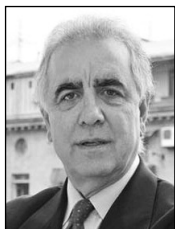
He further adds that "there are very few people in Armenia who know the strategic issues of the country and can imagine their possible solutions." In other words, he creates a positive environment and calls for a debate in society (he mentioned some names who already contributed to it) and he firmly believes that whatever the controversial atmosphere in Armenia today, Armenia has the human resources to cope with the inevitable economic recession.

Irresponsible Reconsideration of Strategic Alliances

It is rather distressing to watch some politicians and political forces in Armenia bet on the support of the USA or Europe to get rid of Russian influence. It is foolish and suicidal to continue thinking in that direction, more than ever. At least one political party is maneuvering openly toward a divorce with Russia. Their connections to Washington are not a secret but one should wonder if those people still possess their minds. They are the same ones calling for the continuation of the revolutionary process by using more radical meth-



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Libya's Interim Government Recognizes the Armenian Genocide Once Again

Libya's interim government recognized the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 2020, for the second year in a row. On April 19, 2019 the provisional government had issued a similar recognition.

While this recognition may surprise many people because there is hardly a single Armenian living in Libya, there are, however, geopolitical reasons for taking such an action. Ever since the toppling and killing in 2012 of Muammar Gaddafi, the leader of Libya, the country has been in constant turmoil with various military factions fighting each other to rule Libya.

The officially recognized government of Libya is limited around coastal Tripoli and Misrata, while most of the Libyan territory is occupied by the interim government led by military leader Khalifa Haftar. The internal civil war has been considerably expanded by the interference of external powers in Libya's domestic affairs. Turkey and Qatar have supported the central government with Islamic fighters and military hardware, while the interim government has been endorsed by Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The countries on the opposing sides in Libya are also involved in diplomatic clashes and mass media wars. Last month Saudi Arabia announced that it was blocking access to Turkish news agencies and websites. In return, Turkey blocked Saudi and Emirati news outlets. Furthermore, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan supports the

Muslim Brotherhood, while Saudi Arabia, Egypt and UAE are opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood. Egypt and Turkey have been feuding ever since the pro-Muslim Brotherhood President of Egypt Mohammed Morsi, supported by Turkey, was toppled in 2013. Egypt, Saudi Arabia and UAE have asked their citizens to boycott Turkish products and travel to Turkey.

These various regional and internal feuds have prompted the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Libyan interim government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation on April 24, 2020. Here is the text of the announcement translated into English:

"We recall today the genocide of the Armenian population by Turkey which falls on April 24 of each year. The State of Libya commemorates this anniversary in implementation of Government Decision No. 238 of 2019, which approved this day as a national day to revive it.

"Turkey's criminal actions against the Armenian people by burning, deliberate killing, forced deportation, and other ugly acts contrary to all divine laws is a crime against humanity and it must be recognized and granted an official apology to the Armenian people and compensate them for the pains that these massacres have caused which cannot be forgotten from the memory of Armenians and the whole world. As we condemn this crime devoid of any element of humanity, we again call upon the countries of the world to recognize this heinous crime.

"It is today's Turkish government, in its new situation, which commits crimes against the peoples of the world by its blatant interference in their internal affairs. Perhaps what it carried out yesterday by bombarding the city of Tarhuna [Libya] with missiles and drones, killing children, the elderly and women, destroying humanitarian convoys, food and medical aid, fuel tanks, bringing in mercenaries and supporting terrorists are other crimes added to a chain of Turkish crimes against people and confirms to the whole world the extent of Erdogan's arrogance and his disregard for all international laws and norms."

On April 19, 2019, the Libyan Interim Government had issued a similar statement through its Foreign Ministry which reads as follows:

"The Interim Government officially adopted a resolution in March recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

"On 24 April 1915, the Ottoman authorities rounded up, arrested, and deported from Constantinople (now Istanbul) to the region of Ankara, 235 to 270 Armenian intellectuals and community leaders, the majority of whom were eventually murdered.

"This was followed by the deportation of women, children, the elderly, and the infirm on death marches leading to the Syrian Desert. Driven forward by military escorts, the deportees were deprived of food and water and subjected to periodic robbery, rape, and massacre.

"The final death toll of the genocide is reported to be 1.5 million."

It should not be surprising that the Libyan interim government has issued a statement on the Armenian Genocide because it serves its anti-Turkish political agenda. It would have been more surprising if such an announcement would be made contrary to its own interests.

All countries cater to their national interests. The Armenian government must also act in a similar manner. Libya is a good example. This is the second year in a row that its Interim Government has recognized the Armenian Genocide. What has been the reaction of the Armenian Government? We are not aware of any public comment to this effect. Wouldn't it be proper for the Armenian Foreign Ministry to issue a statement welcoming the Libyan announcement? Someday the Interim Government may become the legally recognized government of Libya. Now is the time for Armenia to establish friendly relations with Libya. As Turkey has been isolating Armenia from its neighbors by its blockade and its anti-Armenian economic and diplomatic efforts, Armenia in response should join hands with supportive countries and isolate Turkey to whatever degree it can.

By establishing good relations with the Libyan interim government, Armenia would also be in a good position to affirm its relations with Egypt and the United Arab Emirates and mend its non-existent relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I am sure these countries would appreciate the friendly hand extended by the government of Armenia.

ods against the former rulers.

The international politics of the USA is the major threat to peace and international order. The US executive, which fears to lose its leadership, continues even more insistently to play with fire, conducting a new type of war with China, refuses multilateralism, and challenges all international institutions, starting from the UN ones, including international jurisdictions. President Trump used his veto to prevent Congress from tying his hands for engaging in wars. The US delegation refused on May 8 to adopt the Security Council resolution for cessation of any military hostility until the coronavirus crisis ends. In other words, the US is preparing very obviously hostile actions in the Middle East, but also in other regions of the world. Venezuela experienced it already. Iran and its Middle East proxies are clear targets, in order to secure the announced annexation of Palestinian West Bank territories by Israel.

The international public order, as conceived after the Second World War, thanks to the UN Charter, is broken and that's why the world is becoming dangerous.

At the doors of Armenia, its neighbors Turkey and Azerbaijan, which are in a troubled financial situation, are also increasing their threats against Armenia. The remedy is well known: if you have domestic issues, nothing better than a war. In the middle of this global crisis and shortage of financial means, no significant help could be expected by remote Western partners.

Turkey, which is financially exhausted, is coming back to the US fold, as Edmond Azadian rightly commented recently in his column (<https://mirrorspectator.com/2020/05/07/us-turkey-relations-gradually-warming-up/>). It was to be expected sooner or later. Russia is and remains its historical enemy.

Russia is and must remain the strategic ally of Armenia, not only because the country's economy and security depends on it, but because the history of this alliance is resilient. One must not forget that the Russian Empire in the 19th century was empowered by the powerful European countries to protect the Armenian populations. The Western countries, which tried to implement new autonomy measures for the Armenian provinces in the Ottoman Empire at the eve of the 1915 genocide, fled the scene when the First World War broke out. We all know that these countries denounced the massacres and deportations but did not do anything to stop them, except Russia, which engaged militarily in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. In the negotiation process over the NKR dispute settlement, the leadership of Russia is not disputed. Neither the USA, nor France, questions that matter of fact. Reconsidering the alliance with Russia today is just irresponsible and not an option.

In order to be respected as an equal partner by Russia, and to put an end to vassalage, Armenia must be reliable in good

and bad times and respect its word. Recent attacks against Russia for wrong reasons are not acceptable. The Russian economy is on the verge of collapse too, and Gazprom, like other oil and gas companies, has dark prospects in the short term due to brutal price and demand collapses on the energy market. To speculate that the Gazprom price increase is political retaliation is unfair, since Armenia was privileged so far by prices greatly below market, and one must remember that. The announcement that Armenia will not renew its loan agreement with Russia for the maintenance and upgrade of the nuclear plant came out as another surprise move from the Armenian side. Does Armenia have another partner for that? One can doubt it, since the European Union has always made clear in all its partnership agreements that Armenia must cease all operations at Medzamor.

The NKR Settlement Strategy Must Be the Object of a National Concord

As for the recent speculation concerning Lavrov's statement about the Minsk settlement process, it must be said that present and past Armenian authorities never explained to the "people" the real meaning of agreements in the framework of the Minsk process negotiations over Nagorno-Karabakh. No one can doubt that Armenian diplomacy is discussing and putting forth new proposals for the integration of NKR representatives into the negotiation process and for drafting a new agreement privileging a one-stage and final settlement of the dispute, where the physical security of NKR Armenians is the key objective. However, the phased-approach settlement, currently stressed by Azerbaijani and Russian authorities, is a reality. In fact, the principles were agreed upon and they clearly plan a phased process and a self-determination process, in the meaning of international law, i.e. respecting the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. This is a fact. I have concluded one year ago that the Minsk process must be stopped by the Armenian authorities, if the principles on which it relies do not correspond any longer to Armenia's and NKR wishes (<https://mirrorspectator.com/2019/03/07/the-minsk-process-behind-the-words-and-principles/>.) This kind of decision is serious and cannot be taken without national unity and consensus.

The risk of global and regional war is real, and if war is to burst out again between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which seems to be the option envisaged by the Azerbaijani side, then it is better to withdraw from the current process, premised on the Madrid principles, recognize the independence of NKR and engage in the annexation of at least one corridor. In any case, that kind of decision requires thorough discussion and clear approval from all political forces and former national leaders. The poor performance of Armenian leadership in the duelling with a well-prepared and very self-confident President Ilham Alyev in a discussion held on

February 15, 2020 in Munich is rather worrying and revealed uncertainty in the strategy, bad arguments, and defensive stance. It is not granted to everyone to have the right caliber and stature to conduct such a difficult negotiation process alone, especially when one has to navigate between many contradicting and adversarial conditions. Dealing with the upcoming military provocations and threats will also require adequate responses

That remark advocates once more and definitively for a complete and immediate change of prime ministerial politics, all centered at present on anti-corruption and witch-hunt. President Ter Petrosyan wrote an opportune article in March requesting the suspension of parliamentary investigation into the early April 2016 war and suggesting calming down the political hostility between today's ruling team and the two former presidents' teams, because of the current pandemic crisis.

My suggestion goes far beyond this message, because the situation requires exceptional measures and initiatives. The social and political instability and violence, the inevitable economic collapse and the real threats of war with neighboring Azerbaijan advocate in favor of a national concord.

Without interference in the daily management of the government, my modest suggestions are:

- For President Armen Sarkissian to convene a consultative meeting with the three former presidents, the prime minister, the NKR authorities and any relevant political parties or experts in order to discuss and conclude an agreement for the conclusion of a pact of national concord on strategic and security issues that include our alliances, the NKR issue and the threats of war.

- For former Presidents Ter Petrosyan, Kocharyan and Sargsyan and Prime Minister Pashinyan to accept sitting together around the same table.

- For Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to form a commission of experienced people, who offer assistance for the drafting of an emergency action plan to reduce as much as possible the effects of the pandemic crisis over the economy, and avoid major social chaos and a new massive emigration flow (when borders will be opened again).

Everything should be undertaken to stop the ongoing domestic self-destructive process, and on the contrary bring all political forces to agree on security fundamentals in this very troubled period.

May 11, 2020

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Remnants of The Sword

By Raffi Bedrosyan

The term ‘remnants of the sword’ or ‘kilic artigi’ in Turkish is quite widespread in Turkey. It describes the members of an enemy group that survived the mass killing by Turks and now continue living among the Turks despite the threats, dangers and insults. This term is generally used to define the remaining minority Armenians, Assyrians or the Pontic Greeks after the genocides during the First World War. For example, the surviving Armenian orphans taken in by Turkish or

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Kurdish homes, were called ‘remnants of the sword’. But recently, the term has been transformed into a more ominous meaning. Just like the word ‘Armenian’ which is used to swear or insult during an argument, as in ‘Armenian bastard’, or ‘Seed of Armenian’, Turks have recently started using the term ‘remnant of the sword’ to insult one another. A politician calls an opponent in Parliament a ‘remnant of the sword’ to imply that the opponent has family roots mixed with Armenians, or the President refers to Kurdish militants as ‘terrorists originating from the remnants of the sword’.

For the Armenians and the hidden Armenians who are the descendants of the genocide survivors, the real ‘remnants of the sword’, it is truly painful to hear this term, for whatever reason it is used. As Garo Paylan, the Armenian MP in Turkish Parliament recently stated, the use of this word is like re-opening an old wound and bleeding again. Many Armenians in Turkey, Armenia or in Diaspora do not need any reminders, as the wound has never closed.

I would like to relate the story of a real ‘remnant of the sword’. As the readers of my book *Trauma and Resilience* remember, I left Turkey and came to Canada after I found out at age 17 that my own grandmother was a remnant of the sword, who survived the genocide after being deported from Bursa, an hour away from Istanbul, but gave birth to a baby boy along the way who died after ten days during her long and torturous trek toward the Syrian Desert.

One of the first people I met in Canada was an elderly Armenian man who was well known for his cooking skills in Toronto and for organizing the barbecues for church picnics, weddings and other large gatherings. He had a strange scar on top of his bald head, and one day he told me his story of 1915, while we were preparing the meat for another church picnic.

His family was from Tokat, interior of the Black Sea region of Turkey. He remembers he was about 5 years old when the Armenian women and children were ordered to collect their belongings to start the march toward destinations unknown. After a few hours walk from their village, they were stopped and surrounded by a large group of soldiers with bayonets and swords. His mother knew what was to come and immediately hid the little boy under the covers of her long skirt. Then the slaughter began. As his mother was getting stabbed by the bayonets or cut by a sword, the boy’s head also received a cut. And her mother peed on the boy just as she gave her last breath. But the boy survived under his mother’s skirt with the cut in his head.

Eighty years later, this old man, a remnant of the sword in the real literal sense, told me the following while preparing the barbecue meat under the hot sun, his sweat mixed with his tears: ‘To this day, I smell my mother’s pee every day’.

Imagine the trauma this boy suffered when growing up and then growing old.

Armenians will never forget and forgive the perpetrators of this crime. But the crime is not only what happened in 1915. The real crime is the continuing denial and lies about what happened in 1915. The official version of history in the Turkish textbooks, preached by brainwashed historians to a brainwashed population still defines the 1915 events as ‘only relocating the Armenian revolutionaries and their families securely from the war zone in the eastern front to safer regions in the south’. Were places like Tokat or Bursa in the war zone? Were Armenian women in Tokat and Bursa revolutionaries? The deniers of the genocide are just as guilty as the perpetrators of the genocide. And we the remnants of the sword will never stop the struggle for truth and justice.

LETTERS

Online Responses to Edmond Azadian’s “Armenia and Russia on a Collision Course” (*Mirror-Spectator*, May 2, 2020)

“Daloci”

Actually the make-believe "alliance" of Russia-Armenia relations revealed itself in the 2016 war. I suspect that's why the old rank-and-file held by Kocharyan and Sargsyan was booted and a new approach implemented; good or bad remains to be seen. Russia is now behaving in a manner that is actually proving that Russia's intent with Armenia was not that honorable to begin with. To understand this in perspective, imagine claiming "Armenia and Russia are best allies" for decades and then 2016 happens. Wait, where's Russia? Well, Russia was not on the battlefield defending Armenians. Russia, which definitely knew of the attack, didn't even inform its "ally" so that Armenians can better be prepared to defend themselves. In fact, Russia just stepped forward once again as the last time, with some audacity telling Armenia to stop and once again sign "peace agreements" just as the tide was about to reverse against Azerbaijan, because the offensive (approved by Russia) had actually failed. Russia next publicly and shamelessly claimed: "both sides need to stop" - meaning that the aggressor of that criminal invasion (Azerbaijan) was "off the hook," and the victim of it (Armenia) should keep its mouth shut. That is not as an ally behaves.

That's a nice joke in the comments claiming "Russia will again jump in to save what remains, but Baku will have to take back significant amount of territories" - obviously you do not know enough about what transpired the last time in the Karabakh war. Russia stepped in indeed - not to save the Armenian side - but to save Azerbaijan. The excuse was "NATO will attack if you (Armenians) don't stop from removing Azerbaijan", just as the Armenian forces were getting ready to march on Baku to finish and win the war and force a peace plan. And of course, a NATO attack was of least concern when it came time for Russia to invade Georgia, or Ukraine. Well informed Armenians know and understand that Russia is not a real ally of Armenia, that "alliance" is limited to Russia's own security, not Armenia's. However, Armenia has little choice but remain under Russia's policies due to the USA's support of Turkey. Nations allied to the USA get used but get certain benefits, nations allied to Russia get used, but not in a good way. That is what Armenia is stuck with.

“Good Wisher”

That is very naive thinking. Politics and "friendship," that you are referring to, in the real world do not coexist. Every country is acting in their interests, and you can't blame them because you have to do the same. Also, expecting that RF will stand by you while you are trying to turn your back on them or join EU is far from reality. You tell me what would you do on their place. There is a lot more to it... But, take the map, look who are the

neighbors, what they have done in the past, and then decide who you should stick with... And remember that the truth is on the peak of a sword.

“Good Wisher”

Practice shows that Armenians don't learn lessons from history, from mistakes done in the past. They always hoped that someone "has to" help them. Always believed that words and agreements on sheets of paper are reliable and can not be ignored. That kind of thinking (for centuries) brings only a smile on how naïve can a country be.

Wake Up, take a map, look where are you on the world map, look who can you work with, who's interests are aligned with yours. Then kiss up to that country, but be friendly with others too. And do that until you will have your own power and energy resources. Those last ones are only possible in case of Armenia thru education and leading in technology (real lead not just for show). To be a leader in tech opens up a long discussion topic and for now I will leave it at that...

“Jordan”

Why is it whenever a corrupt useless government in a former Soviet republic is overthrown, the new government immediately and always becomes anti-Russian? It's like it's the standard thing to do. It's not possible to eliminate corruption, build infrastructure, improve the quality of life of the people while being non-aligned? And some nerve of Armenia being against Russia. Never mind all the subsidies, but Russia sided with Armenia against Azerbaijan even though Baku never asked to leave the USSR. Probably because Armenia was Christian, but still.

“Arevordi”

It's all part of the plan to drive a wedge between Armenia and Russia, weaken Armenia, and settle the Artsakh dispute in accordance with the wishes of the "international" community. Despite their corruption, Serj and Robert could not go along with such a plan. This, in a nutshell, is why today's NED and George Soros funded government was put into power in Yerevan. This is also why we are seeing a significant rise of anti-Russian activists (of course paid by Turks, Jews and Westerners) throughout Armenian society. The plan is to basically sow internal political conflict in Armenia (it's being done as I write this) and undermine relations between Yerevan and Moscow (it's being done as I write this). It's all going according to plan because over 99% of Armenians are politically illiterate and/or have a treasonous streak in their DNA. With Armenia

in a political, cultural and economic decline, sooner or later, Azerbaijan will attack in force. What happened April, 2016 was a small skirmish, not a war. This time we will see a real war. And this time we will suffer much more serious losses. Russia will again jump in the save what remains, but Baku will have take back significant amount of territories. A peace will thereafter be brokered by the international community. The end.

Ed Demian

That skirmish, as you call it, cost Armenia 113 deaths, and Azerbaijan over 2000 dead. With such odds, Azerbaijan would run out of soldiers, before capturing less than 20% of Artsakh.

Rich

Let's not forget also, Azerbaijan isn't exactly swimming in cash these days with the oil prices tanking (forgive the pun). All countries lost some GDP from COVID-19, but oil producing countries got hit far worse.

The Armenian military is much stronger, and more prepared for Azerbaijan than they were. Granted Azerbaijan bought new equipment too, but clearly the balance is less in their favor now.

Russia uses countries, and always has. They are never a reliable ally, because they are always on the make. Always trying to gain obedience and dominance. And they will milk this conflict for as long as they can, so they retain importance.

With Turkey behaving as it is, Armenia suddenly becomes a more important region for other countries to project their power. Even so, losing Russian support is dangerous, and a break would be more difficult for Armenia to navigate than Russia, but it will still hurt Russia diplomatically and strategically.

They leave no choice. Either put up with corruption from our companies, and don't investigate, or you lose our support. The new government can't really do that and remain legitimate in the public's eye.

Rafael K.

I empathize with the author's concerns though I favor a more hands-off approach. Granted, the government in Yerevan may have flaws but not enjoying public support/trust is not one of them. It's fundamental to acknowledge that for the first time the average Armenian citizen sees this government as his/hers and implicitly approves of its policies in various branches of governance. This government - a result of fair and transparent elections - is the one wanted (often worshiped) by Armenians and the one considered to be 'for the citizens, by the citizens'.

For better or worse, this is Armenia's choice.