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Even as COVID-19 Cases Rise, Armenia Loosens Restrictions

YEREVAN (Eurasianet.org and RFE/RL) – Armenia has taken a big step toward ending its lockdown even as cases of COVID-19 in the country continue to sharply increase. Starting on May 4, Armenians can again eat out (in outdoor seating), go shopping anywhere except a mall or other large markets, and travel without restrictions (though public transportation remains suspended). Factories of all sorts are allowed to reopen, as are hairdressers and beauty salons. The government is also in no rush to resume public transport services in Yerevan and other cities.

All reopened businesses have to comply with safety requirements set by the Ministry of Health. In particular, employers must ensure physical distancing among their workers and customers, frequently



A couple eats at an outdoor restaurant in Yerevan on May 4.

disinfect premises, provide employees with hand sanitizers and measure their temperature on a daily basis. Those who have a

fever must immediately leave their workplace and seek medical aid.

Wearing face masks and gloves is obligatory for only some categories of employees, notably waiters.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan defended on Sunday, May 3, his government's decision to lift remaining restrictions on people's movements and reopen virtually all sectors of the Armenian economy despite the continuing spread of coronavirus in the country. He declared that the onus is now not only on his government but also on ordinary Armenians to contain the virus.

"We are announcing a new, decentralized phase of the fight against the novel coronavirus," Pashinyan said during a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan and Health Minister Arsen Torosyan.

"The main reason why we are opting for such a solution is that it's now obvious that we will have new coronavirus cases at least until March or April next year, until a vaccine is developed," he said. "Therefore, our challenge starting from tomorrow is to do everything ... so that we can live with coronavirus, rather than be locked down, because we cannot stay shut down for one year."

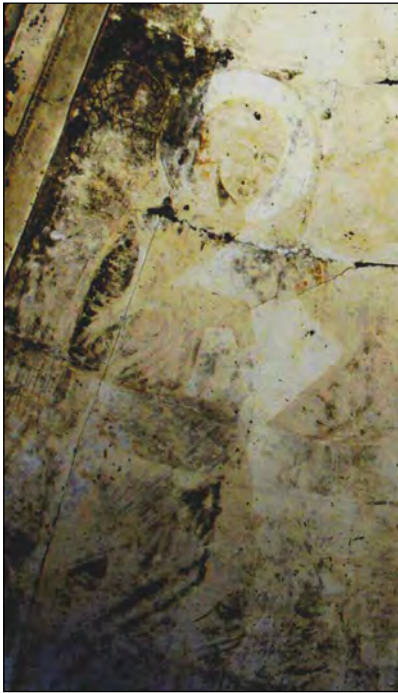
"The most important nuance of the decentralized struggle is that every citizen of Armenia will shoulder responsibility for see RESTRICTIONS, page 2

Art History Under Lockdown

Tufts Art Historian Maranci Discovers Ani Cathedral Wall Paintings and More

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

SOMERVILLE, Mass. – It may have taken as much as one thousand years, but images deliberately obscured and faded are now coming to light in the famous cathedral of Ani. Dr. Christina Maranci, Arthur H. Dadian and Ara T. Oztemel Professor of Armenian Art at Tufts University, has used accessible software tools to reveal more clearly see DISCOVERY, page 13



Enhanced image of the image of an angel on the left side of the apse of the Ani cathedral

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Diocesan Council Chair Says Furloughs, Pay Reductions Are Necessary in COVID-19 Era

NEW YORK – The adverse financial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are rippling through the world, and Armenian institutions are not exempt. The Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America is perhaps the first major Armenian institution in the United States that has taken the dramatic step of furloughing employees and instituting pay cuts. Fr. Krikor Sabounjian, chair of the Diocesan Council, said, "Due to the global situation, we were forced to take aggressive but hopefully temporary actions that will be effective from May 1 – July 31, affecting every see FURLOUGHES, page 5

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff



An empty Aces Barbershop Company

Florida Makes the Best of a Difficult Time

By Taleen Babayan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

for itself in the Sunshine State that has become even more evident during the pandemic crisis.

The estimated 30,000 Armenian-Americans, who are scattered throughout the state in cities such as Boca Raton and Miami in the south and Orlando and Tampa in the central region, are anchored by see FLORIDA, page 8

MIAMI – The Armenian-American community in Florida, one of the newer Diasporan pockets in the United States, has created a strong presence

NEWS IN BRIEF

Landmine Explosion Kills Soldier in Artsakh

STEPANAKERT (Public Radio of Armenia) – Artsakh Defense Army Private Taron Poghosyan (born in 1988) died as a result of landmine explosion at the defense posts of a military unit located in the southern direction.

An investigation into the details of the incident is under way, Artsakh's Defense Ministry said.

The minister said it shares the sorrow of the heavy loss and expressed condolences to the soldier's family and friends.

Private of the Artsakh Defense Army Taron Poghosyan (born in 1988) died as a result of landmine explosion at the defense posts of a military unit located in the southern direction.

Investigation into the details of the incident is under way, Artsakh's Defense Ministry said.

Philanthropist Donates 100K Masks to LA on Behalf of Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The Republic of Armenia donated 100,000 surgical masks donated to the City of Los Angeles, the Armenian Consulate General in Los Angeles announced.

"It will help alleviating the outbreak of COVID-19 in Los Angeles and assisting the city authorities in combating the virus. This important initiative comes from the well-known Armenian-American philanthropist Jack Youredjian, the founder and executive chairman of Western Drug. He and his wife, Zarig Youredjian, implement successful projects in Gyumri, helping the earthquake-stricken families with housing as well as empowering many children through academic success, career planning and vocational training.

Through coordination of Deputy Mayor of Los Angeles for International Affairs Ambassador Nina Hachigian and Consul General of Armenia Ambassador Armen Baibourtian, the masks were delivered to relevant authorities in Los Angeles. The surgical masks were provided to medical institutions and vulnerable groups in LA. This initiative highlighted the evolving strong partnership between the second largest city in the U.S. and Armenia, which was elevated to a new higher level during the visit of the Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to Los Angeles and warm hospitality extended to him by Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti in September 2019.

"The fight against COVID-19 has made the world smaller, and people across the planet are joining together to confront this deadly pandemic," said Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti. "Armenia and Los Angeles share an unbreakable bond – and this generous gift will help protect vulnerable Angelenos and medical workers who are showing incredible courage and extraordinary determination to save lives."

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NASA Minds to The Rescue

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Armenian Engineers Develop Thermal Scanner for Covid-19

YEREVAN (Armradio) – Armenian engineers have developed a thermal scanner – an AI solution that can be used for detecting elevated skin temperature in high-traffic public places through quick multiple target screening.

The Scylla Thermal Scanner provides AI-based analytics, which, combined with a state-of-the-art thermal camera, enables continuous contactless and non-invasive accurate temperature monitoring.

It can be used for preliminary screening in border checkpoints, airports, educational and government institutions, manufacturing warehouses, and hospitals.

“Such solutions are very expensive in the world, and the prices hit \$20,000 amid growing demand due to the coronavirus pandemic,” the company’s technical co-founder and chief data scientist Ara Ghazaryan said in an interview with Public Radio of Armenia.

He added that what they offer is at least three times cheaper.

“We offer different solutions. In one case the camera fixes the temperature when a person walks in front of it. In a second case people need to stand before the camera to get their temperature measured. The second option is cheaper,” Ghazaryan said.

Ara Ghazaryan says Latin American and Arabic countries are most interested in purchasing the scanners. Columbia has already installed them at the entrances of hospitals.

As for Armenia, he says, the system is still too expensive for the country.

Single Pays Tribute to Healthcare Workers

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – A group of Armenian singers and TV stars have come together to record a single honoring health workers during the coronavirus outbreak.

The music video for the single Thank You, released on May 1 by Duetto Studio, was produced by Ara Baghdasaryan. The music was produced by Edgar Alexanyan.

The song features vocals by pop stars Erik Karapetyan, Silva Hakobyan, Kristine Pepelyan, Mihran Tsarukyan and others.

The music video shows a medical doctor – portrayed by actor Sargis Grigoryan – working in a busy Yerevan hospital while his family waits for him to join his child’s birthday party at home. He eventually joins his family via a video call when they are blowing the candles

Armenia Defense Minister Visits Artsakh

STEPANAKERT (Armenpress) – Armenia’s Minister of Defense Davit Tonoyan visited Artsakh May 1-2 as part of the military cooperation and combined action plan of the two countries.

Accompanied by Artsakh’s Defense Minister Jalal Harutyunyan, Tonoyan visited a number of active duty military bases in the northern and central directions, toured various barracks and rear units and met with the troops, the Artsakh Defense Ministry said in a news release.

The main discussion points focused on the improvement of the service and social-household conditions of the servicemen, as well as combat and morale readiness, effective application of arsenal and military equipment, modernization and logistical issues.

Tonoyan praised the current level of military cooperation between Armenia and Artsakh.

Minister of Environment Sacked

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – By a decree of Armenian President Armen Sarkissian, Erik Grigoryan was dismissed on May 5 from his post as the minister of environment.

The decree was signed at the suggestion of the Prime Minister according to Article 131 of the Constitution and respective legislation of the government structure and activity.

Even as COVID-19 Cases Rise, Armenia Loosens Restrictions

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the fight against the epidemic,” added Pashinyan.

The premier renewed his calls for citizens to strictly follow social distancing rules and avoid touching their faces with unwashed hands.

He admitted that the decision to essentially end the lockdown is “creating the risk” of a faster spread of the virus.

Daily Increases of COVID-19

The Armenian Ministry of Health has already reported increased daily numbers of coronavirus cases for the last two weeks. It said on Monday morning that 121 people have tested positive for the virus in the past 24 hours, taking the country’s COVID-19 total to 2,507.

The ministry also said that four more Armenians have died from the virus, the largest daily increase in fatalities reported so far. The country’s death toll from COVID-19 thus reached 39.

According to Torosyan, 35 COVID-19 patients were in a critical condition as of Sunday afternoon.

To date, Armenia has tested 24,942 people for the disease.

“We can manage 3,000 to 4,000 cases,” the health minister told Pashinyan. “Right now we have 850 patients in hospitals and about 350 others [isolated] in hotels. Our objective is ... to not exceed the maximum [hospital capacity] and not have to provide medical assistance in non-hospital conditions.”

Torosyan repeatedly warned last week that the health authorities will soon be no longer able to hospitalize or isolate all infected persons. He said this will increase the risk of further growth in infections.

Critics say that the authorities never strictly enforced the quarantine and began easing restrictions on business activity on April 13, just three weeks after the start of the economic shutdown. The number of daily coronavirus cases rose significantly later in April amid a gradual reopening of more sectors of the Armenian economy.

When Armenia first issued a state of emergency on March 16 to deal with the outbreak, residents quickly took to the restrictions. But as time has gone on, observance has become noticeably looser and enforcement of the rules more lax. An analysis from Yerevan-based economist Hrant Mikaelian, using data from the Russian search engine Yandex, suggested that Armenians were self-isolating less than their neighbors in the South Caucasus.

“If the disease still gets out of control and we see mass infections and as a result an increase in mortality, then the economy is not going to benefit,” Mikaelian wrote in a blog post after the lifting of the restrictions was announced. “Social solidarity will be undermined, there will be chaos and panic in the public sphere, and the economy is not going to get any advantage from the lifting of the quarantine. So, in my opinion, it’s too early to lift the restrictions.”

Reinfections Noted

Three people in Armenia tested positive for COVID-19 two weeks after being treated for the disease and discharged from a hospital, suggesting potential re-infection, Torosyan told lawmakers at a committee meeting on May 4 when asked whether or not re-infections have been recorded.

“Unfortunately such cases were recorded, including in Armenia. But there is a big academic debate going on about this. And every day we are receiving updated scientific information on whether or not these were re-infections, meaning the patient was treated and then contracted the infection again, or whether it was simply a de-activation of the virus in the body, and then re-activation, and we were unable to detect the virus in a de-activated state because the patient was asymptomatic and the swab didn’t contain the virus. Or the most likely case is that this is the non-active particles of the virus in tissues, when the virus is not multiplying, but its DNA is present in the cells, and we simply detect it upon testing,” Torosyan said.

These three people have been quarantined as a precaution to rule out potential spread of the disease.

Since it is unclear at the moment whether or not recovered patients are immune to the coronavirus, Torosyan urged them to maintain all precautionary and safety rules like others.

Arrest Warrant Issued For Jailed Ex-Minister’s Son

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – A court in Yerevan issued an arrest warrant on Sunday, May 3, for Gurchen Khachatryan, a wealthy businessman. He is the son of Armenia’s arrested former Finance Minister Gagik Khachatryan. The younger Khachatryan has accused the government of seeking to illegally dispossess his family.

However, Gurchen Khachatryan was not immediately arrested and his whereabouts remained unknown as of Monday evening.

The Khachatryan family has extensive business interests. The most important of its assets is Ucom, one of the country’s three mobile phone operators and largest Internet and cable TV provider.

The ex-minister’s two sons and a nephew own a combined 77 percent of the Ucom stock. Gurchen Khachatryan is also the chairman of the company’s board of directors.

In an April 28 statement, he claimed that “high-ranking” Armenian officials have threatened to arrest him if he and his brother refuse to cede control of Ucom and another major IT firm at a knockdown price. “Ucom is not for sale, neither is our dignity,” he said.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was quick to respond to the claim, saying through a spokeswoman that Khachatryan and his relatives must return hundreds of millions dollars “stolen from the people.” She said relevant authorities will allow the Khachatryans to sell their Ucom stake only if they agree to transfer all proceeds from such a deal to the government.

Khachatryan’s lawyers said afterwards that the National Security Service (NSS) has brought new criminal

charges against him. In particular, they said, he now stands accused of assisting in bribery.

The lawyers confirmed that the accusation is connected to the arrest late last month of Sedrak Arustamyan, the top manager of companies belonging to another wealthy businessman, Gagik Tsarukyan.

The NSS claims that Arustamyan had paid Gagik Khachatryan a \$22.4-million bribe to ensure privileged treatment of those companies by tax authorities. It says that the payment took the form of two bogus loans provided to the former minister who was arrested on corruption charges last August.

Both Arustamyan and the Khachatryan family insist that the massive cash transfer was a commercial transaction, not a bribe. One of the lawyers representing the family, Yerem Sargsyan, said over the weekend that the ex-minister’s sons had borrowed the hefty sum to buy real estate abroad. He did not go into details.

In what appeared to a related development, NSS officers raided the Ucom headquarters in Yerevan on Saturday. They also searched the home and the car of the company’s new executive and confiscated his laptop computer.

The security service did not comment on the searches. Aram Orbelyan, a lawyer for the Ucom CEO, alleged that they are part of broader government efforts to nationalize the company employing 1,800 people or “hand it over to another person” in gross violation of property rights guaranteed by

Armenian law.

The NSS also summoned Gurchen Khachatryan’s wife and mother for questioning. Both women reportedly refused to testify as witnesses.



Gurchen Khachatryan, the chairman of Ucom company’s board of directors.

Meanwhile, Khachatryan issued a written statement shortly before the court allowed the NSS to hold him in detention pending investigation. The Ucom chairman decried the “illegal” criminal proceedings and said he has no intention to “get involved in these processes as a prisoner” and thereby contribute to further “illegalities.”

Sargsyan confirmed on Monday afternoon that Khachatryan has not been arrested yet. But he declined to clarify whether his client has fled Armenia or gone into hiding inside the country. Khachatryan was banned from travelling abroad after being first indicted in January.

“Gurchen Khachatryan is prepared to present himself before the investigating body at any moment if its actions are brought back to the legal field,” said the lawyer.



INTERNATIONAL

Diaspora Connected: Armenians in Spain Support Local Anti-Coronavirus Efforts

YEREVAN — As a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs Zareh Sinanyan was obliged to cancel upcoming visits to Armenian Diaspora communities.

However, maintaining a connection and working with the Diaspora remain at the top of the High Commissioner's agenda.

To this end, the Office of the High Commissioner, led by Sinanyan, has launched "Diaspora Connected," a program which will connect representatives from Diaspora communities from around the world through online video conferences, aiming to maintain connections, identify and address problems, and deepen cooperation.

The first conference took place with representatives of the Armenian community in Spain. High Commissioner Sinanyan welcomed the participants and emphasized the importance of maintaining and cultivating a strong Armenia-Diaspora connection regardless of the situation in the world.

During the conference, members of the Spanish-Armenian community discussed the realities of the Armenian community in Spain, the scope of their activities, and the problems they face.

They noted that the Armenian community has supported the local authorities in fighting against the virus by coming up with a number of initiatives, including preparing free protective masks, providing food to vulnerable communities, and organizing free transportation of medical workers.

They also noted that there are infected people among the Armenian community who are undergoing treatment. Under these conditions, the local one-day school, chess, and painting groups

take place remotely.

Representatives of the community emphasized how important the Office's initiative is to the community especially during such conditions, since a sector of the Armenian community has felt neglected by the previous administration. They also expressed particular concern that the assimilation of Spanish-Armenians is progressing at an increasing rate. On the one hand, recent immigrant families are often not diligent in this manner, on the other hand, the community does not have traditional structures, such as cultural centers or daily schools to prevent assimilation. Despite all this, many local Armenian youth want to return and work in the homeland.

Additionally, community representatives raised a number of concerns, in particular, with the lack of organization among the community, preventing assimilation, delays in the delivery of textbooks from Armenia, dual citizenship, and conscription.

The next video conference featured the Armenian community of Belgium. Dozens of representatives from various community, educational, cultural and political organizations took part. Nicolas Tavitian, chairman of the Committee of Belgian-Armenians, Chairman of Inside Europe, and director of the AGBU Europe Office, introduced the community, and noted that 50 Armenian organizations operate throughout Belgium, and that the Belgian-Armenian community will celebrate its 100th anniversary in two years.

Sinanyan praised the community's organization and exemplary unity. Afterwards, he touched upon the situation in Armenia, including restrictions,

economic challenges, and social impact of the coronavirus. Presenting the programs of the office and possible changes to them, Sinanyan noted that the implementation of the "Step to Home" program of young leaders may be postponed, a number of community visits have been canceled, and that the conferences will probably be held online. The iGorts program, for which 800 Diaspora specialists have applied, has been postponed to start in September. The High Commissioner also touched upon the goals of the office: strengthening ties between Armenia and the Diaspora, maximizing mutual collaboration and cooperation, creating the necessary conditions for repatriation, promoting investment and improving the investment sector.

Afterwards, community representatives asked the High Commissioner questions, especially pertaining to repatriation law and strategy, privileges offered to repatriates, investment support and preservation of the Armenian identity.

In response to a question about the relationship between the diaspora and the state, Sinanyan noted that a strong Armenia is the guarantee of the Diaspora's longevity, and that the continued development and strengthening of the country will help resolve challenges within the diaspora.

Regarding the preservation of Western Armenian, the Commissioner stressed that it should be widely taught in Armenia as well, and that the homeland should become a center for teaching the language.

It should be noted that follow-up connection is maintained with all participants of the video conferences, and cooperation is continuous.

REPORT:

Russia, Turkey, Iran Agree to Remove Syria's Assad

MOSCOW (Middle East Monitor) — The Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) expects that Russia, Turkey and Iran will reach a consensus to remove the head of the Syrian regime, Bashar Al-Assad, and establish a ceasefire in exchange for forming a transitional government that includes the opposition, members of the regime and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

The RIAC, which is known to be close to the decision-makers in the Russian government, said in a report that a Russian organization named the Foundation for the Protection of National Values, affiliated with the security services and the office of President Vladimir Putin, has been conducting an opinion poll in Syria.

This would send a very clear political message, conveying that the Syrian people do not want Al-Assad to remain president.

The report stated that, since the beginning of its military intervention in Syria, Moscow has been keen to avoid being presented as the defender of Al-Assad, adding that in negotiations it has stressed that "the Syrian people will decide whether or not Al-Assad will remain in power".

Russia has become more serious about making changes in Syria, RIAC explained, not least because protecting Al-Assad has become a burden.

Russia's TASS news agency explained: "Russia is suspecting that Al-Assad is not only unable to lead the country anymore, but also that the head of the Syrian regime is dragging

Moscow towards the Afghani scenario, which is a very disconcerting possibility for Russia."

Meanwhile, the news agency added that Iran, which is suffering from stifling US sanctions, has no interest in achieving stability in the whole region, because it considers it a battlefield with Washington.

that Moscow is working on a combination of scenarios including one that sees forces present in Syria accepting each other's scope of influence. As a result, Syria would remain divided into a region protected by Tehran and Moscow, the opposition region supported by Turkey, and the East Euphrates supported by Washington and the SDF,



Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad (BBC News photo)

The news agency considered that while Moscow is ready to use Al-Assad to negotiate an agreement that guarantees its interests; it is sacrificing Syrians to ensure that Al-Assad remains in power.

According to TASS, Al-Assad cannot refuse the Russians' demands, so he makes them hear what they want to hear, but in the end, he implements Tehran's demands.

The Russian news agency stressed

explained TASS.

It indicated that the second option requires a complete withdrawal of all foreign forces and the unification of the country after achieving a political transformation in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution No. 2254.

The news agency considered that this option is less costly for all parties.

Turkey has long called for the removal of Al-Assad as a prerequisite to the end of its operation in Syria.

International News

Gandhi Statue to Be Install in Yerevan

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A statue of Indian independence hero Mahatma Gandhi will be erected in Yerevan, according to a decision approved on April 28 by the City Council.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry coordinated the project with the Indian side and submitted the proposal to the City Council months earlier.

The Indian government will cover all costs for the creation and installation of the statue celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Gandhi.

Russian Embassy Hosts WWII Photo Exhibit

YEREVAN (News.am) — In the lead-up to the 75th anniversary of the victory Great Patriotic War in World War II, the Russian embassy in Armenia on May 5 launched a series of photo exhibitions of the war years, prepared by the Federal Archival Agency of Russia, as well as TASS and RIA Novosti news agencies.

"The work of Soviet frontline photo reporters shows the battles and moments of peace, the daily hard work of the rear, the feats of the partisans, the suffering of the prisoners, and the daily life of the war years. The materials are a proof of the heroism of the Soviet people," the Russian embassy in Armenia noted.

Uruguay Recognized Genocide 55 Years Ago

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay (Public Radio of Armenia) — This year marks the 55th anniversary of Armenian Genocide recognition by Uruguay, the first country to officially acknowledge this crime against humanity.

On April 20 1965, Uruguay became the first nation in the world to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

The Armenian National Committee of Uruguay describes the recognition as a "historical milestone in the fight for justice for the Armenian people."

The Committee has been commemorating the anniversary of the Armenian genocide together with the Presidency of the House of Representatives for two decades in the Legislative Palace.

Given the current coronavirus crisis, the event has been postponed this year, but a series of commemorative activities will be organized in compliance with conditions imposed by the health emergency.

HDP Demands Apology For Dersim Massacre

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Turkey's Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) on May 5 demanded an official apology for the 1937 Dersim massacre and the establishment of a truth commission to heal the wounds of one of the bloodiest stains on the country's history.

HDP MP Alican Onlu tabled a series of parliamentary questions calling on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to restore the rights of the people of Dersim, in the largely Kurdish south-east, Morning Star reports.

He called for a truth & acknowledgement commission to open the archives and court records to the public and for the perpetrators of the massacre to be tried in absentia. Mr Onlu asked for May 4 to be officially recognised as Dersim massacre memorial day.

Measures must be taken to end to the forced assimilation policies that crushed the Kurdish language, beliefs and culture of the people of Dersim, which is known by the official Turkish state name of Tunceli, he said.

A decree signed in the Turkish parliament on May 4, 1937, led to an onslaught by the army and the massacre of up to 70,000 people.

The massacre followed a rebellion led by Kurdish Alevi chieftain Seyid Riza against the Turkification policies of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Riza was hanged in November 1937.

Witness statements describe the brutality inflicted on the people of Dersim, including chemical weapons dropped by the Turkish air force.

Community News

Armenian American Medical Association Of Greater Boston Goes Virtual

BOSTON – As the COVID-19 pandemic has spread across the world, and up-ended everyone's daily lives, it has become paramount to the Armenian American Medical Association (AAMA) of Greater Boston to play an important role in mitigating the effects of the virus on the Armenian population in New England.

The AAMA board, in collaboration with the AGBU New England District, got together and developed a webinar series on the Corona pandemic that was open to the general public.

The first event was held on Saturday, April 11, and was moderated by Dr. Vatche Minassian, with the participation of Doctors Sally Vanerian, Armineh Mirzabegian and Armen Arslanian. The topics covered during the first webinar included information on the virus, its epidemiology, the way it spreads, symptoms of disease, prevention, quarantine, treatment, and public health impact of the disease.

The second event was held on Saturday, April 25, which was simultaneously broadcast live both as a webinar where participants had to register to attend, as well as a live feed through the AGBU Facebook page. Dr. Shant Parseghian moderated the program, with the participation of Doctors Anush Sahakian and Shant Broukian, as well as Nancy Barsamian, RN. The topics covered during the second webinar included the impact of the virus on the health of patients with severe disease as they get evaluated in the emergency room, and their course as they receive treatment in the hospital including the ICU. Finally, Barsamian covered the impact of the virus on nursing homes, in general, and the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Jamaica Plain, in particular.

The third webinar is scheduled for Friday, May 8, 8-9 p.m. and will be moderated by Dr. Rosalynn Nazarian. The first topic to be covered by Dr. Louis M Najarian during this event will be the psychological impact of social isolation due to the pandemic on the family life including children. The second invited speaker will be Dr. Vicken Sepilian who heads AMIC (Armenian Medical International Committee) and who has been active in evaluating and coordinating international efforts to help the Armenian government deal with the Corona pandemic's effect on Armenia and Artsakh. The two speakers will be joined by Joanne Ricardelli, a nutritionist and fitness trainer, who will address how to stay fit and healthy during social isolation.

The goal of the AAMA is to continue with its mission of educating the public with the health impacts of the Corona virus and other general medical conditions on the lives of the community we serve in the Greater Boston area.



Dr. Vicken Sepilian



A screenshot of the Martyrs Day service

St. Vartan Cathedral Marks Martyrs Day During Coronavirus Pandemic

NEW YORK – A typical Martyrs Day is an occasion of intense activity in the Armenian community, with large public gatherings and densely packed sacred observances. But the 2020 commemoration saw Armenians across the world prohibited from coming together physically, due to restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Instead, during the week culminating in April 24, Armenians united in symbolic ways, communicating over various media platforms, and designating specific hours of the day for acting in unison.

In the days prior to April 24, Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians, had encouraged Armenian faithful across the world to observe the occasion in their homes: by dimming the lights and reciting prayers by candle light on the evening of April 23, and by observing a minute of silence at noon on April 24. On both occasions, local churches were instructed to toll their bells for three minutes in memory of the Genocide Saints.

Parishioners across the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America honored the Catholicos' appeal. Their churches also held special closed-door prayer services, and where possible broadcast these over the Internet to the faithful.

At the seat of the Diocese, St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral in New York City, the Feast of the Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide was marked with a special Divine Liturgy celebrated by cathedral vicar Fr. Davit Karamyan, which included the "Prayer for the Intercession of the Genocide Saints" and the ceremonial minute of silence in their memory.

Presiding over the Badarak and offering a special homily was Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan. In a sermon beginning with the words, "Our imprisonment is for Christ," in an echo of St. Paul, Bishop Daniel spoke on the inner meaning of human suffering, both in the torments of the Armenian Genocide Martyrs in 1915, and in the midst of the 2020 worldwide pandemic crisis.

He recalled the 2015 ceremony canonizing the Genocide Martyrs as the "most momentous day in the modern history of the Armenian Church: a day of unity among all its faithful."

When the Armenian Church acknowledges the martyrs as saints, he said, "We children of the church proclaim that the blood of the Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide is the blood of Jesus Christ that he shed on the cross." In that sense, the shared suffering of the Armenian people represents "a unique pathway to God, a unique means of growing in the faith, a unique perspective on eternal life."

Findikyan looked back on the sufferings of earlier Christian exemplars – from St. Paul languishing in a Roman prison cell, to the Genocide Martyrs themselves – and wondered whether the current crisis of disease, fear, and isolation is itself a way to see worldly events as the saints would see them: "To take what the world sees as disaster and calamity...and transform all of that, through the eyes of faith—through Christ himself – into Light and Life."

The bishop went on: "Today, on the 105th anniversary of the Genocide, we see CATHEDRAL, page 5

NASA Workers Design, Develop Ventilator From Scratch

PASADENA, Calif. (CBS NEWSPATH) – Researchers at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory have joined the fight against the coronavirus in a unique way. A team from the space agency used their technical skills to develop a ventilator specifically for COVID-19 patients.

For scientists who specialize in spacecraft, designing an Earth-bound medical machine might be one of their most unusual creations yet. "This was a complete departure, we're not a medical device company," says Sarah Hovsepien, who is part of the team behind Project Vital. The group of NASA-JPL employees designed, built, and tested a new type of ventilator from scratch in just 37 days. It was an incredible feat for a socially-distanced staff. A small group worked on the prototype in person while the rest relied on video conferencing.

Combining the technical know-how of more than 100 people remotely was one of the most challenging parts of the job. "And we were creating this new path for a new way of working, a new way of doing things and it was incredible how much we were able to accomplish in a short period of time," Hovsepien says.

The prototype is only made of about 80 parts and was designed to deliver more oxygen at higher pressure, something doctors say is needed for many COVID-19 patients. Testing at Mount Sinai Hospital



Sarah Hovsepien

in New York has so far proven the project a success. "We have the potential to save human lives, people that we might know, our neighbors, our families, and that intensity, it's amazing. It's amazing," says Michelle Easter, a mechatronics engineer on the Project Vital team.

NASA is now seeking emergency FDA approval for its ventilator and speaking with manufacturing companies who are interested in producing it.

Hovsepien obtained her master's degree in 2012, in the Design and Computation Group, Department of Architecture, from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. At MIT, she worked on projects at the Media Lab, and also at the Center for Bits & Atoms (CBA) under Neil Gershenfeld. At CBA, Sarah worked on a lightweight, high-strength composite aircraft wing structure, using advanced manufacturing technologies for reconfigurable, repairable composite assemblies derived from lattice foam structures found in nature.

In 2011, Sarah became part of the inaugural class of NASA Space Technology Fellows where she worked on Digital Material Skins for a pressure vessel, focusing on the design and fabrication of overlapping, discrete 2D structures inspired by origami tessellation's.

She received her Bachelors in Architecture at California Polytechnic University of Pomona.



COMMUNITY NEWS

City of Brea declares 2020 Year of Armenian Genocide Commemoration

BREA, Calif. — The City of Brea in northern Orange County, has declared 2020 as the “Year of The Commemoration of the 105th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.” The proclamation also designated April of every year hereafter as Armenian History Month.

The proclamation was spearheaded by Armenian-American Marty Simonoff of Brea. Simonoff was first elected into public office for the City of Brea in 1996 and is currently serving his sixth term on the Brea City Council.

“The Armenian National Committee of America – Orange County chapter would like to extend its gratitude to the City of Brea and Mayor Marty Simonoff for their commitment to the ongoing remembrance

and commemoration of the Armenian Genocide,” remarked Armen Garabedian, Chair of the ANCA Orange County chapter. “This powerful proclamation not only codifies the official remembrance of the Armenian Genocide and celebration of the Armenian-American community through the designation of April as Armenian History Month, but highlights contemporary consequences of genocide denial through Turkey’s enabling of Azerbaijan’s physical and cultural genocide against the Armenians of Artsakh.”

Simonoff, a member of the Armenian-American community, has been a staunch supporter of genocide recognition, genocide education, and advocacy for the right to self-determination for the people of Artsakh. He

has been instrumental in facilitating yearly Armenian Genocide Remembrances and Proclamations with the Orange County Board of Supervisor, and continues to work closely with the Armenian-American community – including the ANCA Orange County chapter – to address the interests and needs of the local community.

“We thank Mayor Simonoff for his support throughout the years in advancing our community priorities locally, and at a county level,” added Garabedian. “On this 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, we welcome this proclamation and look forward to continuing to work with the City of Brea and Mayor Smirnoff in advancing our community’s cause for justice.”



Brea Mayor Marty Simonoff

Diocesan Council Chair Says Furloughs, Pay Reductions Are Necessary in COVID-19 Era

FURLoughs, from page 1

employee of the Diocesan operations including the Primate. These actions included across the board furloughs and pay reductions. We did our best to keep our people whole and in fact we chose to pay everyone for March and April

and contrary to other non-profit organizations at this time we chose not to lay anyone off. We also chose to continue to provide employee benefits for all.”

He said that the challenges facing the Diocese are in fact no different than what

Armenian businesses, individuals and other institutions are facing in the US. In addition to the annual distributions from the portfolio of the Armenian Church Endowment Fund (ACEF), he pointed out that the three main sources of Diocesan income are facility rentals,

donations and support from the parishes. All three have been affected, so that despite the 2020 ACEF distribution, Sabounjian said a substantial shortfall is anticipated for this year.

Bishop Daniel Findikyan, during a presentation at the weekly Armenian-American Health Professionals Organization (www.aahpo.org) Zoom conference on the COVID-19 pandemic on May 7 said that the financial shortfall this year may be somewhere around \$900,000, but this figure is contingent on many factors.

Though in the past, the expenses for the maintenance and repair of the Diocesan complex in New York has been a major concern, Sabounjian did not state that these costs were an immediate factor contributing to the current steps taken. He said that a study of facility needs was well underway, but its conclusions were delayed due to the pandemic.

When asked whether funds from the Diocesan Annual Appeal, the Endowment Campaign, or a special fund for spending for the Primate might be used to help in this crisis, Fr. Sabounjian said this was all taken into account during decision making, and further noted that though many restrict funds might exist, borrowing against them “is not an option.” On the other hand, he said, the Diocese has applied for federal Payroll Protection Program funds, and is awaiting the results.

Sabounjian was asked whether any special fundraising had been done to try to offset the projected deficit. He replied, “We are in the process of enhancing our strategy for fundraising, especially in light of this pandemic. In addition, we are hopeful that our people will support the Diocese’s work, as they always have.”

He concluded, “These decisions were not taken lightly. We agonized over them for weeks. And we constantly reminded ourselves that we are a Christian Church. The health of the Diocese is not simply financial, but ultimately concerns our pursuit of the mission of the Armenian Church and the spiritual well-being of our parishes and faithful, what Bishop Daniel has termed ‘Building Up the Body of Christ.’ The Diocesan Council and leadership are aggressively working toward reassessing the Diocese’s priorities in the midst of this pandemic and in its aftermath.”

St. Vartan Cathedral Marks Martyrs Day

CATHEDRAL, from page 4

too are living in darkness, and fear, and calamity, when much of what we have, much of what we have worked for, has been taken away from us. When we are ‘imprisoned’ in our homes, and every one of us has the choice to see that calamity through worldly eyes...or as glimmers of the Light of God.”

To choose to do so, the Primate said, is to join with the Genocide Saints and affirm that all of our sufferings are for Christ. “We can join them and say: This Genocide is for Christ. We can join them and say: This pandemic is for Christ. We can join them and say: All our lives are for Christ.”

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OBITUARIES

Diramayr Zabell Kalayjian

Devoted Christian, Matriarch

CLIFFSIDE PARK, N.J. — Diramayr Zabell Kalayjian passed away on Wednesday, April 29, 2020 at the age of 97 in Emerson, NJ of natural causes.

She was born in Aleppo, Syria August 23, 1923, to George and Jamilah Mardigian, who only a few years earlier had survived the Genocide and were forced to leave their ancestral Cilician City of Kilis, and settled in Aleppo.

Diramayr Zabell Kalayjian attended Oosoomnasiratz and the Emaculate Conception Schools in Aleppo, where she received high honors for being hardworking, diligent, responsible, and intelligent. She was also admired for her beauty grace and striking sky-blue eyes.

On August 28, 1938, she married Kevork Kalayjian, son of Girgi and Tervanda Kalayjian, at Holy King Armenian Apostolic Church in Azez, Syria. They had seven children: First son Zaven Kalayjian who became a priest, late Very Rev. Fr. Vertanes Kalayjian with Yeretzgin Anahid with their life time dedication to the Armenian Church and Youth Ministry, Zareh who died in infancy, Zarminé Boghosian writer, Principal Emeritus of the Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School, Mary who died in infancy, Kevork who is a poet and a financial auditor, psychologist Dr. Ani Kalayjian who has dedicated her life to helping victims of trauma through her Meaningfulworld, Vasken Kalayjian a branding specialist-artist-and author.

She leaves 10 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren.

Diramayr Kalayjian was a devoted Christian, dedicated to the Armenian Church and to her family. After her children were grown and successful in their endeavors and families, she

devoted her time and energy to care for her grandchildren and shared her ministry with her extended family and friends.

In 1960 the Kalayjian family moved to Aleppo to give their children access to better higher education, and in 1971 they immigrated to the US, to join their first-born son, Rev. Fr. Vertanes and Yeretsgin Anahid Kalayjian, of St. Mary's Armenian Church in Washington, D.C.

Living in North Jersey, Diramayr was active in the Holy Cross Armenian Church Women's Guild (Union City, NJ) and was honored with the 1979 Mother of the Year Award from the parish. In 2003, in recognition of her 80th birthday, a special spiritual education fund was established in Zabell's honor at St. Mary's Armenian Church.

Diramayr Kalayjian homeschooled her children up to first grade, both in their religious studies, literature, arts, crafts, math and sciences. She was an avid reader. Each morning she encouraged her children to read a verse from the Bible before breakfast.

Losing her firstborn son was emotionally distressing for her, and she often expressed, "no mother should bear to witness the death of her child."

She was fortunate to witness the ordination of her grandson Saro into priesthood as he became Fr. Avedis Kalayjian in July 2016.

Diramayr Kalayjian was a deeply spiritual Armenian Christian mother and a caring mentor to others through her prayers and generous spirit. She had friends calling her from around the world to receive her blessings and advice.

Diramayr Kalayjian was a matriarch very well described through the loving words of



Yeretzgin Kalayjian who said: "Our precious Diramayr went to be with her son, Der Hayr. She was an angelic person, and we all loved her very dearly. She will have a special place in heaven! She will be adorned with crowns! We all have a lot to learn from her admirable life."

Diramayr's death is mourned by her youngest sister Jaklyn Yahyahan, of Los Angeles; Yeretsgin/Diramayr Anahid Kalayjian, Zarmine and Missak Boghosian, Kevork and Maral Kalayjian, Dr. Ani Kalayjian, and Vasken and Jacqueline Kalayjian. She is also mourned by her grandchildren and great-grandchildren and her nieces and nephews in the Tashjian, Shamamian, Yahyahan and Mardigian families.

Her funeral took place on Tuesday, May 5, at George Washington Cemetery in Paramus, NJ.

Due to the situation regarding the current pandemic, her funeral services were subjected to the physical distancing safety practices.

Norman Gulamerian

Artist With a Grand Passion,
Dies at 92

By Katharine Q. Seelye

NEW YORK (*New York Times*) — Norman Gulamerian was a successful businessman and an artist, but his life was shaped by his love for an exuberant young widow and her five children.

He met Mary Alexander briefly after a funeral in St. Louis in 1963. An optimistic, can-do Julie Andrews type — she even sang — Mrs. Alexander was raising her children (Christopher, Rebecca, Seth, Eve and Jennifer) on her own after her husband had died of a heart attack.

When Mr. Gulamerian, who lived in New York, met her again two years later, he was taken by the whole package — the lively children tumbling over one another, not to mention Mrs. Alexander's dark beauty, her joyous light brown eyes and the way she threw her



head back when she laughed.

He courted her through the mail, sending her hundreds of letters and asking her to marry him. One proposal arrived in the form of a drawing of a male bird on the ground looking up at a tree, where a female bird sat with five baby birds.

He was, after all, an artist.

Born in Brooklyn to Armenian immigrants on August 29, 1927, Mr. Gulamerian had attended the High School of Music and Art in Manhattan (now the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts), where he developed as a painter, though he didn't graduate: He left to join the Navy and spent his 18th birthday on a ship bound for Japan.

After the war he returned to Brooklyn, earned his high school diploma, attended Brooklyn College and resumed painting.

"He wanted to prime his own canvasses, but he couldn't find any linen, so he imported a roll from Belgium," said Jennifer Pagano, one of his daughters. "His brother said to him, 'If you can't find it, other painters can't either.' So that was the start of their art supply business, in 1949, out of their basement in Brooklyn."

He and his brother, Harold, called their company the Utrecht Art Supply Corp. because they lived near Utrecht High School. It grew into a well-known chain of art supply stores from New York to California. Mr. Gulamerian also wrote a textbook, *The Language of a Work of Art* (1963).

He had an easier time starting his business than he had persuading Mrs. Alexander to marry him. Although she had fallen for him, she was reluctant to move East and leave behind her large extended family in St. Louis.

But she finally said yes. They married in 1969 and moved to Watchung, N.J., close enough to New York so that he could commute to work but far enough out to have a big house with a bedroom for each child. It was also big enough for an art studio, where Mr. Gulamerian painted massive triptychs, usually of religious subjects, though he did not believe in organized religion.

Mary Gulamerian's health declined in recent years, and her husband moved with her into an assisted living facility in nearby New Providence, N.J. She died last year.

He caught the coronavirus in early April. The nurses called another of his daughters, Eve Balboni, and allowed her to sit with him briefly.

He couldn't speak. Ms. Balboni reminded him of their family history. "And when I told him that he had married Mom and us in 1969, he just cried out when he heard the word 'Mom,'" Ms. Balboni said.

He died on April 13. He was 92.

Edward Menzigian

Army Veteran

WORCESTER — Edward Menzigian, 92, passed away peacefully on April 20, 2020 at Holy Trinity Nursing and Rehabilitation Center from complications of Covid-19.

He was born in Worcester on September 12, 1927 a son of the late Manoog and Yeraney (Anglian) Menzigian. Edward was raised in Worcester and attended local schools where he graduated from the former Commerce High School.

He enlisted in the United States Army on May 17, 1949 where he served his country during the Korean Conflict.



Upon his discharge, he began his career with the HP Hood Company. He then went to work for the Norton Company where he was employed for many years until his retirement. Always keeping busy in his retirement, Ed worked part time at Jewish Healthcare Center and also as a crossing guard in the City of Worcester.

He leaves his wife of 54 years, Ruth (Jamgochian) Menzigian; his daughter, Nancy Reardon and her husband, Neal of Rutland; his grandchildren, Tommy and Patrick Reardon, both of Rutland; several nieces, nephews extended family and friends.

Besides his parents, he was predeceased by his infant son, Aram Menzigian and his brothers, Aram and Paul Menzigian.

The family wishes to express their thanks to the nurses and staff of Holy Trinity Nursing and Rehabilitation Center for the exceptional care provided for Ed.

Due to the current health crisis and resulting government restrictions, funeral services were held privately. Arrangements were made by the Callahan, Fay & Caswell Life Celebration Home, 61 Myrtle St., Worcester.

Dzhulyetta (Avedisyan) Mangoyan

Former High School Principal in Armenia

WATERTOWN — Dzhulyetta (Avedisyan) Mangoyan passed away on April 25, 2020. She was 87.

Dzhulyetta was born on May 4, 1932 in Leninakan, Armenia to the late Ararat and Arpik (Topjian) Avedisyan.

She worked in Armenia for 40 years as a high school principal before moving to the United States in 1992. In the United States, she was active in the life of the church and often spoke at the church about Armenian history and literature.

She was the wife to the late Arshak Mangoyan. She was the mother of Satenik Mangoyan, Anna Mangoyan and the late Oganess Mangoyan who passed away in 2010, and his wife, Nadezhda

Mangoyan. She was the grandmother of Henrik, Gayane, Arshak, Alex, Vahe and Emma and had five great-grandchildren.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic and current public safety measures, private graveside services were held at Ridgeland Cemetery in Watertown.



Sonia Mae Turnamian

Co-Founder of St. Thomas Church

WOODCLIFF LAKE, N.J. — Sonia Turnamian, née Tefank, formerly of Englewood, NJ, Fort Lee, NJ and Naples, FL, died at the age of 95.

Born in Union City, NJ, the youngest daughter of the late Hagop and Bertha Tefank, she grew up in Weehawken, NJ.

Sonia's early passion was music and she was an ardent violin player.

Sonia was the first member of her family to attend college and earned a bachelor's degree in Education from New York University. While attending college, she especially enjoyed working at Lord and Taylors' flagship store in Manhattan, where she met many designers and developed a lifelong love of fashion.

After graduating from NYU, she worked briefly as a music teacher in NJ and married Richard Michael Turnamian in the Blizzard of 1947. She was predeceased by him in 2007.

Together, Sonia and Richard were founding members of the St. Thomas Armenian Church of Tenafly,

NJ where Sonia spent many years donating her time, planning and organizing fundraisers for the church. Later in life, she worked in the family's aerospace business and cherished her weekly Bridge game with dear friends. Sonia enjoyed traveling the world with family and friends, seeing new places, and experiencing new cultures. She kept meticulous notes on all of her travels and indulged in her love of art. Sonia also had a passion for health and fitness. She exercised daily and maintained a healthy lifestyle throughout her life.

She is survived by her son Michael of Naples, FL., her daughter Ellen and her husband Daniel of Oradell, NJ, and Jeanne of Cape Coral, FL. She was grandmother to Jaclyn and Tiffany Malloy, and Amie (Kechejian) Apelian and Jennifer (Kechejian) Moore, several great-grandchildren and one loving dog named Junior, whom she referred to as "an angel."

All burial arrangements were private. A celebration of her life will be announced at a future date.





OBITUARIES

Rachel (Koumrian) Dohanian

Dedicated Member of
Armenian Memorial
Church

BELMONT, Mass. — Rachel (Koumrian) Dohanian of Belmont passed away on April 23, 2020, just 3 weeks shy of her 100th birthday.

She was the wife of the late Armen Dohanian, Sr.; mother of Armen Dohanian, Jr. and his wife Louise of Belmont, Phyllis



Dohanian of Belmont and the late Joyce Dohanian; grandmother of Matthew Dohanian and Sherée Dunwell, Adam Dohanian and Elizabeth Jewell and Armen Dohanian, III and Paula Dohanian; great-grandmother of Lily and Vera Dohanian; sister of Doris Markarian and the late James Koumrian. She is also survived by her nieces and all members of the Armenian Memorial Church.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic and current public safety measures, a private graveside service will be held for the family.



In Remembrance of the Armenian Genocide, Boston Armenian Community Gives Back

BOSTON — As part of the inspirational April 24th campaign to provide 1.5 million meals to individuals and families in need across the United States, and as a symbolic gesture of gratitude to America for the humanitarian relief provided to the Armenian people during the Armenian Genocide, the Boston Armenian community rallied support and also raised awareness through the purchase of 3 billboards, reported the Armenian Assembly of America.

“This is an amazing example of our community at work, seeing our best and brightest here in Boston come together to continue the effort to Feed America. This is at the core of the Armenian Assembly’s objective to bring our community together in a meaningful way,” stated Assembly Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian. “Starting with our strong community in southern California, Boston and other communities continue to organize and raise awareness about the Armenian Genocide while giving back to those in need during the current state of emergency. I share with all of you my respect and thanks to all those who contributed to this effort throughout the country,” Barsamian added.

Doctors Shant and Reem Parseghian, in collaboration with the following community members, were able to raise the needed funds: Dr. and Mrs. Noubar and Anna Afeyan, Mr. and Mrs. Armen and Lauren Arakelian, Mr. and Dr. Aram and Knarik Arkun, Dr. and Mrs. Armen and Araz Arslanian, Dr. and Mrs. Mihran and Elo Artinian, Mr. and Mrs. Nigoghos and Roset Atinizian, Mr. and Mrs. Nishan and Margrit Atinizian, Mr. and Mrs. Robert and Carineh Avakian, Mr. and Mrs. Jano and Arpi Avedissian, Mr. and Dr. Ara and Talin Balikian, Mr. and Mrs. Avedis and Carmen Barmakian, Mr. and Mrs. Jack and Rita Bejakian, Mr. and Mrs. Sam and Ida Bejakian, Mr. and Mrs. Stephan and Beth Boyamian, Mr. and Mrs. Avedis and Houry

Boyamian, Mr. and Mrs. Sarkis and Rita Chekijian, Mr. and Mrs. Jirair and Susan Demirchian, Mr. and Mrs. Raffi and Nina Festekjian, Mr. and Mrs. Jean-Jacques and Nicole Hajjar, Dr. and Mrs. George and Kara Halebian, Mr. and Mrs. Chris and Talin Kebabjian, Dr. and Mrs. Berdj and Margaret Kiladjian, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander and Tamar Kouspakian, Mr. and Mrs. George and Zepure Kouyoumjian, Mr. and Mrs. Aurelian and Anahid Mardiros, Mr. and Mrs. Gary and Hasmig Mardiros, Mr. and Mrs. Armen and Sylvie Meguerditchian, Mr. and Mrs. Richard and Maro Meguerditchian, Dr. and Mrs. Vatche and Natalie Minassian, Mr. and Mrs. Charlie and Herip Minassian, Mr. and Mrs. Vahe and Ani Nigoghosian, Mr. and Mrs. Karnig and Linda Ostayan, Mr. and Mrs. Sarkis and Seta Ourfalian, Doctors Ashot and Yelena Papoyan and Dr. and Mrs. Vatche and Seza Seradarian.

“As genocide survivors, we were always grateful to the countries that hosted us and helped us to prosper and build our communities again, so expressing gratitude to this great country we live in is the least we can do. Moreover, the prominent placement of these billboards helps to further our collective goals in raising awareness about the tragedy of the Armenian Genocide,” stated Dr. Shant Parseghian of Massachusetts.

Thanks to the multi-coalition Armenian-American organizational effort that was initiated in southern California in partnership with the Tony Robbins Foundation, a nationwide nonprofit organization, Feeding America, will be able to provide much-needed meals to more than 5 million people based on the funds raised.

The 3 billboards may be seen starting Monday, May 4 for one week at I-93 WS exit 31, I-95/Rt. 128 WS North AC exist and I-90 Massachusetts Pike Beacon Street.

Arax Sarajian Daughter of Genocide Survivors

RIVER EDGE, N.J. — Arax Sarajian, 92, formerly of River Edge, passed away on April 29, 2020.

She was predeceased by her husband, Dick. She was the mother of Richard and Nora Sarajian, Ken and Trish Sarajian, Carol and Jim Kennelly; grandmother of Ara and Alice, Raffi, Garo and Haig Sarajian, Michael and Daniel Kennelly, and Ani and Stephen Sarajian. She was predeceased by her sister, Alice Catchouny Hagopian, and brother, Armen Catchouny. She is also survived by her brother-in-law Haig Sarajian and several nieces and nephews.

The daughter of Genocide survivors, Yeghishe and Satenig Catchouny, Arax was born in New York City and raised in Orange, NJ.

She attended the Packard Business School.

She met her husband, Dick, at an Armenian Youth Federation function. Their life together was one of giving and charity, filled with her family, her church and community.

Arax and her husband, Dick were founding members of Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Apostolic Church of Ridgfield, NJ, and of the Ladies Guild and Men’s Club. They were devoted to the Sunday School, where generations of children knew them as Auntie Arax and Uncle Dick. They were ardent supporters of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America.

She was also a member of the Bergen County Armenouhi Chapter of the Armenian



Relief Society for more than 60 years. So many of their activities were focused around youth programs, whether it was the church basketball league (and her end of year spaghetti and meatballs dinner), or AYF meetings as advisors, AYF Alumni or supportive parents for Senior Olympics, Junior Olympics, or wherever needed.

In River Edge, she served as a Girl Scout leader, Little League team mother and member of the P.E.O.

Funeral Services were private and arranged by William G. Basralian Funeral Home.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Florida Makes the Best of a Difficult Time

FLORIDA, from page 1

several Armenian churches and a community that has come together in times of celebration and hardship. Acclaimed for its year-round sunny weather and over 1,000 miles of emerald coastline, Florida currently has close to 40,000 cases of COVID-19, concentrated in the south, which precipitated the closure of non-essential businesses, parks and beaches and the enforcement of social distancing.

Miami Beach City Commissioner, Mark Samuelian, the first-Armenian-American elected official in Miami-Dade County history, has assumed a strong leadership role during the pandemic. He noted the city was “very quick to heed the warnings” and immediately implemented the “safer at home” order. If individuals enter essential businesses, from pharmacies to



grocery stores, they are required to wear masks, groups are prohibited from meeting and public amenities remain shut down.

“We wanted to protect the entire community and the most vulnerable, including the seniors and those with pre-existing conditions,” said Samuelian. By reacting fast, the hospital capacity stayed at a manageable rate and Miami “didn’t have the surge and spike other states have had.”

Overcoming the initial stage of the pandemic threat, Samuelian said the city’s attention has now turned to increasing testing and contact tracing. A testing center outside the Miami Beach Convention Center will be launched this week, making it the first in Florida to provide walk-up and drive-through testing. Another advancement is antibody testing in Miami Dade County that will determine how many people have been exposed to the virus. Samuelian also noted that Miami Beach has been named one of 10 cities in the US to be included in the Rockefeller Foundation’s COVID-19 National Action Plan, which will enhance testing and contact tracing.

“I am so impressed with how folks in Miami Beach and the Miami area have come together,” said Samuelian. “The community has taken our lead and followed many of the measures we put forward even though they were difficult.”

Helping Community with Food

Humanitarian initiatives and partnerships also sprung into action, such as Meals for Heroes, a Miami-based not-for-profit organization that Samuelian himself is personally involved in, that provides food to residents and frontline workers. The group raises money from the community, buys warm meals from local restaurants to provide them with revenue and delivers them to hospitals and first responders.

“It’s a wonderful win-win situation,” said Samuelian. “The community is engaged and there is the opportunity to support restaurants and first responders who deserve so much.”

Another project geared towards aiding the public emerged from the Miami Beach High School Robotics Club, whose members came up with the idea to make masks for residents. Samuelian bought their first order and presented it at a press conference where others followed suit.

“The greater community of Miami Beach has come together and shined during this terrible time,” said Samuelian. “It’s been tough for everyone but out of the darkness comes light.”

Born and raised in Massachusetts, Samuelian has been a longtime resident of South Florida and appreciates the “vibrant” Armenian-American community. Although Armenian Genocide commemorations were cancelled due to the pandemic, Miami Beach passed a unanimous resolution, spearheaded by Samuelian, to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide.

“This resolution is a recognition of truth and the policymakers and leaders at all levels of government are willing to stand forward and say on the record what exactly happened,” said Samuelian. “Florida Armenians can be proud that they have such an impact in their community.”

In past years, Florida Armenians commemorated April 24 by organizing walk-a-thons, panel discussions, film screenings, liturgical services and wreath placements at the memorial cross stone in Boca Raton. While there couldn’t be in-person events this year, the Armenian Genocide Committee, Inc. (AGC) donated to the Armenia Fund to help those in the homeland who are battling COVID-19.

“The pandemic affected so many different aspects of our community and it’s positive to see the Committee’s contributions and their goodwill towards others,” said Samuelian.

Small Businesses Suffering

Small businesses have long been the heart and soul of the US and are integral to the neighborhoods and communities in which they exist. Millions of small businesses across the country face challenges during the pandemic, including the Boca Raton-based Aces Barber Company, owned by George Hovsepian. His business, which specializes in haircuts, style and beard grooming for men of all ages, has been closed for two months.

“We’re watching the news everyday and waiting for instructions,” said Hovsepian. “Other barbers call me up and ask what I’m doing and I tell them we’re all in the same boat.”

Hovsepian likens his city now to a “ghost town” noting that only essential businesses like the Publix supermarket and gas stations are open.



Aces Barbershop Company now, and in better days, below



avirus was in New York City, I shut down my shop, which was two days before the stay at home orders were announced.”

Hovsepian, who has been operating for five years and recently signed a 10-year lease in his current space, applied for a Small Business Loan but hasn’t received any updates yet. He oversees his barbershop’s operations with his wife, who also cuts and styles hair, and has created a welcoming atmosphere for clients. Personalized flat screen televisions accompany each leather barber chair and the lounge area is complete with couches, a cappuccino machine and gaming systems to keep clients occupied as they wait their turn.

Like many Armenian-Americans who fused their passion and work ethic, Hovsepian turned his teenage hobby into a fully fledged business that’s open seven days a week and remains a popular spot among residents from Boca Raton and neighboring cities.

“My mother gave me clippers one day and I started cutting my twin brother’s hair,” said Hovsepian. “Soon I was cutting hair for the whole neighborhood.” Eventually he enrolled in a barber training program where he sharpened his skills and business acumen.

Once Aces Barber Company is given the green light to open, Hovsepian said they will take “even more precautions” to ensure the safety of their clients and employees, who will wear gloves and masks.

“We’ll leave one empty chair between each client and have more people wait outside in the beginning so the customers feel comfortable and safe,” said Hovsepian. “This is going to be a different world when we reopen.”

While the closure of his barbershop has posed its fair share of difficulties, Hovsepian said he always “prepares for the worst.”

“When it rains it pours so you better have that umbrella ready,” said Hovsepian, who anticipates a busy crowd when businesses are permitted to open their doors. “We’re all going to learn a lot from this experience.”

Armenian Church

It’s been a particularly challenging time for the Armenian Church and its faithful, who have missed weekly liturgy, the milestones of weddings, baptisms and special Easter services, in addition to the cancellation of religious, educa-

tional and cultural programming. Rev. Fr. Hovnan Demerjian, pastor of the St. Hagop Armenian Church in Pinellas Park, said the severity of the pandemic in the greater Tampa community has been mild, however the Church faces similar problems as others across the nation, including the isolation of members, cancellation of in-person services and events and the loss of income.

“I believe the deepest challenge, however, is a spiritual one,” said Demerjian. “The pandemic has forced loss and change on the entire world and the routine, values and the very structure of our lives has been altered.”

Demerjian believes that the church’s first task is to help people “feel, communicate and accept these losses rather than denying or avoiding them.”

Turning to God during these turbulent times is also of significance because “God’s grace has the power to transform any and all of our loss into miraculous gain.”

To stay connected with church members, Demerjian has live streamed church services since March 22, though there have been drawbacks to the virtual experience.

“Our church is a living breathing body, meant to come together in the flesh,” said Fr. Demerjian. “Although the virtual services are somewhat disembodied, there are benefits, such as engaging a different and larger slice of our community and those who live distant from church can participate in virtual services more often than regular ones.”

By utilizing the virtual platform, Demerjian has added creative enhancements, such as scrolling the names of community members’ ancestors whose lives were lost during the Genocide Martyr’s service. He also has plans to experiment with ways for people to engage and understand worship better by reading or hearing English without altering the traditional service.

The St. Hagop Armenian Church community has come together and “brought out the good in many of our members.” According to Demerjian, the Parish Council has redoubled its regular outreach efforts, including coordinating phone calls to all parishioners, particularly the most vulnerable, and other thoughtful gestures to lift their members’ spirits.

“One of our parishioners had a milestone birthday planned but when her family from New Jersey had to cancel their trip, we decided to flood her with cards from the community that covered her entire mantle and wall,” noted Demerjian. “This woman experienced a bit of Christ’s overwhelming love via the small acts of kindness of our community.”

Despite the stay at home orders, many cultural organizations, including the ARS Sosseh Chapter of South Florida, are keeping busy. The board members hold virtual meetings, led by Chairperson Mary Andonian, who noted they were thankful to remain connected even from a distance.

“Everyone was very happy to see each other and we took the time to discuss our elderly and the online fundraiser we are participating in with the Feeding America relief organization,” said Andonian. “Unfortunately we had to cancel our very successful annual Mitchink Lent Dinner, however we are planning online practices and rehearsals for the Arevig Dance Ensemble that the kids have every week.”

The chapter, which usually meets and plans their events at the Armenian Community Center (Hye Getron) in Boca Raton, recently celebrated its 35th anniversary of serving the community through social, education and humanitarian efforts.

“The planning for Mother’s Day was cancelled for this year however we are making baskets to deliver to many mothers who are vulnerable and also to community members who are our supporters,” said Andonian.

The Sosseh Chapter has also focused on raising money for the Armenian Relief Society (ARS) Global Emergency Response Fund, which will benefit Armenian communities around the Diaspora and the homeland. The next generation, the AYP South

continued on next page

Florida Makes the Best Of a Difficult Time

from previous page
Florida “Arev” chapter, has also mobilized its group members to donate and raise funds in their community.

The St. Mary Armenian Church in Hollywood, and its fellowship hall have been empty for almost two months now, which has posed difficulties for worshippers and pastor Rev. Fr. Vartan Joulfayan, who has had to adjust to streaming church services every Sunday. Along with one acolyte, Fr. Joulfayan chants hymns, reads the scriptures and psalms and addresses his sermon towards his smartphone, instead of his usual faithful in the pews.

“This new way of connecting virtually with the worshipers gives an opportunity to those at home to follow the prayer service and remotely feel connected to the Badarak and celebrate their faith in Christ,” said Fr. Joulfayan, who has been reaching out to parishioners on a daily basis to check in with them and make sure they are safe and healthy.

Along with the Parish Council and a group of volunteers, Joulfayan provides for families who may be in need of groceries, medication and any special needs. He also makes short video recordings and live streams messages on Facebook, while scheduling Zoom meetings to connect with church families and have Bible lessons.

“This pandemic has certainly changed our lives dramatically and forced us to adapt to new ways of connecting with each other,” said Joulfayan, who acknowledges human connection as a vital component of daily life. “How to cope with this new situation, which does not show us a certain future yet, will be our biggest daily challenge with its anxieties, fear and unknown.”

Nevertheless, Joulfayan added he believes the faithful will persevere and derive strength from God.

“As people of faith, believers in the resurrection of our Lord Christ Jesus, and as descendants of survivors of the Genocide, we must keep going forward by any means necessary to stay connected with each other, never lose hope, and always depend on the power of almighty God,” said Joulfayan.

Arts Scene

The arts and culture scene in Florida has also felt the shockwaves of the pandemic, as thousands of performances have been cancelled throughout the state, including concerts by oudist, singer and composer Joe Zeytoonian. A resident of South Florida, Zeytoonian is co-executive director of Harmonic Motion, a non-profit cross-cultural arts organization that focuses on folkloric music. Along with dancer and percussionist Myriam Eli, they regularly perform Middle Eastern and Armenian music and collaborate in the rich genres of jazz, flamenco, Balkan and Afro-Cuban.

“When social distancing became the norm for halting progression of the pandemic, all of our performances were cancelled,” said Zeytoonian, who has received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and was the recipient of the Florida Folk Heritage Award. “I had the fleeting thought of teaching online and quickly abandoned it in favor of study and sending out sonic video postcards through Facebook.”

A well-known presence throughout Florida and the global music scene, Zeytoonian has been involved in Armenian Genocide commemorations and helped organize a centennial concert at the Arts by St. Johns on Miami Beach in 2015.

Zeytoonian, who has toured the world and recorded with chart-toppers Gloria Estefan and Shakira, acknowledged that the “loss of life due to the virus became deeply personal.” When the time is right, he will seek new ways to connect with his audience, including “the possibilities of creating performance video and teaching via Zoom.”

Connected from Afar

College student Victoria Gechidjian, who currently lives in Miami and is a parishioner of St. Mary Armenian Church, credits the tight-knit community that has been supporting one another throughout the pandemic ordeal.

“Although it was a difficult transition, the change was not as drastic because everybody has kept strong communication with one another,” said Gechidjian.

Recipe Corner

Guest Recipe
by Christine Vartanian



Lamb-Stuffed Baked Eggplant (Beyli Baghli)

My immigrant grandparents and American-born parents often served delicious eggplant and lamb dishes at our dinners in 1950s New Jersey,” says Robyn Kalajian. “Some of our family’s traditional recipes featured only eggplant, and in others, lamb was the star. On occasion, both ingredients ended up in the same pot. When I spoke with my sister recently, we discussed our first introductions to Beyli Baghli or <<http://www.ianyanmag.com/the-khohanotz-imam-bayildi/>> Imam Bayildi, stuffed eggplant dishes. My sister recalled the first time she tasted this concoction was when her Armenian mother-in-law, originally from <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bursa>> Bursa, Turkey, prepared it.”

Note: This recipe can be converted to please vegetarians. First, omit the meat. Once eggplants have baked, carefully scoop out the pulp and chop it. Sauté your favorite vegetables – peppers, squash, carrots, mushrooms, zucchini, etc., and cook them along with the onions and seasonings. Add chopped eggplant and cook a little longer. Spoon mixture into eggplant shells, and follow the rest of the recipe.

INGREDIENTS:

2 large eggplants (4 smaller eggplants can be substituted), cut in half lengthwise, stem trimmed
Olive oil

MEAT FILLING INGREDIENTS:

1 1/2 teaspoons ground allspice
2 teaspoons paprika
1 tablespoon ground coriander
1 large sweet onion, chopped finely
1 lb. ground lamb or beef
1/3 to 1/2 cup pine nuts
1 cup flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped
Salt and pepper, to taste

SAUCE:

1-15 oz. can diced tomatoes with juice
1 tablespoon red pepper paste (or tomato paste)
1 tablespoon lemon juice, optional
1 tablespoon sugar
Salt and pepper, to taste
Chopped Italian parsley, optional, as garnish

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 425°F.
Generously sprinkle cut surface of eggplants with salt; allow to rest for 30 minutes to help draw out any bitter juices. Rinse eggplants and pat dry.
Place eggplant halves, skin-side down in a baking pan so they fit snugly. Brush cut-sides of eggplant with olive oil, and season with salt and pepper. Bake for 20 to 30 minutes, or until soft and golden. Remove from oven and allow to cool.
Prepare the meat filling while eggplant is baking: In a small bowl, stir together the allspice, paprika and coriander. Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet. Add the onions and half of the spice mix. Cook over medium-high heat for about 8 minutes, stirring often.
Add the ground lamb (or beef), and cook until meat is crumbled and no longer pink; drain any excess grease. Add pine nuts, parsley, salt and pepper to taste. Cook another 5 to 7 minutes. Remove from heat.
For the sauce, place the remaining spice blend in a mixing bowl with the diced tomatoes and their juices, red pepper paste (or tomato paste), lemon juice (if using), sugar, and salt to taste. Mix well.
Reduce oven temperature to 375°F. Pour sauce mixture into the baking pan to surround the eggplants. Spoon lamb mixture to cover the top of each eggplant. Cover the pan with foil and bake for about 1 hour. Carefully lift foil and baste eggplants halfway through baking.
Garnish with chopped parsley. Serve warm or at room temperature with bulgur or rice pilaf, plain yogurt, and a crusty bread or Armenian pita bread.
Serves 4.

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Photo and recipe courtesy of Robyn Kalajian

allowed me to learn how to prioritize my work and how to be more independent when it comes to thinking of designs and concepts for my projects,” she said.

While Florida, and much of the world, is adhering to the stay at home orders, Gechidjian is finding the positive during this problematic period. “Having to stay at home has allowed me to really focus on my personal growth and well-being, which is something I am immensely grateful for.”

For New York native Raffie Bagrevandian, the stay at home orders pushed back his plans to return to his hometown. A resident of Fort Lauderdale for the last two years, Bagrevandian made the move for educational and professional opportunities but is staying put until it’s safe to travel back to New York City. In the mean-

time, he’s following precautions in his South Florida community.

“I’ve noticed increased usage of face masks and latex gloves for preventative measures,” said Bagrevandian. “People have also been friendlier and helping one another out.”

As an advisor in the digital field, Bagrevandian is thankful the pandemic didn’t affect his work and his projects can be completed remotely.

“Florida is home for now until we have a clearer picture of what direction this is going in,” said Bagrevandian. “This is certainly an obstacle that prevents the production of our jobs and duties as citizens, especially when we see our resources become limited, so I’m praying and thinking about the safety of people around the globe.”

Arts & Living

Nelly Uvarova

'We Will Always Find Each Other. We Proudly Carry The Banner of Being Armenian.'

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN – Years ago, a woman in Tbilisi read the coffee grounds of an Armenian woman named Gohar Khalatova, and informed her that on the face of Gohar's daughter she saw a shining star.

Years later, Gohar told her daughter Nelly: "That was about you!"

Nelly has since grown up to become a renowned theater, film and voice actress in Russia

She was born on March 14, 1980 in Mazeikiiai, Lithuania. Her father Vladimir Uvarov is an engineer-technologist; her mother, Gohar (Galina) Uvarova (Khalatova), is an economist and former sportswoman, who also taught gymnastics. Her older sister, Elena, is a designer.

Nelly was 2 when the family moved to Tbilisi. When she turned 9, Georgia entered a period of political instability, and the Uvarov family lived for five years in inter-ethnic conflicts and civil war. In 1994, they moved to Moscow as refugees, without housing, money



or work, but gradually all difficulties were overcome.

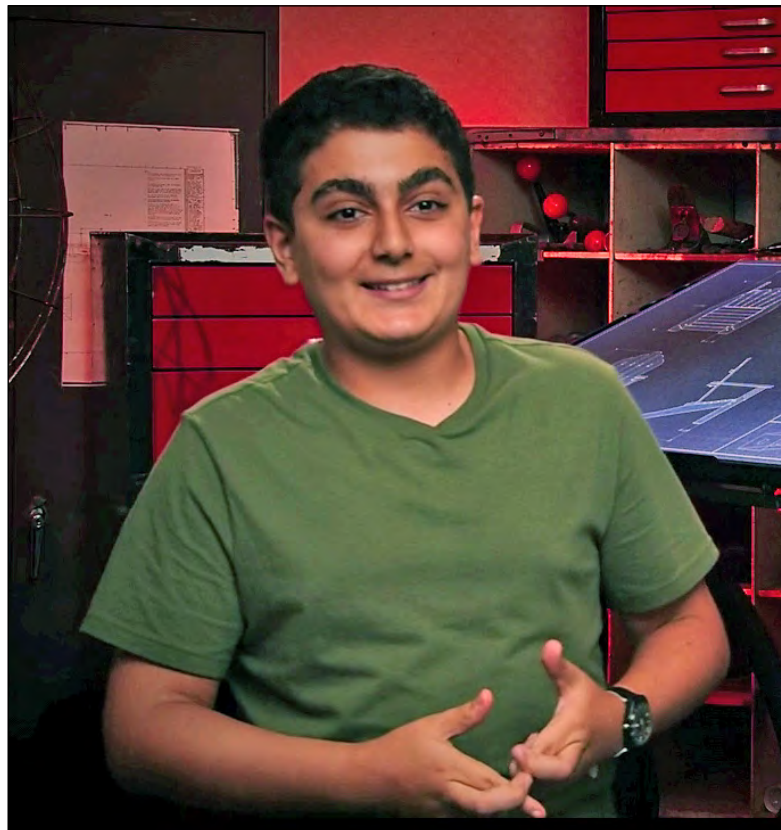
In 2001 Nelly graduated from VGIK. Since then, she has worked in the Russian Academic Youth Theatre (RAMT) as one of their leading actresses.

In 2004, Nelly received the prize for the best female performance at the Rainbow International Festival for her one-woman show, "Rules of Behavior in Modern Society." Starting in 2005, Nelly gained international recognition and acclaim as the leading role of a charming ugly girl, Katya Pushkaryova, in the TV series, "Not Born Beautiful."

Uvarova has appeared in more than 25 films and TV series, and has performed about 45 roles in productions of the Russian Academic Youth Theater and other theatres. She lives in Moscow with her husband, actor Alexander Grishin, daughter Iya and son Ignat.

Nelly and I met in Yerevan, where she came to participate a new film by Armenian-American director and actor Michael Goorjian. The role she is playing is an Armenian named Sona, who is married to a Russian. One might assume that in some ways Nelly played her mother.

see UVAROVA, page 12



Daron Yacoubian

Daron Yacoubian Named Disney+ Shop Class Champion

GLENDALÉ – Daron Yacoubian, 15, who is entering the Armenian Academy at Blair High School in Pasadena as a 10th grader next year, has won the first season of Disney+ Shop Class Competition Series. This show is aired around the world and has millions of viewers.



Daron-Yacoubian with teammate Marco Perez building their adventure fort

This series featured teams of young builders, who were tasked with designing, building, and testing unique creations. In each episode, a panel of experts evaluated and tested their work based on design creativity, and build functionality. Daron and his teammates Marco Perez, and Coach Kim Kocaya won the first

round in Episode 102 "Hole in Won" with their space themed golf course. In Episode 107 "Ready to Launch" their team advanced to the finals with their unique rocket design (see <https://mirrorspectator.com/2020/04/04/daron-yacoubian-advances-on-disney-shop-class-competition-show/>).

In the finals, Episode 108 "Build Your Own Adventure," Daron's team was named Shop Class Champions with its military-themed adventure fort. Daron is the son of Dr. Stephan and Maro Yacoubian of Glendale.



Daron Yacoubian speaking with host/actor Justin Long

NAASR Becomes Visual History Archive Full Access Site

BELMONT, Mass. – The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will feature full access to the public of the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive (VHA) of over 54,000 testimonies. One of the world's leading Armenian Studies centers, NAASR advances education and scholarship through supporting and connecting scholars globally and providing outstanding programming to the general public. NAASR plans to conduct outreach with schools, colleges, libraries, and other institutions in order to spread awareness about the availability of the VHA at NAASR's headquarters.

A designated room in NAASR's brand new headquarters – NAASR's Vartan Gregorian Building – will have access to all of the testimonies in USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive. These testimonies are from survivors and witnesses to the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, the Nanjing Massacre, Guatemalan Genocide, Anti-Rohingya Mass Violence, and Cambodian Genocide, along with testimonies of survivors of the South Sudan Civil War and Central African Republic Conflict.

"As the collections in VHA continue to grow, especially with its current collection of more than 1,000 testimonies by Richard G. Hovannisian, it is imperative that new avenues in scholarship and education make use of these rich and previously unused resources," said Stephen D. Smith, PhD, Finci-Viterbi executive director of USC Shoah Foundation and UNESCO chair on genocide education. "NAASR's obtaining access has done just that. Our goal is always to elevate these materials through collaboration."

NAASR created this special space in its new headquarters so researchers, family members of survivors, and the public could view these moving, eye-witness testimonies, study their historical contexts, and contribute to the goal of preventing future genocides.

"Fortunately, two inspiring donor families came forward to make the room a reality and to provide permanent access to this vast archive with a perpetual subscription through ProQuest," said Sarah Ignatius, Executive Director of NAASR. "We are extremely grateful to them for their vision and their generosity."

"As the family of Armenian Genocide survivor Andranik Vartanian," said Susan Vartanian Barba, who donated the perpetual subscription to the Visual History Archive in honor of Andranik and his wife Nvart, "we are pleased that his testimony and those of other survivors will be accessible in perpetuity, not only to genocide scholars, but to the general public. Access to the Visual History Archive opens the door to researchers, educators, students, and scholars to study a contextualized history through primary source testimony. In addition, future generations of Armenians will be able to connect with their ancestral past through the voices and memories of survivors, deepening their empathy, understanding, and respect for humanity."

On behalf of the Ajemian family, Lucille Ajemian donated the archive viewing room in memory of her mother Helen Paloian, her husband Gerald Ajemian, and her son John Gerald Ajemian.

"My mother was a genocide survivor who immigrated to this country as a teenager," said Lucille Ajemian, "my husband was a WWII veteran and a first-generation businessman, and my son, an M.B.A. They had a deep commitment to scholarly research and a thirst

see NAASR, page 12



ARTS & LIVING

Bartender Gegam Kazarian Mixes Love of Herbs with Drinks

By Ashley Pini

Tell me about your background; where you were born, raised and educated.

My name is Gegam Kazarian. I was born in Yerevan city, Armenia, in 1980.

When I finished high school, I started working in a Mexican restaurant to pay for my university studies. After that, I worked in many different hotels and as the time passed I realized that I had fallen in love with this profession. I worked in positions of this profession such as steward, waiter, assistant and bartender; I worked in the kitchen and in the bakery department as well. I got interested mainly in the world of gastronomy when I came to Spain at the age of 20. I started working in different places to broaden my knowledge. I also worked as a sommelier and all this acquired knowledge has helped me to become the man I am now.

There's one interesting fact I'd like to share. I think that my story in this profession started when I was 5. Back then I would enjoy smelling and mixing different products, trying to invent new flavors and smells, most of them were pretty rare. I would smell the bread I ate, or grass when I was playing outside. When I was a child I would love to eat rose petal jam that my grandmother cooked. My grandfather used to make wine and distill it. I remember always staying by his side and helping him in everything I could. So I have been experiencing the world of different fragrances since I was a child and I think that my grandparents' way of life has influenced me a lot.

One more interesting fact to talk about is my mother's habit of setting the table with precision. When I was seated at the table it was always perfectly set and I would have my special dinnerware, I remember a lot about that. I think this ritual showed me that minding each detail is essential, that's why I don't use only crystal glasses but different metals, silver, gold, copper, wood, ceramics, organic and natural materials as well and I take care of every detail when serving a drink. I buy different table wear in the countries I visit.

When I was 5, I would pick cherries with my cousins in my grandparents' garden. I would put them inside the bottle with a little bit of sugar, stir them with a cherry tree branch and leave the mix for a while in the sun. Afterwards we would drink the juice. I can certainly call it my first cocktail.

How did you get a start in this industry?

I started working in this industry 20 years ago. When I was 18, I was hired by an international Mexican restaurant as a steward. Then I started taking different courses. I was fond of the kitchen as well as of the bar.

We had international managers. My first general manager Boiko Dimitrov, he was Bulgarian and the bar manager, Biju Varghese, he was Hindu.

Then I changed my job to become a waiter, then a bartender, and then I worked in the kitchen and in the bakery. In a few years I started working as a sommelier.

I'm not sure whether it was luck or my own decision. I believe more in fate than in luck.

At what stage did you feel that this could become a career?

At first I started to work in the restaurant because I needed money to pay for my degree. I dreamed of becoming a doctor, then I wanted to become a biochemist, but as time passed I was getting more involved in the gastronomy business. When I came to Spain I didn't have opportunities to use my first degrees so I started working in hotels and in restaurants. I'd like to note that since I was a child I have been taught to treat my guests with great hospitality so I am very fond of inviting people and treating them. Armenians are very hospitable people. Hospitality is essential for me, so, when making a cocktail it becomes one of the ingredients together with my biochemistry as well as happiness and affection for my clients.

What are you most passionate about in the industry and your job in particular? What gets you motivated?

I love tasting different types of food. I enjoy experiencing different tastes and fragrances, searching and acquiring new ingredients for my

cocktails. I enjoy sharing experiences, watching how my guests enjoy those experiences and different sensations that they produce. I love to serve people and it gives me great pleasure.

I get motivated by my projects and my journeys. In my Kazari's project I have a part that's

I never imitate at any of them. I carve my own, personal path. My cocktails are more gastronomic, as I learned a lot from different chefs and pastry cooks, so they conceptually differ from other cocktails as well as containing all my experiences and all of my knowledge.

nomical problems and in 1931 the company went bankrupt. In 1933 a new company Raffles Hotel Ltd. appeared. At the start of the Japanese occupation of Singapore on February 15, 1942, it is said that the Japanese soldiers encountered the guests in Raffles Hotel danc-



Gegam Kazarian

called Kazari's Konecta where I connect different ethnic cultures, lifestyles, experiences, origins through the sense of taste. I want people to experience different sensations.

Can you briefly explain your job? What does a regular week look like?

I have to repeat that my job is all about connection, sharing experiences. To be honest I work 24/7. I open Kazari's Lab for my guests only at weekends to give them all that I have seen, eaten, experienced and created during the week. During the week I also give different trainings, events and master classes in my Kazari's Lab as well as all over the world. I travel a lot. I also work on my other projects and I prepare myself to serve my guests and my friends at the weekend.

Do you have a mentor – or an influencer that you now look up to or aspire to emulate?

I had lots of teachers when I was young and I'm constantly studying. I try to learn new things even from my clients, but my favorite teachers now are children. I graduated from the Pedagogical University and I'm also very fond of pedagogy. Sometimes I organize different training events for children and I have learnt a lot from them.

If I had to name my first mentor, it would surely be Biju Ratja, my first bar manager. He managed to inspire me the passion for this professional world and motivated me to keep on with it in Spain.

Of course there are more people who I consider to be my mentors. There are a lot of famous people among them. Lots of them became my friends. For example, a good friend of mine from Greece is Michael Menegos, Ueno San from Japan, King of cocktails – our amazing American bartender, Jeff Darry. I also trained with different famous mentors such as Steve Olsen, Kevin Terry, Stanislav Vadrna (A very good friend of mine who is dedicated to establishing international connections between Japan and Europe), Gary Regan or Philip Duff. Those professionals and good friends of mine all over the world have played an essential role in my life and have given me a lot of precious knowledge.

Is there an industry issue that you are particularly passionate about? Something you would like to see change in?

I think that the main problem is that new bartenders want to achieve a lot in a very short period of time. In some countries within a year some bartenders start calling themselves mixologists or even consultants and they become very popular posting their videos on YouTube and social networks but, to my mind, they suffer a great lack of experience. For example, I've been working in this industry for 20 years and I think that this experience is still not enough. I consider that time is very important for a person to acquire experience and knowledge. To become a real professional you have to be working for 30, 40 or 50 years. And a large number of people are only looking for fame, they get popular only by copying others and not by searching for their own way. From my point of view to become a professional bartender you have to feel the passion for this profession and to live this experience and it would be much better if everyone made their creations in their own personal way, giving their

The main change for me would be in the perception of the bar industry and gastronomy. I can't imagine gastronomy without a good cocktail. If bartenders had more knowledge and thought more about national products, spices, ingredients or herbs than alcohol, it would make me really happy. People have to pass on the knowledge about their country's ancient liquors, ingredients and products to the next generations to conserve the knowledge about them, maybe creating new cocktails from this base.

Why did you choose the year you chose [for your special cocktail? What is its relevance to you? Why is it special?

I chose the year 1887 as the year of my cocktail. In this year 4 Armenian friends Martin, Tigran, Avet and Arshak, salesmen, inaugurated Raffles Hotel in Singapore, one of the best known hotels in the world. Afterwards this hotel was taken over by many other companies. It was also used as a refuge. In 1929 during the big depression the hotel suffered serious eco-

ing one final time. Meanwhile, the staff buried the hotel silver—including the silver beef trolley—in the Palm Court.

During World War II, Raffles Hotel was renamed Syonan Ryokan, incorporating Syonan ("Light of the South"), the Japanese name for occupied Singapore, and Rryokan, the name for a traditional Japanese inn. During the liberation operation about 300 Japanese soldiers committed suicide.

In 1987, a century after it first opened, Raffles Hotel was declared a National Monument by the Singapore government.

This year is also connected to another date. In 1915 the bartender from this hotel Ngiam Tong Boon created the cocktail "Singapore Sling" – one of the most famous cocktails in the world. It is widely regarded as a national drink of the country. Primarily it's based on the liquor Cherry Herring but it also contains pineapple juice as the main ingredient, along with grenadine, lime juice and Dom Benedictine.

Another event that deeply affects me also occurred in 1915. Turks committed Armenian Genocide. More than 2 billion Armenians were killed.

So my cocktail will be inspired by these events.

Kazari Sling

Garnish: Dehydrated pineapple slice with pomegranate beans and Armenian dry cherry lavash (a traditional Armenian sweet made from fruit crushed and dried in the sun)

Method: Shake all ingredients with ice and fine strain into clay jug.

Ingredients: 60 ml Ararat Armenian brandy infused with dehydrated pineapple

22.5 ml Cherry Heering

15 ml Palo cortado sherry

20 ml Lemon juice

10 ml Natural artisan grenadine without added sugars

2 dash Thyme bitters

(All photos used in this article are from the company Kazari's Audio Visual)



ARTS & LIVING

Nelly Uvarova: 'We Will Always Find Each Other, as We Proudly Carry the Banner of Being Armenian'

UVAROVA, from page 10

So, Nelly jan, barev!

Barev dzez!

Did you know these words before, or did you learn them here?

No, of course I knew the words of welcome and gratitude in Armenian.

You are very popular in Russia. How is this expressed? Do people come to the theater "for Uvarova?"

We can say so, although it is hard for me to talk about it because I do not sit in the box office and have not any idea how it works. Yet, I can tell the theater I work in does not have a shortage of spectators; the seats are always full. I don't know, whether it is to my credit, but I do know from my fans' comments from the letters I receive. At this point, I realize that there are people who are very supportive of what I do.

Although you are not on social networking sites, how do your fans communicate with you?

I get letters in an old-fashioned way (laughs).

You became famous after the TV series, an art form some consider inferior to cinema and theater. What is your attitude to these three kinds of art that you are in?

I started my acting career in a dark time, the 1990s, when it was said that there was no cinema at all in Russia; that it is dead and could not be revived. Also as a student I received the prize for the best acting in the short film "Let's Fly!" by Anna Melikyan. At the first interview we both had, we were asked why we had chosen this profession, as the actors are not in demand and there is no movie industry. I was very young, probably naive, but I was so affected by this question. It offended me so much that I answered without thinking at all: "If we went into this profession, it will not die."

Maybe the answer was quite ambitious, but it was not because of ambition, but rather my inner conviction, out of love for the profession. Fortunately, the times have changed: there was a time when doing a TV series was not in favor, but now the border between TV and cinematic projects is blurring, and there are very high-quality TV projects. I am very pleased with this trend. At the moment when the series "Not Born Beautiful" was released, the actors who were in the TV series did not have a very good reputation, but I think 2005 just become a watershed, after which participation in the TV series ceased to be considered something shameful.

Nelly, it so happened that you made your cinema debut in Anna Melikyan's film and performed one of your best roles in Karen Oganessian's film. Although these films (by the way, both are debuts) do not have Armenian themes, however there is a parallel between the nationalities of the directors and your roots.

That's right (laughs). It is no secret that there are many Armenians in the Russian film industry, starting with the highest positions, producers and directors, therefore such meetings occur naturally. Anna Melikyan and I know each other from our professional "infancy": in VGIK she studied directing, I acting, and we maintain relations and a friendship to this day.

With Karen Oganessian we met during the casting of his film "I am Staying," one of my favorite works. We all knew this was Karen's first work and we were very careful and attentive to him on the set: the project was actually done in an atmosphere of great love, and it seems to me that when that happens, when the main motivation is not financial, a team assembles not to make money, but in sake of a work that everybody is interested in doing, under these conditions a warm product comes out.

During the filming, Karen had a birthday, and the film crew wanted to congratulate him. Actress Elena Yakovleva and I decided to surprise Karen during the difficult scene of the hero's resuscitation, when he is in a coma and Yakovleva and I are standing by his bed. We found an Armenian on the set and asked him to translate the text of our heroine into Armenian. We made a pact with the director of photography that when Karen will say "cut!," the DOP will tell him he had a problem with the take and has to do one more. When this extra take started, Yakovleva and I started performing our dialogue in Armenian. Karen was sitting with his headphones on and he did not understand what was going on: everyone was laughing at his reaction. He did not even immediately realize that the actresses suddenly started speaking Armenian.

Indeed, funny. The name Nelly is not Armenian, but is very common among the Armenians. I assume that name came from your mother's side?

It happened that my mother had a sister, Nelly, who, as a child, died during the earthquake in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, where they lived. It was important for my mother to name her daughter after her late sister, although she had not seen her. It was also important that the combination with the father's name will sound beautiful – Nelly Vladimirovna.

Please tell us about your Armenian side. What "Armenian memories" do you have from your childhood?

I grew up in Georgia, where my mother's parents, Grigor and Aghunik Khalatov lived. My grandfather was from Georgia, my grandmother - from Ashgabat. When we moved to Tbilisi, my Russian father was very well received in my mother's family (although he was kind of from another world), which I cannot say for the opposite side - for my mother it was more difficult in Russia, as my father's family it was more difficult to accept an Armenian woman than vice versa. My grandmother told me that one winter someone knocked on the door; she opened and saw on the doorstep a young man with beautiful blue eyes, with skis (in Georgia snow falls only three times a year): thus my father came to ask my mother to marry him. Somehow it all worked out. I had a very happy childhood, despite the difficulties of that time – a life without electricity, water, jobs. But my parents tried their best to keep us out of trouble. We were very friendly in the courtyard and in the school;

in my class in Tbilisi school there were 16 nationalities, to me this international community was the norm.

My grandparents talked to each other in Armenian, to us in Russian, and when there was something to hide from us, to discuss our secrets and their own, they switched to Armenian. I liked it very much, and I thought of this trick of learning Armenian and not telling anyone about it.

I remember our dinners, and then when we moved to Russia, I missed it terribly. But wherever you are, you stay exactly the way you were raised. And so far, during our family meeting, especially on New Year's Eve, there is always lavash and tolma on the table: the kitchen is preserved, which I cannot say about the songs and dances.

Speaking of another childhood episode - I was eight years old when the earthquake struck

should not be like this. Gohar replied that this is the norm for Armenian girls, and I said: "I will now call my husband, you tell him what kind of the young girls of Armenia are - with character and will!"

During the filming of this movie, you say a few phrases in Armenian. I expected you to say it with a Russian accent, but I was pleasantly surprised that your Armenian speech sounded like Tbilisi Armenians.

This is not surprising, because there were many Armenians around me in Georgia, and now there are many of them in Moscow as well. I have got a musical ear; I think I have got an Armenian speech somewhere in the cerebral cortex of my brain. At first I was afraid that I would have to speak Armenian, only a couple of words maybe, but a few phrases seemed complicated to me. The beautiful actress Tatev Hovakimyan from Yerevan taught me through



Nelly Uvarova Photo by Hayk Papikyan

Armenia, which was felt in Tbilisi. I was home alone, and when it happened, I ran outside. We did not have any damage, but then we found out what happened in Armenia, we were very worried about how to help. I remember there was a meeting in the family, everyone gathered at the big table in the grandmother's apartment and agreed that each family member would take the children who were left without parents after the earthquake. I was really looking forward to having someone in our family to whom we would give family warmth, but in the end, it did not work out, because the Armenian government at the time decided that all the orphaned children would stay in Armenia.

You have probably been told more than once that you have Armenian eyes, that even when you smile, your eyes are sad.

Yes, at the institute, a teacher told me: "Here, all the sorrow of the Armenian people is in Nelly's eyes!"

What else is Armenian in Nelly Uvarova's human and artistic nature?

Perhaps, the temperament. When sometimes I argue with my husband, he jokes and says: "Look, you are an Oriental woman, why are you behaving like this? You must be obedient, listen quietly to me, look at the floor and agree with everything!" And I ask: "Show me where have you seen such Armenian women?" When I was in Yerevan six months ago on a guest trip, we had volunteers with us. I was accompanied and helped by young girl named Gohar, my mother's namesake. I was astonished to learn that she was still in high school being so active being able to do anything, speaking several languages, treating everyone with respect, but on an equal footing. I had a master class at the Institute of Theater and Film, and I was surprised again to see that 80 percent of the audience was girls – future directors, producers – and they all were active, asking questions. I told Gohar that when I talked to her, I thought she was an exception, but I was struck again by this activity among the female population. Even I am hostage to the myth that Armenian women

the Internet: she was very demanding. And now I am not scared at all, I have listened a lot of people talk to each other, and Armenian has stopped being something foreign to me.

The current project, for which you are invited to Armenia, is being carried out against the backdrop of the misfortune that has befallen all humanity. The project is still ongoing, but what are your impressions?

I keep thinking that if the shooting had started literally two or three days later, I would not be here, but I happen to be here. My family is in Moscow, it is not easy to be apart from the family when there is a general panic. But on the set, most people are conscientious and cautious, and I do not see anyone getting discouraged.

Especially with the women.

Right (laughs). Actually, I was pleasantly surprised that somehow everything was fine. There is a lot of talk, as it seems at first, but everything is done, everyone is united in a common cause: I like when people are focused on a cause. There is this feeling inside the group that as long as we are on the set, we are all dealing with our fears and our problems, and we are all united by a common idea, which is a personal encouragement to me. At this point, I do not think my being here is random, and I do not blame myself for not being home at such a difficult moment. And it is also nice that the project has an international team: the director, producer and cameramen are from the United States, there is an actor from Spain: some are of Armenian origin and there are such connections through common roots. It seems to me that not all nations, but wherever in the world you work, you always know that there is an Armenian in the film crew, and that we will always find each other, as we proudly carry the banner of being Armenian. You meet people, you do not ask about their ethnicity, that is not the main thing, but you always know the fact that there is an Armenian around you, even if he does not look Armenian. This desire for self-identification and unification is very characteristic for us.

NAASR Becomes Visual History Archive Full Access Site

NAASR, from page 10

for continued learning. It is our hope that this viewing room serves as a resource to use the lessons from the past to point towards a better future."

History:

This marks the culmination of more than ten years of conversations and planning at NAASR. In 2009, J. Michael Hagopian, the founder of the Armenian Film Foundation (AFF) as well as NAASR's first West Coast board member in the late 1950's, was working toward having copies of the Armenian Genocide survivor testimonies he had filmed years before digitized and integrated into USC Shoah Foundation's VHA. He expressed his hope to NAASR's leadership that one day there would be a place where this material could be accessed. The idea continued to stay alive in ongoing discussions with the AFF's new leadership, Carla Garapedian and Jerry Papazian. It's also noteworthy that survivor Andranik Vartanian's testimony, whose name is honored by perpetual access, lives in the VHA as part of the AFF's collection.



Tufts Art Historian Maranci Discovers Ani Cathedral Wall Paintings and More

DISCOVERY, from page 1

some of this art and an inscription, and she has done this all from her home in Somerville, near Boston.

It began last summer, Maranci wrote, when she was reading an undergraduate student thesis about the medieval Armenian city of Ani. The author, Atineh Movsessian, repeated the assertion of the famous art historian Sirarpie Der Nersessian that there is little extant evidence of Armenian wall paintings from the tenth century, and this spurred Maranci to relook at pictures she had taken of churches over the years.

Several years earlier, in her study of the Armenian church of Mren (located in Kars province of the Republic of Turkey), she had used image adjustment software, Photoshop, on photographs she had taken during a visit there. Her naked eye was unable to make out many details that the graphics editor made discernible. With some software adjustments, she was able to reconstruct the visual program of images and inscriptions in the church.

This experience led Maranci to review her photographs of the cathedral at Ani, the medieval capital of the Armenian Bagratuni kingdom. This led to the discovery of a naturalistically depicted image of an ox in the cathedral's apse, which was hitherto unknown. As an experienced researcher in the field of Armenian art, Maranci said, "it was to my astonishment that I was confronted with this ox, no less because it appears in the most famous of Armenian churches (or at least one of the top ten)."

She wagered it may not have been seen since being whitewashed when the cathedral was turned into a mosque, perhaps as early as the 11th century. This ox became the key to decoding a series of images as well as to discovering a previously unknown Biblical inscription.

The cathedral at Ani was begun in 989 under the patronage of King Smbat Bagratuni by the famous architect Trdat, and completed in 1001 with the support of Smbat's sister-in-law Queen Katramide. Although architecturally the cathedral is well studied, the internal decorations



The location of the image of the ox, at lower right

have largely been passed over, in part because visitors during the past several centuries have had difficulty in making them out and in part because Armenian wall paintings in general have not been a subject of great study. Maranci speculated that the lack of attention to this topic may be because there are so few known examples surviving of Armenian wall paintings before the 17th century, 20 or 25 in all.

Their poor condition, plus the possibly mistaken belief that Armenians were reluctant to

paint and use icons in their churches in medieval times, further discouraged attention, Maranci said.

Maranci explained that her work on each image with Photoshop was laborious, altering the tonal ranges and colors, and using the Inversion tool to obtain more details, while not adding or subtracting any isolated points, lines or zones. She said, "The process of recovering and identifying the images took several weeks, as well as feedback from many viewers."

Knowledge of the conventions of medieval Christian iconography helped greatly in the reconstructive process, as it allows educated suppositions about the contents of the imagery. For example, in addition to the ox, remnants of a throne on the cathedral's wall can be seen even to the naked eye. Maranci said that she knew that an ox appears next to a throne only two times in the Bible, in the Vision of Ezekiel and in Revelations (the Gospel of John). The throne usually is surrounded by three other figures, a man or angel, an eagle and a lion. The four figures symbolize the four evangelists, Luke, Matthew, John and Mark, and are often arranged in a particular order. Indeed, these figures can be identified tentatively at the Ani cathedral too.

Sometimes detective work is also necessary. Six lines of lettering in Classical Armenian on a scroll painted on the south wall of the apse are hard to make out except for two words, ՄԵՐՉԵԱԼ (having approached), and the ending of the last line, Ա[ստուծոյ], or "of God."

Maranci said that knowing this was most likely a scriptural text, she did a biblical word search on arak29.am, and found 18 occurrences of ՄԵՐՉԵԱԼ. Only one however was in a sentence ending in "of God," so that allowed her to conclude that the painted inscription was the closing of Luke 10:11 "բայց զայս գիտասցիք

զի մերձեալ է արքայութիւն Աստուծոյ" (... but you shall know this; that the Kingdom of God has come near).

Maranci presented the results of her Ani cathedral investigations at Yerevan's Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, commonly referred to as the Matenadaran, on February 28. She was planning to give some lectures on the images of the cathedral in the US too, and while these have been postponed or cancelled due to COVID-19, she soon will give a virtual talk for the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research. She also is publishing an article on this topic in the *Revue des études arméniennes*. One important conclusion she draws is the need to work to save what is left of the cultural legacy of Ani. She said in her lecture notes, which she was kind enough to show to this author, that "the wall paintings of Ani and its environs are in urgent need of scientific attention, using the best methods of documentation, stabilization, conservation, investigation, and monitoring. Ani's status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site will hopefully give impetus to such work."

Now that Maranci, like the rest of us, is in lockdown mode due to the pandemic, she has used the abovementioned approach of software enhancement of photographs to study other sites. She has found major zones of painting at the nearby Church of St. Gregory Abughamrents at Ani and the nearby monastery of Horomos, where the walls of the churches are covered with plaster.

Although her upcoming trip to Hromkla (present-day Rumkale in Turkey, near Aintab/Gaziantep), a former seat of the Armenian Catholicosate, had to be postponed, she was able to study photographs of the site. An image in a Turkish book of one of the walls of the main gateway of the site allowed her to decipher part of a large carved inscription. It named a Hohannes [ՅՈՀԱՆՆԷՍ], who most likely is Catholicos Hovhannes Ssetsi (1203-1221). The latter, according to medieval sources, renovated and rebuilt the site but this inscription, Maranci wrote, had never been noticed before.

Maranci encourages those of us facing travel restrictions, exclaiming, "For everyone who has travelled and photographed churches, inscriptions, paintings – you can review them and discover new things—all you need is a computer and some curiosity!"



The image of an ox from the apse of the Ani cathedral



COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

US-Turkey Relations Gradually Warming Up

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Turkey's foreign policy emanates from and is shaped by its geostrategic position, which has helped that country to play antagonistic and regional world powers against one another. That policy is not President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's invention. It was implemented by Ottoman sultans as well as by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Erdogan has further refined that policy, and, to his credit, he has been exercising that policy rather skillfully, if at extreme risk.

Once upon a time, the destiny of Armenia and Armenians was one of the pawns of that balancing act, particularly after the plight of the Ottoman Armenians became an object of international negotiations in 1878. By the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish war, the Tsarist forces had advanced to the outskirts of Istanbul, and a treaty was signed at San Stefano. Article 16 of this treaty guaranteed reforms in the Armenian provinces by the sultan, who would be accountable to Moscow.

The Treaty of Berlin, which followed that of San Stefano the same year, literally bartered the issue of reforms for the island of Cyprus. The sultan ceded the latter to Great Britain in exchange for a better deal, which was embodied in Article 61 of the new treaty.

Even today, much of Armenia's fortunes are dependent on which way Turkey's foreign policy swings. Armenia benefits from the US when US-Turkey relations are strained. Conversely, Armenia becomes a beneficiary when Armenia's strategic ally, Russia, is at odds with Ankara. Recognition of the Armenian Genocide, long stalled in Congress, was fast-tracked when Turkey pushed the envelope too far. The reason the executive branch of the US government, meaning President Donald Trump, did not follow suit, was because the US was reluctant to give away the entire stock of its leverage on Turkey. And indeed, President Trump maintained his personal friendship with Erdogan despite all the mischief of the latter, to be used for the initial steps of warming relations between the two countries.

The great powers become involved in the Middle East by decapitating stable rulers and as a result created mayhem to justify accusations that the peoples there are composed of medieval clans and thus incapable of self-rule.

Turkey is one country which has benefitted from that managed chaos. Having joined NATO, Ankara has used the alliance to promote and achieve its selfish goals. In the process, Turkey strained its relations with the other NATO member states. Its incursions in Cyprus, Iraq and Libya were tolerated because Ankara in each case was able to convince its allies to accept that it was acting on behalf of the alliance, or, conversely, crying wolf that its interests as a NATO member were being threatened.

Turkey stretched that line too far when it invaded Syria and invoked Article 4 of the North Atlantic treaty, which states that a member state can claim that it took action because its territory was threatened. This time around, it was caught red-handed because the action was a brazen aggression against a neighboring country. When Ankara invoked Article 4, it received some consoling words, and nothing more. Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's secretary general, blamed Russia and Syria for having slaughtered Turkish forces, but made clear that no military assistance was forthcoming.

Before reaching that point, Turkey had cooperated with Russia and Iran, undermining US interests. During that time, while the US was effectively fighting ISIS forces and supporting Kurds in Syria (the YPG), Turkey weighed in on the other side of the equation.

At present, the war in Syria is at a standstill, with Idlib surrounded by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces, supported by Russia and Iran, while Turkey's proxy forces are there mixed in with thousands of refugees. The US had withdrawn its forces from northern Syria, throwing its Kurdish allies under the bus while allowing Mr. Trump to state that the "Kurds were

fighting for their own land."

Turkish-Russian relations soured after the slaughter of Turkish soldiers as well as the failure of the Astana agreement to ensure a ceasefire.

Washington would not have disassociated itself from Turkish adventures had it not been for the Israeli element. Mr. Erdogan miscalculated his actions by continuing his anti-Israeli rhetoric. This issue is not covered by news outlets or commentators, with arguments begin made under the euphemism of "US interests in the region."

Although Turkey and Russia share many interests and their mutual trade is moving towards the benchmark of \$100 billion, politically they are working at cross-purposes. Despite its substantial trade with Russia, Turkey needs US support for its faltering currency and banking system. Its relationship with Russia has hit a snag also in Libya, where Russia is supporting General Haftar, who has vowed to topple the government of general accord, supported by Turkey. Ankara was expecting Russia to discontinue its support for Haftar, but to no avail. Therefore, the short-lived honeymoon between the two powers has outlived its usefulness.

While Ankara needs the US, the latter's policy is turning out to need Ankara. Indeed, the US has developed an obsessive pol-



icy of containing Iran, which threatens so-called "US interests in the region." There are three options under consideration: attack Iran militarily, engage its proxies in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen, or delegate the mission to Turkey. The latter may flirt with the idea, but as its policies have demonstrated, it will not go beyond a certain point to accommodate an ally. But if that option gains prominence, the US may take the bait.

It has already been softening its position on the Russian-made S400 missiles. If Ankara mothballs the missiles, Washington may look the other way and reinvoke Ankara to the program of fifth-generation F35 fighter jets, from which Ankara was evicted when it finalized its arms deal with Russia.

Turkey shipped two plane-loads of medical equipment to the US. Originally these supplies were to have been sold, but at the last minute they were turned into Ankara's gift to the US in the fight against the coronavirus. What is more significant is that the cargo is accompanied by a letter from President Erdogan to President Trump indicating that "an atmosphere of cooperation has been created by the pandemic."

It has become clear that the mood is changing in Ankara as well as in Washington. Mr. Erdogan pushed his luck as far as he could. As arrogant as he is, he is not insane enough to try to go beyond the "red lines." Now he has found the limit of Washington's tolerance. Incidentally, Mr. Erdogan has toned down his rhetoric against Israel, realizing full well the significance of US-Israeli relations.

On the one hand, his relations are becoming strained with Russia, and maybe down the road with Iran as well, in deference to the US. On the other hand, Washington and Ankara have been exploring and finalizing areas in which they need each other.

Turkey's pendulum is definitely swinging towards the West, and towards the US in particular.

Indications are coming to light that we will have to wait for another US president who will have the political will to use the term genocide.

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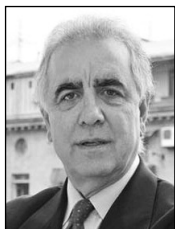
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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

COVID-19 Provided Opportunity To Pursue the Armenian Cause Online

The coronavirus pandemic disrupted the traditional plans of Armenians around the world to commemorate the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on April 24. However, very quickly Armenians discovered new ways to commemorate the Genocide by changing the street protests and large gatherings to online marches and Internet programs. In the future, when this pandemic is over, Armenians can use some of the new Internet and video methods on April 24 in addition to the public events.

This year, Armenians in various countries carried out virtual programs on April 24 instead of the traditional street protests and indoor commemorative events. Today I will focus on one of these programs, the HyeID virtual march.

HyeID is a Glendale-based non-profit organization that was formed three years ago to plan the future Diaspora Armenian Parliament. This year, the HyeID group organized a virtual commemoration during the week of April 24, starting on April 22. Within a few days, over 341,000 Armenians and some non-Armenians from around the world endorsed the following message on April 24. Hyeid.org: “We have to stay home this April 24, but we join the Online March. We demand justice for Turkey’s Genocide of 1.5 million Armenians in 1915.”

Within a few hours of making this website public, it came under persistent and massive attack from Azerbaijan and Turkey trying to hack the site. Fortunately, HyeID board member Aram Ter-Martirosyan, a software engineer, and his team, reacted quickly by blocking the hacking efforts. Such an organized hacking attack could have only come from the governments of Azerbaijan and Turkey. This is called “Denial-

of-service attacks” which Wikipedia describes as “a cyber-attack in which the perpetrator seeks to make a machine or network resource unavailable to its intended users by temporarily or indefinitely disrupting services of a host connected to the internet. Denial of service is typically accomplished by flooding the targeted machine or resource with superfluous requests in an attempt to overload systems and prevent some or all legitimate requests from being fulfilled.” By working around the clock for two nights, Ter-Martirosyan’s staff was able to block the flood of attacks on the April 24 link.

Another unfortunate disruptive act was caused by Google which blocked the HyeID app on Google Play that was created by Ter-Martirosyan and his staff. The Turkish and Azeri hackers, having failed in their disruptive efforts, probably complained to Google to remove the app that powered the April 24 program. Google’s negative action significantly limited the number of online march participants.

Google sent the following offensive message to Aram: “We don’t allow apps that lack reasonable sensitivity towards or capitalize on a natural disaster, atrocity, conflict, death, or other tragic event.” Google also blocked the Google account of Aram’s company, ConnectTo Communications, Inc., disrupting and causing damage to his business. Aram immediately filed an appeal with Google, advising that the State of California, where Google is headquartered, and the United States had recognized the Armenian Genocide. Google has yet to respond to Aram’s appeal. I suggest that HyeID or Aram file a lawsuit against Google to revoke its wrongful decision on the app.

The HyeID group also posted its April 24 link on Facebook, generating over 341,000 participants from 198 countries and territories, which included 310,000 Armenians and 41,000 non-Armenians. A major achievement was that Apple Store ranked the April 24 app as the top 10 downloaded app in the world for iPhones and iPads.

Besides publicizing the Armenian Genocide to 41,000 non-Armenians around the world, a by-product of this effort was that for the first time we discovered that there are Armenians in 198 countries and territories.

The HyeID group was ecstatic that such a large number of Armenians and non-Armenians participated in the April 24 virtual march. Even though this figure is far below the approximately 10 million Armenians worldwide, the HyeID group was surprised to find out that Armenians were dis-

persed in close to 200 countries. Here is the number of participants in some of the countries/territories:

Russia: 121,415 Armenians; 10,677 non-Armenians.
Armenia: 54,065 Armenians; 3,760 non-Armenians.
United States: 50,390 Armenians; 4,071 non-Armenians.
France: 13,476 Armenians; 1,797 non-Armenians.
Georgia: 9,917 Armenians; 1,049 non-Armenians.
Lebanon: 6,016 Armenians; 828 non-Armenians.
Canada: 5,598 Armenians; 373 non-Armenians.
Belgium: 4,565 Armenians; 313 non-Armenians.
Iran: 4,440 Armenians; 441 non-Armenians.
Germany: 3,748 Armenians; 522 non-Armenians.
Argentina: 3,547 Armenians; 966 non-Armenians.
Netherlands: 2,962 Armenians; 230 non-Armenians.
Ukraine: 2,885 Armenians; 416 non-Armenians.
Spain: 2,473 Armenians; 291 non-Armenians.
Greece: 1,747 Armenians; 187 non-Armenians.
United Kingdom: 1,664 Armenians; 266 non-Armenians.
Austria: 1,223 Armenians; 51 non-Armenians.
United Arab Emirates: 1,174 Armenians; 205 non-Armenians.

Australia: 1,012 Armenians; 61 non-Armenians.
Syria: 1,010 Armenians; 83 non-Armenians.
Artsakh: 961 Armenians; 177 non-Armenians.
Cyprus: 872 Armenians; 77 non-Armenians.
Turkey: 795 Armenians; 410 non-Armenians.
Poland: 651 Armenians; 475 non-Armenians.
Switzerland: 611 Armenians; 156 non-Armenians.
Egypt: 425 Armenians; 85 non-Armenians.
Azerbaijan: 201 Armenians; 99 non-Armenians.
Nakhichevan: 100 Armenians; 33 non-Armenians.

Interestingly, there are a handful of Armenian participants in such unexpected places as: Mongolia, Northern Mariana Islands, Wake Island, Indonesia, Wallis and Futuna, American Samoa, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji, Antarctica, Libya, Algeria, Mali, Madagascar, Mauritius, Chad, Tanzania, Congo, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Zambia, Mozambique, Tanzania, South Africa, Central African Republic, Maldives, Iceland and Greenland.

To find out the results of the online march in your own country and city, please go to the interactive report: www.HyeID.org. You can also learn the number of participants near you by selecting the distance from your area. As the saying goes, “amen degh Hay ga” [Armenians are everywhere].

One Hundred Years on, Let's Finally Recognize the Armenian Genocide

By Stephan Pechdimaldji

In her most recent book, *The Education of an Idealist*, Samantha Power dedicates significant time to the Armenian Genocide. She advocated for its recognition before joining the Obama administration, then failed to do so while serving as a special assistant to the president on the National Security Council and then as ambassador to the United Nations.

As part of her ongoing apology tour, Power has argued that she tried to strike the right balance between idealism and realism. In the end, she concluded that the politics of genocide was too complicated.

Power’s book came out at the same time Congress passed landmark nonbinding resolutions last year that formally affirmed recognition and defined American policy on the Armenian Genocide as the systematic mass extermination of 1.5 million Armenians by the Ottoman Turks from 1915 to 1923.

As a first-generation Armenian-American and grandson of survivors of the Armenian Genocide, this historic decision was something I had been waiting for my entire life. I wanted to know that the stories about how my grandfather, Haroutiun Toufayan, hid in a haystack for more than 40 days from Turkish soldiers while his father and brother were taken away (never to be seen or heard from again) had not been told in vain.

Unfortunately, that sense of euphoria and jubilation quickly turned to skepticism and doubt. After all, this wasn’t the first time Congress had recognized the Genocide. We had been down this road before when similar acknowledgments had been made in 1951 and 1984 and by Ronald Reagan early

in his presidency. There were multiple reports that the Trump White House sought to block the resolution on the Senate floor so as to appease Turkey’s President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Ankara officially responded by calling the resolutions political theater, claiming they had been proposed merely because of heightened tensions between the United States and Turkey over that country’s invasion of Syria and purchase of a Russian S-400 missile system. It was also widely whispered that Democrats were trying to send a message to President Trump by sabotaging his budding relationship with Erdogan. It reminded me of how political this issue had become.

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the Armenian Genocide has increasingly become the “political” one. We’ve seen presidential candidates on the campaign trail looking for votes and money promise recognition, only to capitulate to Turkish pressure once in office.

To understand why Turkey continues to deny its role in orchestrating the first genocide of the 20th century, and Washington’s complicity in that denial, one must examine the political machinations of the Cold War and America’s War on Terror.

In seeking not to upset Turkey for geopolitical reasons, the U.S. has avoided holding Turkey culpable for these atrocities and crimes against humanity. During the Cold War, the U.S. would often claim that it was not in our national interest to do so because Turkey was a NATO ally, strategically located near the Soviet Union. When the Cold War ended, the rationale turned to the War on Terror and Turkey’s importance as a launching pad for U.S. airstrikes against ISIS and other Islamic fundamentalists from the Incirlik Air Base.

Following the attacks of 9/11, Washington even went so far

as to cite Turkey as a model democracy in the Middle East, despite the country’s poor record on human rights and free speech. It all boils down to Turkey taking advantage of its geopolitical position to influence how it wants the world to see it. Unfortunately, perception is reality when it comes to Turkey. It’s one of the reasons the Turkish government spends so much money each year on lobbyists to manufacture and shape Turkey’s image.

Sadly, this issue has become a political football where politicians use empty threats to gain leverage with Turkey. Even Israel, a country founded in the wake of genocide, has used the Armenian Genocide as a political cudgel when dealing with Turkey. Last year, for example, lawmakers voted to debate recognition of the Armenian Genocide in the Knesset as relations between Israel and Turkey deteriorated over unrelated matters. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s son even took to social media to accuse Turkey of genocide.

What politicians fail to understand is that genocide isn’t a political issue – it’s a human rights issue. Political expediency should play no role in this debate. For far too long, we’ve seen Turkish subterfuge define this issue for U.S. policymakers, who invariably acquiesce to Turkey’s wishes. When decisions are being made to score political points, it then opens lawmakers up to questions around the authenticity of those outcomes.

What’s more, it sows doubt about their intentions and can play right into the hands of deceitful actors. At a time when trust in our government leaders is at a nadir, we should be vigilant in holding autocrats like Erdogan accountable for his country’s actions and history. Our abrogation of that responsibility only adds to Turkey’s resolve, giving it cover to question the sincerity of our motives.

It’s incredible the amount of power and sway that Turkey has over Washington, D.C. when it comes to dictating foreign policy. Are we to take guidance from a country that purports to be a democracy when more journalists sit in Turkish jails than anywhere else in the world? Are we going to take their word over ours?

Today marks the Armenian Genocide’s 105th anniversary. It’s high time that the U.S. honor and acknowledge this Genocide – not because it serves a political purpose, party, or foreign government, but because it is the right thing to do.

We owe it to my grandfather, as well as the survivors and victims of all genocides.

(Stephan Pechdimaldji is a public relations professional who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. This opinion piece was originally published in the *Washington Examiner* newspaper on April 24.)

Trump to Tap DOJ Lawyer Hovakimian as National Intelligence General Counsel

By Daniel Lippman

WASHINGTON (Politico) – The White House has picked a top Justice Department lawyer to serve as the new general counsel of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), according to two senior administration officials on May 4.

Patrick Hovakimian, the chief of staff to Deputy Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen, will be nominated to ODNI to serve as the intelligence community’s top lawyer, according to the officials. In his current role, he advises Rosen and Attorney General Bill Barr on department operations, policy and specific cases.

He also works closely with Rosen on matters that come before the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States and other counterterrorism and counterintelligence issues, including sitting in when the FBI briefs him. He also played an instrumental role in DOJ’s handling of last December’s shooting by Saudi students at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Fla.

From October 2018 to May 2019, he was DOJ’s director of counter transnational organized crime, where he helped coordinate department policy on the issue and worked closely with Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control and Financial Crimes Enforcement Network and intelligence agencies that work on fighting such crime. Hovakimian has been Senate-confirmed before; he’s a commissioner of the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission of the ‘US, and is expected to continue in that role.

Brad Brooker currently serves as ODNI’s acting general counsel. He temporarily stepped into the role in March, after former general counsel Jason Klitenic left to return to the private sector.

Last September, Klitenic briefly got wrapped up in the early stages of President Donald Trump’s impeachment probe when he consulted with the Justice Department and decided that a whistleblower complaint that ODNI’s inspector general, Michael Atkinson, had deemed “urgent” should not be provided to Congress. Atkinson was fired by Trump last month.



Patrick Hovakimian

With the Senate returning to Washington on Monday, Trump’s nominee to be DNI, Rep. John Ratcliffe (R-Texas), is expected to get a hearing on Tuesday from the Senate Intelligence Committee. If confirmed, Ratcliffe would replace acting DNI Richard

Grenell, who’s also the US ambassador to Germany.

Hovakimian started working in 2014 as assistant US attorney in San Diego, where he was the co-lead counsel on the “Fat Leonard” case, a major multinational bribery and fraud in East Asia, where he got a lot of experience working with the Department of Defense. He also helped coordinate law enforcement operations and investigations overseas in that role.

When he went to Washington to work for the Trump administration, Hovakimian worked as senior counsel to then-Associate Attorney General Rachel Brand. He attended Stanford Law School and also got a masters degree in political theory from the University of Oxford, where he was a Marshall scholar. He received a bachelor’s degree in politics from Occidental College, graduating summa cum laude.

According to documents previously submitted for his Senate confirmation, Hovakimian is a Federalist Society member and lifelong Republican who volunteered for the McCain and Romney presidential campaigns.

Former NJ Basketball Star Back Home after Season Cut Short by Coronavirus in France

By Greg Tartaglia

RAMAPO, N.J. (Northjersey.com) – Sarah Halejian is facing the possibility that the coronavirus outbreak has brought an end to her professional basketball career.

The Ramapo High School graduate is deeply grateful that it has not taken away any of the people closest to her.



Former Ramapo basketball player Sarah Halejian plays overseas in France. (Photo: Courtesy of Toulouse Metropole Basketball)

Halejian, 27, spent the past winter playing with Toulouse Metropole in France’s Ligue 2. The league suspended play not long after the NBA suspended its season after Rudy Gobert tested positive for the virus. Ligue 2 playoffs typically last until mid-May.

Her original return flight to the U.S. had been scheduled for June 2. When the State

Department issued its March 19 recommendation for Americans traveling abroad to return stateside, Halejian’s agent helped make arrangements for her homecoming.

“It was about eight days after I got home that they cancelled the rest of the league’s season,” she said. “It was definitely the smart choice to come home when I did.”

The youngest of three siblings arrived home in Wyckoff the same day that her 29-year-old brother, Eric, came back from New York City. Both self-quarantined for two weeks.

They and sister Alexis, 35, who lives in Los Angeles, all were healthy as of Easter Sunday.

“You realize even more how important it is to be close to your family and your friends in crazy times like this,” Sarah said. “And times like this show just how short life can be.”

While all three Halejians played basketball at Ramapo, it was Sarah who graduated as the Franklin Lakes school’s all-time leading scorer in 2011.

She was named North Jersey Player of the Year as a sophomore and a junior, led the Raiders to a pair of Bergen County championships and finished with 1,843 points. All that earned her a place on the All-Decade first team.

A four-year career at Yale followed. She was named captain of the team as a senior but suffered a torn ACL midway through that season.

“I had goals of playing professionally and

overseas,” Halejian said. “So my Yale coach at the time actually recommended I take the next year to rehab and get healthy, but also get some exposure over in Europe.”

She spent her first postgraduate year at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, earning a master’s degree in sports management and playing for the school’s basketball team.

Her first pro season was with Switzerland’s BC Winterthur, near Zurich, in 2016-17. The game also took her to Australia for two seasons before she landed with Toulouse Metropole.

“Here, after you finish college, besides the WNBA, there’s not really anything else for these female players,” Halejian said.

“But in Europe, it’s way different. [Most countries] don’t have college or university teams. So I’ve had some teammates who, they started playing professionally at age 17, age 18, and they play for about 10 years professionally.”

The 5-foot-9 guard just completed her fifth pro season. She had the top shooting percentage

(59.3) and No. 2 scoring average (10.0) on Toulouse Metropole, according to eurobasket.com. That came on the heels of a 2018-19 campaign in which she averaged 18.8 points and 5.9 assists for Australia’s Casey Cavaliers.

“This whole thing was interesting timing for me,” Halejian said, “especially because I kind of went into this past season in France thinking it would be my last season anyway.

“So, I don’t know if it’s a sign that it’s just meant to be my last year, but... I think a five-year run has been pretty amazing, and it’s looking likely that I’ll probably hang them up now.”

Halejian noted that none of her teammates had been infected at the time she left Toulouse – one more reason she considers herself “very, very lucky.”

“It’s been an amazing experience,” she said of her pro career. “But eventually, [I wanted] to be back home and start working, and have a little stability in my life. The main thing is just being close to my family and friends again.”



Startup Flight Hunter Seeks to Become Aerial Uber

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – The Armenian startup Flight Hunter accepts bookings for organizing charter flights to Yerevan from around the world. As the company reports, Flight Hunter was created two years ago, and tries to develop a platform aiming to provide new opportunities for spontaneous travelers and adventure seekers through offering tickets just from 4-5 hours before the flight with the minimum price.

Considering the fact that air carriers have suspended their regular flights and small air companies went bankrupt, millions of people still need to move from one part of the world to another. That is why the company has decided to change its business model, allowing potential passengers to book charter flights through the platform. The company will gather the bookings and will conduct the charter flight once there are enough applications for a certain destination. Those passengers whose requests are not enough to conduct the flight will be offered nearby destinations as an alternative.

Lithuanian Officials Extend Condolences

VILNIUS, Lithuania (Armenpress) – Gintaras Grusas, the archbishop of Vilnius, issued an address on the occasion of the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

“Numerous tragedies occurred during the last century, people were killed. Let’s pray for the Armenian people and the memory of the victims. Let’s recall all the victims of the last century, those who appeared in the epicenter of trials and sacrificed their lives.”

In addition, Algis Kaseta, the mayor of Varena, issued a message. “Today marks the 105th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. This date is important and worth mentioning.

The date is important, as at the beginning of the 20th century, the crimes against the Armenian people – which resulted in the deaths of millions of people, the expulsion from their land, the destruction of culture – were not properly assessed by the world community. This had provoked other heinous crimes – Nazi crimes against the Jewish people, Holocaust, and a whole host of crimes committed by other dictatorships against the ethnic and social groups.”

In 2005, the parliament of the Republic of Lithuania acknowledged the fact of the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire.