

## Boston Armenian-Owned Properties Damaged During May 31 Violence

**By Aram Arkun**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

the Back Bay and Downtown Crossing areas, as well as vandalism and damage in three parks. While Boston Mayor Marty Walsh praised those who peacefully protested, he said, "what happened in downtown Boston was an attack on Boston and its values,"

BOSTON — Peaceful Boston protests by thousands of people sparked by the death of George Floyd and other black Americans on Sunday, May 31 ended up in violence and the looting that night of dozens of businesses in

harming the worthy cause of the protestors. Among the Armenian business owners affected was the Talanian family, which through C. Talanian Realty owns and manages one of the largest private portfolios of property in the Back Bay, according to its website (<http://ctalanianrealty.com/>).

Charles M. Talanian is the president of the firm. He said this week, "Most people think I deal with all the hoity-toity high end stuff. Yeah, I have Dolce Gabbana, UGG, Longchamp, La Perla, H&M, but that is less than 10 percent. Most of what I have are mom-and-pop shops."

He added, "Oftentimes a person comes with a dream and one month's rent and that's about it. They try. They want to get into business. I admire these people."

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## Ohanian Says He Stepped Down from Reddit Board to Help 'Make a Better World' For Daughter Olympia

**By Maria Pasquini**

LOS ANGELES (*People*) — Alexis Ohanian is committed to helping make the world a better place for all, including his daughter Alexis Olympia.

On June 5, the Reddit co-founder and executive chairman, 37, announced his resignation from the company's board, encouraging his colleagues to hire a black candidate to replace him. The following day he sat down with wife Serena Williams to have an in-depth discussion about what motivated him to take a stand.

see OHANIAN, page 13



Alexis Ohanian with his daughter, Olympia

## Genocide, Holocaust Education Bill Passes Colorado House

DENVER (Combined Sources) — The Colorado House of Representatives unanimously passed a bill on Friday, June 3, to require that high schoolers study genocide and the Holocaust in order to graduate.

"Ignoring the darkest, most harrowing chapters of our history for the sake of temporary comfort will only lead to history tragically repeating itself," said Rep. Dafna Michaelson Jenet, D-Commerce City, one of

the proposal's sponsors. "Teaching our high school students about the horrors of the Holocaust and the genocides that have occurred across history and around the world will no doubt lead to a better informed, hopefully more compassionate and conscientious Coloradans down the road."

House Bill 1336 directs the State Board of Education to adopt learning standards by July 1, 2021, and for school districts to

implement their genocide curriculum by the 2023-2024 school year.

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum reports that 12 states require schools to teach about the Holocaust. Those states are California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island and Virginia.

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## CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

### Hard-Hit British Armenians Deal With Pandemic

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

LONDON, ENGLAND — While no country has been immune from the devastation of the pandemic, the United Kingdom has been particularly hard hit, currently leading Europe in the highest number of COVID-19 deaths. Slow to react, much like the United States, the UK is carefully emerging from a lockdown that was implemented in late March. But as the pandemic's threat still looms large, marches and protests for racial inequality have surfaced as thousands demonstrate across the city, creating an even more unpredictable climate for citizens.

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## Boston and Detroit Armenian Funeral Homes Shoulder Their Heavy Burden

**By Aram Arkun**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

al homes in Watertown, which have faced a stressful situation only somewhat less difficult than that of the New York and New Jersey funeral homes.

Paul Bedrosian of the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, a family business started by his parents in 1946, said that greater than 90 percent of the clients are Armenians. The remainder are families of people married to an Armenian, referred by Armenian friends, or friends of the Bedrosians personally.

see FUNERALS, page 10

WATERTOWN — Massachusetts, after New York and New Jersey, has had the highest number of deaths due to the novel coronavirus. That naturally has had an impact on the two Armenian-owned funeral



Giragosian Funeral Home in Watertown

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Pashinyan to Attend WWII Commemoration

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan will depart for Moscow, Russia, to participate in the military parade dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War (World War II), his spokesperson Mane Gevorgyan announced on June 8.

The annual Victory Day Parade, scheduled on May 9, was postponed this year due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and a decision was made to hold the event on June 24.

One column from Armenia consisting of 75 people will participate in the Parade.

### Armenia to Receive \$315 million in loans from IMF

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia will receive \$315 million in loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which will be used to finance budget programs.

The government on Thursday, June 4 approved the Stand-By Arrangement signed between the country and the IMF on May 23 and June 1.

Finance Minister Atom Janjughasyan said that the world economy is expected to shrink by 3.5 percent in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, which can't but affect Armenia's budget.

### Catholicos Blesses Doctors in Armenia

YEREVAN — On June 3, Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, led a blessing ceremony for Armenia's doctors and healthcare workers gathered at the ancient St. Gayane Monastery.

He conferred the blessing with the rarely-seen Relic of St. Luke. Luke the Evangelist was himself a physician, and is considered the patron of doctors.

The blessing of the physicians comes at a time when Armenia is facing a critical moment in the ongoing pandemic crisis.

On May 29, the government announced that Armenia had overtaken Iran and France in terms of the number of cases per one million people, and was approaching the Italian scenario. The result is a growing strain on Armenia's healthcare system, with officials warning that intensive care units at Armenian hospitals treating COVID-19 patients may run out of vacant hospital beds.

In response to the crisis, the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, at Catholicos Karekin II's direction, has expended the equivalent of \$600,000 in support of the medical system. Holy Echmiadzin has been active in the social realm, too, deploying resources and the ranks of the clergy to help bring food and necessities to our people.

## INSIDE

### Olympics to Circus

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Prime Minister Orders Arrest of Former Security Chief

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has reportedly embarked on efforts to neutralize the Armenian opposition since Monday, June 8.

According to a report by Hraparak Daily, the government's entire resources have now been directed against the opposition forces which are said to be consolidating.

"But the number one target is former Director of the National Security Service (NSS), Chairman of the Homeland Party Artur Vanetsyan, who is seen as a serious threat to him," the paper writes.

Citing sources, Hraparak Daily says that newly appointed NSS Director Argishti Kyaramyan has been ordered to "neutralize" Vanetsyan. Pashinyan has reportedly instructed him to summon Vanetsyan to the National Security Service "under any pretext" and arrest him for two months by using all the "leverages of influence over courts." Under such a scenario, the former security chief is expected to be released after two months in custody.

"Kyaramyan isn't a career officer and is virtually not constraint in terms of fulfilling his superior's orders," the paper says, adding Vanetsyan has today been summoned to the NSS for questioning and is likely to be arrested after it.

## General Arrested on Embezzlement Charges In Critical Condition

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Former Member of Parliament Gen. Manvel Grigoryan is at Nairi Medical Center, it was reported on June 8. His lawyer Arsen Mkrtchyan said that the general is in critical situation.

"He lost consciousness and is now in the resuscitation department of Nairi Medical Center. The situation is critical," he said.

Grigoryan was arrested in June 2018 when authorities raided his rural compound and found huge caches of weapons and ammunition, as well as allegedly embezzled military supplies and donations. A private zoo and a large car collection was also found.

## Pashinyan and Family Recover from COVID-19

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and his family members have recovered from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), he announced on Facebook on Monday, June 8.

"Dear compatriots, we just received the results of our double tests. The results of all of us are negative. We also received negative results yesterday.

Of course, we need to somehow reconsider the timing and circumstances of our infection. But at this moment it's important that we all are healthy and have immunity. Thank you for all the wishes addressed to us during this period.

I am returning to a full work," the premier said.

## 2019 Was Banner Year For Hi-Tech in Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The number of new companies registered in technology increased by 25 percent in 2019, reaching 1,250, Minister of High-tech Industry Hakob Arshakyan said during the joint session of the parliamentary standing committees, presenting the indicators registered in the fields of high-tech industry and military industry, on June 8.

"In 2019, we had a 30-percent growth in the field, the total turnover comprised nearly 320 million drams. This comprises 2.4 percent of the total GDP. According to our estimation Armenia has the potential for much more," he said.

He noted that the growth of high technologies in the 2018 GDP was 0.4 percent.

Arshakyan connected the growth in the field and the number of companies with the policies of the government, in particular by granting privileges to the new companies.

# Pashinyan Urges Better Enforcement of Social Distancing, Masks in Public, As Cases Surge

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told the Armenian police on Tuesday, June 9, to step up the enforcement of social distancing and other rules meant to contain the spread of the coronavirus in the country.

Pashinyan said this must be the primary task of the newly appointed chief of the national police service, Vahe Ghazaryan.

"The quality of the work of the police will continue to be essential in the fight against the epidemic," he said, introducing Ghazaryan to senior police officials. "As much as we realize that the entire police staff is on the verge of exhaustion, new impetus should be given [to police efforts] no matter how impossible that may seem."

Ghazaryan was appointed as police chief on Monday immediately after the sacking of his predecessor, Arman Sargsyan. The latter was in charge of police for only 9 months.

Pashinyan gave no clear reasons for Sargsyan's sacking at the meeting with the senior police officials. But his remarks suggest that he was dissatisfied with ongoing efforts to make Armenians practice social distancing, wear face masks in all public areas and take other precautions against the virus.

Pashinyan ordered authorities to toughen the enforcement of those rules on June 2 as the COVID-19 epidemic in Armenia reached alarming proportions. He stated the following day that citizens' failure to comply with them had become so widespread that there is little the police can do about it.

The total number of confirmed coronavirus cases reached 13,325 on June 8 after the authorities reported 195 new infections. The daily figure was sharply down from previous days' official statistics because the largest Armenian coro-

navirus lab was shut down on Sunday for what the Ministry of Health described as "prophylactic" maintenance.

The ministry said that only 829 COVID-19 tests were performed on Sunday, compared with some 2,500 tests carried out on Saturday. The number of new cases reached a fresh daily of 766 as a result of Saturday's tests.

The ministry also reported 11 more coronavirus deaths on Monday, bringing the official death toll to 211. The figure does not include the deaths of 72 other people who were also infected with the coronavirus. The ministry says that those fatalities were primarily caused by other, preexisting conditions. The police claim to have fined since then many more people who did not wear face masks in cars or buses.

Like Pashinyan, Ghazaryan was born and raised in Ijevan, a small town and the administrative center of Armenia's northern Tavush province.

Ghazaryan has rapidly worked his way up the police hierarchy since the "Velvet Revolution" of April-May 2018 that brought Pashinyan to power. He was appointed as chief of the police department of Tavush in May 2018 and became the commander of Armenian interior troops a year later.

Pashinyan assured the senior policemen on Tuesday that the police service is now fully merit-based and that political or personal connections will play no role in their promotion.

### Textile Factories Hit

Two more textile factories in Armenia suspended their operations on June 9 after dozens of their workers tested positive for the coronavirus.

The Gyumri-based factories belonging to the local Lentex and Svetex companies employ a total of about 400 people.

Tigran Petrosyan, the governor of the surrounding Shirak province, said 120 workers underwent coronavirus tests; nearly half of which came back positive on Monday. He said the company owners decided to temporarily shut down

their plants without any government orders.

"Svetex decided to take a two-week break while Lentex is discussing mechanisms and ways of continuing its work," Petrosyan told RFE/RL's Armenian service.

"We can't operate right now because the [infected] people have self-isolated while others, who feel unwell, are having tests in polyclinics," said the Lentex owner, Karen Gomtsyan.

Gomtsyan said he will decide "in the coming days" when to reopen the plant. He suggested that some of his 350 or so employees will return to work soon so that Lentex can fulfill its contractual obligations to foreign buyers. They have not been in contact with infected workers and "feel well," he said.

The provincial administration has reported 135 coronavirus cases among residents of Gyumri and other Shirak communities. Only 42 of them are in hospital at present.

Armenia's largest textile plant located in Vanadzor, the administrative center of neighboring Lori province, has been hit by a similar COVID-19 outbreak. Authorities ordered the Gloria company's plant to close on June 3 one of day after three of its 2,600 predominantly female workers tested positive for the virus.

The Lori governor, Andrei Chukasyan, pledged to help people. "We keep in touch with everyone by phone to see if they need food," he said. "We have food packages that will be delivered to them by our workers and volunteers so that they don't leave their homes."

Gloria will remain closed at least until June 20. This and other Armenian firms manufacturing clothing were allowed to resume their work in late April following a month-long stoppage ordered by the government as part of a nationwide lockdown. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on April 12 that the textile industry should be able to reopen despite being "the main driving force" of coronavirus infections in the country.

## Georgian Armenians Donate 27 Ventilators To Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Several Armenians in Georgia donated 27 ventilators to Armenia to fight against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), it was announced on June 8.

The Armenian Embassy in Georgia organized the delivery of the devices to Armenia.

Healthcare Minister of Armenia Arsen Torosyan thanked the Georgian Armenians for the donation. "Our patients really breathe with these devices," he said.

Former advisor to the Armenian prime minister Arsen Kharatyan also commented on the news, stating that the ventilators have been delivered to the Nork Infectious Disease Hospital.

## Correction

To our eternal mortification, the first and last names of George Floyd were transposed on last week's front page of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*. It was human error as a result of putting together a difficult issue with many important pieces, including two on the opinion pages on why Armenians should honor his memory and those of others who like him were killed simply due to the color of their skin.

We regret the error.

## Digital Archives of National Library of Armenia Restored Online

YEREVAN — According to the acting director of the National Library of Armenia, Hrachya Saribekyan, online access to digitized materials of the library has been restored after almost three weeks. In a June 3 press conference (<https://www.facebook.com/armnationallibrary/videos/3234459616778140>), he reiterated that the digitized files had been preserved in hard drives which were undamaged despite the fire in the server section of the library.

Saribekyan pointed out that prior unfounded statements about destruction of valuable library materials in the press were harmful. Investigation was continuing as to the cause of the interruption in service. While certain types of computer viruses have been ruled out as the cause, human intervention still remains a possibility. He thanked various software firms and technology specialists for their help.

He announced that a decision was taken to create a new website, which already has been designed and will be ready soon for use after testing. He displayed some images from it. With digitalized materials hav-



Hrachya Saribekyan at the June 3 press conference

ing been doubled in quantity, new servers will be procured to be added alongside the existing ones. The Association of European National Libraries is helping the Armenian National Library in this work.

As an aside, Saribekyan was careful to use a mask while speaking during the press conference, and the journalists present also were masked.





## INTERNATIONAL

# Benjamin Varonian

From Sports to Circus, from France to China

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/PARIS – French-Armenian Benjamin Gabriel Jean Varonian, 40, is a former Olympic gymnast and circus acrobat. He won two gold medals in the parallel bars and team all-around at the 1998 European Junior Gymnastics Championships and competed at the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney and won an Olympic silver medal in the horizontal bar. Varonian and another French athlete, Eric Poujade became the first ever French gymnasts to win Olympic medals in gymnastics in a non-boycotted Olympics. After this success Benjamin left sport for awhile, but decided to return to gymnastics becoming an acrobat. Thus he trained for working in circus taking special acting and music lessons, dance classes... and now he works as a circus acrobat in China.

**Benjamin, the first time I learned about you was on Russian TV, during the broadcasting of the 2000 Summer Olympics from Sydney. The Russian commentator mentioned that you are from France but of Armenian origin. Where do your Armenian ancestors come from?**

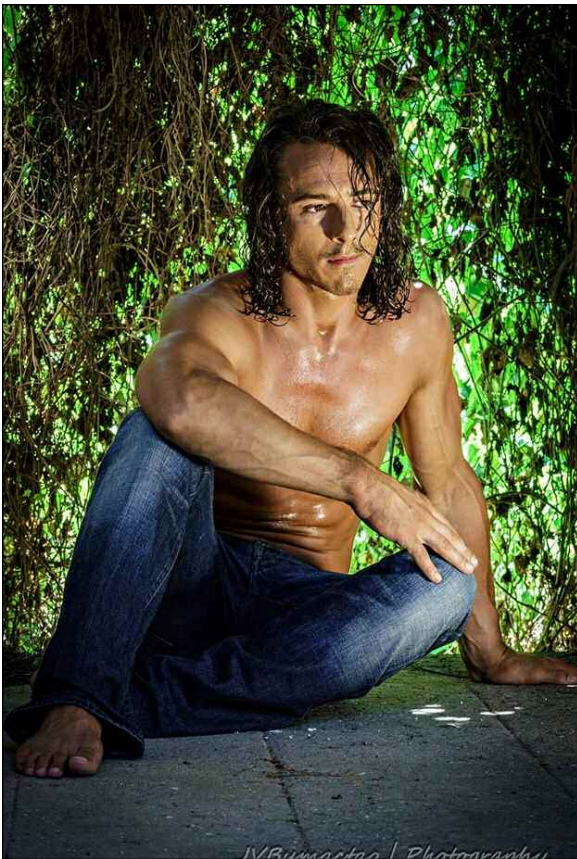


Benjamin Varonian in the Olympics

I am from France with some Armenian origin. My grandfather came to France during the World War II and married my grandmother who kept the name. Unfortunately I never met him and so we never had Armenian traditions in the family. I have been contacted by some other parts of his family, his brother who lived in Marseille. I looked into it and found we are from Yerevan. Many people ask me about my origin so it helps me to discover the Armenian people, the culture and the traditions. And I am so proud of my name now. I travel a lot and quite often when people ask me where I am from I answer I am Armenian from France.

**Are you from a sporting family?**

I do not come from a sporting family, and my mother raised me alone. She was a nurse working at night. I was quite a restless boy, and the value of sports was the oppor-



Benjamin Varonian

tunity to learn discipline and to expend all the energy I had.

**Back to the Sydney Olympics, I remember your excellent performance that brought you a silver medal in the horizontal bar. What kind of impact did it have on your life and career?**

Well, winning an Olympic medal definitely changes your life. It was the first time in France in my discipline, that an unknown young man did that. I have been through so many opportunities to meet other Olympians and champions that help to see the life differently. The experiences shared by them helps one to grow up and to get more maturity. It was so inspiring for me to be surrounded by such talents.

Now you work as an acrobat in “Chinese Las Vegas” in Macau, in “Cirque du Soleil” show. Is it common for gymnasts to move to the circus world?

Yes, it is common for us to move to the circus after finishing our career, but I chose a different path at the beginning. I worked for seven years in a real estate agency ending up as director. But, you know, after a while I was missing acrobatics so badly. So I decided to change my life and to challenge myself again. After a couple of months of hard trainings I started to do some auditions and I was successful. I guess when you reach your dreams and you have the experience and the skills you know how to work hard to success.

**How is life in China?**

Life is good in China; Macau and Hong Kong are really different than mainland China. For me it was also the opportunity to travel a lot through all

Asia, to embrace different cultures and religions. I came back last year after some time in Canada and New York to perform. I did the new “Lion King” last year.

**Where and how are you spending this uneasy time? For circus artists it should be hard do not train with his collective, right?**

I returned France before the pandemic to spend time with my family. My mum is getting older and I need to be around her more than ever! I am in France until now. Actually it is a very tough time for all circus artists. Everything is close and we cannot train as well on any equipment. A lot of different shows have been closed and never reopened. I try to keep my body in shape to be ready for some better time. But right now I have no idea how the future will look like... Actually, no one has...

## Henrikh Mkhitaryan Seeks Permanent Transfer to Roma

ROME (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Armenian midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan has stated his desire to leave Arsenal and join Roma on a permanent basis once his loan deal expires, the Mail Online reported on June 8.

Mkhitaryan moved to the Serie A side on a season-long loan in September and is enjoying his time in the Italian capital. Roma do not have an option to buy the playmaker at the end of the campaign but Mkhitaryan is hopeful something can be done so he can remain at the club for many seasons to come.

“I don't know how long I'm going to stay here,” he told the Futbol with Grant Wahl podcast. “I like Rome as a city and AS Roma as a club, I wish I could stay here longer but it's not up to me.

“I'm doing my best, I'm training, I'm learning Italian to improve so let's see what's going to happen next.

“The club and the philosophy of the manager suits me. I'm very happy to play this type of football because it makes me feel pleasure, it makes me enjoy playing football. It's the only reason, I guess.

“Of course, I'd like to be at Roma next season and not just next season, for another few years. I still have a contract with Arsenal, it's not up to me. It's up to Arsenal and Roma if they agree the terms of the transfer fee.

“My thinking is to play hard, to train hard and to look forward. If I'm not going to stay at Roma and have to go back to Arsenal, I'm not complaining.

The 31-year-old has made 17 appearances for Roma in all competitions since joining, scoring six goals. His contract with Arsenal expires at the end of next season.

## International News

### ECHR Advisory Opinion On Kocharyan Case not Subject to Interpretation

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – Armenia's former Prosecutor General, Gevorg Kostanyan, on June 8 said he is concerned with the fact that the acting prosecutor general has commented on the advisory issue of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) concerning charges brought against former President Robert Kocharyan.

“The Constitutional Court of Armenia is the only and unique addressee of the ECHR advisory opinion and only the Constitutional Court may assess the decision of the European Court,” Kostanyan said during an online interview on the 2nd TV Channel on June 8.

Kostanyan said, the Prosecutor General's Office and the Prosecutor General himself have no capacity to elaborate on the decision of the European court. He then suggested that the ECHR advisory opinion is not subject to interpretations but to translation only.

“There is no need to interpret the advisory opinion as the document clearly sets all the principles, resolutions and approaches the Constitutional Court should consider to apply. Any interpretation – be it from attorneys, state bodies or any other figure – has no relevance,” stressed Kostanyan, who served as Representative of the Republic of Armenia before the Court from 2004 to 2017.

The ECHR delivered an advisory opinion on former Armenian President Robert Kocharyan's case sought by the Constitutional Court of Armenia on May 29.

### Turkey Wants to Convert Hagia Sophia Church into Mosque

ISTANBUL (Panorama.am) – Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has asked his aides to conduct a comprehensive study on how to convert Istanbul's famous Hagia Sophia landmark, currently a museum, into a mosque, the local sources reported.

During a top party meeting earlier this week, Erdogan noted that Hagia Sophia was reopened as a museum in 1935 after a cabinet decision, and said that it should be up to the nation itself to reverse that decision. The report published by Hurriyet daily said that Erdogan wants to maintain Hagia Sophia as a tourist attraction like the neighboring Blue Mosque, but open it for Islamic prayers.

One senior ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) official disputed the report and said that Erdogan had not ordered the study.

“We were discussing a similar court case before the Council of State that has opened the way for Islamic prayers in Chora Church,” the official said. “There were only expressions of wishes.”

Hagia Sophia, a UNESCO world heritage site, was originally built as a Greek Orthodox church. It was converted into a mosque after the conquest of Istanbul by Mehmet the Conqueror in 1453.

### UNICEF: Unequal Access to Remote Schooling Threatens Learning Crisis

PARIS – As nearly 1.2 billion schoolchildren remain affected by school closures and as they grapple with the realities of remote learning in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF warns inherent inequalities in access to tools and technology threaten to deepen the global learning crisis.

“Access to the technology and materials needed to continue learning while schools are closed is desperately unequal. Likewise, children with limited learning support at home have almost no means to support their education. Providing a range of learning tools and accelerating access to the internet for every school and every child is critical,” said UNICEF Chief of Education Robert Jenkins. “A learning crisis already existed before COVID-19 hit. We are now looking at an even more divisive and deepening education crisis.”





## INTERNATIONAL

# Hard-Hit British Armenians Deal with Pandemic

LONDON, from page 1

The tight-knit and orderly London Armenian community, estimated at 25,000, have established a number of cultural, academic and religious institutions, along with businesses and social services that enhance the capital city as a whole. They are eager to return to their work after months of being shuttered indoors and resume their full-scale operations in order to benefit their fellow community members.

The bulk of Armenians in England arrived in the 20th century during the first and second world wars. In fact, one of the earliest whistleblowers of the Armenian Genocide was British politician, diplomat and historian Viscount Bryce, who was the first to vocalize his condemnation of the massacre of the Armenians to the House of Lords in July 1915. He proceeded to co-author the Blue Book the following year, which recounted eyewitness statements and detailed a number of documentary records relating to the atrocities.

The rich heritage and the robust activities of the London Armenians community has made its mark on the UK and continues to do so as it navigates through an unprecedented lockdown while keeping its eyes on the goal of a safe reopening and reuniting of members.

## Pandemic Arrives

The pandemic personally affected acclaimed violinist Levon Chilingirian, who was diagnosed with COVID-19 and spent three weeks in the hospital last March. Following a busy month, he began to feel ill on March 13. His wife, Dr. Susan Pattie, director of the Armenian Institute, took him to the hospital where he tested negative for COVID-19 and was sent home. When she noticed his symptoms were getting worse, they returned to the hospital where Chilingirian's results came back positive and he was admitted into the acute ward.

"I wasn't very aware of what was going on until I woke up and I was close to being discharged," said Chilingirian, whose



Violinist Levon Chilingirian

lung and heart were attacked by the virus. "Thanks to the incredible work of the doctors, I survived and they sent me home on Easter Day."

As a result of the illness, Chilingirian has lost a lot of weight and his recovery continues two months after he was initially diagnosed. He is able to walk for longer periods of time but still has trouble playing the violin at his full capacity.

"Since I was immobile for almost a month while stuck in bed, I lost muscle in my arms and so the bottom half of my body is recovering more quickly," said Chilingirian, who is the founder of the Chilingirian Quartet, a renowned string quartet well-known on the international scene.

As a professor and chamber music artist in residence at the Royal Academy of Music and professor of violin and chamber music at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, Chilingirian has been on sick leave for an indefinite period of time.

Because of his illness and the lockdown, Chilingirian's projects, which included giving masterclasses and performing concerts at the Manhattan School of Music and the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, were postponed. He expressed disappointment in missing out on the scheduled performances and teaching opportunities but sees renewed activity on the horizon.

"I'm looking forward to everything gradually coming back to normal, but I'm sure it will be a transformed scene," said Chilingirian, who has been awarded the Order of the British Empire for his services to music. "We play chamber music so perhaps it will be easier to bring back from the performance point of view though I'm sure there will be changes, such as social distancing, among the audience."

## Supporting Armenians in Need

Its mission of supporting disadvantaged members of the Armenian community in the United Kingdom assumed even more meaning for The Centre for Armenian Information and Advice (CAIA) when the pandemic struck London.

Focusing on the elderly, migrants, refugees and low income families, CAIA, which was established in 1986, aims to build bridges towards equality, opportunity, cultural identity and greater inclusivity for Armenians in the UK and the wider community. It has been a lifeline for those arriving from troubled

parts of the Middle East and Eurasia, who have faced discrimination because of their religious and ethnic backgrounds, according to Misak Ohanian, chief executive of CAIA (also known as Hayashen). The organization helps them overcome challenges that stand in the way of their integration into society and provides advice and support.

Despite the pandemic uprooting life in London, CAIA continues its much-needed services, although "COVID-19 has had a significantly negative effect on the people that rely on the Centre for Armenian Information and Advice."

"CAIA provides many vulnerable people within the Armenian community the opportunity to receive advice on a range of issues relating to asylum, professional skills development, community integration, and providing a strong sense of community and friendship," said Ohanian, who noted that children services are also offered for different age groups.

In line with government regulations on social distancing and self-isolation, the pandemic forced the cancellation of in-person programs, causing "stress, loneliness and great sadness among the people that use services provided by CAIA."

"Although we have been able to maintain contact with the people we support through telecommunications and digital means of providing advice, we need to enhance our capacity to provide further ways to support them," said Ohanian, who acknowledged that CAIA had to make fast changes to adjust to the lockdown, including increased outreach.

A key element of CAIA's programming during this time have been the Emotional Wellbeing Groups and One-to-One Support Sessions, which have now moved to Google Meet video sessions and focus on managing anxiety, loss and sharing inspirational messages to keep the morale of members high.

"Our main focus during the pandemic has been to save lives, reduce mental health anxiety

and ensure that we continue to support those with the fewest opportunities to gain

essential support, services and advice," said Ohanian.

Regarding an opening, CAIA is following government guidelines and sharing in conversation with other charities and non-profit organizations they collaborate and network with in London.

CAIA is also part of the Armenian Community Emergency Management Committee, which has brought together all the active Armenian organizations, including the Armenian Church, to support the most vulnerable in the community during the pandemic.

The Diocese of the Armenian Church of the United Kingdom has continued to provide a spiritual haven for its faithful through live streaming capabilities offered by the Diocese, allowing a respite from the mournful state of the world.

"The lockdown started late and the death rate has been high," said Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of the United Kingdom. "Naturally, the pandemic has affected our community and we had to close our churches, but we are remaining active virtually through church services, Bible Study and activities organized by our youth group."

The weekly e-newsletter also keeps church members in the loop and part of the institution's narrative, but the Primate acknowledges that the pandemic "has impacted our church socially and financially."

The tentative date of July 4 has been presented for when places of worship can open to the public, with restrictions in place, and the Primate looks forward to welcoming the faithful in person in London's two churches, St. Sarkis and St. Yeghiche, as well as one in Manchester and mission parishes dotted in different communities throughout England, such as Birmingham, and Dublin, Ireland.

Another consequence of the lockdown has been the postponement of the popular Armenian Summer Festival in London, under the auspices of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of the United Kingdom, that promotes the Armenian heritage and will now take place in the Fall.

The aftermath of the pandemic, such as anxiety and mental health issues, are also of concern to the Primate, who asserted that the Diocese is taking steps towards providing solutions.

"We have kept communication open to our faithful by phone, especially to those who don't have anyone helping them," said Manukyan. "We don't know if there will be a second wave, but we are doing our best to help our community here while trying to assist our homeland at the same time."

## Armenian Institute

The Armenian Institute, which ensures Armenian culture and history are accessible and offered in creative ways to the public, didn't have much notice to shut down, according to Dr. Susan Pattie, a co-founder and director of the organization, which was established in 2001.

"The government waited so long to take action that when they did, it was sudden," she said of the notice to close on March 16. "We had to go into our space quickly one night to pack up and start operating out of our homes."

Pattie and her colleagues made a quick transition to operating virtually but had to cancel the remainder of their March events that included lectures and book presentations. By April, however, they were ready to begin launching their events

online. The silver lining was that a large number of people began to tune into the programming from cities around the world, including Istanbul, Beirut, Munich and New York.

"We are missing out on the human touch but we don't have a choice right now," said Dr. Pattie of the changes, which has helped the Institute envision their future events through a different lens. "We're thinking we will combine these technologies with our in-person events."

The activities at the Armenian Institute have been paramount to bringing the community together in London to raise awareness of the Armenian culture while discovering the meaning of what it means to be Armenian in the 21st century in the Diaspora.

Funding from The Arts Council in England during the pandemic has helped the organization not only maintain but increase its programming through an Emergency Fund they applied for and received, as well as being awarded a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Activities that have taken place over the last couple of months include workshops on music and creative writing, Salon sessions that initiate conversation around a specific subject, such as treasured objects, language lessons, and a recent manti making class online. The schedule of programs have helped bolster the community, particularly for those who live alone and find solace in the company of others, albeit virtually.

An added benefit of the grants is helping the Armenian Institute build its outreach program. During the pandemic they have been checking in with community members while sharing in conversation and asking them about their family stories. This is part of a long-term project Pattie envisions, similar to the USC Shoah Foundation.

"As people become willing, we will start collecting migration stories about lives in London and the UK that we will post online as a resource," she said.

Although the lockdown has eased over the last week, allowing Dr. Pattie to go into their new space in the Farringdon area of London, alongside one or two co-workers, there is no official date on when the Armenian Institute will once again be open to the public.

"There are a lot of discussions about a second peak and demonstrations concerns, so we have no idea when we will open again," she said. "Everything is closed in London for the time being, including theaters and concert halls, so we have all been in this together."

## Armenian Community Council

A forum that ties the multitude of Armenian organizations in London together is the grassroots Armenian Community Council that consists of 15 elected members from 9 organizations who oversee various tasks throughout the year, such as the Armenian Genocide commemoration, the independence of the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh, with the "main goal of having all of our groups in one place," according to Dr. Hratch Kouyoumjian, Vice Chair of the Armenian Community Council and former chairman of the Tekeyan Cultural Association's London Chapter.

"London is rich with organizations but we have been in hibernation because of the pandemic," said Dr. Kouyoumjian. "We are represented in each domain and staying active but we have stalled these last couple of months compared to how busy we usually are."

The Armenian Community Council, founded 40 years ago, designed a proper way to commemorate the Armenian Genocide by launching a social media campaign to mark April 24, calling on community members to participate digitally in a Virtual March. In addition, they organized a remembrance service at St. Yeghiche Armenian Church and a wreath-laying ceremony at the memorial khachkar.

"The Armenian Community Council is bipartisan and we work together to be helpful to the community," said Kouyoumjian, noting their collaborations with the Diocese and the Armenian Embassy in London. The group participated in the organization of a medical webinar with the Armenian Medical Association of Great Britain, where panelists answered questions from the public about the pandemic, and have reached out to the vulnerable and needy in the community to deliver groceries, medication and provide financial and mental health support.

"There have been deaths in our community, unfortunately and our hearts go out to their families," said Dr. Kouyoumjian. "We are kept abreast of the numbers and the basic indicators are trending downwards and we've seen more people in the streets wearing masks. Eventually we have to bite the bullet."

## University of Oxford

At the University of Oxford, campus life is cautiously opening back up again. The academic term was ending as the lockdown began and the Easter break gave staff and students time to prepare for online classes and examinations, according to Dr. David Zakarian, Associate Faculty Member of Oriental Studies.

"The first weeks of the term showed that the advanced planning was a success and despite some minor hiccups, the teaching process continues at the required standard," said Zakarian. "All faculties and colleges had to make certain adjustments regarding teaching and examinations to avoid putting students





## INTERNATIONAL



Marianna Asatryan (center) with students of the University of Oxford Armenian Society

and staff under unnecessary stress.”

While faculty and students are growing weary of the lockdown, that has now entered the third month, Zakarian said they try to focus on the benefits, such as having more time to do research. In the meantime, the University's leadership is in regular contact about updates, including recent news that the library services will begin to reopen this month to allow access to material that can't be accessed digitally (the University invested in purchasing digital access to thousands of electronic resources when the library closed).

“Everything, of course, depends on the decisions made by the government, but everyone works on a contingency plan in case this situation continues beyond September,” said Dr. Zakarian, who has been attending virtual conferences and lectures, “which is one of the positive aspects of the lockdown.”

“The Society for Armenian Studies, NAASR, the Armenian Institute in London, and the Oxford University Armenian Studies have organized a variety of online events related to various aspects of Armenian Studies, and it is wonderful to be able to join them to discuss interesting topics, and most importantly to see friends and colleagues from all over the world.”

The Armenian presence at The University of Oxford is elevated by The Oxford University Armenian Society (OUAS), which serves as a hub of culture for not only students but also Armenian families who live in the vicinity of the institution, according to Marianna Asatryan, head of Admissions Operations, Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach at University of Oxford, who serves as the senior member of OUAS.

“The society is open to everyone who loves and appreciates Armenian cultures and traditions and we have a number of non-Armenian members,” said Asatryan, who notes that OUAS is an integral part of the Oxford Armenian Studies.

Throughout the year OUAS organizes social events, including brunches, pub trips and coffee mornings, as well as cultural events, such as Armenian Liturgical and folk music performances from the Oxford Armenian Choir, which Asatryan conducts. They also network and collaborate with other student societies in the UK, including the London School of Economics, King's College London and University of Cambridge.

Since the lockdown, they have weekly online meetings to check on one another. Their final event of the year before lockdown was the Armenian food night in early March.

“Students have largely been affected by exam cancellations and online teaching arrangements in the summer term, including three of our members in the final year of their studies who have been very much impacted by all these alternative measures,” said Asatryan. “Some students had to return to Armenia or their country of residence because Oxford could no longer host them and the graduation ceremonies this summer won't be taking place. Without a doubt, the pandemic will have a major impact on future career paths and graduate jobs.”

The Armenian Language Summer Intensive Courses are the cornerstone of the Programme of Armenian Studies, but the sessions that were scheduled to take place in Athens, Greece, have been cancelled due to the pandemic.

Founder and director Dr. Krikor Moskofian expressed regret that the program will be skipped this year.

“We first held the Summer Intensive Courses in London and then in Budapest, and Athens was to be the most convenient venue yet for these courses, both in terms of facilities and Armenian context, given the established Armenian community there, so it is a great shame that they can't go ahead,” said Dr. Moskofian, who has taught Western Armenian language and literature in both Lebanon and the UK and is the author of two Western Armenian language textbooks.

The evening courses in London that are offered throughout the year have also been postponed and the pandemic has affected the organization's work outside of Armenian language courses as well. The Programme for Armenian Studies has been in the midst of conducting interviews for its Memory Documentation Project (MDP), documentation of the memory of the first generation born in the Diaspora after the Armenian

Genocide. They have already amassed interviews from 100 people in Beirut, Athens, Buenos Aires, London, and the U.S. and plan to focus on Jerusalem next when travel is safe and accessible to schedule the in-person recordings.

“Despite the disruption and interruptions caused by the pandemic, we have nevertheless had plenty to do, such as our transcribers and editors who have completed many hours of work on our bank of interviews,” said Moskofian, whose goal with establishing the Programme for Armenian Studies was to “cater to the needs of the Western Armenian Diaspora.”

The organization focuses on “allowing the voice of the Western Armenian Diaspora to be heard” and provides academic and cultural output, such as the Taniel Varouzhan Annual Lecture (TVAL), a collaboration with Ghent University, where prominent academics and intellectuals are invited to speak on topics related to Armenians and

Armenian studies, in memory of the distinguished poet, who studied there. Moskofian ensures that resources are offered online and the content they produce is available in Western Armenian, English, French and Turkish.

“Deciding to learn Western Armenian is significant because it is a decision to place value in an endangered minority language,” said Dr. Moskofian, who earned his doctorate in Armenian literary criticism from SOAS, University of London. “Western Armenian is very much alive, despite the threats that face it, and for many thousands around the world it remains a language of everything from mundane chit-chat to high literature, from sweaty street fights to folk tales and lullabies. It is the backbone of Western Armenian culture.”

## Businesses Suffering

The pandemic and subsequent lockdown has hit the restaurant industry quite hard, including Meza Restaurant, which specializes in Lebanese dishes and was awarded the title of Best Cheap Eats by Time Out Magazine.

Sales have been down overall even though the restaurant has stayed open for takeout and delivery, but delivery platforms are charging high commissions, further squeezing the restaurant's bottom line.

“Stock sourcing, such as daily fresh vegetables, meat, specialty Lebanese items, have been challenging, as some regular suppliers suffered business interruptions as a result of the pandemic,” according to the Armenian-British manager and partner of Meza, which has multiple locations throughout London.

There is no confirmed date for reopening, though the government has announced and retracted dates. No guidelines have been set forth either in terms of how to proceed with masks or perspex screens once things are up and running again, which some feel will ruin the social aspect of dining out.

“The rules of lockdown have kept changing, being relaxed almost as soon as they were tightened,” he said. “I'm not sure how much ‘appetite’ there will be dining in post coronavirus. Some may not be put off, but I fear things will take a while, if ever, to return to normal.”

The restrictions caused by the pandemic have altered the way entrepreneurs conduct business, particularly abroad. The Armenian British Business Chamber, a membership organization founded ten years ago with the goal of connecting Armenian and British businesses and people, promotes bilateral trade and investment between British and Armenian companies and serves as the first point of contact for any UK business interested in entering, investing, exporting or outsourcing to Armenia and any Armenian business with similar interests in the UK, according to Shoghik Tadevosyan, assistant to the executive director.

The last business support service the organization was able to offer to a UK-based company considering investment in Armenia was in February, shortly before the eruption of the pandemic, which has “halted business travel the way we knew it.”

“We had to cancel or postpone networking and business to business matching events planned for 2020 and to adapt to the newly created reality of the pandemic,” said Tadevosyan, noting that members stay connected digitally to a greater extent now. “We regularly share with the members and larger public information on COVID-19 related regulatory changes in Armenia and the UK and disseminate information about financial support programs offered by the governments.”

The ABBC has also partnered with the Said Business School

of the University of Oxford to share webinars through social media.

“While countries and governments are preparing for the gradual ease of travel restrictions we are busy preparing new formats for networking and business promotion to promote export and cooperation between Armenian and British businesses,” said Tadevosyan. “We realize that the return to old ways of doing business is unlikely and we look forward to innovative ways to promote business relations and create new networks and opportunities for Armenian and British trade and investment.”

The international food product Marlenka, based on traditional Armenian recipes, has seen an uptick in its online sales during the pandemic, which has prompted many around the world to opt for delivery over in-store shopping.

Founded by Gevorg Avetisyan and headquartered in London, the award-winning Marlenka line offers a variety of desserts.

“There is plenty of evidence that stringent social distancing measures have led to a surge in overall demand for delivery services, especially for food,” said Vince Moucha, managing director. “There has been an increase in internet traffic, partly thanks to our creative marketing strategy on social media.”

He concedes that because of the pandemic there has been a “major blow for the wholesale and export part of the business” because Marlenka supplies to independent retailers in the UK. They have nevertheless ramped up their logistical services to mitigate potential adverse impacts.

“As a globally operating company, epidemic and pandemic risk scenarios are an integral part of our Group's continuous risk planning,” said Moucha. “We follow a holistic management process that enables our business units to ensure the best possible operations for our customers.”

Marlenka also prioritizes the safety of their employees and customers as they closely monitor and manage the coronavirus outbreak, including the establishment of a task force and coordinating with international organizations.

## AGBU YP

The AGBU Young Professionals (YP) of London sprung into action when its events were cancelled, particularly the London Summer Internship program, which takes place every year and provides college-aged students opportunities to live, work and discover London. As an alternative, AGBU & YP London launched a mentorship program to support the students who planned on participating by connecting them with a strong network of professionals in their fields and providing them with valuable workshops and one on one mentorship sessions, according to the organization's leadership.

The members acknowledge that COVID-19 has impacted AGBU YP London since the group's main focus is “fostering a



Students in the Programme for Armenian Studies during the Summer Intensive Course in Budapest at the Budapest Armenian Museum.

sense of community and culture through different social charity events for Armenians in London.” Throughout the year they host up to 12 events that range from after-work meetups to art exhibitions, musical performances or global fundraisers.

In its place, the chapter hosted and promoted online events, including virtual meet-ups to maintain ties with one another on the local level, as well as internationally, by participating in YP Live, a series of weekly global virtual events that connects Armenians from all over the world through engaging and interactive events. Together they are all supporting the global fundraising campaign of AGBU to help those afflicted with COVID-19.

“We have seen a strong collaboration with YP chapters around the world who have hosted digital events to ensure community interaction and that the overall mission of YP chapters is maintained through the pandemic,” they said. “Given the breadth of digital platforms, the digitally native YPs have shown resilience to the lack of physical meetings and we are still seeing healthy engagement throughout our community.”



# Community News

## Westside Ararat Guild Donates Face Shields To Ararat Home

LOS ANGELES — The Westside Guild of the Ararat Home recently donated 380 WETShield vision-free face shields to the Ararat Home of Los Angeles. These face shields are essential items that the nursing staff in all three of the Ararat Home facilities will use while providing personal care (feeding, dressing and bathing) to the residents. Derik Ghookasian, Chief Operating Officer of the Ararat Home, reports that these past weeks have been challenging for the administration and staff due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but that they are working tirelessly to ensure the health, safety and well being of their residents as well as staff members. He stated “We are truly touched by this very kind gesture of showing appreciation to our staff. Your support during this challenging time reassures and strengthens us, and we are truly grateful.”

During this difficult time, the Executive Board of the Westside Guild continues to hold board meetings and have organized a Weekly Connection to help their members get through this period of staying home. Members appreciate the relationships they have, as well as share stories of what they are doing during their new spare time, any particular hobbies, recommending books, movies, treasured family recipes and much more.

Noralea Goodrow, co-president of the Westside Guild, states “Not even a pandemic can keep the Westside Guild from moving forward with their mission and creating fellowship.. They are zooming into this era with enthusiasm and creativity.”

The Westside Guild is well known for its annual Christmas luncheon which has become a high. The Board stands ready to plan the Christmas Luncheon as well as other events, once the restrictions and cautionary measures are no longer imposed and everyone’s safety is ensured.

## Sevan Boghos-Deirbadrossian Wins Gulbenkian Prize for Teaching Armenian Online

CANOCA PARK, Calif. – Sevan Boghos-Deirbadrossian, an Armenian teacher at the Armenian General Benevolent Union Manoogian-Demirdjian School, recently was named a winner of the Gulbenkian Foundation’s Prizes for Teaching in Armenian Online.

According to the school’s Facebook page, she submitted lesson plans, examples, detailed outlines and resources in this competition, and was selected for her creativity and innovative online teaching techniques. Boghos-Deirbadrossian has taught at the Manoogian-Demirdjian School for almost a dozen years.

Boghos-Deirbadrossian was born in Damascus, Syria and after graduating the St. Tarkmanchats Armenian School, graduated the University of

Damascus with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature. She moved to the US in 1999. She took some child development classes at Los Angeles Community College and earned a certificate in Computerized Office and Accounting at Mashdots College. She

also has earned a Certificate to Teach Armenian in the Diaspora from the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales in Paris, France.

Boghos-Deirbadrossian is an active member of the executive of the Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles chapter. On the website of the Manoogian-Demirdjian School, she expounds her philosophy as follows: “I can proudly say that my passion for all things Armenian is so great, that I spend most of my time serving our community. Teaching Armenian to our children is a mission. I consider it a duty to serve my Armenian society, and contribute in preparing future Armenian generations.”



Distributing aid in Tavush

## Knights of Vartan and Ayo Program of FAR Team Up for COVID-19 Relief

NEW YORK/YEREVAN — The Knights and Daughters of Vartan, joining the Ayo program of the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, raised over \$10,000 for food and everyday necessities for people in the Tavush border region of Armenia.

**By Gohar Palyan**

COVID-19 is spreading. The lockdown in Armenia has left scores of people with either limited income or no income at all. They needed help more than ever. Knights of Vartan Past Grand Commander Nigoghos Atinizian initiated a matching fund. He and his wife, Roset donated \$5,000 to be matched by funds raised by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan and friends.

“People in Tavush region are hardworking and I have met many of them during my frequent visits to Armenia. We know the pandemic is temporary and one day we will overcome it. But there are families who need our urgent support now and we would like to stand by their side during this needed time” said Nigoghos Atinizian.

Just one week after announcing the matching fund drive to the Knights and Daughters of Vartan community across the United States, over \$10,000 was raised for COVID-19 relief in the Tavush region.

The Tavush region has the longest geographical border with Azerbaijan. The region is a strategic location and for decades the Knights and Daughters of Vartan and its members have been involved in numerous charitable projects to help support its people. Among those efforts is the COVID-19 Relief project with Ayo. It is essential given the current pandemic that now spreads in Armenia and in the world.

During the last several weeks, and using the money raised during the matching fundraising drive, the Ayo program staff has distributed 400 packages to some 400 families in the Tavush region. The packages include basic necessities as well as food. We know that along with receiving their package of food, these families also receive emotional support. They realize that they are not alone and that during these difficult times, their brothers and sisters across the border and around the world have them in their thoughts.

There are several other projects that the Knights and Daughters of Vartan have undertaken as members continue to show their support for their brothers and sisters in Armenia.

“We are so thankful to Past Grand Commander Nigoghos and Roset Atinizian for their generous donation and to the members of the Knights of Vartan who rose to the occasion to help our homeland. As members of the Knights of Vartan we are committed to helping our homeland along with our communities in the diaspora,” expressed Grand Commander Steven Adams.

Ayo! is a fundraising platform of FAR. By providing a vehicle to raise money for local development projects, it allows the people of Armenia to make positive changes in their society.

For or more information about the FAR visit [www.farusa.org](http://www.farusa.org) and about Ayo! Visit [www.weareayo.org](http://www.weareayo.org). To support COVID19 relief in Armenia via Ayo program please visit <https://weareayo.org/donate/covid-19>.



## Holy Martyrs Church Pastor Connects with Parishioners During Pandemic

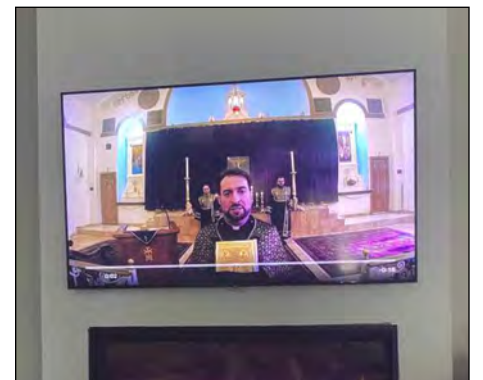
BAYSIDE, N.Y. — Rev. Dr. Abraham Malkhasyan, pastor of the Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs in Bayside, New York, is no stranger to social media, having had an active Facebook page promoting his parish’s activities for many years.

On March 17, when Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate of the Armenian Diocese of America (Eastern) released a directive closing the churches to parishioners due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, Malkhasyan was ready with a plan.

“Living in the epicenter of the nation’s health crisis, I knew that keeping my faithful together during this unprecedented time was crucial for all of us, myself included,” said Fr. Malkhasyan. “I immediately began livestreaming on my Facebook page starting from March 18. That evening’s Prayer for Healing and Hope was the beginning of a journey for my congregation.”

Since the beginning of New York’s lockdown, Malkhasyan has livestreamed every Sunday Badarak, Lenten evening vespers, the entire Holy Week services, Badarak on Ascension Day and Assumption Day, the Martyrs Day Prayer Service and a Prayer for Peace against racial violence. In addition, he initiated a Wednesday afternoon Children Sermon Series on March 24 focusing on the topics of patience, responsibility, servanthood, as well as others. “With all the students of my church’s three schools at home, I wanted the children to know that the church was still here for them. In the comfort of my own home, and with the help of Yn. Karine and my two older children, we tried to keep a dialogue open with the young faithful and their families. My children enjoyed it a lot and it was a great way to feel connected during those initial few weeks of lockdown. I even had the children of the community send me photos and drawings, which I displayed on my wall at home and showed them on Facebook during our special Easter sermon.”

Malkhasyan has also offered a few Bible Study sessions with members of the church’s Couples Club, as well as a weekly Windows of Wonder series, describing the church’s beautiful stained glass windows. “Many of these videos have been viewed by people outside of New York and the United States, commenting how beautiful our sanctuary is,” said



Rev. Dr. Abraham Malkhasyan livestreaming

Malkhasyan. “It’s even more beautiful when it is full of people.”

Holy Martyrs’ Outreach Committee also responded to the Coronavirus Pandemic through a series of initiatives designed to offer support to those who need it most. Holy Martyrs was one of the first parishes in the Eastern Diocese to organize in response to the crisis. The Outreach Committee organized a telephone campaign to check in and offer words of support to parishioners and community members, particularly seniors and people who were not well. Hundreds of phone calls came from Parish Council and committee members, as well as the leadership of the church’s three schools and many auxiliaries. Special efforts were made to reach people who were feeling

see CONNECTING, page 7





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Aram Sahakyan Organizes Peaceful Demonstration in Colorado

FORT COLLINS, Col.— Another round of protests was sparked in Fort Collins on Tuesday, June 2, after an Instagram post went viral inviting people to join in a unity march.

The independently organized protest began on the Oval in front of the Administration Building, where there was a short speech, followed by a march to City Hall along Howes Street.

The march was a peaceful demonstration unaffiliated with the Black Lives Matter movement, according to organizer Aram Sahakyan; however, it was inspired by and dedicated to it.

The lawn in front of the Administration Building was nearly full as protesters gathered. According to the Fort Collins Police Department (FCPD), there is no estimate for crowd attendance, as they don't have a mechanism to provide accurate data.

During the march, protesters chanted "black lives matter" and "don't shoot" as they took up several city blocks in length.

Sahakyan, a recent philosophy graduate of Colorado State University, shared a post inviting others to join him in a walk to City Hall to celebrate the Black Lives Matter movement and support racial unity. The post that was originally shared on Instagram quickly reached larg-

er audiences and was shared throughout Facebook and Reddit. The post asked attendees to wear a mask and remain socially distant, and strictly condemned any acts of violence or aggression.

"As a person of Armenian descent, I was raised to cry for justice for the Armenian Genocide of 1915," Sahakyan wrote in a text message to the Collegian. "It doesn't make sense for me to cry for justice for that but not for the [Black Lives Matter] movement. Social media advocacy wasn't cutting it. I felt like I needed to do more."

At one point, crowd members were invited to give speeches addressing fellow protesters and the need for protest. During these speeches, Fort Collins Police Chief Jeff Swoboda addressed the crowd, expressing the FCPD's direct support.

"This is your time, and I am only here just to let you know that I hear you, the Fort Collins Police Department hears you and we march with you," Swoboda said. "You are welcome at the front of our police department every day. I get it and I hear you. We stand with you."

As protesters marched from City Hall to Old Town Square, officers walked with the crowd and chatted with them. During nine minutes of



Aram Sahakyan leads the protesters

silence where protesters laid on the ground with their hands behind their backs, officers took a knee in solidarity.

Swoboda released statements in relation to the protests going on within Fort Collins and the death of George Floyd.

"We share your desire for an end to police brutality. No good cop wants bad cops in this profession," Swoboda wrote in the press release. "We stand with you in creating an equitable, inclusive community where people of color feel safe. We acknowledge that historical and present-day racism exists in our community. It needs to be addressed and stopped."

Eduardo Gomez Perez also attended the protest after viewing the post on Reddit and explained why being active and vocal is so important for the Black Lives Matter movement.

"If you want to support the cause, you have to be vocal because the voice is what makes it known, [what] makes it strong," Gomez Perez said. "You can do other things aside from protesting. I know people are afraid of judgment or whatnot, but if you're afraid of the judgment of people who are against this, then you need to look at yourself and the people you surround yourself with."

Jamir Constance, a recent hospitality management graduate of CSU, expressed why he felt it was important for a community like Fort Collins to take part in protests.

"It's one of the nicest communities I've ever been in," Constance said. "One of the whitest though and to see all these white people come out and support me and people who look like me, it's pretty incredible. Just to see the people that have come in to realize the fight and the struggle and the pain that we go through, although they've never experienced it and they never will, speaks volumes."

Sahakyan also expressed the need to do more beyond just protesting. He explained that while protests are important for garnering the public's attention, people also have to sign petitions, vote and donate. Sahakyan also requested that Colorado State University take action, stating that CSUPD and President Joyce McConnell must make a statement.

"CSU is not innocent of racism and hate," Sahakyan wrote in a text message to the Collegian. "We need to see what they're going to do to back their statements up."

(Excerpted from the article in the Rocky Mountain Collegian [June 2, 2020] by Meagan Stackpool.)

## Tekeyan Cultural Association

A Virtual Lecture Organized by the  
Tekeyan Cultural Association  
Metro Los Angeles chapter

with the participation of the  
Tekeyan Cultural Association  
Detroit chapter  
Greater Boston chapter  
Greater New York chapter  
Los Angeles chapter  
Montreal chapter  
Pasadena-Glendale chapter

## AN INTRODUCTION TO MODERN ARMENIAN DIALECTS:

*From Agulis to Zeytun by way of Dikranagerd,  
Hamshetsnag, Kesab, Musaler, New Julfa and many others*  
Keynote Speaker



**BERT VAUX, PhD.**

Reader in Phonology and Morphology  
Faculty of Modern & Medieval Languages and Linguistics  
King's College, University of Cambridge

Wednesday, June 17, 2020  
6 PM Los Angeles / 9 PM New York

Please register to participate online:  
<https://cutt.ly/tekeyanlosangeles>

[info@TekeyanLA.org](mailto:info@TekeyanLA.org)



[facebook.com/TekeyanLA](https://facebook.com/TekeyanLA)



[TekeyanLA](https://twitter.com/TekeyanLA)



[@TekeyanLA](https://www.instagram.com/TekeyanLA)

## Holy Martyrs Church Connects with During Pandemic

CONNECTING, from page 6

isolated during the crisis and might need help. The committee also put together a group of volunteers, spearheaded by the ACYOA Seniors, to shop for and deliver food and supplies to shut-ins who could not shop for themselves. These efforts will be ongoing as New York emerges out of lockdown. "I am grateful for the efforts of many individuals who have helped the most vulnerable of my community," noted Malkhasyan. "We can only get through these difficult times if we help each other. When lockdown began, many were ready and willing to help. May God bless them all!"

When asked what has been the hardest part of his ministry during lockdown, Malkhasyan reflected on the challenges of praying for and with those who were sick and comforting the families who had lost loved ones during the past three months. "With hospital and home visits prohibited, I found myself constantly on the phone with my parishioners. We prayed together, many times during life's precious last moments, using FaceTime or the phone. While I could not provide the sacrament of Holy Communion, I did my best to assure my people that God is with us at all times. It has not been easy laying to rest many I have known and loved without a proper funeral, but these are unprecedented times. Preaching to empty pews has also been a challenge. I miss my people. I look forward to seeing my congregation in the pews again, praying with them, and one day being able to offer them Holy Communion. Until then, we must adhere to strict health guidelines so that we can remain healthy and safe."

Pastors need to live with hope, even during the darkest of days. Malkhasyan provided a day of celebration on Pentecost Sunday when he

was joined by Findikyan, who gave an inspirational homily via Facebook. Together, following Badarak, they offered special prayers and drive-by blessings to the community's high school and college graduates and the graduates from the church's three schools. Malkhasyan, a 2020 graduate of Fordham University's Doctor of Ministry Program, also received a blessing.

"As we begin a partial re-opening of our churches this weekend, I am grateful to the support of my parishioners who have watched and commented on our services online these past few



Rev. Dr. Abraham Malkhasyan with his children, with many of the photos and drawings sent by parishioners posted on the wall behind him.

months and to those who have donated to our 'virtual pass the plate' initiative during these times of financial challenges. I am also grateful to my dedicated deacons who have continued to serve beside me with social distancing. I will continue to livestream all services, but eagerly await seeing my flock in person, especially the older parishioners who are not online and cannot yet attend services. We have been through a lot in New York, but as the sign on the Long Island Expressway says - we are New York Tough! We will get through this together, 'For nothing is impossible with God.' (Luke 1:37)"

— Lynn. T. Cetin MD





## OBITUARIES

## Mary Adishian Vosgerichian

Born in Worcester

WALTON HILLS, Ohio — Mary Adishian Vosgerichian, 98, passed away peacefully at her home on March 30, 2020, after a brief illness, with her family by her side.

Mary was the first child of Krikor and Zabel (Vajebian), born in Worcester, on January 3, 1922. Mary had three siblings: John, Berjoohie, and David.

After completing high school, Mary graduated from Salter Secretarial School in Worcester and became a secretary and administrator with a large local clothing retailer.

Mary became “Jr Mom” when her Mom, Zabel, passed away unexpectedly in 1943 during World War II. Her brother, John, was serving in the Army. Mary assumed responsibility with her dad for raising sister, Berjoohie (12), and brother, David (3), until her father married again in 1946.

Longtime family friends from Worcester asked Mary and her dad if they were open to meeting a single gentleman who lived with his mom, from Cleveland, both survivors of the Genocide, who were planning on visiting them in Worcester. They both agreed. It was love at first sight for Mary and Gus. Months later they married in Cleveland with hundreds of celebrants from Worcester and Cleveland in attendance.

They had a beautiful life together, raising their two children, Susan and Todd, seeing them pick exceptional spouses, Joe and Maryann, and enjoying the arrival, growth, and development of their grandchildren, Guy, Eric, Stephanie, Andrea and Daniel, and great-grandchildren, Heaven, Ryan and Jillian.

Mary thoroughly enjoyed working part-time as a sales associate at Higbee's and May Company for more than 25 years, where she developed dozens of lifelong friends. She had great love for her family and friends, on whom she had an incredible impact. Her graciousness, warmth, magnetic personality, and wisdom will be missed by all those who love her dearly.



She and Gus traveled to Europe to see family and friends and enjoyed winter getaways to Florida. They also enjoyed their card playing parties with their group of friends. Mary and Gus did not miss any major activities and events of brother David and Judy's children, David, Chris, Thomas, and Marci.

Mary was a lifetime member of the Armenian Church, and she and Gus often hosted visiting Armenian priests and archbishops in their home.

Her husband, Hosrof “Gus,” passed away in 1995. Mary is survived by her daughter, Susan (Joe deceased) Mocarski of Plantation, Florida, and her son, Todd (Maryann) Vosgerichian of Twinsburg, Ohio, her grandchildren, Guy and Eric Mocarski, Stephanie (Tim) Homa, Andrea (Mike) LaChiusa, and Daniel Vosgerichian, great-grandchildren, Heaven Mocarski, Ryan and Jillian Homa, and many near and dear loving nephews and nieces.

A Memorial Service and Celebration of Life will be held at a later date.

## Ronald S. Kareken

Descended from Genocide Survivors, Attorney,  
Dedicated Volunteer

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — Ronald (Ron) Samuel Kareken was born December 15, 1935 in Buffalo, NY, to Frances and John Kareken.

His mother was born Frances Mouradian in Canada, while John was born Hovhannes Aloyan in Keghi, a then-Armenian enclave of Turkey.

A survivor of the Armenian Genocide of the early 20th Century, John eventually settled the family in Canton, IL, where Ron grew up with his grandmother Aghvany, and his sister Sylvia (today a retired teacher).

When he was 15, the family welcomed a brother, also named John Kareken (today an editor). Graduating from Canton High School in 1952, Ron enrolled in the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as an ROTC scholarship student in engineering, and after graduating in 1958 he served in the United States Navy for three years.



Upon leaving the Navy, he attended law school at George Washington University, where he received his JD. Soon thereafter he was recruited by the Eastman Kodak company in Rochester, NY.

While still in the Navy, Ron met and fell in love with Lynne Marcus, a former principal ballerina with a number of ballet companies in the New York, Norfolk, and DC areas. She would become Lynne Kareken and together they settled in Rochester, where he would earn his MBA at the University of Rochester while working at Eastman Kodak.

Together, Ron and Lynne raised two children, David Kareken, today head of neuropsychology in neurology at the Indiana University School of Medicine, and Jeremy Kareken, today a playwright residing in Baltimore and New York.

Retiring from Eastman Kodak as an assistant general counsel, Ron practiced law at a number of firms in the Rochester metropolitan area. Having a strong sense of service, Ron was also the founding chairman of the Patent and Trademark Committee of the New York State Bar Association, a past President and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the U.S. Trademark Association (now the International Trademark Association), and a past member of the Board of Governors of the Brand Names Education Foundation.

For six years, he chaired the Public Advisory Committee for Trademark Affairs for the U.S. Department of Commerce. As President of the U.S. Trademark Association, he worked with Congress in passing the 1988 Trademark Law Revision Act. He also volunteered his services to Volunteers of America, Inc., one of the nation's largest human service organizations.

Ron was loved and admired by a great many friends and colleagues. He is survived by his brother, sister, two sons, and four grandchildren, all of whom love and miss him deeply.

## Makrouhi Kuredjian

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Markouhi (Takessian) Kuredjian passed away on June 8, 2020.

She was 89.

She leaves Mayda Kuredjian and children Armen, Raffi and Lori Kelechian (Los Angeles); Arsen and Marina Sarafian and daughter Perla; Saro and Hilda Hartounian and children Nairi, Nanor and Aram (New Jersey); Setrak Kuredjian and Sonia Kuredjian; Hagop Gagossian (Pasadena); Alice Gagossian and Marie Sarafian

Funeral services were held on Wednesday, June 10, at the Armenian Catholicosate St. Gregory Illuminator Church, Antelias. Burial services followed at the Armenian Cemetery, Furn El Chebbak.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Krikor and Makrouhi Kuredjian Educational Fund of the Vahan Tekeyan School in Beirut, Lebanon.

Donations in Lebanon: Please contact Tel. +961 71 720598

Donations in US: Please make checks to Tekeyan Cultural Association and mail to: Tekeyan Cultural Association, 755 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472 Memo: Krikor and Makrouhi Kuredjian Educational Fund

Condolences and contact email: kuredjianfamily@gmail.com



## Paul B. Bedrossian

Doctor, Born in Cyprus

LIVERMORE, Calif. — Paul Bedrossian died peacefully on May 30, 2020.

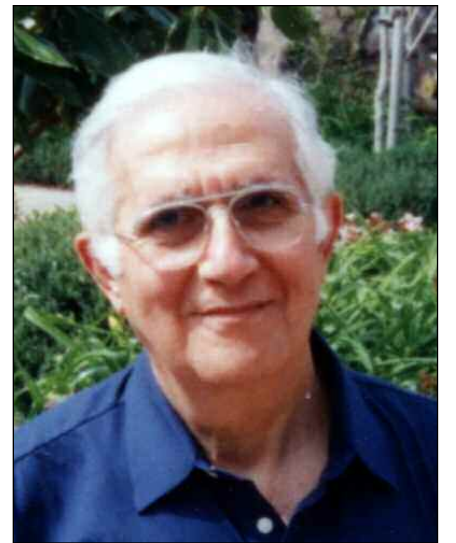
He was born in Cyprus to an Armenian refugee family in 1927, attended American University in Cairo, and earned a Doctorate in Medicine from University of Geneva in 1954.

He performed a residency at Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn and later served on the clinical faculties of both Upstate and Downstate Medical Centers in NY.

Starting in 1963 he practiced ophthalmology in Freeport and Rockville Centre and served at South Nassau, Mercy, and Hempstead General Hospitals and at the A. Holly Patterson Home for the Aged.

He was predeceased by his wife of 57 years, Felice Takakjian, with whom he enjoyed exploring and photographing the American West.

He is survived by a son, Peter, of Livermore.



## Giragosian

F UNERAL H OME

**James “Jack” Giragosian, CPC**  
**Mark J. Giragosian**  
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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Prof. Patapoutian Receives 2020 Norwegian Academy Of Science Neuroscience Prize

OSLO — The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters has awarded the Kavli Prize in Neuroscience for 2020 to two California based scientists, David Julius of the University of California, San Francisco, and Ardem Patapoutian, Scripps Research, La Jolla, “for their transformative discovery of receptors for temperature and pressure.”

While neural mechanisms for sensing chemicals in olfaction and light in vision have been described, a molecular basis for how temperature and pressure are detected and encoded into electrical signals has been lacking. The two Kavli Prize Laureates, Julius and Patapoutian, discovered receptors for temperature and pressure, two critical physical features of the environment. These findings revolutionized the field of neuroscience by providing a molecular and neural basis for thermosensation and mechanosensation.

David Julius used capsaicin, the compound in chili pepper that elicits the sensation of heat, to identify the gene encoding the first temperature sensor, the ion channel TRPV1. Julius further discovered that TRPV1 is activated by high temperature, high concentrations of protons found in ischemic tissues and chemical compounds generated during inflammation, thus providing a molecular integrator for both temperature sensing and inflammatory signals. Genetic experiments then showed that mutant mice deficient in TRPV1 have a deficit in heat sensitivity and a marked reduction in inflammatory and cancer pain. This discovery led to the identification of a family of channels involved in sensing specific ranges of warm and cold temperatures and irritants, some of which are mutated in familial pain syndromes. In other experiments, Julius and collaborators identified these channels as infra-red sensors in vampire bats and snakes, and as targets of spider and scorpion toxins, further validating their roles in temperature and pain sensation. TRPV1 and related channels are now targets for development of new analgesic drugs.

Ardem Patapoutian discovered a family of pressure-sensitive ion channels, the Piezos, that are highly conserved throughout the animal kingdom. Piezos were soon confirmed by Patapoutian to be essential for pressure sensing in mammals. His work further showed that Piezos form pressure-sensing channels and that they are directly responsible for pressure sensing in skin by Merkel cells, proprioceptors and touch sensory terminals. Piezos also act to sense pressure by nerve terminals in blood vessels and in the lungs and affect red blood cell volume, vascular physiology and underlie a broad range of human genetic disorders. The discovery of the Piezos opened the



David Julius, right, and Ardem Patapoutian

door to understanding mechanobiology in health and disease.

The 53-year-old Patapoutian was born in Beirut and is the younger child of the writer and playwright Sarkis Vahaken and teacher and principal Haigouhi Adjemian-Patapoutian. He and his family moved to Los Angeles as a result of the Lebanese civil war. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of California Los Angeles and his doctorate from the California Institute of Technology. He is married and has two children.

A professor in the Department of Neuroscience at Scripps Research and investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Patapoutian is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (2016), and a member of the National Academy of Sciences (2017). He is a co-recipient of the 2017 Alden Spencer Award from Columbia (with David Ginty), and the 2019 Rosenstiel Award for Distinguished Work in Basic Medical Research (with David Julius).

## San Diego Armenians Celebrate Blessing of New Sanctuary Foundation

SAN DIEGO — On Sunday, May 31, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, officiated the blessing of the foundation of the new sanctuary in San Diego. Very Rev. Pakrad Berjekian, Archpriest Manoug Markarian, and Archpriest Datev Tatoulian also took part in this joyous ceremony. The service also featured the voices of Deacons Yerevan Ohannessian and Levon Parsegov, and choir members, led by choirmaster Nishan Chadergian.

Against the backdrop of picturesque landscape and warm sunshine, this ancient rite consisted of blessing the site of the new church as well as anointing and laying of the foundation stones that were carved with Armenian crosses. The sanctuary's generous benefactor, the Israelian/Butterfield family, was unable to attend, but will be individually honored and celebrated at the consecration ceremony in about a year's time.

Sixteen godfathers placed the stones at the 16 pillars of the foundation, each representing a different Apostle and the evangelists of the Holy Gospels. The godfathers were named because of their generous stewardship of the Bridge to the Future project, which began in 2010 as a multi-year capital campaign to build a new church campus near Del Mar.

The godfathers were Khoren and Kathy Kassardjian, Paul and Rosemarie (deceased) Kalemkiarian, represented by Honorable Sharon L. Kalemkiarian, Alan and Mireille Yaghdjian, Carol Vassiliadis represented by Khoren Kassardjian, Gary (deceased) and Ilse Takessian, David and Annie Malcolm, represented by Kathy Kassardjian, Armen and Sevan Derderian, John and Cynthia Andonian, Jim and Jane Sahagian, Paul Esajian, represented by Karen Esajian, Jack (deceased), Garo and Nina Hachigian, Berge and Terry Minasian, Harry and George Krikorian, Noubar and Maida Markarian, Steven and Lisa Kradjian, and Jim and Beth Broussalian. Godfather of the Altar were Jack and Maro Kalaydjian, represented by Very Rev. Pakrad Berjekian.

In his welcoming remarks, Dr. Robert Aboolian, Parish Council chairman, stated, “Our generation has been working hard and will continue along this path to complete the construction of this church campus. But remember, the purpose of our endeavors is to leave a legacy for the generations to come. Today, we see the first fruits of our community's efforts, dedication, and selfless dedication towards this project. Our parishioners and spiritual leaders have demonstrated that they can work well together for the greater good of our church and community, so I am very optimistic about the future of this project.”

In his keynote speech, Derderian said, “This historic day is the reflection of our Christian faith and witness to the vision of our ancestors, for their life's journey has been with God, a journey of resilience and resurrection, a journey looking beyond the horizons. This historic ceremonial rite is an act, which strengthens our faith in God and our bond with the history of our nation, and is a bridge of our lives to the future. I wholeheartedly congratulate you as you launch the start of this monumental project.”



Dr. Robert Aboolian, St. John Garabed Parish Council Chair, opening the celebration

Closing the short program, Berjekian commented, “A decade of hard work by our enthusiastic community and supporters throughout the Diocese brings us to this momentous occasion.

The Bridge to the Future project dates back to 2008 when the Trust Fund Committee of St. John Garabed Armenian Church purchased close to 14 acres of premium property in San Diego, California. In October 2014, the Conditional Use Permit was granted by the City Planning Commission, and in January 2016, the Coastal Commission approved construction of the site. In 2017, the project was taken over by the newly-formed Building Committee to oversee and facilitate the construction phases. Thanks to a generous donor, an additional 4 acres of adjacent property was donated to expand the footprint of the campus.

When completed, the campus will feature a sanctuary designed to resemble St. Hripsime in Echmiadzin, elegant social hall, youth center and gymnasium, education and cultural building with classrooms and a library, Armenian Heritage Park, picnic and meditation spaces, and abundant parking.



Archbishop Hovnan Derderian blessing Godfathers Kathy and Khoren Kassardjian

sion. It is indeed gratifying to know that future generations of our community will have a beautiful and blessed sanctuary in which to connect with their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

## Mirror Offers Paid Internship through Armenian Students Association

WATERTOWN — The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is seeking an intern for a six-week program this summer (mid-July through August). The intern will receive a \$150 weekly stipend provided through the Armenian Students' Association of America's Internship Program. The *Mirror* also is looking for interns during the regular year.

The intern should be in college or graduate school and does not necessarily have to be studying journalism. Internet skills are a plus. Most likely, the internship will be done long distance, via electronic communications, so location is not an issue (but native speaker knowledge of English remains important). If interested, please email [tcadirector@aol.com](mailto:tcadirector@aol.com) or [alin@mirrorspectator.com](mailto:alin@mirrorspectator.com) with your resume.





COMMUNITY NEWS

# Boston and Detroit Armenian Funeral

FUNERALS, from page 1

He described the situation over the last few months as “definitely drastically more people passing away.” At its peak in April, there were 25 funerals, whereas he said, normally, the funeral home would handle 8 or 10. It slowed down in May.

Bedrosian said that even back in January, there were a few deaths which listed pneumonia or respiratory problems as the cause, which he now suspects could have been due to COVID-19. After seeing confirmed COVID-19 victims over time, he said he noticed the following: “Our results are a little bit compromised as far as the circulation to the extremities is concerned. We can usually tell from the hands or feet, sometimes in the facial area, where they might be a little more pink tone, or blemish, than there normally would be. It suggests the virus is present.”

Guidelines in Massachusetts were changing and unclear in March. Cardinal Sean Patrick O’Malley of the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston announced that Catholic churches would allow funeral masses with up to 25 people, but the limitation on participants was being abused. The cardinal then decided not to accommodate funeral masses but only conduct prayers at the cemetery. The Armenian Church decided to close and only do graveside prayers, though some priests might come to the funeral home before going to the cemetery. The Greek Orthodox Church decided not to close but to limit gatherings to 10 people.

By the weekend of March 21-22, President Donald Trump was talking about lowering the national limit on gatherings to 10 people but was leaving the actual decision to individual states. Sometime around 9 p.m. on Sunday, March 22, Bedrosian called his state senator,

William Brownsberger. Bedrosian said, “I was fortunate that I reached him. I identified myself and said we need some guidance from [Massachusetts] Governor Charlie Baker’s office, since the guidelines keep changing.”

Brownsberger’s first reaction was that there should be no visitations allowed at all, but Bedrosian explained to him why they were important to families. Bedrosian then said that he thought the numbers allowed should be lowered from 25 to 10, but that the funeral homes don’t want to sound insensitive to families who have just lost loved ones, so this decision must be taken by the governor’s office.

After talking about this for around half an hour, according to Bedrosian, Brownsberger said that he appreciated the call and that Bedrosian had won him over. He said he had not realized the nature of the situation and would talk with the governor the next day, Monday. In fact, he did speak with the governor, and perhaps this contributed to the governor’s new mandates limiting gatherings to 10 people, which went into effect on March 24.

The transition was awkward. Bedrosian had a visitation in his funeral home on the night of March 24 and the family had invited 25 people. He had to call and tell the family that the guidelines had changed, forcing them to reduce the number of those invited.

Bedrosian was appreciative of what Brownsberger did, saying, “Thank God Brownsberger went to bat for us. I appreciate what he did for our profession.”

Even now, there is no guaranteed way to know if someone has died of COVID. Bedrosian pointed out that though the ability exists to test for the virus after someone passes away, there are not enough resources available to do so at present.

Consequently, like other funeral homes, he assumes that every burial is of a person who had the virus, and wears face guards, face masks and smocks.

For the funeral home visitation, Bedrosian took some precautionary steps, such as removing the customary guest book so there is no possibility of people touching the same pen or book. He took away the kneeler in front of the casket so there is no common place to kneel.

Nonetheless, under the current circumstances, Bedrosian said, “I am fearful for myself too. I am 72 years old and like any first line responder, I am in harm’s way. But it is what it is.” After the disinfecting and embalming, however, there is no danger from the body.

Visitations are open casket still and Bedrosian said that most of the families he deals with want to see their loved ones. However, there have been some who out of anxiety preferred just to go directly to the cemetery. Bedrosian said that for most of them, he would take a picture of the loved one dressed up and send it so they could have that memory.

Cemetery visitations include the priest and Bedrosian, so usually only up to 8 family members can come. Bedrosian said, “It is such a sensitive thing, grief. You want people to be able to say goodbye to their loved ones. Many had been shut out of the nursing homes, and their only opportunity is at the funeral homes, but it is limited. These are very sad times.”

Bedrosian reflected about the bigger picture. He said, “There is a lot of stress in general. People are financially in a difficult way. The family unit is a little different. A husband or wife used to go to work but now is staying at home. I have some friends who say, I can’t do it. Every other day I go to Home Depot. I have to get out.”

He added, “what is disturbing to me is that I watch a lot of news reports and see people throughout the country not wearing masks. What is wrong with people?”

**Giragosian Funeral Home**

The Giragosian Funeral Home in Watertown has deep Armenian community roots, just like the Bedrosian Home. James Giragosian took over the Charles Mardirosian Funeral Home, which was established in 1932, in 1979. James’ son, Mark, said that 80-90 percent of their burials were Armenians.

Mark Giragosian, like Bedrosian, said that the number of burials increased dramatically in April, perhaps even tripling, while they slowed down in May. In April and May, a good majority of the calls were deaths due to COVID-19. A large number were elderly, but were in good shape before the virus. He said, “That has been the most astonishing thing to me: how many people died in such a short period of time. Their deaths were accelerated. It was like somebody stepped on a gas pedal.”

The situation at the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Jamaica Plain, Mass., was one of the things that was most difficult for Giragosian to experience. His greatest fear, he said, had been that it might get hit by the coronavirus.

He said, “We had Easter, and it was a beautiful holiday even though not in a church, but Easter night I got my first call to go to the nursing home. I do all my own personal removals, as we call them. I had been to the Armenian nursing home many, many times over the course of my life, but I never saw it like this. All the nurses wearing full hazmat suits and the COVID unit was iso-

lated and sealed off. It was a scary place. Easter was April 12. I went back again many times. Bedrosian probably went there several times. That week after Easter we lost so many residents.” He concluded that this was a week, or several weeks, that he would like to forget. “It was a very hard experience,” he added.

Giragosian and Bedrosian did not have to turn people away even in April, unlike many funeral homes in New Jersey and New York. Giragosian said, “We got lucky.” Crematoriums were able to keep up with the workload, again unlike in those places.

Giragosian was extremely cautious, using all protective equipment, like Bedrosian, including suits, masks and shields, when going into places like nursing homes, and taking extreme precautions during the embalming process since even now, no one knows definitively whether the virus can continue to survive in the corpse. Giragosian said that with a young child, and his wife pregnant, he certainly did not want to bring any disease home. He said, “The risk is certainly there, but we had to take it. It was part of what we needed to do to help these families. It continues to be a tough situation, as we just don’t know how the virus spreads. We hear different things every day.”

Like Bedrosian, Giragosian bewailed the curtailment of the mourning process due to the virus, with no church services and limited visitation. He said, “It was dramatically altered. It was really weird being at these [cemetery] services, when even among the immediate family, there were no embraces or hugs.”

He saw the pain on the faces of the family members when their mother or father had to die alone and goodbyes had to be said via Facetime. Consequently, even if in a casket, the time for a widow to see her husband a last time was very, very important, he stressed.

Most people, he said, were understanding of the limitations on participants at the cemetery services. Giragosian said, “It was a very difficult period of time. We took care of what we need to. Surviving relatives plan to have more of a celebration of life once restrictions are lifted. This is unprecedented territory for all of us, even the long-time directors like my father.”

He hoped, he said, that this would not become the new normal, because the public opportunities for people to grieve together are very important. He said, “They need the support of their friends and community when they lose somebody. I hope we can start bringing people back to church and having wakes again.”

He speculated: “It is hard to say what is going to happen. People are going to be apprehensive even if we are able to have public gatherings in church or in the funeral home with wakes. People are wearing masks now when they come to see us and a lot of people don’t even want to come in and sit with us. They handle funeral arrangements through the phone or email. We will be seeing masks for quite some time even if we move toward normal and have services more public. It is weird. Are we never going to be able to shake hands again or embrace? The virus will never go away. The flu didn’t. Will it continue to affect our lives in the same way?”

**Detroit Funeral Homes**

Michigan, including the metropolitan Detroit area, has had the fifth largest number of deaths from COVID-19 in the US, and during earlier months was higher on this list. It has two Armenian-owned funeral homes, and as would be expected, they

## Boston Armenian-Owned Properties Damaged During May 31 Violence



The UGG store after the looting. Shoes and boxes from this store were found up and down Newbury Street that night.

PROPERTY, from page 1

My father never went to high school and look what he made out of himself. He had dreams and vision – very big vision.”

He said that his firm has a lot of retail, office and residential clients in the Back Bay area and is very personal and hands-on with its clients. He said, “We are not a big company from out-of-state – send your rent check to an out-of-state post office box.”

Some tenants have been with the firm for more than 30 years.

The novel coronavirus crisis put a lot of pressure on this relationship. Talanian said, “These past three months, I spent a tremendous amount of time on the phone, talking to them, trying to make deals, to get through this pandemic situation.”

Stores were closed and his firm only got a 30-day relief on taxes while getting paid either partial or no rent for 90 days. Federal banking rules allow banks and insurance companies that finance properties to take action if a building does not perform up to a certain standard financially and put it up for auction, he pointed out.

He tried to nurse the situation along until the planned soft opening on June 1 of offices at 25-percent capacity in Boston. He was in Florida on the night of May 31, he said, when he received an email from Meg Mainzer-Cohen, the executive director of the Back Bay Association (<https://www.boston-backbay.com/>), which has more than 400 business members

working for their mutual interests in the neighborhood, especially larger businesses like the Prudential Center, Copley Place and the hotels. The email stated that according to Captain Steven Sweeney, commander of police district D-4, there was no intelligence that Newbury Street would be targeted for looting or aggression. However, there would be a tactical van patrolling the Newbury-Boylston route just in case.

Clearly something was off with that intelligence. Mayor Marty Walsh of Boston on June 4 admitted that the city did not call up all available and able officers that night (<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/06/07/nation/there-was-no-full-call-up-boston-police-sundays-demonstration/>). On the other hand, according to the same article, the police presence was seen by many as significant. According to reports of some residents, there was no police presence for one hour, while the plundering was fairly organized (<https://theboston-sun.com/2020/06/03/radical-change-peaceful-protests-morph-into-violence-and-looting/>). Windows were broken with “some sort of tool,” then a group would enter a store to rob it, and cars would come to take away the stolen goods. A Boston Sun editorial blamed professional criminals who took “advantage of the diversion of the police created by the peaceful and legitimate protestors” (<https://theboston-sun.com/2020/06/03/most-of-the-protesters-are-not-looters/>).





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Homes Shoulder Their Heavy Burden

faced a heavy burden, though their situation was a little less difficult than in New York or Boston.

Simon Javizian Funeral Directors is a firm established by Simon Javizian in 1952. His wife helped in the business, and eventually, his son Semon joined too, though he moved to Florida. Simon said that the firm has three funeral homes and that while most of the people who call him are Armenian his firm also works with many non-Armenians.

Javizian said, “We have noticed a big change since it [COVID-19] occurred. Let me say that we don’t know exactly how many

virus cases we have had. Many times—almost always—when we go to a hospital to make the removal of a body, they do not tell us that this person died of this or that disease because of privacy rules. We have to assume that it is a virus disease and protect ourselves accordingly until the death certificate arrives, and that might take several days...The doctor might then have put the cause of death as a heart attack whereas the virus may have caused it.”

Simon Javizian

He estimated that deaths have gone up approximately 30 percent because of the virus. Interestingly, he estimated that Armenians were dying in smaller numbers than non-Armenians among his funeral homes, and that, he thought, might be due to the better socioeconomic condition of Armenians in the Detroit area compared with the majority of the population.

The numbers of deaths only began to slow, he said, in the last few weeks, but still were higher than ordinary. The funeral homes were able to handle the number of cases that came in, but at the peak of the disease, the hospitals and the medical examiners’ morgues experiencing great difficulties, and cemeteries and crematories were so busy, he said, that they had to wait and line up to be told what day and time they could come.

Javizian said, “We had more bodies in storage in our funeral homes than ever before, but because we were not having visitations or funerals, we had the extra space to keep those bodies. One of our cemeteries had a three-week delay so we had to keep a body for almost three weeks.”

As in many other places, his funeral homes try to do most arrangements via telephone or Internet instead of in person in order to practice safe social distancing, and only immediate family are allowed to see the body prior to burial. Javizian said that the maximum permitted in 10, but his firm tries to keep it down to 3.

Some cemeteries also only allow 3 immediate family members, and each one has its own rules. Others allow no more than ten, and they too make their arrangements via phone or Internet. If a family has to go buy a grave, they can’t go into the cemetery office. An employee will go out of the building and deal with the family members through the car window. To see the grave, they have to follow the cemetery attendant in their own car.

As a result of these complications, Javizian said that more

cremations are being done now than burials. The only thing usually the family has to do is when they decide on the final disposition of the remains, so contact of the families with bodies is even less than in cases of burials, where families usually have immediate burial and go to the cemetery.

The biggest change for most people, he said, is the inability to have a funeral service, and priests may or may not be able to be present at the immediate burials. To allow more people to follow the burial ceremony, the firm provides Internet viewing as a courtesy, though at times also individuals present use their own cellphones and say they will do it.

Javizian noted that he happened to be in Florida at present, where he is also licensed and arranges funerals in various areas. He stated, “Fortunately the Armenians here haven’t been touched by the virus in the same degree as other states have.” This is Javizian’s 68th year in the business and his wife passed away 11 years ago. He concluded that despite the stress at present, “I believe in what we do and as a result I will continue doing it as long as the good lord continues to give me my health.”

Christopher Korkoian provided more information about the coronavirus situation among the Armenians in Detroit. The Edward Korkoian Funeral Home, like most of the other Armenian-owned homes, has been a family business. It was started by Edward B. Korkoian in 1949 and continued by his son Edward H. Korkoian, who continues to work, while Christopher, the latter’s son, joined the business in 1995 and received his license in 1999. The wives of the first two generations also joined in the business.

Christopher Korkoian said that the primary location, in Royal Oak, had roughly 70 percent Armenian clientele, while a second location did not deal with Armenians in general. He said that his father wants to continue in working in part because “our business now is dealing with people he has grown up with or people that were older than him as he was growing up. He still wants to be present and support his community and family.”

The COVID-19 crisis began in March, in Michigan, and the heaviest month was April, Korkoian said, while even in May the numbers were still too high for comfort. As for the number of deaths compared to ordinary years, Korkoian said they were



From left, Christopher, Yvonne and Edward Korkoian

“just a little more, to be honest.” However, the age group has been a bit younger, with more in the 50- to 60-year-old range than usual. He said that the majority of the people had other health-related issues, but he thought the virus made their demise earlier than expected.

Korkoian suspected that the international border with Canada may have been one reason why Michigan was hit fairly hard compared to other parts of the US. Like Javizian, Korkoian thought that Armenians might have been affected a little less than the general population.

The Korkoian funeral homes did not have to turn anyone away, but like all other firms, did make changes in operations. First and foremost, Korkoian said, unless a family preferred to meet face-to-face, they tried to do everything remotely, via phone or Internet, including Zoom.

Secondly, St. John Armenian Church in Southfield, Michigan, along with all Diocesan churches, did not allow funeral services inside the sanctuary, though St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church in Dearborn, Michigan did allow funerals with only a small number of immediate family members. Not all took advantage of the latter’s possibility, however.

The Armenian Congregational Church of Southfield also did not allow services in the church. Saint Vartan Armenian Catholic Church in Bloomfield Hills, did not have any deaths of parishioners in this period, according to Fr. Andon Atamian.

The state of Michigan throughout the crisis only allowed a maximum of 10 people present at a funeral gathering, including priest and deacon, so many families chose not to have visitations or dan gark religious services the night before as a result, Korkoian said. If 10 people were in the funeral home and another one arrived, he would have to wait for one of those present to leave the funeral home first before he could enter.

In general, Korkoian said, Armenians had a prayer service at the grave. Those cremated could be buried, but some families preferred to keep the remains until restrictions will be lifted for a public gathering sometime in the future, he explained.

Cemeteries each have their own restrictions in terms of how many can be present at the grave. Some do not allow approaching the grave until the burial is complete and the cemetery employees have left, said Korkoian.

Despite all the restrictions, Korkoian said that families have been very understanding concerning what the funeral homes, churches and cemeteries can do.

Korkoian confessed, “I too am concerned about getting sick, not just from those who have passed away but also from people you are coming into contact with...In this line of work, you work hard because you have to get things in order before you have the visitation, before the funeral and before the burial. You do have moments of stress because you might be on time constraint. ... but since all this has been happening I would say the mental stress is more intense because of the fear that it is out there, and it does not discriminate against anyone, whatever age or sex one might be.”

Like all other funeral directors, he worried about the lack of closures for families not fully allowed public grieving but understood, he said, that “first and foremost we have to be concerned with the health of our city, county, state and country, and the world.”

Evidently, what happened that evening and whether the mayor acted properly will still continue to be analyzed and interpreted as more information becomes available, but Talanian is in the critical camp, suspecting political bias and motivations possibly connected to the upcoming November election.

Many stores with high-end goods were targeted, like UGG and Canada Goose (see a preliminary list here: <https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2020/06/01/boston-businesses-looted-vandalized-list>). Talanian said his friends who watched the night unfolding through the security cameras in their stores told him odd stories of police not intervening next to looters and cars and Ubers backed up on Newbury Street, collecting plundered goods.

Armed troops, including the National Guard and extra police, secured the area in the days after the plundering, with Humvees traveling the streets. There have been no major issues since May 31 while peaceful protests continue to take place.

Talanian said that it was too early to calculate the damages his properties suffered. If a property was rented and occupied, the tenant would be responsible for his glass fronts, but he would be responsible for vacant stores, such as one of his properties with a building permit in the window which was going to be built out for a Dunkin Donuts.

Talanian said, “I feel sad for the smaller businesses that I have.” They all told him they just wanted to go back in business and pay rent. Until it is all over and the damage can be assessed, he asked them to pay half the rent, which they really appreciated.

As for the graffiti, Talanian said, the city was sending in people to power wash it off.

Other Armenian-connected businesses damaged that night include Alex and Ani, a firm founded by Carolyn Rafaelian, and Alan Bilzerian. Fortunately the latter was not entered and is open again.



A view of Newbury Street after the looting with stores boarded, including Talanian Realty property





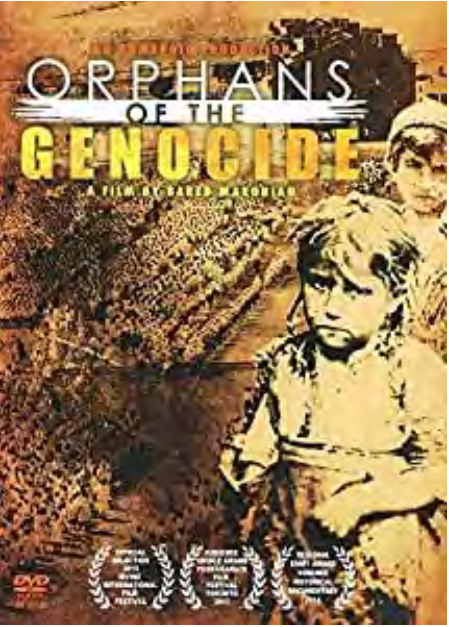
# Arts & Living

## Bared Maronian’s ‘Orphans of the Genocide’ Documentary Now Available on Amazon Prime

COCONUT CREEK, Fla. — Armenoid Productions announced this that its 2013 award-winning “Orphans of the Genocide” documentary is now available for free on Amazon Prime Video. The visual journey of never-before-seen archival footage and discovered memoirs of Armenian orphans tells of the horrors of the Armenian genocide of 1915. It was widely broadcast on PBS TV Stations reaching over 50 million households, and translated into French, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek and Armenian.

“We chose to make the ‘Orphans of the Genocide’ available for free on Amazon to expand our viewership. Currently it is available in the US and the UK and will soon be available in Germany and Japan with subtitles,” says Armin T. Wegner Humanitarian Award Laureate, four-time Emmy Award-winning documentary filmmaker and founder of Armenoid Productions, Bared Maronian.

“Orphans of the Genocide” documents the arduous journey of over 150,000 Armenian orphans who were later rescued by American and Scandinavian relief organizations. Among many orphans profiled is Satenig, American pathologist and euthanasia proponent, Dr. Jack Kevorkian’s mother. Selected by the Hong Kong World International Film Festival, and nationally distributed by the National Educational Telecommunications Association



to over 250 TV stations across the U.S., the documentary received a Telly Award. It was nominated to the 2014 Regional Emmy Award in Historical Documentary category, selected in NYC Filmmaker’s Festival, nominated as Best Documentary at the 2013 ARPA Film Festival, featured at New York’s Unspoken Human Rights Film Festival, and received the Audience Choice Award at the 2013 Pomegranate Film Festival in Toronto, Canada.

Maronian’s most recent production, “Bloodless: The Path to Democracy,” is a collaboration between Armenoid Productions and Cultural Impact Foundation. It documents the civil disobedience of the people’s revolution of 2018 in Armenia which resulted in the bloodless overthrow of an incumbent, corrupt, oligarchic government and the appointment of a new “people’s choice” Prime Minister. Maronian’s earlier 2016 documentary, “Women of 1915,” examines the plight of the Armenian women during and after the Armenian Genocide of 1915.



St. Nicholas Church

## Uneaten Mulberries

### Ichmeh before the Genocide

There were many mulberry trees in the village of Ichmeh in the Ottoman Empire in 1915.

Ichmeh was a small village in the province of Kharpert containing several hundred families. It rested in the shadow of Mount Mastar and was made up of two sections, upper and lower Ichmeh. The name Ichmeh literally means “don’t drink” in Turkish apparently from a time when water drunk from

the natural spring was found to be distasteful. Unlike most of the other villages of Kharpert, the name of the town has not changed and the name Ichmeh continues to the present time.

The Armenians in the village had lived in relative harmony and peaceful coexistence with the Ottomans for quite some time. The Armenians in their section of the village occupied their homes peacefully and ran numerous businesses, mills and orchards. The village had its own school, formed by the merger of three smaller schools: while Ichmetzi’s (citizens of Ichmeh) were not particularly well educated, they shared a great respect for education and strongly encouraged learning among their children. The town had two churches, one Apostolic and the other, Protestant. The Armenian citizens of Ichmeh were especially proud of St. Nicholas Church, a magnificent stone structure, which had been built over a steady stream which flowed right under the Church.

Ichmeh was quite independent and self-contained and the shops and mills were able to provide virtually of the needed foodstuffs and household items which the citizens required, as well as providing items for neighboring towns.

Garabed Mazadoorian was born in 1867. He was a respected member of the  
see MULBERRIES, page 12

## Breathing With Saroyan

### A Message of Life

FRESNO/NEW YORK — On Monday, May 18, 2020, a community gathered — at a distance, online — to reflect upon the “delight & mystery of life” as expressed in the artistic objectives of William Saroyan’s literary work and through distinctive features of the



William Saroyan. Photo by: Boghos Boghosian

Armenian faith tradition. Upon invitation from parish priest The Rev. Fr. Stepanos Doudoukjian, Megan A. Jendian prepared a multi-media presentation for nearly 50 participants in the Capital District of Upstate New York’s St. Peter Armenian Church — Adult Education series hosted by co-coordinators Rhonda Boyajian and Elsie Vozzy.

Resource materials included publications from St. Nersess Armenian Seminary (*Sacred Music Lab* - NY, 2006) and research by Saroyan scholars David S. Calonne (*Saroyan: My Real Work Is Being*, 1983) and Prof. Micah Jendian (*Falling from the Trapeze: Saroyan’s Challenge to the Culture Industry*, 1999).

In the midst of global suffering and the current malady of despair, Jendian anchored her message in the miraculous messenger: the Way, Truth, and Life with Whom the source of grace lives and breathes within and among us. Noted as wisdom literature in the scriptural *Book of Job*, “The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty teaches me.” In the preface to Saroyan’s first collection of short stories, *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze* (1934), he states simply: “Try to learn to breathe deeply...; try as much as possible to be wholly alive with all your might.” At all times in all places, along with the perpetual yet oft-times passive practice of breathing, and through active engagement with both literary art and sacred prayers, readings, and hymns, there is the revelation of an ever-present message of life and hope.

Expressed and experienced in the timeless psalmody of the Armenian liturgical calendar, days - and even hours - are sanctified with specific themes to guide faithful in the revelation and reception of *Medz Avedis* - the Great, Good News; Mondays, for example, are designated as the Day of the Angels. Saroyan believed in writing, and wrote daily to uplift, encourage, and help readers focus their vision upon the “imperishable force of being” as proclaimed in his 1952 memoir *The Bicycle Rider in Beverly Hills*: “I wanted to restore the nature of man to its rightful wonder & dignity...I wanted the human being to be both a human being and something not unlike an angel, for I believed he could be both at the same time. By angel — I mean a genius, and by genius — I mean a person of ever-unfolding grace, intelligence, and creative power.” In order to live with eyes that see and ears that  
see SAROYAN, page 16





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Uneaten Mulberries: Ichmeh Before the Genocide

MULBERRIES, from page 12

Armenian community and interacted well with both the Armenians and Turks. He was one of three Armenian members of the town's governing council and known as a *khobabashi* in Turkish. Nonetheless, although the Armenians had representation, they did not command much actual authority and the Armenian members of the council did not have much influence with the Mayor. The job of the council was to hear complaints of the villagers, to arbitrate disputes, aid in the collection of taxes and to keep registries of property, inhabitants and dates of births and deaths. Garabed had twice been to the United States and in fact had become a naturalized American citizen in Rhode Island on one of his trips, in 1897. His son Nigoghos was his only surviving son as his other son Harutiun had died of illness as a child. Thus, the bond between father and son was very strong.

Young Nigoghos enjoyed living in Ichmeh, but in the spring of 1915 increasingly noticed that things were changing. Although he was only 8 years old in the spring of 1915, he perceptively sensed that matters were greatly amiss. The school had been converted into a police station and the number of policeman had increased significantly. So too was there an increased presence of Turkish militia passing through town. Most of the Armenian men under the age of forty had been "conscripted" into the Turkish army. Things seemed uncertain and the Armenians seemed uneasy about their activities. Things were not as peaceful as in the past and there was a noticeable sense of unease and apprehension. Increasingly, word came from other villages of the disarming of Armenians, confiscation of their property and the diversion of Armenians in the Turkish army to labor battalions. Both father and son knew that the situation was becoming bleak with the cessation of delivery of an Armenian newspaper printed in Istanbul, to which Garabed subscribed, and which was his most reliable source of accurate news.

Nigoghos recalled in particular one occasion, while he was walking through the Armenian section of town, when he saw two Turkish soldiers watching him and whispering to each other. Although Nigoghos spoke Turkish fluently, he was not able to make out what the soldiers were saying in their hushed tones, but he could not miss the snicker on their face and he did hear one word quite clearly: "Gavoor" or infidel as the Armenians were sometimes called. He was bothered by their laughter as they stared at him.

The Armenians of Ichmeh were particularly fond of their fruit trees, especially the apricot trees, fig trees and the prized mulberry trees. The orchards were bountiful and productive. As



Nigoghos Mazadoorian

the growing season progressed, the fruit, when ripened, would be harvested and enjoyed for immediate consumption as well as dried for later enjoyment. The mulberry trees varied in their schedules of ripening: when ripe the fruit would be harvested by someone climbing the tree and shaking the branches so that the mulberries fell into sheets or blankets held by others below. It was a festive and joyful experience.

In the spring of 1915, Garo and His son Nigoghos were walking through their orchards

where among other mulberry trees was a particularly robust and early ripening one. Whereas most of the other mulberry trees were just newly flowering and the fig tree branches were producing new green buds, this particular mulberry tree was already showing signs of bearing fruit. The Armenians considered this to be a very good omen. To see and taste the first mulberries of the season was something special.

Nigoghos was pleased to be with his father examining the trees and anticipating the future bounty. His father lifted him onto the tree producing the early fruit where Nigoghos found a secure foothold and began shaking the tree, causing fruit to fall from the branches. After an ample number of the berries had fallen to the ground, Garabed helped his son down from the tree and father and son picked up and ate the fresh fruit. After they had eaten their fill, Garabed asked his son to collect some in a cloth pouch to take home to his mother Zartoohee.

"Let us go home now my son" said Garabed. "We have tasted the first mulberries of the season. We shall not die this year."

They hurried home with their bounty. They looked forward to returning as there would apparently soon be many more delicious mulberries to eat.

Garabed Mazadoorian (1867-1915), together with numerous other older male residents of Ichmeh and its surrounding towns not previously conscripted into the Turkish army, was taken away from his family, and imprisoned in extremely packed conditions in the sacred Soorp Nigoghos Church. From there these men were bound together by rope in groups of ten and taken to a valley called Arpa Talatsee where they were killed. His son Nigoghos survived the Genocide, endured many hardships including being required to tend to orchards owned by Turkish families in the nearby town of Zartarich. He travelled to Aleppo by foot and ultimately found safety in a Danish orphanage in that city. There he was discovered by a friend of his father and as the son of a naturalized

American citizen was provided passage to America partially through funding by a charitable and educational foundation named "Ichmehee Oosoomnaseerat" meaning generally patrons for the advancement of education in Ichmeh, which had originally been formed for school construction and education in Ichmeh. He married Yegsa Aharonian, also a Genocide survivor from the Kharpert village of Yegheki. Both worked tirelessly in the factories of New Britain Connecticut. They saved enough money to buy a home where Nigoghos planted many bountiful fruit trees and painstakingly cared for them as he had learned to do while in servitude in Zartarich. They had two sons for whom they provided a loving home, many comforts and advantages including the opportunity for both to attend and graduate from Yale University.

*This story was told by Nigoghos Mazadoorian (1907-1997), to his older son Charles (1934-1996), who earned a degree in English literature and who lovingly preserved it in writing. Minor edits have been made by*



Nigoghos Mazadoorian and his wife, Yegsa

*Charles' younger brother, Attorney Harry Mazadoorian, Nigoghos' younger son.*

## Cannes Festival Will Include Karabakh Film in 2020 Lineup

CANNES, France (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The film "Si Le Vent Tombe" (If The Wind Falls) by Armenian filmmaker Nora Martirosyan has been included in the list films that would have comprised the Cannes Film Festival's selection for 2020.

Saying "cancellation has never been an option," Cannes general delegate Thierry Frémaux said the 56 films would have competed for the Palme d'Or, as well as playing sidebars such as Midnight Screenings, Out of Competition, and Un Certain Regard, the Guardian newspaper noted.

Martirosyan's movie is about Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) and is the director's debut feature film.

The 73rd festival was due to take place May 12-23, but after restrictions by French government effectively banned mass gatherings until mid-July at the earliest it was forced to call it off, before subsequently abandoning tentative plans to reschedule it for later in the year. The Cannes Film Market, the film industry trade fair which normally operates alongside the film festival, has been reconfigured as an online event and is due to run June 22-26.

## Ohanian Says He Stepped Down from Reddit Board to Help 'Make a Better World' For Daughter Olympia

OHANIAN, from page 1

"This was not an easy decision at all," Ohanian said at the start of their conversation, explaining that the choice was made "upon reflecting on the state of where our country is right now" and how he could most effectively help move things forward.

"I thought about what I could do beyond a social media post, beyond a donation," he continued, noting that while it may seem "counterintuitive," he felt that the best way he could lead by example was by resigning from the board.

"We need diversity at the highest levels of business now more than ever," Ohanian explained. "Once I realized why I needed to do it, it became very easy."

In addition to stepping down from the board, Ohanian also announced he would be donating future gains from his Reddit stock to help the black community — starting with \$1 million pledge to Colin Kaepernick's Know Your Rights Camp nonprofit.

Asking her husband why he decided to step down, Williams, 38, stressed that he was the one to make the decision. "A lot of people might think I told you to do something, or I forced you —" she said, as her husband laughed. "He doesn't listen to me, ever."

"I thought about what those dollars could do for a community that has clearly suffered for far too long, and that I with my power and my influence and my privilege want to do something meaningful to start to show a change. To make a better world for Olympia," Ohanian said, referencing their 2½-year-old daughter.

Ohanian went on to explain that when his daughter grows up, he wanted to be able to answer her questions about what he's done to fight against racial injustice "with the

clearest conscience."

"I wanted to put as much weight behind the gesture as I could because I felt I owed it to you and I owed it to her," he said.

"One of the things that really broke me at some point in the last week, I was looking at Olympia, she's 2½ now, and she is such a pure, just blank canvas," he continued. "She only knows love. There is not an ounce of

your entire life?" he asked his wife. "How have generations of black Americans been able to endure your entire life? Because if I'm just getting this mad right now, I wouldn't be able to function."

"It's hard. It is definitely not easy," the tennis star replied. "It's something that unfortunately has become normal for us."

Kaepernick's Know Your Rights Camp is a



Alexis Ohanian, with his wife, Serena Williams, and daughter Alexis Ohanian Jr. (Olympia)

hate in her body."

"That's the crushing thing. At some point, Olympia is going to have to have a talk with you, a talk with us, but especially a talk with you, about how she's going to have to work that much harder, how she's going to have to deal with this much more, that pisses me off," he told Williams.

Through his own emotions, Ohanian was also afforded a deeper perspective at the pain the black community has felt for years. "I'm sitting here like, if I'm this pissed off just now, how have you been able to endure

legal defense initiative that aims to "raise awareness on higher education, self-empowerment, and [provide] instructions on how to properly interact with law enforcement in various scenarios," according to the athlete's website.

It's recently expanded to provide legal assistance to protestors fighting against police brutality in the wake of George Floyd's death while in police custody in Minneapolis, Kaepernick said, and has also been working to file civil rights cases against police





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## Books

## Literature and Engagement

Vahé Oshagan's Novel *Odzum*

By Tigrane Yegavian

The famous French-Armenian historian Anahide Ter Minassian did not have the chance to touch this newly published book she translated from Armenian to French in the twilight of her life. An iconoclastic story, Vahé Oshagan's short novel *Odzum* [anointing, or unction] (Vahé Oshagan, *Onction*, Marseille: Editions Parenthèses, 2020, 128 pages, 19 euros.) [https://www.editionsparentheses.com/Onction] is one of the most relevant stories in the book *Tagarti shurch* [around the trap] published in New York in 1988. This committed and fiercely free text questions the engagement, action and revolt of a whole generation, the one which turned twenty at the end of the 1970s.

What have been the attempts of Armenian literature to respond to the challenge of armed struggle? This article was written in part based on an interview that the late historian had given us about Vahé Oshagan, shortly before her death.

A “transgressive novel,” if there are any, *Unction* evokes an episode of Armenian life in the diaspora scarcely or poorly addressed in our contemporary literature. Let's call this genre “*Hay Tadism*,” because it's about armed struggle. In contemporary Western Armenian literature, there are some authors in the diaspora who have taken up this subject. Among the most committed, one can find three writers from

from the inside (*A Time for Terror* (1997) and *Ruling over the Ruins* (1999)). Literarily poor, it does not shine through style or aesthetics, but through its iconoclastic and transgressive dimension.

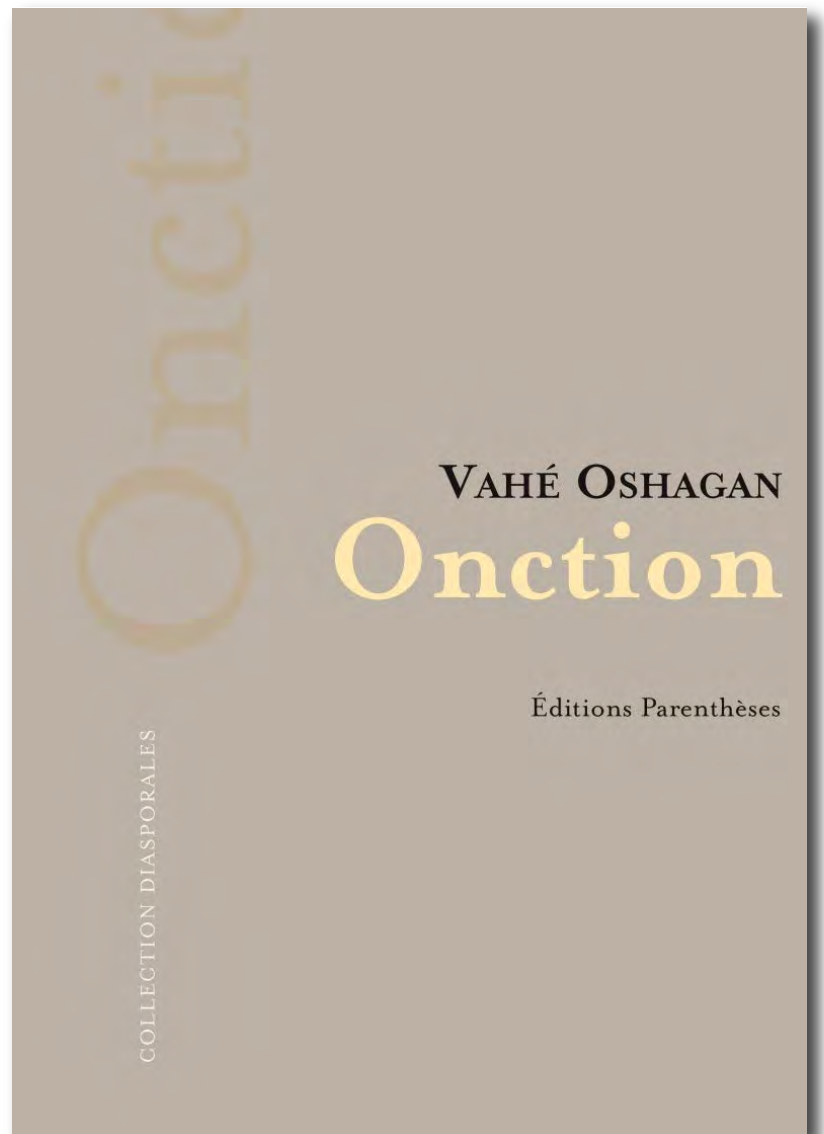
Attracted by existentialism when he frequented the Sorbonne and the cafes of Paris in the 1950s, he had maintained all his life a kind of great gap between his membership of the ARF Dachnaksutun, and his loyalty towards the Armenian community structures, and on the other hand, a transgressive writing, a yearn to awaken a whole people from its inertia. If at times he developed a “poetry of the absurd,” he nonetheless remained faithful to a quest for meaning; a questioning of traditional standards, their exploration of the Armenian diasporic reality and its taboos. His poetry as well as his prose render in him a metapolitical project: it's a question of breaking myths. But to replace them with what? And to pretend to what type of normality to suppose that this is the supreme aspiration of this revolutionary militant youth?

## Destroying Myths

Oshagan's generation is that of the sons of survivors haunted by their stories. The writer was in his 50s when the first terrorist attacks hit the headlines. Driven by urgency, Oshagan writes, fascinated by these young revolutionary characters ready to commit a terrorist act to wake up an amorphous, anesthetized people, knocked out by the Catastrophe and centuries of serfdom. The debris of the Catastrophe surviving in a diaspora where the present is impossible, the future improbable. This Armenianness, which rots away from everything and everyone in the suburbs of the great western metropolises, is described as “frozen, petrified, fossilized in the paradise of false religion” (p. 52).

There are three young activists: an Armenian communist boy from France, a Lebanese-Armenian girl, and the youngest of the commando, an American Armenian who looks like a “blond angel,” both cut off and protected from his painful heritage. They plan to attack the saint of saints. It is incumbent upon them to destroy the church and religious mysticism first, then liberate this “Armenian people of mustaches” from their permanent passive state, to “transform them into something vital, alive; something that can be passed on from generation to generation. They have youth, charm, healthy bodies, sexual bodies. They have carefully thought it through and are devoted to the cause, ready to make a sacrifice. In this immediate context and in their eyes, the enemy is no longer the predatory Turk but the Armenian castrated by centuries of serfdom that must be freed from his chains in spite of himself. Facing them, the target is embodied by an old *kahana* (married priest), a native of Kessab.

This choice cannot be a coincidence if one takes into account that this village, today in Syria, adjoins the fabled Musa Dag, the mecca of Armenian resistance. They don't know that the man they targeted no longer believes in the God of Christians and the hope of the resurrection. He's a sick man with a painful, aged body – but remains a brave and resilient man. Vahé Oshagan has chosen to attack national myths, this spirituality reduced to its simplest expression, in the hope of deconstructing other myths like those maintained by traditional diaspora parties. In short, breaking the myth because with the myth would also disappear centuries of oppression, fear of the Turk, terror of the massacres. Except that the operation will take an unexpected turn. Not only will the priest survive, but this ordeal is experienced as a regenerative passion. The writer has contented himself with pressing where it hurts, rehashing old fetishes through characters at most romantic, at least stereotypical.



## Incompatibility between Sex and Armenianness

“For Vahé Oshagan sex is of central importance,” said Anahide Ter Minassian, who remembered the heated discussions with the writer in post-war Paris when she was a teenager. She remembered the proud descriptions with many details of his young Parisian female conquests. He was a young man recently arrived from his native East, where relations between the genders were regulated. He felt intoxicated by his discoveries of French women “so accessible,” the opposite of the “Armenian sisters.”

No wonder also that Vahé Oshagan wanted to attack the taboo of sexuality, which, in the eyes of Jacques, the commander of the commandos, does not rhyme with fulfillment in the case of the Armenians. The men suffer from permanent insecurity; the women are afraid of opening old wounds, instead repressing all heat. Pleasure is absent. Within these young comrades animated by the same project, there is a rigid discipline: just shake hands, there is no way to fall in love.

“It is all around the mouth and at the tip of the finger that sexuality nestles – first the kiss, then the words, the tumult, the song, and then the silence that is also built around the mouth ... the language that searches, the mouth with its secret content, closed with extreme intimacy ... the center of Armenianness is the mouth” (p. 72), Oshagan makes Jacques's character say.

In this lost world, suffering is beyond the body, the flesh, enjoyment, far beyond, and much stronger than sex. And because Armenians are weak and vulnerable in this “sexual zone,” you have to strike where it hurts. “They will wake up well, free themselves from the old fear of the old taboo.” There is something grand about breaking a centuries-old spell, breaking the bonds of the moral obligation that unites and disunites Armenians in the diaspora, opening wide the prisons where all this frustration was contained. To do this, what could be more obvious than to act in an Armenian church in the middle of the celebration of the Eucharist?

## A Need for Sacredness

With Oshagan, there is no requirement to believe in the presence of God. But we cannot ignore the sacred. Here, the priest's body is the object of the act of desecration. After hugging in public and letting notes of jazz music at full volume escape from a transistor, the young people go to undress Der Avedis during mass, to tear his ornaments with a knife, “all the pieces of his useless tinsel, ridiculous celebrant, to throw them away, until all that remains is his panties, his shitty panties” (p. 64). Provocative gesture? Terrorist act or revolutionary agit-prop for this generation of militants? It's up to the reader to decide.

Let us remember here that the defilement of the holy place did not take place. The purpose of the commando was to violate what was most sacred among the Armenians; understand the level of vitality of the Armenian soul which is not defined in the text. A soul pure enough to care for these self-satisfied, sick, “falsely happy, falsely pious” bodies. Instead we discover a nationalized God, a Christianity subordinate to tradition, a kind of national religion confined to the Armenian faithful only. Father Avedis' god is a nationalized god. The diasporic

continued on next page



Vahé Oshagan

the second half of the 20th century, two of whom fell into oblivion: Raymond Boghos Kupelian and Kevork Adjemian (who was one of the founders of the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia [ASALA]); but also Vahé Oshagan (1922-2000). Of these three names, only Vahé Oshagan is relatively accessible to us, as evidenced by the recent publication in Armenia of his poetic work (*Gayanner* [stages], Erevan: Khachentz, 2017).

A minor genre, if any, this literature is currently almost exclusively available in the Armenian language, apart from two novels by Kevork Adjemian which are about ASALA seen





## Vahé Oshagan's Novel *Odzum*

from previous page

Church does not live; it is a shell emptied of its essence, where the faithful go astray in folkloric formalin. A varnish on the surface. Confiding one day to the philosopher and philologist Marc Nichanian, the need for a metaphasic of the diaspora, Oshagan aspired for a moment to make the diaspora a kind of “spiritual homeland.” This quest lived in him throughout his eclectic work (theater, essay, novel, short story).

### Limits of a Revolutionary Project

One of the limits of Oshagan's attempt was to want to combine moralizing discourse, a familiar register strewn with rude words (“cock” ... etc.), and stuttering of the language between Armenian, English and sometimes French. But authenticity is not always there; the border between the Armenian and foreign worlds, more airtight than ever, lends itself to a dangerous slide towards emotionality, patriotic lyricism, and thesis novel ... incompatible with the modernizing and liberating project to which Vahé Oshagan aspired. What can literature do then? Relate reality in its most glaring truth, tear down the masks, relate the urgency. “There is a palpable urgency that was not unrelated to his fear of death,” Anahide Ter Minassian told us. Vahé Oshagan, suffering from heart problems, was terrified that death would abruptly interrupt his work as a writer. Hence, no doubt, this radical, transgressive writing, bearing fetishes and myths to be demolished by regenerative terrorism, at most a therapeutic shock. A literature powerful enough to confiscate our present.

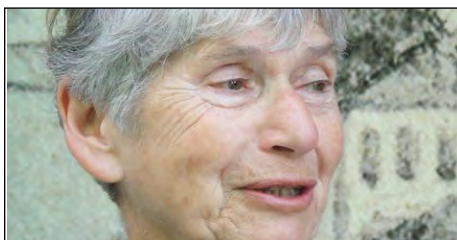
### Two Mythological Characters

Let's be clear, this book has two heroes, the author and the translator. Vahé Oshagan, intellectual figure, son of the great Hagop Oshagan, torn by his own contradictions as a member loyal to the partisan discipline of Dashnagsutun and the iconoclasm boiling and bubbling in his heart. Ter Minassian said of him, “He was a handsome man, charming and with an ironic smile.”

She remembered not without emotion these “literary encounters” in the modest apartment of Digin Chakérian [Shakerian], the wife of the godfather of Vahé Oshagan, a stone's throw from the Place des Fêtes, in the popular and poverty-stricken Paris of those years where one was poor, dignified and proud at the same time. There were evenings where the still fresh memory of the great Armenian literary figures of Constantinople was evoked, and where the young Vahé looked like a “rabbit in clover,” if one believes the testimony of Anahide.

Our future historian had become friends with him and she became his confidante, as he multiplied his female conquests to better feed his poetic inspiration. But why did she choose to translate *Odzum* [Uction] rather than another text? Admittedly, there was also a short story translated with the editor Houry Varjabedian and published in the beautiful collection *Nos terres d'enfance* [Our Childhood Lands]. The homeland took the form of old shoes that are painted.

It's hard to believe in chance. Anahide Ter Minassian lived through these years of political turmoil and engagement with a fiery and militant commitment that was never denied until her last breath. Probably it was due to this longing that is present in her for total liberation, coupled with an ideological affinity with her friend. And a freedom to reconsider the work of her friend with a gaze relieved of the weight of



Anahide Ter Minassian

complexes. “Vahé considered that the worst calamity caused by the Genocide was to have destroyed the Armenian novel,” reported Anahide. The imprint of the Catastrophe gave them the strength to accomplish a perfectly complementary work, inhabited by a common passion to transmit and awaken an invigorated national conscience among young people. A kind of self-conquest.

# A Providential *Silent Angel*

## By Antonia Arslan

By Rita Mahdessian

The publication of *Silent Angel* is Providential. It was meant to be released in April, the Genocide month. COVID-19 delayed its release.

But this delay was Providential. *Silent Angel* speaks more meaningfully in today's world than it would have a month ago, when we might not have listened to it, thinking that we already know the story. We all have our dead, our grandparents, our cousins. The weight of their stories is burden enough for each of us. Why listen to someone else's story?

But this delay was Providential. We are all stuck at home. We have not gotten together on April 24 to ask for justice. We have not had our yearly catharsis, that moment when we stand together and for an instant believe that it might just be our time again.

It is in the walls of our homes, in today's silence that we can perhaps hear Antonia Arslan's loving voice when she tells us not her story (she did that in the *Skylark Farm*, in the *Road to Smyrna*, in *Il Rumore delle Perle di Legno* and the other books of her world-famous saga) but our story, the story of all of us. It is a brief story. You can read it in an afternoon. Like the bards of old, she gently brings us back to the lost ancient homeland. She sings of the colors and smells of Mush. She paints the joyous women of Mush swimming in the foggy Aratsani river. She brings us to the majestic plane tree and the little spring, “the flowering garden with its lettuce, purple eggplant, and zucchini that have grown disproportionately .....and the rows of gerania neatly arranged at the windows as well as the colorful zinnias - the pride of ... rustic gardening.”

In the walls of our home, Antonia Arslan tells us the story that we all know, the story of two Armenian women who found the Homiliary of Mush, cut it in half and carried it on their backs to save it from the Turks. One of the halves reached Echmiadzin through torturous paths brought by one of the two women. The other half was wrapped in cloth and buried in a churchyard in Garin - or what the Turks now call Erzerum. It was eventually found by a Polish officer in the Russian army and delivered to the Matenadaran where both halves of the manuscript are currently housed.

In the walls of our home, we can let our authentic storyteller gently touch our wounds. And if we do so, we will hear her once again put us in a true crisis, a moment in which we risked losing everything, home and family, and yet did not lose our determination to save our priceless heritage no matter the cost.

We, Armenians, we have been through far grimmer days than the ones that we are living today. We have survived far, far worse than COVID-19. We have survived stay home orders far, far worse than ours now. We have survived not being able to work. We have survived fire, the sword, our fear. We walked through hell on earth. And we can do so again, and again, and again.

Yes, we Armenians have “learnt to bow ... [our] head[s] when persecution rears its head, to shut ... [ourselves] up in opaque silence, to disconnect from ... [our] own thoughts.” We know how to “Cry, but cry silently ... then focus on surviving...”

And when we think that we cannot again go back to look at what our fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers had to go through when they hid and when they marched through deserts, that it will tear us

apart to do so, Arslan gently reminds us that destruction is not the last word. Once the danger is passed, once the sword is sheathed, we “slowly get back up. Like stalks of wheat after the storm has crushed but not broken ... [us, we] sway in the breeze the next day.” Resurrection follows death. Our faith, our culture, are stronger than the sword, if only like the two women, we take them on our backs and climb the high mountains towards safety. “We shall not perish as long as the book survives.”

And if we actually see what Antonia Arslan was and is able to do, we will realize how right she is when she says this. She writes her books not just for us, but for the world. She sings not just for us, but for our neighbors and friends, for those we know and those we do not, for those who know of our pain and for those who learn of



### *Silent Angel*

By Antonia Arslan

May 2020 Augustine Institute/Ignatius Press

112 pp. \$14.95

it for the first time. And her voice is itself proof of our resilience, of our faith, of our culture. The world listens to it. The first review of this book was not written by an Armenian, and it was not released by the Armenian press. It was written by an American and published by the American press. The book itself was not translated by an Armenian, but by an American professor, Siobhan Nash-Marshall. It was not published by Armenians, but by an American publishing company: Ignatius Press and the St. Augustine Institute.

Yes, the release of the book now is Providential. The story of the book is our story. This is why Arslan wrote it in the present tense. Perhaps we can learn to see ourselves through Arslan's eyes, not as homeless orphans who have something to prove to the world, but a great people with a magnificent culture. Perhaps we can now take our nation's books on our backs and climb the high mountain together.

The book is available at Amazon.





ARTS & LIVING



**PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The Armenian Historical Association of Rhode Island (AHARI) will present a program titled, “Genomic Reconstruction of the Fractured Homeland, A Genetic Atlas of Historic Armenia,” with Dr. Levon Yepiskoposyan of the Laboratory of Evolutionary Genomics, Institute of Molecular Biology, National Academy of Sciences, Republic of Armenia. This virtual presentation will take place on Saturday, July 27 at noon via zoom and the AHARI Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/Armenian-Historical-Association-of-Rhode-Island-103327147678209/>)**

# Anna Astvatsaturian Turcotte Featured in Documentary ‘Under The Same Sun’

PORTLAND, Maine — In 2017, author, human rights advocate, an Armenian American author and a city councilmember, Anna Astvatsaturian Turcotte, was invited to be featured in the filming of a documentary by French-Canadian filmmaker Francois Jacob, titled “Under the Same Sun.”

The film’s world premier took place at the Canadian Hot Docs Film Festival on May 28 in Ontario, Canada. The film will then premier in the United States and other locations later in the year.

Astvatsaturian Turcotte was filmed across the United States, Armenia and Artsakh during the last two and a half years. The documentary explores the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through the eyes of various individuals, including Astvatsaturian Turcotte, delving into her childhood as an Armenian refugee from Azerbaijan, her current life as a public person, a human rights advocate, activist for the people of Artsakh, author and a politician. The filmmaker showcases Astvatsaturian Turcotte’s work of advocating for and supporting the people of Artsakh through various projects. The film crew also filmed Astvatsaturian Turcotte’s childhood home and school in Baku, Azerbaijan.

In addition to Astvatsaturian Turcotte’s story, the documentary also attempts to look at the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict from opposing viewpoints. Astvatsaturian Turcotte does not endorse and does not agree with the views of these individuals, nor is she endorsing the viewpoint of the film as a whole, recognizing that Mr. Jacob, as an outside, had to work with various multifaceted components of a complicated conflict, explore the history of the region, and demonstrate conflicting sides to give the conflict and the film the respect that it deserved.

Astvatsaturian Turcotte does, however, endorse the humanity behind the film, the beauty of Armenia, of the Armenian history, Armenian people, and awe-inspiring resilience of people of independent and free Artsakh.



Anna Astvatsaturian Turcotte

# Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian



## Asparagus Pickles

Pickling is also a great way to extend the shelf life of fresh asparagus. In fact, it’s best eaten at least a week after it’s been pickled. In Armenian and many Middle Eastern cuisines, dolma refers to a family of stuffed vegetable dishes, most often wrapped in grape or cabbage leaves. Use this same filling — and a similar cooking technique — to hollow out and stuff zucchini, eggplant, tomatoes, or peppers. Dolma taste best served warm or cool (like this recipe), and leftovers can be re-steamed one or more times as desired.

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 5 lbs. fresh asparagus
- 3 quarts water
- 1 quart vinegar
- 1/2 cup salt
- Pickling spice in a bag
- 5 large cloves garlic, peeled
- Dried chili peppers (optional)

**PREPARATION:**

Wash and sterilize canning jars. Clean and cut asparagus. Blanch for 1 minute in boiling water; cool in ice water. To make the brine, boil water, vinegar, salt and pickling spice in a bag. Cool for 20 minutes. Place garlic in each quart jar and chili, if used. (For an extra boost of dill flavor, tuck some fresh dill weed in with asparagus.) Pack asparagus in jar; fill with brine and secure a sterilized lid and band onto each jar. Once the jars have cooled, refrigerate them for at least a week before eating. (this will keep in the refrigerator for at least a month.) NOTE: If you want to can asparagus for long-term storage, immediately after pouring in the hot liquid and sealing the jars, process the jars in a water bath canner for 10 minutes. Remove jars and let them sit undisturbed for 24 hours before moving them. Will keep for up to a year. Canning the asparagus will make them less crispy. Choose thicker asparagus.

Recipe from *A Harvest of Recipes Cookbook*, Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, Fresno, California. Recipe submitted by Florence Mazgedian, reprinted from the 1985 Dorcas Guild Cookbook.



## Breathing With Saroyan

SAROYAN, from page 12  
hear, a deeper awareness to the eternal message in the breath of life and the beat of the heart shall be vitally awakened and attuned. Through this means to encounter the “delight & mystery of life,” discussion participants read lyrics of an ancient, 8th century rhythmic hymn which references Jesus as the “Angel of the Great Mystery” and also listened to Saroyan’s own voice and words in an audio recording provided by the County Public Library.

The evening of reflection concluded with drawing inspiration from both Saroyan’s epigraph of his depression-era 1939 play “The Time of Your Life” to “seek goodness everywhere” and the epistle of prison-bound St. Paul to the Philippians to “think about and do anything of brave virtue.”

While May 18, 1981 marks the day Fresno-born, world-renowned author and artist William Saroyan exhaled his final breath upon the earth, his eternal spirit and a message of hope continue to breathe throughout the world.

For additional topical information, visit:  
<https://www.foreversaroyan.com/bibliography>  
<https://vemkar.us/resources/back-to-the-sources/online-resources/>





## COMMENTARY

## EDITORIAL

# Armenia's Political Fragmentation Amid Pandemic

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Armenia initially faced the coronavirus pandemic successfully, but now it seems that the situation is getting out of hand. Even Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his family members have been infected with the virus, leaving the country in survival mode.

In view of the critical situation, the first president of the republic, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who seldom comments on political developments, has issued a stern warning on ilur.am under the title of "Simple Syllogism." In it he says, "1. Coronavirus has declared war on Armenia. 2. The burden of conducting the war falls on the shoulders of the leaders. 3. Whoever is fighting against the leadership, willingly or unwillingly, betrays the nation. The domestic political infighting during the war is madness, which has no justification."

Ter-Petrosyan believes he has the moral responsibility to sound the alarm at moments of crisis. He did so also during the four-day war in April 2016, advising people to rally around the government of President Serzh Sargsyan, whom he did not like.

Surprisingly, very few people heeded his warning the last time around. On the contrary, many voices, from the ruling party and opposition quarters, joined to criticize him.

A realignment of political forces was in the offing before the virus struck. One dramatic development was the sustained effort toward the elimination of corruption, including illegal ways of amassing wealth and vote buying. However, before reforms could be implemented, the country was hamstrung by COVID-19.

The Pashinyan administration, while grappling with domestic problems, was also challenged in the foreign policy realm. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's statements on April 21 continue to reverberate in political circles and the news media. On that date Lavrov had stated that the negotiation process conducted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Minsk Group could be stopped. Instead, he proposed a phased solution to the Karabakh conflict, with the first step being the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the areas outside Karabakh. Then, just to stress where Russia stood with regard to Armenia, he refused to lower the price of Russian gas, even when there is a glut of energy on the world market. He concluded his remarks by warning the Armenian government to stop its lawsuits against Russian interests in Armenia, namely challenges against Gazprom and the railway system.

Perhaps emboldened by Mr. Lavrov's unfriendly remarks, Azerbaijan held war games in the Nakhichevan exclave, featuring modern Turkish weaponry. The specter of war began looming over the horizon.

These developments created an atmosphere of siege in Armenia and Artsakh. Analysts have to work hard in the next weeks and months to unearth the impact of those external factors on domestic politics, which suddenly took a dramatic turn. Within a short period of time, defections appeared among the ranks of the groups which had originally supported the revolution.

The Velvet Revolution began strictly based on a domestic agenda. Foreign policy stances taken after Pashinyan assumed power became a major factor in the splintering of his base post-revolution.

The first group to defect was the Bright Armenia party, led by Edmon Marukyan. The party was elected into parliament by pretending to play the role of a docile opposition but turned viciously against the ruling My Step coalition.

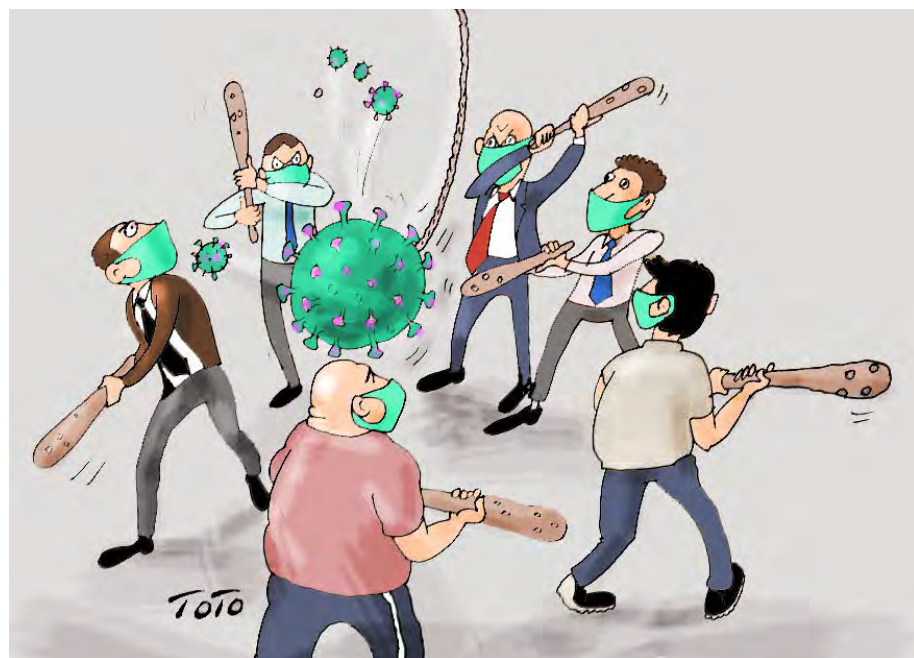
Marukyan's group began systematically voting against Pashinyan's positions and Marukyan himself instigated a fistfight on the parliament floor recently.

Arman Babajanyan, a solo player with a mysterious political agenda, joined Bright Armenia to qualify for running for a parliament seat. After he won, he quit that party to become an independent member. Ever since, he has been wearing the mantle of "the defender of the revolution" and has been engaged in a fight

to unseat the members of the Constitutional Court. His foreign policy hinges on a single agenda item: to liberate Armenia from its "vassal relationship" with Russia.

He first tried to recruit to his campaign several veteran political warriors, to no avail. Recently, he gathered like-minded pundits and academics in front of the Matenadaran, all dressed in white shirts in Nazi style, when he announced the formation of a new political group, which he named "In Defense of the Republic." The goal of the group is to emerge eventually as a political party, with a name to be determined later. Babajanyan refuses to cooperate with any group or individual that has been associated with the old regime and considers Pashinyan to be derelict in his pledge unless he cleans out the Constitutional Court.

Another group not satisfied with the Pashinyan administration's performance is composed of diverse political elements. One of those elements is Ara Papian, a scholar and diplomat who in a way has assumed the role of spokesperson. The group is called National Democratic Pole (Azgayin Joghovertavarakan Bever). Papian has joined forces with the Sasna Tserer party,



headed by Jirayr Sefilyan, commander of the forces that liberated Shushi. Last but not least, is filmmaker Tigran Xmalyan [Khzmalyan], president of the European Party.

Mr. Papian contends that Armenia needs a party with a nationalistic ideology as the Armenian Revolutionary Federation was eliminated from the political scene following its defeat in the recent parliamentary elections.

Sasna Tserer is a controversial party open to the use of violence, which led the group to take over a police station, killing the police chief.

Besides Sefilyan, other prominent members are Varoujan Avetissyan and Garegian Chukaszyan.

Recently, Papian and Chukaszyan noted that they have received grants from the George Soros Open Society, which do not entail any "political commitments."

Sasna Tserer believes that Pashinyan has not extended the revolution to Artsakh. Tigran Xmalyan and the others by association, believe that Armenia's place is in the NATO structure. They also would like to see Armenia sever its "colonial relationship" with Russia.

On the opposition front, no visible force exists yet. The Republican Party of Serzh Sargsyan is still hanging on as an opposition party, though reduced to a shell of its former self.

The former president still heads the party, with former leaders Edward Sharmazanov and Armen Ashodan regularly offering a run-of-the-mill criticism of the ruling party. No other group tries to come close to the Republican Party, which suffered a spectacular defeat in the last election.

The new kid on the block is Artur Vanetsyan, the most vocal member of the opposition, who has formed a new party called Homeland (Hayrenik). Vanetsyan was the head of the National Security Services and was dismissed by Pashinyan. He does not seem to have a clear political agenda, except criticizing the current administration.

In solidarity with him is Michael Minasyan (Mishik), son-in-law of the former president. He is considered to be a fugitive and accused of enriching himself illegally. He has been releasing video clips from his kitchen table, accusing Pashinyan and his family members of scandalous activities.

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## COMMENTARY

# The Post-COVID State

By Daron Acemoglu

CAMBRIDGE – The world is experiencing one of the most transformative moments of the last 75 years. The social, economic, and political consequences of the COVID-19 crisis have already been truly momentous, and they have most likely only just begun to be felt. In the United States, more than 40 million workers have filed unemployment claims since mid-March, and more and more families are being pushed to the brink of poverty. Around the world, millions more are facing even more precarious conditions, with 40-60 million people expected to fall below the extreme poverty line of less than \$1.90 per day.

Most governments have proved dangerously unprepared for the crisis, which has exposed deep-seated weaknesses in public-health and social-security systems in rich and poor countries alike. Social and political tensions that have long been simmering just beneath the surface of the global economic order have begun to boil over, as evidenced most vividly by the protests in the US over the recent killing of an unarmed black man, George Floyd, by four police officers in Minneapolis.

As has been widely noted, the unacceptably high number of COVID-19 deaths, especially in the US and the United Kingdom, are closely tied to the grotesque levels of inequality in both countries. Just before the pandemic struck, 12-15 percent of the US population was receiving food assistance, over 42 percent of adults qualified as obese, almost 9 percent of the population was still lacking health insurance, and 20 percent were covered by Medicaid (government-provided health insurance for the poor).

Now, owing to the pandemic, we have witnessed an expansion of the government's role in the economy at a pace and on a scale without modern precedent. Ironically, despite peak polarization and lack of trust in government institutions, many commentators would prefer the state to have even more power to regulate behavior, collect private information, and compel people to undergo testing and quarantine.

## First as Tragedy

The conditions in which we find ourselves amount to what James A. Robinson and I would call a “critical juncture.” In our 2012 book, *Why Nations Fail*, we describe similar historical scenarios in which deep-seated instability lends itself to the possibility for sweeping institutional change, but without any clarity as to the likely direction of that change. Depending on their institutions, power structures, political leaders, and other factors, societies at such junctures embark on radically different trajectories. History and current conditions suggest four possibilities, each with vastly different economic, political, and social implications.

The first is “tragic business as usual,” in which, to paraphrase Karl Marx, the history of the dysfunctional present simply recurs. In this scenario, we make no serious effort to reform our failing institutions, or address the economic and social inequities that have become endemic. We neither strengthen the role of expertise and science in decision-making, nor take steps to boost the resilience of our economic, political, and social systems. We simply accept today's deepening polarization and collapsing public trust. This path is highly likely if our leaders do not understand the severity of the problem, or if we cannot organize ourselves to demand from them the necessary reforms.

Needless to say, the consequences of tragic business as usual would be terrible. COVID-19 will hardly be the last public emergency to confront us during this century, or even during this decade, and we would have inherited from the current crisis a much larger and more powerful government that lacks the ability or will to use its resources to tackle pervasive social ills. That would fuel further discontent and alienation, because the perceived gap between the government's power and its capacity to address people's needs would widen.

The “tragedy” part of this path would come when we realize that business as usual cannot last. One way or another, democratic politics will start coming apart at the seams, and something even worse than populist nationalism would likely emerge to fill the void.

## Renewal with Chinese Characteristics?

The second possible path is “China-lite,” which has become increasingly likely for the “Hobbesian” moment we are now living through. Writing in the middle of the English Civil War (1642-1651), Thomas Hobbes believed that any human population requires an almighty state to keep individuals safe from one another. Society, he argued, would thrive if it submitted its will to the Leviathan. In times of deep uncertainty, when there is a need for high-level coordination and leadership, many people's first instinct is to turn once again to Hobbesian solutions.

In the case of COVID-19, one of the most obvious lessons of the crisis is that a powerful government is necessary for managing large-scale emergencies. But what would such a government look like?

Contemporary China is a salient example. In this scenario, Western democracies would try to emulate China by worrying less about privacy and surveillance, while permitting more state control over private companies. After all, one of the standard narratives to have emerged from the pandemic is that China's pre-existing infrastructure for snooping and social control enabled it to respond to the virus faster and much more effectively than the US has. One could also imagine citizens in advanced economies deciding that democratic governance is too inefficient or unwieldy for dealing with the challenges of a globalized, interconnected world.

But China-lite need not come about by conscious choice; we could also stumble into it unwittingly. The experience of the twentieth century's two world wars shows that once the government's spending and taxation expands, it tends to remain at those higher levels.

The same goes for other forms of state power. In the US, once the FBI and the CIA had been created and vested with far-reaching surveillance and enforcement capabilities, there was little chance that either agency would ever relinquish those powers. Notwithstanding reforms in the 1970s, following revelations of widespread abuse and a US Senate investigation, America's national-security state has expanded dramatically since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

This is not to suggest that a country like the US could turn into China overnight. But there could come a time when it has gradually passed some unmarked threshold: when its domestic surveillance regime, privacy laws and conventions, and economic policies start to look more like those in contemporary China than its own a few decades ago. At this point, the US would have

developed into a bastardized version of China, because it would probably still lack the level of state capacity that has developed in China over two and a half millennia.<sup>1</sup>

For example, less democratic governance might go hand-in-hand with less effective, more arbitrary bureaucratic action in many domains. Instead of the stifling but usually competent despotism of the Chinese state, the US could end up operating like a hypertrophic digital Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) – one of the most notoriously inefficient bureaucracies found in the 50 US states – perhaps with random disruptions from presidential Twitter accounts. Inevitably, this kind of state would fail, triggering endgame dynamics similar to those associated with the “tragic business as usual” scenario.

## Thus Spake Zuckerberg

The third trajectory leads to tech dominance or “digital serfdom.” To return to the example of the US, imagine that America, as a society, recognized the need for widespread coordination, but lost still more trust in government and public institutions, owing to the Trump administration's spectacular failure to manage the COVID-19 crisis. More or less by default, Americans would instead come to rely on private companies like Apple and Google, which could step in to manage testing, contact tracing, and other pandemic-response measures far more efficiently than the government has done.

Indeed, Apple and Google have already announced a partnership to track viral contacts through iOS and Android mobile devices. The same tech giants are already offering the creative innovations needed to sustain many forms of economic activity during the lockdown and social-distancing periods. Beyond improved online communication and entertainment options to spare the public from debilitating boredom, artificial intelligence and advances in automation technologies promise to enable factories, meat-processing plants, and many other critical production sites to keep operating at scale.

As more and more of these technologies come to seem indispensable, the private companies behind them will amass more power; and in the absence of a viable state-based alternative, the public might voice few objections. The same firms will, of course, continue to collect personal data and manipulate users' behavior, but they will have even less to worry about from the government, which would become a kind of subservient handmaiden to Silicon Valley.

In time, the champions of the pandemic economy would grow much, much bigger, exacerbating pre-existing conditions like rising inequality. Silicon Valley would then propose its own solutions, by pushing for a universal basic income, charter schools, and more e-government. But insofar as these measures would merely paint over the underlying problems, they are likely to lead to even wider discontent and frustration over time. Will the growing ranks of jobless subjects settle for a monthly pittance in the absence of real economic prospects? Probably not. In the long term, the third path would arrive at the same dystopian destination as the first two.

## The New-Old Welfare State

Fortunately, the fourth option – “welfare state 3.0” – could lead toward a brighter horizon. The first iteration of the welfare state emerged from the Great Depression and World War II. In the US, it featured policies such as social security and unemployment insurance, and later received a major upgrade with additional programs such as Medicaid and Medicare (government health insurance for those over 65) in the 1960s.

The second version came in the 1980s, following the arrival in power of Ronald Reagan in the US and Margaret Thatcher in the UK and, subsequently, the collapse of the Soviet Union. In many parts of the West, and particularly in the US and the UK, welfare state 2.0 amounted to a downgrade – a weakened, less effective iteration of what had come before, with many old protections, such as trade unions, hollowed out or neutered.

To anticipate what could – and should – come next, one should start with an understanding of current needs. Clearly, many advanced economies need a stronger social safety net, better coordination, smarter regulation, more effective government, a significantly improved public-health system, and, in the US case, more reliable and equitable forms of health insurance.

Pretty much everyone agrees that governments need to shoulder more responsibility, while also becoming more efficient. It is also safe to assume that the pandemic-era expansion in spending, regulation, liquidity provision, and other interventions will become permanent to some degree (though it will eventually have to include expanded taxation, too). But this larger government would be fundamentally different from the DMV state in the China-lite scenario. As the state grows stronger, so, too, would democratic institutions and mechanisms of political participation adequate to monitoring its actions and holding it accountable.

To be sure, the other three scenarios remain possible, and welfare state 3.0 could be wishful thinking. Yet it is worth noting that something very similar has happened before. As Robinson and I show in our most recent book, *The Narrow Corridor*, this fourth path is the most common and straightforward way to achieve true state capacity, democracy, and liberty at the same time.

The rise of welfare state 1.0 illustrates this dynamic clearly (just as the failure of welfare state 2.0 demonstrates what can happen when efficiency is pursued at the expense of broader social buy-in). Before the 1930s, there was not much of a social safety net anywhere in the world, and government regulatory capacity was limited. But the Great Depression and WWII changed all of that.

In 1942, William Beveridge of the London School of Economics led a government committee in writing the now-famous Beveridge Report, which offered a vision for a post-war British welfare state that would ensure social security, health care, and other basic goods to all citizens.

Some critics at the time reacted to these proposals with horror. The economist Friedrich von Hayek, then a new émigré from Vienna teaching at the LSE, saw the modern welfare state as a step toward totalitarianism. He believed that the role for governments in controlling markets and setting prices envisaged by the Beveridge Report would put society on “the road to serfdom.”

But Hayek was wrong. First in Sweden starting in 1932, and then in the rest of Scandinavia, Western Europe, and the US, the state shouldered more responsibilities and grew larger, but democracy deepened, and popular political participation expanded.

## The Only Way Forward

There is growing agreement today that we need better, more accountable institutions, as well as a more equitable way of sharing the gains from technological progress and globalization. Voices from the left and the right argue, not unreasonably, that the game is rigged to benefit a small but powerful and well-connected cohort at the top of the income and wealth pyramid.

Especially now that the world is beset by a pandemic, there is a growing realization that our systems are too fragile and vulnerable for the challenges of the twenty-first century. Even if many countries are far from reaching a consensus on what a better future would look like, acknowledging the problem is always the first step toward building something better.

The belief in the possibility of a new, better welfare state is no fantasy. But it would be naive to presume that it will come about easily, let alone emerge on its own. Efforts to strengthen democracy and accountability must go hand in hand with an expansion of the state's responsibilities. Striking the right balance would be difficult even in the best of times.

At a time of unparalleled polarization, crumbling democratic norms, and dwindling institutional capacity, a reformed and renewed welfare state is a tall order indeed. But like the WWII generation, we have no other choice but to try.

(Daron Acemoglu has taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology since 1993. He is currently the Elizabeth and James Killian Professor of Economics at MIT. He was named Institute Professor, the highest degree of recognition for an MIT professor, in 2019. This commentary originally appeared in Project Syndicate on June 5.)





COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Turkish Government Wastes \$1.5 Million By Paying US Firm for Useless Lobbying

On January 15, 2020, the Turkish government renewed a major contract with the Washington, D.C.-based US lobbying firm of Greenberg Traurig for a total fee of \$1,538,000 for one year ending on December 31, 2020. Greenberg Traurig has been lobbying for the government of Turkey for several years. The agreement was signed by Serdar Kilic, Turkish Ambassador to the United States, and Robert Mangas on behalf of Greenberg Traurig. Violating the requirements of US law, a copy of the agreement was not submitted to the Justice Department's Foreign Agent Registration Act office until May 31, 2020, almost five months after its signing.

Greenberg Traurig will distribute during 2020 most of the Turkish payment to several subcontractors which will assist in the lobbying effort. They are:

- 1) Capital Counsel LLC will be paid a fee of \$432,000.
- 2) LB International will be paid a fee of \$270,000.
- 3) Venable LLP will be paid a fee of \$270,000.

That leaves a net amount of \$566,000 for Greenberg Traurig. Several other US lobbying firms have been hired by the Turkish government for a number of years.

The contract requires that Greenberg Traurig provide the following services to the Turkish government:

- “Lobbying and government relations services to Turkey,

which shall consist of those services ordinarily and customarily provided in representing a foreign sovereign before the United States Congress and Executive Branch.

These services shall include, but not be limited to:

- (a) Proposing and pursuing passage of legislation and other US government action that promotes Turkey's interests and provides a positive image of Turks, Turkey, and the United States-Turkey relationship;
- (b) Preserving and enlarging the Congressional Caucus on Turkey and Turkish Americans;
- (c) Educating Members of Congress and the Administration on issues of importance to Turkey;
- (d) Promptly notifying Turkey of any action in Congress or the Executive Branch on issues of importance to Turkey;
- (e) Preparing brief analyses of developments in Congress and the Executive Branch on particular issues of concern to Turkey;
- (f) Identifying official gatherings and social events to which Embassy personnel ought to attend, including to the extent possible, obtaining the necessary invitations;
- (g) Identifying and/or arranging speaking engagements locally and nationally for Embassy personnel or their appointed or suggested proxies in settings that will improve Turkey's image and advance its causes on Capitol Hill. Such would be, if so directed by Turkey, coordinated with Turkey's existing public relations service providers; and
- (h) Maintaining and forging alliances with other interest groups whose goals are similar to or shared by Turkey.”

The contract further requires that Greenberg Traurig comply with the following requirements:

- “1) Personnel and Other Service Providers: Except as noted below, Greenberg shall compose its own team to achieve the best possible results in providing the services described above. It will provide Turkey at the earliest possible date a list of personnel, including an indication of their areas of expertise and/or how they will be utilized. This list will be updated from time to time as required.
- 2) Additional Costs and Expenses: Should Greenberg incur

extraordinary costs and expenses on Turkey's behalf that are not otherwise contemplated in the fees described above, Turkey shall reimburse these costs provided that Turkey gives explicit advance approval.

3) Monthly Reporting and Quarterly Performance Assessment: Greenberg shall provide monthly a written report to Turkey succinctly describing its work on Turkey's behalf. Such reports need not include calculations of the time spent by the individual members of the Greenberg team. Further, every three months, or as often as Turkey may desire, Greenberg shall present to Turkey a written assessment of its performance during the preceding period. If, upon reviewing the assessment, Turkey is not satisfied with Greenberg's performance, Turkey may, at its sole discretion, terminate this Agreement according to the terms stated herein.”

The Turkish public and opposition parties should be aware that their government has wasted hundreds of millions of dollars of their taxes over the last few decades to pay American lobbying firms. Most of this money has been spent with no benefit to Turkish citizens at a time when the country's economy is in shambles, the Turkish Lira has dropped in value precipitously and Turkey owes hundreds of billions of dollars to foreign banks.

Despite the gargantuan amounts of money spent on lobbying in the United States, last fall the House of Representatives (overwhelmingly) and the Senate (unanimously) adopted resolutions recognizing the Armenian Genocide. The US lobbying firms are experts in siphoning money from their foreign clients. They talk a good game, present rosy reports, but at the end of the day, they accomplish very little.

Neither the Armenian government nor Armenian-American organizations in Washington, D.C. have hired lobbying firms thus saving their funds for more productive work. Armenians do not need lobbyists to convince the US government that their cause is just. No matter how much money the Turkish government spends, it will never be able to whitewash its dirty laundry of past and present-day crimes.

Armenia's Political Fragmentation Amid Pandemic

FRAGMENTATION, from page 17

A small yet forceful group calls itself Adekvat [Adequate], composed of well-informed and articulate young members who do not seem to have any affiliation with other political groups. Artur Danielyan, who does not shy away from physical confrontations with government representatives, heads it.

Thus far, there had been no coordination amongst this diverse group until Gagik Tsarukyan, the head of Prosperous Armenia Party, emerged with a call for the resignation of the government and began networking among the opposition groups. During his party's general assembly, he announced that until now, he believed that 97 percent of the government should resign. Now he said, he has come to the conclusion that 100 percent had to resign.

Tsarukyan is a colorful political animal with a checkered past. He is a millionaire with the reputation of a benefactor who expects a bang for his buck.

Tsarukyan's party supported the previous government and thus was able to garner seats in parliament. Later he had a fall-out with President Sargsyan, who in a scathing speech threatened to destroy his business empire. Following that confrontation, Tsarukyan publicly vowed that he was retiring from politics. That decision lasted until Pashinyan overthrew Sargsyan's government. Tsarukyan then declared his support for Pashinyan's campaign and, in his good graces, he was elected to the parliament. His faction vowed to play the role of pseudo-opposition, but as critical voices began to get louder and louder, he joined the opposition.

Although most of the time Tsarukyan's actions and remarks have been met with sarcastic smiles, this time around, his move has shaken the government, which has rushed to mobilize all its forces to stop him.

Not only did the pro-government media begin a salvo of criticisms and attacks, but they reached out to really inflict pain. The online outlet armtimes.am published the court proceedings of a 1979 case, in which Tsarukyan was sentenced to seven years in prison for participating in a gang rape.

Like its preceding government, the prime minister's office warned Tsarukyan: “Mr. Tsarukyan must have a cause for concern after the parliament adopted a law which will authorize the government to confiscate illegally acquired wealth.”

This is a controversial law which can only satisfy those who hold a grudge against the affluent class. Other than that, it will motivate the former oligarchs to fight back and cause Armenian capital to leave the country. It is a propos to remember Winston Churchill's adage: “You don't make the poor richer by making the rich poor.”

This statement alludes to the ideological heart of socialism, as applied in the Soviet Union. The Marxist ideology in the USSR tried to create equality in poverty while China has created equality in affluence.

Tsarukyan's challenge will intensify tensions politically. The ARF has yet to associate with any opposition group. It has released a statement calling for the formation of a special parliamentary committee to address the crisis.

The recent shake-up in ranks of the armed forces in Armenia will not help stabilize the situation. Three prominent figures in law enforcement and the army have lost their jobs. Pashinyan has sacked the chief of staff of the armed forces, Artak Davtyan, replacing him with Onik Gasparyan.

Also dismissed are the director of National Security Services Eduard Martirosyan and Chief of Police Arman Sargsyan, replaced by Argishti Kyaramyan and Vahe Ghazaryan, respectively.

It seems that troubling times are ahead and we have to refer once more to President Ter-Petrosyan's warning.

Armenians have always been fiercely individualistic, undermining the nation's collective independence. Heeding Ter-Petrosyan's advice may contribute to the collective independence of the Armenian nation.

LETTERS

Church Unity Revisited

To the Editor:

Regarding Edmond Azadian's commentary, “What's Wrong with the Armenian Church” (May 30th *Mirror-Spectator*), I give Mr. Azadian credit for reviving the painful division of the Armenian Church given the other critical issues now facing our society. I expect his editorial will spark a lively and hopefully positive discussion, a discussion that as Mr. Azadian aptly points out will surely cause some unwanted trauma suggesting that many community members would rather live with the status quo.

I, for one, have been a strong advocate for restoring administrative unity and the canonical hierarchical order within the Armenian Church. Some may consider my background somewhat unusual as I try to humbly serve my Diocesan parish (Sts. Vartanantz, Chelmsford) as a deacon and Diocesan Delegate, while proud to be a member of the Lowell Aharonian ARF Gomideh and Chair of the Merrimack Valley ANC. (The origins of this oddball mix rests with the legacy of my beloved parents).

However, the approach to “heal” the division proposed by Mr. Azadian – “identify the historic causes of the division” and “find the source of the cancer and rout it” – would in my opinion do more harm and essentially institutionalize the current situation. Pointing fingers and going through endless arguments about who did what to whom would surely be “traumatic” for the community. The key, I believe is to not dwell on the past controversies, but look forward to all the great benefits to be realized by a unified Diocese/Prelacy: (a) no longer bear the burden of being a “house divided amongst itself”; (b) strengthen the role and respect of both the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin and the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, (c) eliminate an unstable, and often chaotic, tension-filled environment (i.e. Windsor, Canada as one recent example); (d) eliminate conflicts created from pontifical visits and the formation of new parishes, and (e) realize tremendous cost savings by consolidating duplicate Diocesan/Prelacy central offices and multiple small churches communities in local areas.

Mr. Azadian rightfully asks, “The division still continues even after the fall of communism. What is the justification?” Though I, myself, have not

been a member of a Prelacy church, my association with many Prelacy parishioners indicates that the communities that became disenfranchised from the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin in 1933, still have a devotion and sense of loyalty to the Catholicosate of Cilicia for ministering to their spiritual needs over the past 60 years. In addition, the role of the political parties as defenders of the Armenian Church has surely been a critical factor. One assumes that Mr. Azadian's statement, “the attempts by political parties to control the church impacted diasporan life heavily and divided the church,” refers both to the ADL and ARF. However, while the current editorial focuses the blame almost exclusively on the historic role of the ARF, Mr. Azadian has himself previously acknowledged that “ Soviets used the church for their own political advantage “(MS, 02/29/19), which many believe included creating divisions within diasporan Armenian communities.

So, where do we go from here? We missed a golden opportunity to renew unity discussions right after the centennial observance of the Armenian Genocide. Being together with Prelacy brothers and sisters as ONE church family during that weekend in Washington, D.C. was truly a spiritually exhilarating experience!

But hope is never lost for a righteous cause. I believe there are many positive-thinking parishioners from both the Prelacy and Diocese that cherish re-establishing a unified Diocese under the jurisdiction of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, with a respectful connection to the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia.

Some key steps: (1) terms such as “dissident church” and references to assassinated clerics have to be stricken from all future church unity dialogues; (2) our political parties need to redirect their focus from defenders of the Armenian Church to help further mobilize the Armenian community to be staunch advocates to address the global political and humanitarian needs of our Armenian Homeland and diaspora communities situated in troubled areas; and (3) capitalize on the great spirit of cooperation that has prevailed between the Diocese and Prelacy during recent years by re-starting negotiations for church unity. I am ready to join like-minded faithful of the Armenian Church to make church unity in America a reality.

Ara Jeknavorian  
Chelmsford, MA





# Why George Floyd's Death Matters

## And why it can't stop mattering next week

By Levon Brunson

Whenever a police car passes by, I know that more likely than not there are good officers inside, that they mean well for me and my community, and that I'll be safe. However, even if small, the chance that they'll abuse their power is inordinately more dangerous. As a result, I have to contend with each encounter as if my life is in danger.

I have to justify everything I do and everywhere I go.

I have to hope that my tail light isn't broken if I'm driving (Walter Scott).

I have to think about whether I look "suspicious" and take my hood off if I'm wearing one (Trayvon Martin).

I have to think about whether my cell phone looks like a gun (Stephon Clark).

I have to think about whether I'll die even after I'm arrested and in handcuffs and leg shackles (Freddie Gray).

I have to explain and justify my right to exist without appearing "uppity" or "confrontational."

Every time a black person is executed by police, I'm reminded that I have no guarantee of safety from the people I expect to protect me. I'm reminded of all the times this happened in the past, and wonder if I'm going to be next, and if my death will go viral and spark another movement. Yes, Derek Chauvin and the complicit officers are being punished, and yes, over time, better education and dialogue will hopefully eliminate the evil ideologies that guide people such as Chauvin, but to sit complacently and hope another murder doesn't happen is unacceptable.

Why It Should Matter To You

There was Eric Garner, who was choked to death in NYC in 2014. Derrick Rose and other NBA players wore "I can't breathe" shirts after Garner's death, and were met with responses from people such as "I'm gonna start wearing a shirt that says 'I can breathe because I obey the law.'"

Your first response when watching the video of his murder shouldn't be how you would have behaved in the victim's stead, or how you think you would have complied better. It should be one of horror, questioning how an American citizen, who posed no danger to any of those officers, was pinned to the ground in an American city and choked to death in broad daylight and on

camera. It isn't the responsibility of the person being questioned to de-escalate the situation, it's the duty of the police officer to use appropriate force. Certainly, in many cases officers have to defend themselves against armed assailants, but choking an unarmed man to death as he cries for help while three other officers pin him is not self-defense, it's murder. Kneeling on George Floyd's neck for eight minutes isn't self-defense, it's murder.

There was Philando Castile, who was shot to death after being told to show his license and insurance, after appropriately declaring the licensed gun in his car.

There was Jemel Roberson, a security guard who saved numerous lives at a bar by non-lethally subduing a gunman who had begun firing. When the police arrived, Jemel was holding the

gunman at gunpoint, waiting for them to arrive and assist him. They ignored his security uniform, they

ignored the crowd of people telling them that Jemel was the good guy, and after a few seconds of yelling at him to get on the ground they shot him five times.

There was Emantic Fitzgerald Bradford, Jr., an army recruit with a concealed carry permit, who attempted to stop a mall shooting. In the surveillance video you can tell where the shooting happened (top-left) and you can clearly see Emantic run towards the gunfire, only to be shot from behind three times by two officers.

(Sensitive Image Warning)

Again, it doesn't matter if you believe you would have responded better. It doesn't matter what your theory is about what these people could have done to remain alive. What matters is the stark contrast between Philando's death and videos like this one, where a white man enters his car and grabs a gun, then proceeds to threaten police for a few minutes, before being shot once, in a non-fatal area — Philando was shot seven times in the chest. What matters is the contrast between two heroes like Jemel Roberson and this man who held off a murderer at gunpoint as well — Jemel was shot five times while that man was (rightly) praised as a hero.

Obviously, many of these situations are tense and require immediate action, but the difference in approach suggests a missing standard amongst police officers, and more importantly it demonstrates who is chosen in those snap decisions to be killed, and who is chosen to be inca-

pacitated. George Floyd was in handcuffs and on the ground, posing no danger to anyone. His death wasn't the result of an officer fearing for his life. It was a deliberate murder, preceded by eight minutes of torture.

No, this isn't saying that criminals should not be dealt with appropriately. It's not saying that officers should allow themselves to be killed by dangerous people. If a person is suspected of committing a crime, they should be apprehended. They should be indicted. They should have a trial. They should go to jail. What it's saying is that when the person is black, the police can't decide to skip straight to an execution.

So in response to police executions and brutality, Colin Kaepernick knelt in protest and was met with ridicule, called "anti-American" and "anti-military." Soon thereafter, the discussion shifted to Kaepernick's hair and whether he had converted to Islam. The morbid irony is that we're here today discussing a man who was literally knelt on to death.

Lebron James and Kevin Durant shared their thoughts on the President in a podcast, and were asked by Laura Ingraham if they must "run their mouths like that" and told to "shut up and dribble." They have as much a right as any to share their opinions, and while Laura Ingraham does too, her comments sought to reduce them to uni-dimensional caricatures of the historical negro who should only exist to serve and entertain.

When the Black Lives Matter movement began gaining traction, it was countered by All Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter. These counter-movements missed the point entirely, and when people like former Mayor Giuliani of NYC say "Black Lives Matter never protests when every 14 hours someone is killed in Chicago, probably 70–80% of the time by a Black person. Where are they then? Where are they when a young Black child is killed?" they are missing the point.

Yes, it's easy to deflect attention from police brutality by pointing out violence against black people perpetrated by other black people, but these are two separate issues. Police are a group all Americans deserve to feel safe from and protected by, but the black community doesn't, and that is at the heart of the protests.

For every law enforcement officer and every citizen, "black lives matter" is a reminder that black lives matter too, not that all lives and blue lives don't matter, or matter less. It's about the treatment of black people by law enforcement and the government — institutions which historically have and still continue to value black lives less. Until black lives matter, how can all lives matter?

The protests demanding justice for George Floyd that began just a few days ago are already beginning to be overshadowed by the debate surrounding the rioters and looters. Instead of asking ourselves what legislation we can enact to ensure this murder doesn't happen in the future, we're settling for Derek Chauvin's punishment and focusing on whether the rioting and looting is justified as the conversation about long-term vision and reform begins to fade.

The point is, periodically someone is killed and people take to the streets to demand change. Athletes, actors, community leaders and role models make hashtags, start trends, and use their influence to push for reform and awareness. And every time we organize, we are rebuked and

told why we're wrong to ask for better treatment. Then, something more "newsworthy" occurs, and the narrative focuses on the discourse and discord rather than the underlying problem until someone is murdered again.

It's frustrating. It's scary. It's heartbreaking. You might not agree with those who are protesting, or rioting, and if I can't convince you otherwise, I ask that you at least understand why it has become so difficult to express oneself by any other means. It feels like the institutions of government and the people in power are unwilling to acknowledge the problem and to implement lasting solutions, no matter what we do. And no, while punishing an officer after a death is justice, it isn't a lasting solution. We need to codify in law deterrents that will prevent these killings in the first place.

The fact that we're still here, six years after the death of Eric Garner, should make it starkly apparent that change isn't happening. There are only so many times a person can repeat this cycle before realizing that the status quo isn't working — that accepting various institutions' vague promises of "reform" aren't enough. Something major needs to happen, and happen quickly, before the media switches to the next topic and everyone forgets these events.

As a country we can't trust the police to appropriately de-escalate a situation and bring someone suspected of a crime to a court of law. Not all police are racist, but throughout our country's history too many of them have treated and continue to treat all black people as a potential danger, leaving most black people with little choice than to view all police as a potential danger. A group of white citizens armed with semi-automatic weapons filling the state capitol was not perceived as a threat by police officers in Michigan. Now imagine what would happen if a group of all black protesters tried to carry weapons into a government building in Michigan, or anywhere else. When a white man pointing an actual gun at police is dealt with non-lethally, while Stephon Clark is shot twenty times because his cell phone looked like a gun, while Alton Sterling, who was pinned to the ground but allegedly reached for a gun, was shot 6 times at point blank range, while Tamir Rice, a 12 year old with a pellet gun was shot twice at close range even after the 911 caller told the police dispatcher that the gun was probably fake, it's difficult to believe everyone is afforded equal protection of the law.

Even if you're not directly affected, or if you believe these murders aren't race-related, or if you think this is all a conspiracy to stop President Trump from being re-elected, you must concede that we all have a right to due process and a fair trial. George Floyd was not afforded his, and he should not have been murdered over a 20 dollar bill that he may or may not have even known was counterfeit.

As members of the black community, we feel disproportionately targeted by abuse of power, and are outraged because we continue to pay the price for it. Even if you think these police officers aren't racist, or that police brutality doesn't affect you, George Floyd's death should matter to you because the continued dismissal of our Constitution will have frighteningly dystopian consequences for all of us in the future.

(This commentary originally appeared in Medium.com.)

## Genocide Bill Passes Colorado House

COLORADO, from page 1

A 2018 survey of 1,350 Americans found that four in 10 respondents and 66 percent of millennial respondents could not identify Auschwitz, the Nazi-run death camp that killed 1.1 million Jews.

HB1336, which has bipartisan cosponsorship in both chambers, defines genocide as killing, seriously harming, or attempting to bring about the destruction of a national, racial, ethnic or religious group. Currently, Colorado's high school social studies standards only mention the Holocaust and genocide as examples of concepts for which students should "evaluate continuity and change" and "investigate causes and effects."

The bill requires the state board to adopt standards related to Holocaust and genocide studies on or before July 1, 2021. The adoption

of standards is conditional on the receipt of gifts, grants, or donations.

The bill requires each school district board of education and charter school to incorporate the standards on Holocaust and genocide studies adopted by the state board into an existing course that is currently a condition of high school graduation for school years beginning on or after July 1, 2022 2023, if the standards are adopted by the state board on or before July 1, 2023.

The bill requires the department of education to create and maintain a publicly available resource bank of materials pertaining to Holocaust and genocide courses and programs, which must be available for access by public schools no later than July 1, 2021.

The bill also mandates the teaching of the Armenian Genocide in addition to other genocides.

