



Anouch Toranian, second from left on bicycle, campaigning with her team

## Anouch Toranian Elected Deputy Mayor of Paris

By Aram Arkun  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

PARIS – Anouch Dzagoyan Toranian was elected as deputy mayor of Paris on July 3, after being elected as councilor on June 28 in the second round of Parisian municipal elections. She is one of the youngest of 37 deputy mayors, and will be responsible for community life, the participation of citizens, and public debate. She has become the first French Armenian to reach such an influential position and is a member of the Socialist Party in alliance in this election with the Europe Ecology the Greens (Europe Écologie les Verts or EELV) and French Communist parties.

Torianan was in charge of the list of Paris en Commun, l'écologie en action (Paris in Common, Ecology for Paris), which supported the reelection of the socialist sitting mayor Anne Hidalgo, in the 15th arrondissement or district. Toranian was born and grew up in this arrondissement. The most populous district in Paris, the 15th is usually a bastion of the right, while, as Toranian wrote in a June 26 tweet, “The strength of Paris in Common is the union of the left and the ecologists.”

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Anouch Toranian, left, with Anne Hidalgo

## Azerbaijan Resumes Shelling Border Towns In Armenia

### Numerous Deaths

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) – Four Armenian officers and seven Azerbaijani servicemen, including an army general, and were killed on Tuesday, July 14, in fierce fighting that continued on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border for the third consecutive day.

Shushan Stepanian, the spokeswoman for Armenia's Defense Ministry, said Major Garush Hambardzumian and Captain Sos Elbakian were killed by enemy fire as were Junior sergeants Smbat Gabrielyan and Grisha Matosyan.

In addition, three Armenian contract servicemen were wounded in Azerbaijan's shooting from across the border on Monday, July 13, she added.

Azerbaijan's aggression against the security of the civilian population of Armenia will receive a proportionate response, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Anna Naghdalyan said Tuesday, July 14.

“The Azerbaijani side continues its aggression on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, deliberately targeting civilian infrastructures and population, and expanding the geography of escalation. Today the civilian infrastructure of the city of Berd was shelled by unmanned combat aerial vehicles,” Naghdalyan said.

“The aggression against the security of the civilian population of Armenia will receive a proportionate response, for which the Azerbaijani side bears full responsibility.”

Defense Ministry spokeswoman Shushan Stepanyan said earlier that no casualties were reported in the combat drone attack on Berd.

Azerbaijan launched two failed infiltration attempts on the border with Armenia see SHELLING, page 2

## Erdogan Signs Decree Allowing Hagia Sophia to Be Used as a Mosque Again

ISTANBUL (New York Times, AP) – President Recep Tayyip Erdogan issued a decree on Friday, July 10, ordering Hagia Sophia to be opened for Muslim prayers, an action likely to provoke international furor around a World Heritage Site cherished by Christians and Muslims alike for its religious significance, for its stunning structure and as a symbol of conquest.

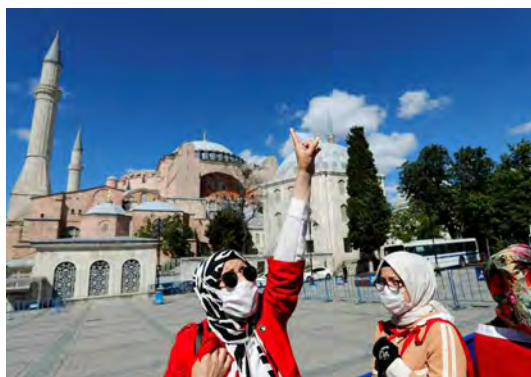
The presidential decree came minutes after a Turkish court announced that it had revoked Hagia Sophia's status as a museum, which for the last 80 years had made it a monument of relative harmony and a symbol of the secularism that was part of the foundation of the modern Turkish state.

Built in the sixth century as a cathedral, Hagia Sophia stands as the greatest example of Byzantine Christian architecture in

the world. But it has been a source of Christian-Muslim rivalry, having stood at the center of Christendom for nearly a millennium and then, after being conquered, of the Muslim Ottoman Empire, when it was last used as a mosque.

Erdogan's decree transferred control of the site to the Religious Affairs Directorate, sealing the removal of its museum status and allowing Hagia Sophia to become a working mosque once again.

It was a decision long sought by conservative Muslims in Turkey and beyond, but one which opponents say Erdogan intends to stir his nationalist and religious base as his popularity wanes after



Celebrations outside the Hagia Sophia (Reuters photo)

18 years atop Turkish politics.

In a post on Twitter that included a copy of the decree, Erdogan simply wrote see MOSQUE, page 5



Kayleigh McEnany

## White House Mention of Armenian Genocide Receives Media Coverage

WASHINGTON – White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany on July 6 used the term Armenian Genocide in passing while discussing the desecration of memorials by protestors in the US. She related President Donald Trump's position on “extreme indoctrination and bias” in the educational system and referred to the Denver Armenian khachkar monument dedicated to the victims of the Armenian and other genocides which had been defaced in late May during the course of the Black Lives Matter see MEDIA, page 12

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Azeri Embassy in Paris Marked with Anti-War Graffiti

PARIS (Armenpress) – The entrance of the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Paris was covered with anti-war messages of “No to War” and “Stop Aliyev,” Zartonk Media reported.

The notes were made on the night of July 14, as a sign of protest against the recent Azerbaijani attack on Armenia.

The door of the embassy was also covered in red paint.

### ECHR Rejects Request To Apply Interim Measure in Constitutional Changes In Armenia

STRASBOURG (Panorama.am) – The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) decided on Wednesday, July 9, not to apply an interim measure requested in the case of Gyulumyan, et. al v. Armenia concerning the recent amendments to the Constitution of Armenia.

The four applicants, Alvina Gyulumyan, Hrant Nazaryan, Feliks Tokhyan and Hrayr Tovmasyan, who were judges of the Constitutional Court (CC) of Armenia at the time of the constitutional reform, requested in particular that the European Court indicate to the Armenian government that they freeze enforcement of the constitutional amendments and preserve their offices.

The court decided to reject the request as outside the scope of application of Rule 39 (interim measures) of the Rules of Court, since it did not involve a risk of serious and irreparable harm of a core right under the European Convention on Human Rights.

ECHR noted that in 2015 the Constitution of Armenia was amended, introducing a 12-year non-renewable term of office for Constitutional Court judges and establishing a 6-year non-renewable mandate for the president of Armenia's highest court.

However, pursuant to a transitional arrangement, judges who had been appointed before the entry into force of these amendments were to continue serving under the old rules, according to which CC judges were appointed until their retirement. Similarly, the president of the CC was to keep his mandate until retirement.

Recently, it was decided to amend the Constitution in a manner that all judges of the CC would have a 12-year term of office, regardless of their date of appointment.

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Alcoholic Beverage Production Slashed in First five months Of 2020

YEREVAN, July 14. /ARKA/. Production of alcoholic beverages in Armenia in the first five months of 2020 decreased compared to the same period in 2019, according to numbers, released today by the National Statistical Committee (NSC).

According to NSC, production of vodka, liquor and other alcoholic beverages in January – May 2020 slashed by 29% year-on-year to 1,151,600 liters. Cognac production dropped by 14.9% to 12,550,800 liters.

Production of grape wine declined by 28.3% to 3, 274,900 liters. Production of sparkling wine (champagne) decreased by 31.9% to 137,200 liters. As for beer production, it fell by 16.1% to 7,090,200 liters.

The largest drop was in the production of whiskey, which dropped by 68.3% to 95,300 liters. The National Statistics Committee provided no explanation of the reasons behind the drop in the production of alcoholic beverages.

## Road Police May Reduce Speed Limits in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Arka) – Deputy Chief of Armenian Traffic Police Arman Chilingaryan said on July 8 that the decision to reduce the speed limit in the capital Yerevan to 60km/h is meant to increase road safety and reduce the number of road accidents.

The speed limit comes into force on July 18. Currently, motorists are allowed to drive at 70-80 km / on Isakov Avenue, Tbilisi Highway, Monte Melkonyan, Acharyan, David Beki Streets, Myasnikyan Avenue, Saralangi Street and Ashtarak Highway.

According to Chilingaryan, the accident rate on these streets is quite high resulting often in casualties.

According to police, in 2019, some 2,172 road accidents occurred in Yerevan, as a result of which 86 people were killed and 2,801 were injured. Moreover, the above-mentioned 8 streets accounted for 10.5 percent of all road accidents in Yerevan. They also accounted for 20 percent of all deaths resulting from traffic accidents in the capital.

There are about 170 city streets in Yerevan, and these eight streets make up 4.7 percent of the entire road network. Chilingaryan added that this decision may be revised, which is common practice.

## Armenian Tax Revenue Falls amid Recession

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – In another sign of a coronavirus-driven recession in the country, the Armenian government reported on Thursday, July 9, a 4.6-percent fall in its tax revenues in the first half of this year.

The State Revenue Committee (SRC) said it collected 680.3 billion drams (\$1.4 billion) in various taxes and customs duties, down from 713.3 billion drams collected in January-June 2019.

The drop came after several consecutive years of rapid increase in Armenia's tax revenues. It reflects a sharp economic downturn that began with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in March.

Vahagn Khachatryan, a veteran economist, said the pandemic and the resulting economic disruptions made the tax shortfall inevitable.

Finance Minister Atom Janjughazyan predicted a revenue shortfall already in April, saying that it will total 170 billion drams (\$350 million) this year. Shortly afterwards, the government amended its 2020 budget to take account of the lower-than-projected tax receipts as well as 150 billion drams (\$310 million) in coronavirus-related relief measures financed by it.

The government plans to borrow more than \$530 million from mainly foreign sources in order to cover the extra budget deficit. It secured a \$280 million loan from the International Monetary Fund in May.

The governor of the country's Central Bank, Martin Galstyan, forecast last week that the Armenian economy will contract by 4 percent this year due to the negative impact of the pandemic. But he said it should recover and grow by 5.5 percent already next year.

# Azerbaijan Resumes Shelling Border Towns in Armenia

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whose troops immediately identified the saboteurs and thwarted them back to their positions on Sunday, July 12. On Monday morning, the Azerbaijani military resumed attacks and continued firing on Armenian positions.

A source told PanARMENIAN.Net, meanwhile, that the Armenian Armed Forces have now “occupied” a new position in the province of Tavush, which neutralizes the communication routes of one of the largest Azerbaijani bases in the region.

The Armenian Army has made available footage from punitive measures taken against Azerbaijan overnight.

The air defense subdivision of the Armenian Armed Forces, meanwhile, struck an Azerbaijani drone fire control system on Tuesday, July 14, Stepanyan has said.

The truce violations there continued despite calls for an immediate end to the skirmishes voiced by Russia, the European Union and the United States. The U.S., Russian and French mediators trying to a broker a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict urged Armenia and Azerbaijan on Monday resume peace talks “as soon as possible.”

Armenian combat UAVs were put into action for the first time, as Armenia undertook punitive actions against Azerbaijan last night.

“July 13 will remain in history as the day, when the combat UAVs of Armenian production were put into action. For the first time, Armenian combat UAVs were used, in combat conditions, and showed brilliant results,” former Spokesperson for the Ministry of Defense Artsrun Hovhannisyanyan said in a Facebook post.

“It seems high-ranking officers became victims of their strike,” he added.

Lawmaker Andranik Kocharyan has revealed that the Armenian military has downed several Azerbaijan UAVs, including a kamikaze drone, after Azerbaijan launched provocations on the border on Sunday, July 12.

Banak.info has published a photo of one of the downed UAVs which it said is most probably ThunderB drone.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan condemned Baku's “provocative actions” during a cabinet meeting in Yerevan. “I can assure you that their provocative actions do not remain unanswered,” he said, appealing to the nation.

He added, “With their resumption, the military-political leadership of Azerbaijan will bear all the responsibility for the unpredictable consequences of regional destabilization. Of great concern is Turkey's policy of inciting regional instability, which is best reflected in the official statement of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, which expresses its unconditional support for Azerbaijan's actions, with an obvious anti-Armenian logic. This military incident did not occur in a vacuum. For some time now, the Azerbaijani leadership has been trying to play the anti-Armenian card for their well-known motives.”

### Russia Concerned

Russia called for an immediate end to heavy fighting.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov phoned his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts to discuss the tense situation there on July 13.

“We find inadmissible a further escalation threatening the security of

the region,” the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement. “We are calling on the conflicting sides to show restraint and strictly adhere to the ceasefire regime.”

“For its part, the Russian Foreign Ministry is ready to provide necessary support for stabilizing the situation,” added the statement.

Foreign Ministers Zohrab Mnatsakanyan of Armenia and Elmar Mammadyarov of Azerbaijan stood by their countries' official versions of events during their separate phone conversations with Lavrov.

Earlier in the day, the secretary general of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Stanislav Zas, called an emergency meeting of the Permanent Council of the Russian-led defense alliance, of which Armenia is a member, to discuss the situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani frontier.

The meeting was postponed indefinitely a couple of hours later, however. A spokesman for Zas refused to say who initiated the delay. He only told RFE/RL's Armenian service that the CSTO Secretariat and member states need to ascertain the “format” of the discussion beforehand.

Zas and Mnatsakanyan also spoke by phone on Monday. “Constant contact with the CSTO Secretary General is maintained, and efforts within the CSTO framework are continuing,” said the official Armenian readout of the phone call.

### Turkish Interference

Armenia accused Turkey of trying to heighten tensions in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry decried “yet another manifestation of Armenia's aggressive nationalism” in a statement issued late on Sunday hours after the outbreak of heavy fighting there. It accused Armenia of continuing to occupy Azerbaijani territory and hampering the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

“Turkey will continue, with all its capacity, to stand by Azerbaijan in its struggle to protect its territorial integrity,” added the statement added.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry dismissed these “utterly false and misleading” claims and charged that the Turkish government is trying to “instigate instability in our region.”

“This provocative attitude by Turkey and its groundless accusations against Armenia attest to the fact that this country has been acting not as a member of the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] Minsk Group but as a party involved in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict,” read a ministry statement. “This fact makes it even more impossible for Turkey to play any role in issues related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within international and particularly the OSCE framework.”

Successive Turkish governments have lent Azerbaijan full and unconditional support throughout the Karabakh conflict. They have made the establishment of diplomatic relations with Armenia conditional on a Karabakh settlement acceptable to Baku.

Armenia has always rejected this precondition. It has forged close military ties with Russia to counter what many Armenians see as a serious security threat from Turkey. From Yerevan's perspective, the presence of thousands of Russian troops in Armenia precludes Turkey's direct military intervention on

Azerbaijan's side.

Incidentally, Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan spoke by phone on Monday. Their press offices did not list the Karabakh dispute among the issues discussed by the two leaders.

### Leaders in Armenia in Turmoil

The Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II led a July 13 meeting to receive updates and issue a statement on the previous day's attempt to penetrate Armenia's northeastern border region, in the province of Tavush, by the armed forces of Azerbaijan.

“We are deeply concerned to be informed of this latest violation committed by Azerbaijan against the northern border of Armenia, which has resulted in injury to Armenian soldiers,” read the statement. “Azerbaijan's excuse for the military incursion is incomprehensible.”

The bishops' statement continued: “We condemn this aggression towards our country, and invite the international community to prevent further potential recurrences of such military actions.”

“While praying for the rapid recovery of our children afflicted by the Azerbaijanis, we affirm our support for Armenia's authorities, our soldiers, and our brave children residing near the border. We wish them courage in the face of enemy attacks.”

The message concludes: “We pray for the steady progress of peace in the region, so that our people can resume their normal lives.”

### Aid to Affected Families

The border attacks are especially pernicious as they come while Armenia is waging battle on a medical front, against an increase in COVID-19 cases.

In addition, Anna Hakobyan, the wife of Prime Minister Pashinyan, on Monday urged the Azerbaijani women and mothers to call on their country's military-political leadership to suspend the military operations, do not endanger the lives of soldiers of the Azerbaijani and Armenian peoples.

Hakobyan said on Facebook that the situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border has become tense starting July 12.

“As the founder of the Women For Peace campaign, I urge the Azerbaijani women and mothers to call on their country's military-political leadership to suspend the military operations, do not endanger the lives of sons of the Azerbaijani and Armenian peoples.

“Women, mothers and sisters should ask their military-political leadership what they have got at the expense of the loss of their beloved ones, their personal tragedy, and what is hindering to discuss the issues in the conditions of peace, through the negotiations with the leadership of the other side.

“Especially during these pandemic days the heads of state should direct their efforts for maintaining the health of their own peoples and against one common enemy – the war against the pandemic, in order to return the humanity to their normal life,” Hakobyan said.

(Sources used were PanArmenian.net, RFE/RL and Armenpress.)



## ARMENIA

# Armenia Again Extends State of Emergency as COVID-19 Spread Worsens

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — Armenia said on Monday, July 13, it had extended until August 12 a state of emergency to try to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus as the number of daily infections has yet to start declining.

Despite the state of emergency, almost all sectors of the Armenian economy are functioning after businesses reopened in early May to ward off economic collapse.

But the country's borders remain closed and international flights have not resumed.

Armenia has registered 32,151 confirmed coronavirus cases and 573 deaths so far from COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the coronavirus.

It is the worst-affected country in the South Caucasus region and hundreds of new infections are still being recorded each day.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said earlier this month that if people did not follow anti-epidemic measures, Armenia might face a new lockdown, which could cause a severe economic crisis.

His government has made wearing face masks in public mandatory.

Specialists from foreign countries and international organizations arrived in Armenia last month to help the country fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

A team of German healthcare workers arrived on Monday to help their Armenian colleagues deal with the coronavirus pandemic.



A German medical team arrives at Zvartnots airport, Yerevan, July 13, 2020.

They were flown to Yerevan by a German Air Force plane that also delivered medical supplies to the country hit hard by the pandemic.

The 16 medics were greeted at Zvartnots international airport by Armenia's deputy ministers of health and foreign affairs as well as the German and European Union ambassadors in Yerevan.

"The German experts will be working along-

side their Armenian colleagues for two weeks," tweeted the German Embassy. "We stand at Armenia's side!"

According to an Armenian government statement, Germany's government has organized the mission in collaboration with two European charities and the World Health Organization. The mission is part of a broader EU scheme designed to help partner countries contain the

spread of the virus.

Similar medical teams have also been sent to Armenia by France, Russia, Lithuania and Italy over the past month. They were deployed to local hospitals treating COVID-19 patients.

The EU Delegation in Yerevan announced that the German government will also provide coronavirus-related financial aid to Armenia. "Germany will be allocating 2.75 million euros (\$3.1 million) for a project addressing COVID-19 in Armenia through research cooperation in order to establish medium to long-term systemic, integrated risk management," the delegation said in a statement.

Health Minister Arsen Torosian spoke of a "slight positive dynamic" in the coronavirus crisis, saying that in recent days there have been fewer infected people awaiting hospitalization at home. But he cautioned that virtually intensive care hospital beds remain occupied by COVID-19 patients.

Fresh figures also revealed that 232 more people have recovered, eight patients have died from Covid-19, while one person carrying the virus has died from other causes.

A total of 135,687 tests have been performed since the beginning of the outbreak in the country, the National Center For Disease Control and Prevention said.

(Stories from Reuters, Panarmenian.net and RFE/RL were used to compile this report.)

## Tribute to Karen Vardanyan:

### A Man with a Vision for Armenia's Future

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

With the passing of Karen Vardanyan, Armenia has lost a dedicated citizen, a creative engineer, an indefatigable organizer and passionate educator, a fine human being. He died on July 10 in Yerevan at age 57.

Karen Vardanyan was a pioneer in the high-tech industry. He graduated from the Yerevan Polytechnical Institute in 1986 and qualified as a hydro engineer. He continued his studies at Harvard Business School in 2009. He was executive director of the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises (UATE) from 2005, after having worked for three years at the Enterprise Incubator Foundation and at the Ministry of Trade and Industry, as head of the IT Development Department. He held seven patents.

My husband and I had the privilege of knowing Karen for many years, and met him whenever possible during our almost annual visits to Armenia. Over dinner in one of his favorite local restaurants where everyone knew him, he would always bring us up to date on his latest plans for revitalizing the IT sector in Armenia. We learned from him how much the sector, which had been a leader in the Soviet Union, suffered from the political instability and economic collapse that followed independence. The sector lost thousands of its best engineers and scientists to emigration, factories closed, investment was lacking.

The UITE, where he was executive director, was established in 2000 as a business association of about 70 enterprises in the field. It runs several programs, like the Digitec Expo, the Digitec Business Forum and the Armenian Robotics Developments and Support Program (ArmRobotics). Karen had told us about his brainchild, robotics clubs in the schools. Children, even from a very early age, could become acquainted with the technology, and learn not only to maneuver robots, but to build them, program them, and to invent all sorts of related devices. For the older students, from 5th through 12th grades, these



Karen Vardanyan

included unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) or drones, with video stabilization cameras mounted on them for application in weather systems and so on. At the Digitec Expo the youngsters would have the opportunity to show what they had created.

Karen had a very clear, ambitious vision. To reestablish the industry in Armenia at the highest level, it would be necessary not just to educate a small number of specialists, but to spread the IT culture throughout the country. The clubs in schools were the vehicles for this educational process. He wanted to forge an alliance of industry with education, whereby companies would support programs in schools and also train students in their enterprises. "One company, one school," was the slogan, and during our 2014 visit, he estimated that there were about 500 such small and medium-sized companies in Armenia; his hope was that that number would increase to 1,400 by 2018, and that he would be able to match them up with schools. Eventually, he aimed at reaching every school in the country.

"It will take one, two generations," he told us, "but we have begun, we have clubs in 60 schools so far." Those students who continued to develop skills through the robotics and engineering clubs, could go on to university, perhaps even with a scholarship to study abroad, then return to Armenia to become part of the growing population of specialists in the industry.

It was a happy coincidence that we were there during the Digitec Expo 2014. At the Mergelyan Institute in Yerevan, where it was held, we had a chance to see for ourselves how the children and youngsters responded. We saw them run

their robots, we watched them working on computers that they had programmed themselves (or even built!), and saw the inventions they had created. We saw them guiding their drones, all the while explaining to us (in perfect English) how they worked. The excitement was tangible and contagious; other children visiting the expo were immediately drawn into the activity. We were overwhelmed. Karen was as delighted as the youngsters.

That was six years ago. Since then, the activities have continued to expand, along with Karen's personal leadership role, which has become increasingly prominent and effective. His passing has come far too soon, too early; he was only 57 years old! We would have wished him better health and many more years, so he could reap the fruits of his endeavors. He never complained. Incurable optimist that he was, Karen was fully confident that, no matter what his personal destiny might be, the process he had set in motion would continue to develop and grow. He was right. It should be of comfort to his family, friends and colleagues, that his vision is becoming reality. What he has accomplished is extraordinary, and the

messages of condolences from institutional representatives bear witness to how deeply his creative efforts have been recognized and appreciated.

Yvonne Chiu, Chairwoman of the World Information Technology & Services Alliance (WITSA), offered her condolences: "I cannot adequately express my heartfelt sadness in hearing of the passing of our great friend and colleague Karen Vardanyan. My sincerest and deepest condolences go out to Karen's family, loved ones, friends and colleagues." As executive director of UATE, Vardanyan "was considered the 'Father of Technology Industry in Armenia.' His dedication to his country, the ICT industry and especially the youth was inspiring, indelible and will be greatly missed."

She added that WITSA was "very proud to have bestowed upon Karen, in 2019, its highest and most prestigious award, WITSA's Eminent Persons Award. The award is bestowed on individuals who make a significant contribution to mankind. His name will go down in history with other luminary recipients." Vardanyan was "a great man and a great, gentle person. He will be sorely missed."

The Minister of High Technology Industry Hakob Arshakyan said on Facebook: "Karen will remain in our hearts as a struggling, free and bright personality. Mr. Vardanyan left an invaluable heritage in the High Tech Sector. UATE, Digitec Expo, Armath [Engineering] Labs, Digi Tech Business Forum, the World Congress on Information Technology and scores of other projects and strategic programs aimed at the IT sector development would not have been complete without his tremendous efforts. Rest in peace, dear friend."





## INTERNATIONAL

## International News

## Belarus Ambassador Meets Pashinyan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan on July 14 received Ambassador Igor Nazaruk of the Republic of Belarus to the Republic of Armenia, who is completing his diplomatic mission in Armenia.

Pashinyan praised the ambassador's efforts to develop the Armenian-Belarusian relations during his tenure and wished him success in his future activities. According to Pashinyan, there is a high level of dialogue between the leaders of Belarus and Armenia, the two countries and peoples have traditional friendly relations, which are a strong pillar for their continuous development and full realization of the existing potential.

He highlighted the open dialogue and reliable partnership within the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) integration unions.

Nazaruk thanked Prime Minister Pashinyan for the appreciation of his efforts, noting that he had made every effort to strengthen the ties between the two countries. According to him, the volume of bilateral trade has more than doubled during this period, which speaks of the positive dynamics of cooperation and the bilateral readiness to deepen it.

The Ambassador of Belarus to Armenia expressed concerns over the escalation of the situation on Armenia-Azerbaijan border and condemned the escalation.

## Armenia Parliamentary Group Holds Inaugural Meeting

LONDON — The All-party Parliamentary group for Armenia in the United Kingdom held its first inaugural general assembly meeting on July 1 with a cross party members of Parliament and Houses of Lords.

Tim Loughton MP was elected Chair and Baroness Cox Co-chair. Andrew Rosindell MP, James Gray MP, Mark Prichard MP and Feryal Clark MP as Vice Chairs with James Murray MP as Officer. The Charge d'affairs of the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia Mr. Gagik Kirakosyan was in attendance.

The All Party Parliamentary Group aims at fostering deeper relations between the United Kingdom and Armenia, promoting peace and security in the region and developing commercial interests between the two countries.

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## Church Fire Breaks out In Hamadan, Iran

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A fire broke out on July 13 on the grounds of the St. Mary Armenian Church in the Iranian city of Hamedan. According to Alikonline.ir citing ISNA news agency, it has not damaged the historic church's structure.

Firefighters managed to extinguish the fire after respective operations which lasted an hour.

No one was injured in the incident.

The cause of the fire was the dry grass near the building, which spread to the façade of the church but not the interior of the building.

# Armenia Opens Embassy in Israel

## Yerevan's Former Ambassador to Washington Shares Insights

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

TEL AVIV — In 2019, Yerevan's interest in developing relations with the country of Israel began to take concrete form. Grigor Hovhannisian, Armenia's former deputy foreign minister and previous ambassador to the US, was on a trip to that country in March 2019. In September, after Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan visited Tel Aviv, it was reported that Yerevan would open an embassy in Israel in the following year. Fast-forwarding to February of 2020, Armenia's President Armen Sarkissian signed a presidential decree on relocating the residence of the Armenian ambassador to Tel Aviv. Before that, the embassy was in Yerevan itself. Thus, the longstanding issue of whether to open an Armenian embassy in Israel moved forward from deadlock.

Two key issues largely define the relationship between the two countries: arms sales from Israel to Azerbaijan and the Armenian Genocide issue. Both issues in their essence are interconnected as today Israel does not formally recognize the Armenian Genocide not so much because of Turkey, but because of Azerbaijan, which is buying Israeli weapons. The uniqueness of the situation is that the non-recognition is happening not because of the perpetrator of the Genocide (Turkey) but a third party. "For Israel, it's just trade, but for us, it's death," Mnatsakanyan told an Israeli journalist who visited Yerevan last year referring to the arms sales. Reporter Yossi Melman's article that later appeared in the Jerusalem Post covered both key aspects of the relationship.

"A genocide is a genocide. It is the moral obligation of Israel to history, humanity, and to the memory of the six million Jews, to recognize the Armenian genocide, exactly as it recognizes the Rwanda genocide 25 years ago," wrote Melman in his lengthy piece.

Currently in the private sector, but previously a career diplomat, Hovhannisian has recently visited Yad Vashem, the memorial of the Holocaust in Israel. He highlights an interesting feature related to the non-recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Tel Aviv.

"Yes, the state of Israel is having a hard time in terms of formally recognizing the Armenian Genocide. At the same time, it's one of the unique countries in the world where public opinion

in its absolute majority acknowledges the historical injustice committed against the Armenians," Hovhannisian said in the interview over Skype.

"You will hardly find any Israeli that does not recognize the Armenian Genocide. There are some countries where despite the recognition, the public, however, remains largely ignorant about this historical fact," Hovhannisian added.

Yad Vashem honors those considered righteous who sheltered Jews when the Holocaust was happening. Among them are Charles Aznavour's parents and many others. "Despite the fact that there were not many Armenians in Europe back in the days of the Holocaust, we have a very high number of Armenians who saved the Jewish people. This was their natural revolt against exclusion and segregation. They were very courageous," Hovhannisian stated, adding that the memory of 1915 was among the reasons why our compatriots in European countries had not remained indifferent to their Jewish neighbors' fate.

The websites of Yad Vashem as well as Washington, D.C.'s Holocaust museum confirms this perspective. "Having witnessed the Armenian Genocide, we decided to save them," Yad Vashem's exhibition quotes Armenian Genocide survivors Pran Tashchiyan, who ended up in Simferopol, Crimea during World War I as a result of Turkish persecution. In 1941, after the Nazis conquered Simferopol, the Tashchiyans sheltered Anatoli and Rita Goldbergs for about three years until the Red Army liberated the city.

Whether academic cooperation for studying the genocide issue or joint efforts in other realms, particularly in the IT-sphere, the ambassador said he thinks that now, with a diplomatic mis-

sion in Israel, cooperation in science could advance.

Throughout almost 30 years of independence, Yerevan was able to sustain positive and constructive relations with many partners that potentially have disagreements, sometimes reaching the degree of antagonism, between each other. As a professional diplomat, Hovhannisian is sure that Yerevan will be able to develop relations with both Israel and Iran, even though specific segments of Iranian society expressed discontent with Yerevan's recent move to set up an embassy in Tel Aviv.



Grigor Hovhannisian

"We have been a responsible member of the international community; nevertheless, throughout this difficult period of sanctions, we kept our relations with Iran very transparent. Whatever objections we hear are printed by pro-Azerbaijani circles of Iran rather than the central government itself," Hovhannisian added at the end of the Skype interview.

Mnatsakanyan stated that Yerevan never has and will not pursue relations with one partner at the expense of another. "We have more than a handful of examples of how Armenia combines its policies with various partners, its key partners, while also pursuing its interests and not harming the various developments that affect our national security," Mnatsakanyan said.

See the online video report at [mirror-spectator.com](http://mirror-spectator.com).

## Anouch Toranian Elected Deputy Mayor of Paris

TORANIAN, from page 1

This second round of Parisian municipal elections was originally to take place on March 22 but was postponed to June 28 because of the novel coronavirus pandemic. The list of French-Turkish politician Agnès Evren of the Union of the Right (Les Républicains) took first place with 53.53 percent of the vote in the 15th arrondissement and Toranian's list came in second place with 35.17 percent. In the March 15 first round, Toranian's list came in third place.

Hidalgo was elected for her second term as mayor by the City Council of Paris on July 3, as were the deputy mayors, after the councilors' own election on June 28. One of Hidalgo's lieutenants called Toranian "the new Hidalgo" in January 2019.

Torianian is one of the youngest on

Hidalgo's list at the age of 28. She holds a master's degree in International Relations (2016) from the Panthéon-Assas University (Paris II) and a master's in Public Administration (2019) from the Paris Institute of Political Studies. She worked for various government administrations or bodies from 2013 to 2017, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and started her own public relations and communications firm in 2015, which led her to go on missions for humanitarian organizations to Armenia or to refugees in the Middle East. In 2018, she was appointed as director of the French branch of the Armenian General Benevolent Union.

Torianian speaks Armenian, English, French and Spanish according to her LinkedIn profile. She has served as a member of the administrative council of

the Armenian youth organization Jeunesse Arménienne de France (JAF) from 2004 to 2015, and, as its representative, served on the administrative council of the Conseil de Coordination des Arméniens de France (CCAF), a coordinative body for the French Armenian community, from 2010 to 2014. She attended the Samuel-Mourad Armenian School in Sèvres, outside of Paris. She is Armenian on her father's side.

Torianian is married to Vasken Toranian, the son of the cofounders of *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, a magazine to which Anouch Toranian's father René Dzagoyan is a frequent contributor. His father Jean-Marc Ara Toranian is a prominent Armenian community leader and co-president of CCAF and his mother Valérie Toranian a French-Armenian journalist who edited *Elle* from 2002 to 2014.





## INTERNATIONAL

# Erdogan Signs Decree Allowing Hagia Sophia to Be Used as a Mosque Again

MOSQUE, from page 1

“Hayirli olsun,” or “Congratulations.”

Immediately after the announcement a small crowd gathered outside Hagia Sophia, some of them chanting “Allahu akbar,” or “God is great.” Television footage showed police placing barriers across the entrance to the monument.

It was not immediately clear how the ruling would change life around the monument. Cevdet Yilmaz, spokesman for Erdogan’s Justice and Development Party, known as the AKP, said the government would determine how to carry out the change.

Erdogan defended the decision as Turkey’s right and said it represented the will of many Turks. He added that the action of turning it from a mosque into a museum 80 years ago had been illegal, but pledged that the mosque would continue to be open to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

“Hagia Sophia, the common heritage of humanity, will go forward to embrace everyone with its new status in a much more sincere and much more unique way,” he said in a live television address.

Entry to the monument would be free of charge, foregoing the ticket price from several million visitors a year, and the first prayers inside Hagia Sophia will take place on July 24. Just before he spoke, several hundred people gathered outside Hagia Sophia to celebrate a prayer of thanksgiving, recording the call of the muezzin on their phones, and then bent in unison for the evening prayer on the esplanade in front of the building.

Erdogan may choose to hold prayers only on ceremonial occasions, as he did to mark the anniversary of the Ottoman conquest of the city in May. But his supporters may demand freedom to enter the building for daily prayers.

Conservationists and art historians have raised concerns about what will happen to the medieval mosaics inside Hagia Sophia, which depict the Holy Family and portraits of imperial Christian emperors, which strict Muslims may demand be covered. Tour guides said that the building may be closed to tourists during prayer times, or even that parts of the building be sectioned off to non-Muslims.

The court decision came as the culmination of a four-year campaign by an obscure cultural association that made legal applications to restore a number of monuments, including several Byzantine churches, as mosques. Hagia Sophia will be the fourth Byzantine church museum to be restored as a mosque under Erdogan, but by far the most significant one. In November, the famous Chora monastery church in Istanbul had its status as a museum revoked.

When the plan for Hagia Sophia was floated, it met a chorus of dismay from religious and political leaders around the world. The ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew, who is the spiritual leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church from his seat in Istanbul, said the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque would disappoint millions of Christians around the world and divide Muslims and Christians since it had long been a place of worship for both.

Hagia Sophia, famous for the grandeur of its immense and iconic dome, was converted into a mosque after Mehmed II the Conqueror held his first Friday prayers there in 1453, three days after seizing control of what was then the city of Constantinople.

Under the secular republic of modern Turkey, the monument was turned into a museum in 1934. It was named a masterpiece of the World Heritage site in Istanbul and has become Turkey’s most popular tourist attraction, drawing 3.7 million visitors last year.

Erdogan had voiced his intention to convert Hagia Sophia into a mosque several times. In May, he gave a strong indication that he would follow through on the plan when – remotely, because of the coronavirus – he opened a ceremony to commemorate the 567th anniversary of the conquest of Istanbul. An imam recited a verse from the Quran, known as the Conquest surah, celebrating the Treaty of Hudaibiyah between the people of Mecca and Medina.

The idea of converting Hagia Sophia back into a mosque prompted immediate pushback from Greece, which sees itself as the heir to the Byzantine Empire. The Greek Foreign Ministry

denounced the conversion as unacceptable and a breach of Hagia Sophia’s status as part of a UNESCO World Heritage site.

In a strongly worded statement, the Greek culture minister, Lina Mendoni, condemned Turkey’s decision as a “direct challenge to the entire civilized world,” adding that Erdogan’s nationalism had pushed the country back six centuries.

“President Erdogan has chosen for Turkey its cultural isolation,” she said.



Josep Borrell, the European Union’s senior diplomat, called Turkey’s decision regrettable.

In its own statement on Friday, UNESCO said that Hagia Sophia is inscribed on its world heritage list as a museum which binds the Turkish state to ensure that “no modification is made to the outstanding universal value of the property.” The organization added that communities and others concerned with the property should be ensured inclusive and equitable access to the monument.

Presidential spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, said Hagia Sophia could be a working mosque and be open to visitors in the same way that Notre

Dame cathedral and the Sacre Coeur basilica in France hold services and are open to tourists.

“The opening of Hagia Sophia for worship does not prevent local or foreign tourists from visiting the place,” he said.

The change of status would also not affect the World Heritage status of the historic peninsula which encompasses the Ottoman Topkapi Palace, and ancient hippodrome and the Blue Mosque, he added.

“Opening this place to worship will not make Hagia Sophia lose anything from its world heritage identity,” he said in an interview with Anadolu Agency. “People can keep going there and visit the place. As our ancestors protected the Christian icons there, they will continue to be protected.”

But supporters of the move were increasingly triumphant on social media.

Finance Minister Berat Albayrak, who is also son-in-law to Mr. Erdogan, tweeted a phrase from a well known conservative nationalist poet:

“As master Necip Fazil Kısakurek said 55 years ago: ‘Wait, youngsters. Either today or tomorrow, Hagia Sophia will be opened.’”

Huseyin Gulerce, a pro-government columnist for the *Star* newspaper reprinted a column he had written 30 years ago in which he had criticized the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a museum as an unnecessary gesture of deference to the West that cast a “dark shadow” over Turkish independence.

“We want back what already belonged to us,” Gulerce wrote. “We want back what was cut off

from our history, faith, culture, national dignity, state honor.”

## World Council of Churches Expresses ‘Grief’

The head of the World Council of Churches has written to Turkey’s president expressing his “grief and dismay” over Turkey’s decision to change the status of Istanbul’s landmark Hagia Sophia from a museum to a mosque.

As a World Heritage museum, “Hagia Sophia has been a place of openness, encounter and inspiration for people from all nations,” interim secretary general Ioan Sauca said in the letter released Saturday by the Geneva-based group.

Sauca said the museum status had been “a powerful expression” of Turkey’s commitment to inclusion and secularism. He urged Erdogan to reconsider the decision “in the interests of promoting mutual understanding, respect, dialogue and cooperation, and avoiding cultivating old animosities and divisions.”

The WCC says its membership comprises 350 Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican churches with some 500 million believers.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian also said France “deplores” Turkey’s decision on Hagia Sophia.

“These decisions cast doubt on one of the most symbolic acts of modern and secular Turkey,” the minister said in a statement.

“The integrity of this religious, architectural and historic jewel, a symbol of religious freedom, tolerance and diversity, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, must be preserved,” he said. “Hagia Sophia must continue to represent the plurality and diversity of religious heritage, dialogue and tolerance.”

The US State Department has said it was “disappointed” by the decision.

## Calls for Action on Hagia Sophia

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN – On July 12, two human rights organizations based in Berlin issued a joint declaration on the decision taken a day earlier to alter the status of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Both organizations have been in the forefront of efforts to gain official recognition of the genocide, efforts that led to the resolution in the German Bundestag (Parliament) passed in 2016. They are the Working Group for Recognition, against Genocide, and for Understanding among Peoples (AGA) and the Promotional Society for the Ecumenical Monuments for Genocide Victims of the Ottoman Empire (FÖGG).

In presenting the declaration, Dr. Tessa Hofmann, chairwoman of the AGA and Speaker of the Board of the FÖGG, called on readers to distribute the statement widely, to generate effective protest against this dangerous development. It reads (in translation):

“The news of the transformation of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque has touched and saddened us. There are some, however, who think one should not attribute such importance to it: Hagia Sophia was always a house of prayer and will now become one again!

In Turkey there is really no lack of mosques. Every year 1,500 new mosques are added – among them, all too often former Christian churches. So, Mr. Erdogan need not worry that there is no house of prayer available to the Muslim community in Istanbul.

Yet, the conversion of the cultural and architectural monument Hagia Sophia is not at all a matter of increasing the number of mosques; it is a continuation of the policy of the Young Turks, the former Committee of Unity and Progress. That policy consisted in not only physically eliminating over three million indigenous Christians, but, on completion of this genocide, in eradicating everything that might be reminiscent of the Christian legacy of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. It was and is

a matter of extinction or triumphant appropriation, in this case, of a historic and cultural monument of universal, unique significance. In addition, the Hagia Sophia is the most important place of worship for 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide, comparable to the significance of Notre Dame in Paris for the world.

The rulers in Turkey, then and now, neither want to show consideration for the feelings of their Christian citizens, nor to display the necessary respect for their cultural heritage.

In such a confrontational political and social environment, where there is no respect for the historical heritage of the different communities in the country; nay, even more: where such actions clearly serve to encourage disrespect and disparagement, then atrocities and crimes like those committed by the ‘Islamic State’ are not far away.

The cheers shouted after the court ruling, by people who were triumphantly waving the Turkish flag with Muslim slogans, should suffice to give an idea of what spirit of hate and intolerance the highest decision makers want to awaken.

This engenders fear in Christians from the Near and Middle East, and understandably so. They are more than concerned. When, for religious or nationalistic motives, people begin to place themselves above others and to deny them respect, then there is reason to fear a step towards something worse.

It is on the contrary urgently necessary for Turkey finally to reflect on its rich and diverse heritage, as long as what remains of it, after genocide and mass expulsions, is still extant. It is necessary to treat this heritage in school textbooks, so that people may learn what great cultural achievements the ancestors of the Christian communities on the soil of current-day Turkey have contributed, and that these are part of the cultural heritage of Turkey.

An exclusive, nationalistic mode of thinking, consisting only of Turkishness and Islam, and deliberately ignoring or denigrating everything else cannot lead to a society based on solidarity. Such a notion must be rejected clearly and unequivocally.

The point here is not to incite Christians against Muslims. One should not fall into that trap of Erdogan’s. The point is to protect the esteem and feelings of Christian citizens in Turkey – precisely against the backdrop of the genocidal history of the 20th century- and to display the necessary respect and esteem to them.

Please do not take lightly the decision to turn Hagia Sophia into a mosque, do not accept it as given! This can have only catastrophic consequences. Christians in this region cannot feel at ease for long in an exclusively Turkish, nationalistic and religiously hostile society and will be directly or indirectly driven out, through verbal or physical violence.”

Amill Gorgis (Chairman of the FÖGG)  
Prof. h.c. Dr. phil. Tessa Hofmann





## INTERNATIONAL

# Turks Gain Entry to Local French Elections

By **Dikran Yeghavian**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PARIS – After having being postponed for three months, the second stage of municipal elections in France took place on June 28, leaving a record of Armenian absenteeism. Though a candidate of Armenian descent, Jeanne Barseghian, won in the municipality of Strasbourg, these elections are marked overall by the decline of Armenian forces and the growing influence of French-Turkish candidates.

The first round of municipal elections took place during an unsettling climate on the eve of a pandemic lockdown. The scheduling and implementation of the second round was not just a welcomed sign of the resumption of the democratic process, but equally salient, a return to some form of normalcy in our lives. While this is an overall positive step for French civic life, for some citizens, their pre-lockdown political concerns have festered and now threaten to derail the causes for which they fight. I speak of course of the French-Armenian community and its struggle to ward off the continued encroachment of the Turkish and Azerbaijani governments on civic life in France through their well-financed and increasingly organized emissaries in local French communities.

A conspicuous example of Turkish and Azeri interests operating on French soil is the relationship cultivated between Rachida Dati, a first time challenger of Anne Hidalgo, the current mayor of Paris. For many years, she has been lobbying on behalf of Azerbaijan and has become a reliable propagandist of Azeri and Turkish interests in France.

While the French-Armenian community is undoubtedly proud of its decades-long achievements in France, particularly of the French government's official commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in 2019, those same accomplishments are on a tenuous footing these days. Resting on our laurels provides an opening for the political strategy of the Azerbaijani and Turkish governments to undermine our work and places us in a politically precarious position with elected officials in France.

## The Turkish State's Strategy in France

There are currently around 330,000 Turkish nationals living in France. Most of them hold dual citizenship in France and Turkey and they vote as a unified bloc at the direction of Ankara. They remain overwhelmingly loyal to the autocratic regime of Erdogan, upholding a political philosophy that is anathema to the governing philosophy of the French Republic.

Currently, the Turkish diplomatic services in France are represented by six general consulates in Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Strasbourg, Nantes and Bordeaux, which cast a large net across the country.

In addition, the Turkish Foreign Ministry functions as a tree structure across the continent. One branch is the UTDE, the Union of European Turks Democrats, which carries out the actions and ideology of the ruling party in Turkey, the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Another branch is the COJEP, an NGO ruled by pro-AKP officials founded in 2015.

The Parti Egalité et Justice (PEJ) is a micro-party based in Strasbourg, which advocates the ultranationalist discourse of Ankara. Its sidelining in 2014 forced the Turkish community to adopt a new strategy: the pro-AKP lobby is now trying to reinvent itself as a party geared towards Turks and Muslims in lower-income neighborhoods. Like its mirror operation in the Netherlands, the Denk, which placed several deputies in Parliament, it is a miniature replica of the Turkish presidential movement. In France, this micro party cynically enmeshed itself in the fight against Islamophobia and prepared its candidates for the last legislative elections of 2017 accordingly.

In order to streamline its control and messaging, the Turkish state set up several institutions such as the DITIB (The Turkish Islamic Union for Religious Affairs), better known as the Diyanet, a powerful religious administration



Lyon, January 2018

relying on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. It manages mosques and cultural associations. In 2017, there were more than 151 Turkish imams (more than the Algerians or the Moroccans) who were supplemented with dozens of Turkish language teachers, all of whom are employees of the Turkish government. These officials are sometimes used to denigrate the opponents of Erdogan, such as leftists, Kurds or those suspected of belonging to or supporting Fethullah Gülen's movement. The DITIB manages about 250 places of worship in France, including more than 60 in Alsace-Lorraine in the east, according to figures from the Ministry of the Interior. But the Islamist organization Milli Görüş (National vision), from which Erdogan came forward, oversees 70 other associations.

All of these structures, including the powerful Müsiad, a pro-regime Turkish trade union, which financially supported their achievements, and the Scholar Grup al Kindi, are working hard for years to shore up their power at the local level. In order to reach their goal, they use religion and education as a way to boost their growing influence and maintain the local Turkish community mobilized to serve the interests of Erdogan's policy domestically and abroad. Enjoying considerable means, they successfully managed to eradicate all of the work of the leftist organizations (composed of Alevis and Kurds), by intimidating them.

## The Challenge of the Municipal Elections

The municipal elections are an eloquent example of the Turkish methods of shoring up their own power base at the local level. After the lockdown, French-Armenians were blindsided at how active French-Turkish candidates have been, particularly how bold their actions have been in historically Armenian communities within France.

The Rhône – Alpes region, located at the center of the country, with Lyon as its major city, is known for being a hub of Armenian activism in the 1970s and 1980s; a city where Georges Kevork Kepenekian, a local figure of the community was the acting mayor between 2017 and 2018. But now, with 140,000 Turkish residents, it is the most important base of the Turkish diaspora in France. Thus, a new reality confronts us in the French political system.

A generation of binational activists born in Turkey but raised in France are running for public office in France. These candidates maintain strong ties to Turkey through family and politics. Domestic French politics can no longer ignore them as they seek elective office. Established French politicians offer us reassurance of their support, but those promises may eventually ring hollow.

First and foremost, we have a candidate in the Lyon metropolitan area, where the chairman of the French Turkish Cultural Center, Izzet Doganel, a loyal partisan of Erdogan, has



Izzet Doganel

joined a slate of candidates supported by the former mayor and the former Minister of the Interior, Gérard Collomb. Doganel even organized a meeting in his local municipality for the Turkish president.

In Valence, a town of 65,000 inhabitants, amongst them more than 15,000 Armenians (most from Syria), the Turkish lobby has made a push. The mayor, Nicolas Daragon is familiar with Armenia and Artsakh. Valence has signed a charter of friendship with Stepanakert. However, that did not prevent him from welcoming on his slate a French Turk activist, Yasin Yildirim, suspected of denying the reality of the Genocide.



Yasin Yildirim

In Vénissieux, a suburb of Lyon, the "Macronist" MP Yves Blein, who is a candidate for the municipal elections, made an alliance with a local leader of the Turkish community named Yalcin Ayvali. This gentleman does not

hide his closeness to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Yalcin Ayvali is well known in Vénissieux, according to the Le Progrès daily.

In 2017, he ran in the European elections under the banner of the Equality Justice Party (PEJ). No wonder, to remind the reader, as that is an Islamo-conservative party and a communitarian formation close to Erdogan's party, the AKP, which aims at redefining secularism. In addition, Yalcin Ayvali regularly retweeted messages from Elias Imzale, described as a "Salafist agitator". For the municipal elections, the pro-Erdogan candidate presented himself without a label, indicating that he no longer belonged to the EYP. With 5% of the vote, he just managed to advance to the second round, which allowed him to seek an alliance with Yves Blein.

In Meyzieu, a small town near Décines with important communities of both Turks and Armenians, the mayoral candidate, Christophe Quniou has formed an alliance with a French-Turkish candidate named Michaël Hamza Ozër. The alliance with Ozër caused most Armenians candidates to withdraw from Quniou's list, but oddly, one Armenian remained with the stated goal of seeking election.

## The Armenians More Divided than Ever

Although the French-Armenian community's main organization for political power and representation, the CCAF (Council of Coordination of Armenian Organizations of France), issued on June 11 a statement denouncing the disguised entry of Ankara's negationism in French political life, the local Armenian activists seem to be more divided and facing internal struggles to organize and motivate.

One disheartening development is why the candidacy in Meyzieu was not mentioned in the statement issued by the CCAF.

Another disturbing issue is the ambivalence of the Armenian candidates for the council of Valence who did not bother to challenge Yasin Yildirim on a fundamental issue by asking him to explicitly clarify his position toward the Armenian Genocide. Another problem was the fragmentation of the Armenian political landscape in Valence and its neighboring town of Bourg Lès Valence. It was in Bourg Lès Valence where some Armenian activists made the odd choice of challenging the Armenophile mayor, Marlène Mourier, who has always been a constant advocate of the Armenian community. During her last term, she tirelessly fought for the recognition of the Artsakh Republic by endorsing the link between her town and Shushi.

We cannot deny that personal and shared interests are colliding to the detriment of the Armenian community. Coupled with a lack of vision and strategy, we are setting ourselves up for a dramatic failure, while enemies of our shared cause are on the ascendancy.



# Community News

## Eastern Diocese Permits Limited Restoration of Sacramental Functions

NEW YORK — In a directive to clergy of the Eastern Diocese, Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan announced new guidelines for local parishes and worshippers, expanding the way the rituals and services of the church may be conducted in the ongoing pandemic situation.

Parishes of the Eastern Diocese, which had been under official lockdown for more than two months, were first permitted to open their doors to the public in a limited way — subject to local ordinances — on May 31, the Feast of Pentecost. But restrictions on certain practices remained in force.

Under the new directive dated June 22, church life will remain strictly regulated by social distancing, mask-wearing, and other now familiar precautions. But certain functions pertaining to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and the administration of Sacraments have been restored.

The restoration of functions applies only to parishes where local regulations do not prohibit church services, and where public gatherings with limited attendance are permitted. (The Primate's earlier directive designated such parishes as having entered "Phase Two" of the post-lockdown relaxation of restrictions.)

Chief among the restored sacramental functions is the ability of worshippers to receive Holy Communion. The issue of resuming Holy Communion was addressed in special instructions issued earlier this month by Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, in consultation with the Armenian Church's Supreme Spiritual Council.

Accordingly, Holy Communion may now be offered to the faithful during the Badarak in the familiar manner.

However, Findikyan's directive on this matter enumerates 12 strict guidelines that must be followed to maintain hygienic practices whenever the Sacrament is administered. These guides were determined in consultation with healthcare professionals in the Eastern Diocese.

In addition, as a temporary measure priests are permitted to place Holy Communion on the right hand of the communicant. This is to be done "in strictly exceptional cases, based on the necessities of providing pastoral care," in the words of Catholicos Karekin II's instructions.

Along with Holy Communion, rules governing funeral services and weddings are also implicated in the restoration of sacramental functions.

Holding a funeral service in the church sanctuary is now permitted (with appropriate distancing, masking, and attendance precautions) for the first time since the pandemic lockdown began. Previously, funerals had been restricted to gravesite burial services attended only by the family and a few mourners. Wake services at a funeral home are likewise permitted (subject to the usual precautions and permissions.)

In the case of weddings — which had been suspended outright during the early lockdown period, and more recently permitted only in a truncated form — an important part of the "Crowning" sacrament, the sharing of the Common Cup (wherein bride and groom drink from the same chalice) has been restored to its place in the service. Again, guidelines are provided for maintaining strict hygienic practices.

While the restoration of these functions will certainly be a welcome development for countless faithful throughout the Eastern Diocese, the Primate's directive concludes with a tone of caution. "It must be emphasized that while these guidelines have been drafted with considerable input from health professionals, they do not eliminate risk to our people and our clergy," writes Bishop Daniel. "It remains the considered decision of each faithful individual and/or household to weigh the benefits and blessings to themselves and their families of participating in church services, against the risks inherent in any public activity in the midst of a pandemic."

Clergy throughout the Eastern Diocese have been instructed on how to proceed with these new guidelines, and how to convey both the permissions and the restrictions to their respective communities.



RACIAL INJUSTICE  
and  
RESPONSIBILITY

## Discussion Takes on Armenian Heritage and Need for Global Understanding of Race and Culture

FAIR LAWN, N.J. — On Tuesday, June 23, St. Leon Armenian Church of Fair Lawn, hosted a virtual forum, titled "Racial Injustice and Responsibility," with a live audience from more than 460 households. The event, which has since been viewed by an additional 600 households at <https://bit.ly/2MMUaAX>, examined the legacy of racial violence and inequality, and the responsibility of non-perpetrators in sustaining regimes of racism.

The event was jointly sponsored by AGBU Ararat, Armenian Bar Association, Armenian Network of America—Greater NY, Daughters of Vartan-Sahaganoush Otyag, Justice Armenia, Knights of Vartan-Bakradouny Lodge, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR)/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Topics, St. Leon ACYOA Seniors, and Zohrab Information Center.

As poignantly recognized by Marc Mamigonian at the start of the forum, the support given by the sponsoring organizations reflects a recognition that collectively and as individuals Armenian Americans do not exist separate from the larger issues of American life and that racial injustice and responsibility — the theme and title of the evening's talk — may be as large as an issue that exists in America because it lies at the root of so many other problems.

The discussion was moderated by Henry Theriault (president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars) and Marc Mamigonian (director of academic affairs for the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research). Panelists included Dr. Jermaine McCalpin (Chair of African and African American Studies at New Jersey City University), Dr. Michael Rothberg (1939 Society Samuel Goetz Chair in Holocaust Studies at UCLA), and Kohar Avakian (PhD student in American Studies at Yale).

Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan opened the forum with a prayer for peace and asked God to "Listen to the cry that rises from every corner of this fragile earth, from our human family torn by violent conflict," Bishop Daniel offered brief opening remarks endorsing the intent of the forum.

"Racism is an issue that we should not be talking about only in these recent weeks of unrest," he said, "but it's something that should be at the core of every sermon of ours as clergy; it should be part of our regular discourse ... particularly in the Armenian Church, because we have been the victims of racism ... and because our creed, our faith, holds that racism in any form, differentiation among the creatures of God, is completely incompatible with the very core of what we believe."

Prior to handing over the program to the panelists for an intellectual and ethical journey, Dr. Theriault noted that, just like when confronting deniers of the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek genocides, the evening's purpose was not to debate whether there has been and continues to be mass systemic oppression of Black and brown people in this country. He pointed out that "Those who refuse to see what is going on today and what has gone on for so long are making a choice. This is not a choice we want to debate."

In further comparison to his and McCalpin's advocacy for Armenian Genocide recognition and reparations, Theriault shared that "history does not just heal itself and that harms of the past — unless rectified by symbolic and material action—not only continue to have destructive impact on victims but actually increase in destructive power over time." He closed with a recognition that a history of violence does not excuse today's Armenians from taking responsibility in the fight against racism in the United States. "In reality," he said, "there is no neutral place on racial injustice in the United States; it is time to pick our side."

see RACE, page 12

## California Assembly Member Adrin Nazarian Motivated by Armenian Experience to Promote Equity

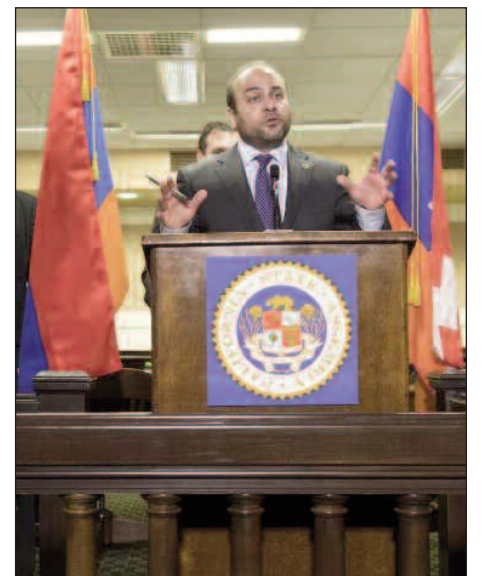
By Aram Arkun  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

SACRAMENTO — State Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian (D-Sherman Oaks) is unique for a couple of reasons: at present he is the only official elected in California on the state level of Armenian background, as well as the only elected Iranian-born official possibly in any legislative office in the United States at the state level or higher. However, he serves a district in the San Fernando Valley which is primarily non-Armenian demographically. In a recent interview, he said his three broad areas of focus as a politician are equity, infrastructure and the aging community.

The 47-year-old Nazarian said that while he is very pragmatic as a legislator and an elected official whose role is to represent his constituents, "at the same time, you want to look forward, and kind of push and pull your constituency towards a certain direction." Part of what motivates him is his interests and background, and this is where his Armenian family story comes into play.

### Influence of Family Background

Like many Armenians, his family has seen much tragedy and in the last 110 years, three generations moved four times. His paternal grandparents were natives of Shushi, Karabakh, who when their hometown was burned in 1920 moved to Baku. Nazarian's father was born there in 1928, but he said that his grandfather did not want to accept communism or Stalin, so moved to Iran to set up a business. Before he could bring his wife and two sons, neighbors informed the Soviet NKVD, or secret service, which exiled his wife to Siberia, leaving the sons without par-



Adrin Nazarian speaking at the April 23, 2018 Armenian Genocide observance event at the state capitol

ents for some five years. She made it back alive and somehow escaped to Iran at night, Nazarian said, to join her husband.

Nazarian's maternal grandmother was from Volograd in Russia and because of the Bolshevik revolution, she lost her father and her family got split apart. Three siblings moved to Armenia while she and her younger brother came to Iran.

Iran too had its revolution in 1979 and then the Iran-Iraq war, leading to Nazarian's family once again being split apart, this time over three different continents, for some seven years until reuniting in the United States. Nazarian and his mother had to traverse several countries to come to the United States in 1981.

see EXPERIENCE, page 10





## OBITUARIES

# Another Survivor of Turkey's Genocide Passes Away in Greece

By Uzay Bulut

ATHENS (*National Herald*) – One of the oldest survivors of Turkey's Greek genocide, Xanthippe Apostolidou, passed away in Greece on May 30 at the age of 103.

Apostolidou was born in the village of Karmut in Argypolis (Gümüşhane), Pontos, in 1917. The news website trapezounta.gr reported on her death on May 31, referring to her as “the last ambassador of our unforgettable homeland” and “one of the last survivors of the first generation” of the genocide.

The Greek genocide in Ottoman Turkey took place between 1914 and 1923. According to the Greek Genocide Resource Center, “it included massacres, forced deportations and death marches, summary expulsions, boycotts, rape, forced conversion to Islam, conscription into labor battalions, arbitrary executions and destruction of Christian Orthodox cultural, historical and religious monuments. It is likely that the victim toll of the Greek Genocide was somewhere in the vicinity of 1-1.5 million.”

In the genocide's concluding year, there was a forcible population exchange between

Turkey and Greece where many of the survivors were forcibly driven from Turkey.

Trapezounta.gr quoted Apostolidou's fellow villager, Panagiotis Moissiadias, as saying: “A month ago, when I visited her, she told me her childhood memories from the house of Constantinos Kapagiannides in Trebizond/Trabzon and the toys that they played with in the large yard of his house.”

Xanthippe's father, Miltiades Apostolides, was a private tutor of the well-known Kapagiannides family from Trebizond. She spent her childhood in a famous mansion in the city built by Kapagiannides. It was later seized by Turks and is now ironically called “Ataturk's Mansion.” She left her village with her family when she was a little child and arrived in Greece during the last phase of the genocide. Like all other genocide survivors, she carried the pain of the tragedy in her heart all her life and took it to her grave.

Though most eyewitnesses to the Greek genocide have passed away, their firsthand accounts and testimonies of their family members give a human voice to these atrocities. The website of the Greek Genocide Resource Center, for instance, contains testimonies submitted by members of the public via the organization's online questionnaire: “Although they aren't first-hand accounts, they do offer

an insight into the experience of Greeks during the Greek Genocide as told by their offspring. It also describes the psychological impact it had on them in later life.”

The website is still open to submissions of testimonies about the genocide in English and Greek.

Scholar Themistocles Kritikakos writes: “Unlike the Armenian genocide, which is the main cultural trauma for the Armenians, there were multiple traumas that led to the forgetting of the events that transpired in the late Ottoman Empire for the Greeks and Assyrians. For the Greeks it included the traumas of the Second World War and the Greek Civil War. For the Assyrians it is their ongoing plight in the Middle East as a stateless people who have faced several instances of genocide the past century.”

He continues: “Memory transcends time and place. The first generation usually didn't speak about what happened due to the horrific events they witnessed. The second generation didn't inquire about what happened dealing with other traumas or settling into a new country such as Australia. However, the third generation, which was more settled, started questioning. They started to connect with a neglected history.”

One of the members of the third generation

of genocide survivors born in Greece who has carried out invaluable scholarly research on the Greek genocide is Dr. Vasileios Meichanetsidis, an Athens-based historian, genocide scholar, and editor of the 2011 book *The Genocide of the Ottoman Greeks*. Meichanetsidis's grandparents were born in Trebizond, which they had to leave during the genocide.

“Genocide and ethnic cleansing are not uniquely European sins,” Meichanetsidis said. “The Ottoman Empire and Kemalist Turkey has its own long and shameful history of Genocide against the indigenous Christian peoples, the Greeks, Armenians, Assyrians. In many ways the Ottoman Empire and Kemalist Turkey set the precedent and the example of massive extermination of ‘undesirable peoples’ (Christians and others). Nazi Germany admired and took inspiration from the genocidal policies and practices of the Turks and hoped for the same impunity which the Turks enjoyed after 1918 and 1923, although they exterminated almost entire peoples who lived in Asia Minor for more than three millennia and certainly before the Ottoman conquest, Islamization, and Turkification of the region.”

(Uzay Bulut is a journalist and political analyst from Turkey. She was formerly based in Ankara.)

## Harry J. Minassian Noted Oud Player

NORTON, Mass. – Harry J. Minassian of Norton passed away peacefully at home surrounded by his family on June 26, 2020 after a brief illness, he was 83.

Harry was born on February 6, 1937 in Brighton to the late Hagop and Vehanoush (Karamanian) Minassian.

He spent his career as an owner and administrator to several nursing facilities including Bay Tower Nursing Center in Providence, RI, Oceanside in Quincy and currently Crestwood Nursing in Warren, RI.

Harry's biggest passion and accomplishment was his musical and entertaining abilities. Harry was a very prominent musician and played the oud. He was the only American Oud player to be personally trained by the legendary Udi Hrant. Harry played middle eastern music and folk songs and entertained thousands of people over the years and many dances, weddings, picnics and other social functions. His musical talents and ability to entertain will be missed by all that had the privilege of hearing him play.

Harry is survived by his wife, Gail (Finn)



Minassian. He was the father of Mark Minassian and his wife Lisa of Cranston, RI, Gary Minassian and his wife Karen of Rehoboth, MA and Gregory Minassian of Quincy, MA. He was the grandfather of 5 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. He was the brother of the late Nazareth “Naz” Minassian and Louis Minassian. He is also survived by many nieces and nephews, relatives and friends.

Visiting Hours were held at the Giragosian Funeral Home, Watertown, on Tuesday, June 30. Private funeral services were held for the family at St. James Armenian Church in Watertown with interment at Blue Hill Cemetery in Braintree.

## Dr. John H. Chaglassian Surgeon, Harvard Medical School Instructor

BELMONT, Mass. – Dr. John H. Chaglassian of Belmont passed away after a short illness on June 20, 2020 at the age of 77. John was born on March 25, 1943 in Beirut, Lebanon to the late Dr. Hrant and Anahid (née Chahine) Chaglassian and was brother to Marlene Baghdassarian, who predeceased him.

He attended the American University of Beirut



Medical School from 1965-1969 before completing his Clinical Residency at Massachusetts General Hospital in 1974 through Harvard Medical School. John was a prominent orthopedic surgeon at Mount Auburn Hospital in Cambridge for 45 years and also served as an instructor at Harvard Medical School and a Clinical Associate at Mass General Hospital.

John is survived by his wife Hasmig Chaglassian (née Baghdadian), his children Ann Chaglassian of Massachusetts, Alain Chaglassian and his fiancé Sandra Afeyan of Massachusetts, and Edward Chaglassian, his wife Lerna Chaglassian and his grandson Luke John Chaglassian of Maryland. He is also survived by his nephews Alex and Haig Baghdassarian and their families, many cousins he adored, and close friends.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and current public safety measures, a private funeral service were held at St. Stephen's Armenian Church in Watertown and interment was held at Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge.

For on-line guestbook visit: [www.giragosian-funeralhome.com](http://www.giragosian-funeralhome.com)

## Sossy (Boyamian) Derian

WATERTOWN – Sossy (Boyamian) Derian of Watertown passed away peacefully in her sleep on July 5, 2020. She was 75 years old.

Sossy was born on June 16, 1945 in Aleppo, Syria to the late Stephan and Azadouhi (Katcharian) Boyamian.

Prior to meeting her husband and starting a family in Lexington, Mass., Sossy had studied nursing at the American University of Beirut where she made lifelong friendships.

She was known among her community as an incredible cook who took great pride in hosting gatherings for her family, friends, and church community.

She is survived by her husband Arman Derian, her son Alec Derian and his wife Sarah of Hooksett, N.H., and her son Saro Derian and his husband Daniel Miller of Boston and their daughter Anoush. She was the sister of Avedis Boyamian and his wife Houry of Winchester, Mass.; Mary Goudsouzian and her husband Dr. Nishan of Winchester, Mass.; Hagop Boyamian and his wife Araxie of Glendale, Calif.; and the late Iskobie Boyamian. She is also survived by three generations of nieces and nephews.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and current public safety measures, funeral arrangements are private, however the family plans to celebrate Sossy's life at a *Hokejash* when it is safe for her loved ones to gather.

For online guestbook visit: [www.giragosian-funeralhome.com](http://www.giragosian-funeralhome.com)



## Dr. Michael Mensoian Professor at UMass



NEWTON, Mass. – Dr. Michael G. Mensoian, of Newton Centre, died on July 7, 2020. He was 93.

He was the husband of the late Sirvart (Gregorian); father of Martha A. Mensoian of Boston and Christopher M. Mensoian of Boston and brother of Margaret (Mensoian) Conrad of Westwood.

He was a World War II veteran, serving in the Navy.

He was a professor emeritus at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

He was active in many Armenian organizations and was a regular columnist for the *Armenian Weekly* newspaper.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and current public safety measures, the viewing at Aram Bedrosian funeral home (Watertown), church service at St. Stephen's Armenian Church (Watertown), and interment at Newton Cemetery (Newton) were privately held on Friday, July 10, 2020.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

# Zoravik to Hold Virtual Public Forum, ‘Black Lives Matter for Armenians’

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The Black Lives Matter movement has challenged US society to recognize police violence against Blacks, as well as systemic racism in our courts, schools, businesses, and cultural institutions. Four centuries of violence and systemic oppression demand exposure, action, and change.

A virtual public forum organized by the Zoravik Activist Collective on July 20 will explore the Black and Armenian experience, including a shared history of subjugation, violence, exclusion, and denial. But whereas, once arrived in the US, Armenians were eventually allowed to fully engage as members of this society because of their “white” race, due to a sequence of oppressive systems (slavery, Jim Crow, and the post-Civil Rights neo-racist order), the race line has consistently prevented this for Blacks.

Recognizing that Armenians have a singular vantage point from which to witness anti-Black racism in our adopted home, panelists will focus on what the Black Lives Matter movement can

and should mean for white Armenians and others in the US today, and will advise on how to take responsibility and action.

The panelists include Dr. Richard Reddick, Dr. Aram Goudsouzian, Kohar Avakian, Levon Brunson, Anaïs DerSimonian, and Carene Mekertichyan. The forum will be moderated by Dr. Henry Theriault and Dr. Laure Astourian.

Richard Reddick, Ph.D., is associate dean for Equity, Community Engagement, and Outreach in The University of Texas at Austin’s College of Education. Richard Reddick is responsible for equity and inclusion-related initiatives supporting faculty, staff, and students in the college and serves as one of the college’s Title IX liaisons and chair of the college’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Reddick is author, co-author, and co-editor of numerous books, peer-reviewed articles, chapters, and opinion pieces. His main areas of research interest are the lives of Black academics, including their approach to work-life balance, service, teaching, and research responsibilities, and their experiences mentoring students.

Additionally, Reddick maintains scholarly interests in diversity in higher education, African American families, and educational policy. Reddick’s scholarship has been featured by NPR, the BBC, the Associated Press, and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Reddick also serves on the editorial boards of Urban Education and the Journal of Higher Education.

Aram Goudsouzian is Professor of History at the University of Memphis. A historian of the twentieth-century United States with a particular focus on race, politics, and culture, he is the author of five books, including *Down to the Crossroads: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Meredith March Against Fear* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2014); *King of the Court: Bill Russell and the Basketball Revolution* (University of California Press, 2010); and *Sidney Poitier: Man, Actor, Icon* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Kohar Avakian is Ph.D. candidate in American Studies at Yale University from Worcester, MA. She graduated from Dartmouth College in 2017

with a B.A. in History, modified with Native American Studies. For her doctoral research, Kohar plans to continue her research on racial formation in the Armenian diaspora within the broader contexts of settler colonialism, slavery, and Asian exclusion. Through historical photography and oral history research methods, Kohar strives to explore the palimpsestic histories of her Armenian, Black, and Native ancestors in order to illuminate the intersections of race, migration, and genocide in the United States at large. Kohar recently published the article *Reparations in the Armenian Weekly*.

Levon Brunson is an Armenian, Black American living in Newton, Mass. He’s a rising senior at Brown University, studying computer science. After graduation, he intends to pursue a career in software development, with the goal of starting a business of his own. Outside of work, he can be found reading and writing about contemporary issues, and in his free time, he enjoys photography, playing basketball, and practicing the guitar. Levon recently published a deeply personal essay *Black Kochari* in the *Armenian Weekly*. He has also published a three-part series in Medium featuring pieces entitled *The Meaning of Protest*, *A Better Future* and *Why George Floyd’s Death Matters* (which was republished in the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*).

Anaïs DerSimonian is a writer and filmmaker interested in the relationship between culture, media and education. Anaïs is a Clark University Alumna (’17), who studied Culture Studies and Screen Studies with an emphasis on education. She has produced various documentary and narrative projects, including a profile on an NGO in Yerevan, Armenia that provides micro-loans to cottage industries and entrepreneurs based in rural regions to help create jobs, self-sufficiency and to stimulate the post-Soviet economy. Besides filmmaking, Anaïs enjoys reading good fiction and watching sketch and stand-up comedy. Anaïs currently works at the cannabis start-up Manna Molecular Sciences, where she uses her creative background to move the company forward. She is a regular contributor to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, with one of her pieces “Armenians Should Care About Black Lives Matter.”

Carene Mekertichyan is an actress, writer, singer, educator and proud Angelena. She received her training from Dartmouth College and the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA). She explores her activism through storytelling and works to empower young voices as a teaching artist. She has performed with numerous theater companies and currently serves as Independent Shakespeare Company’s Artistic Associate for Social Justice. Her plays have been produced at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, MeetCute LA, and Sacred Fools’ We the People Theater Action.

The virtual forum will be held on Monday, July 20, at 7 p.m. ET. Register via Zoom or watch on Facebook Live. The public is encouraged to attend and to participate in the discussion by submitting written questions and comments to the organizers and panelists.

To co-sponsor this event, contact the organizers at [zoravik@gmail.com](mailto:zoravik@gmail.com). The list of co-sponsors will be updated regularly.

Zoravik (“in solidarity”) is a Boston-based Armenian activist collective that promotes new avenues for political and grassroots organizing and project-based engagement for progressives. Formed in the wake of the Velvet Revolution, the group seeks to mobilize the political, cultural, and social institutions of the diaspora to support and encourage transformative efforts in Armenian communities worldwide. For more information, visit [www.facebook.com/zoravik](https://www.facebook.com/zoravik) or email [zoravik@gmail.com](mailto:zoravik@gmail.com).

## Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.

### Dr. Nubar Berberian Annual 2020 Awards

Dr. Nubar Berberian, intellectual, journalist, activist and editor of many ADL daily newspapers for more than 50 years passed away at the age of 94 in November 23, 2016. In his Will, Dr. Berberian directed his Trust Fund managers to appropriate awards every year to college students of Armenian descent worldwide who major in either International Law or Political Science.

#### ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Eligible recipients are college students of Armenian descent who major in either International Law or Political Science.
- 2) Applicant must be enrolled in a full-time graduate program in a fully accredited college or university in the world.
- 3) Applicant must provide all of the information requested on the application form.
- 4) Applicant must submit a copy of his or her most recent college transcript.
- 5) Applicant is to include a small head and shoulders self-portrait.
- 6) Application could be received by requesting from [tcadirector@aol.com](mailto:tcadirector@aol.com).
- 7) Applicants should submit applications electronically (via email) to: [tcadirector@aol.com](mailto:tcadirector@aol.com), The Paper submission will be accepted by the deadline at:

Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.  
Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund  
755 Mt. Auburn Street  
Watertown, MA 02472  
(Electronic application is preferred.)

- 8) The deadline of receiving the applications is **September 15, 2020**.
- 9) The administrators and managers of the fund will vote the qualified winners in **October, 2020** based on the merits of each applicant.
- 10) The winner or winners will receive their awards in **November, 2020**
- 11) Winning applicants are not eligible to apply again.
- 12) This announcement is published in Armenian, English, French and Spanish.

Watertown, MA, July 15, 2020

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# California Assembly Member Adrin Nazarian Motivated By Armenian Experience to Promote Equity

EXPERIENCE, from page 7

Nazarian observed, “Those are the influences that shape you and shape the way you approach things. That is why if you look at some of the bills I have authored or coauthored, or some of the budget ‘asks’, they are very much focused towards equity and parity. I am a firm believer in opportunity. I think that if I had not received some of the opportunities, and a helping hand and support, there is no way I would have been here.”

This background of repeatedly fleeing upheavals motivated him to go into politics. He said, “Part of the reasons I ran for office was I wanted to tell my kids that you are a shareholder in California. This is where our home is. This is where we are going to stay. We are not passersby anymore. You are not going to leave in another 50 years, even if there is a revolution—though it feels really strange these days. You are a part owner of this and you have got to work to make it better.”

Nazarian graduated Holy Martyrs Ferrahian High School in Encino in 1991 and then earned a bachelor’s degree in economics in 1996 from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). After college, he received a Coro Fellowship in Public Affairs and then from 1997 to 1999 served as an aide to Congressman Brad Sherman (D-CA). Governor Gray Davis appointed Nazarian in 1999 as Special Assistant to the California Trade and Commerce Agency, where, among other things, he helped set up a memorandum of understanding on the creation of a Californian trade office in Armenia.

His next position was as Los Angeles City Council deputy from 2001 to 2004. Before his election as assemblymember in 2012, Nazarian served as Chief of Staff to Paul Krekorian when the latter was Assistant Majority Leader in the California State Legislature, from 2006, and as Los Angeles Councilmember since 2010.

## Armenians in California Politics

Nazarian explained that he initially planned to go to law school in order to prepare for some kind of public interest work. While he was working for Sherman, he began to get a lot of calls from nearby Armenian residents asking for help with visas. He asked them, why are you not calling your own representative, and they would reply, because our representative’s office would not return our calls, plus we heard there was a young Armenian man who has been helping people.

Nazarian found out that the representative was Republican James Rogan, whose Congressional district may have included one of the largest numbers of Armenians in the US.

Several Armenians, he said, got together to discuss the situation and decided to run a campaign for an Armenian for Glendale City Council as a first step to preparing a candidate to challenge Rogan. After they succeeded in getting Rafi Manoukian on the City Council in 1999, Nazarian said they thought to have attorney Paul Krekorian run against Rogan.

US national political developments interfered, because Rogan had become a House manager in the impeachment trial of President Bill Clinton and that in turn led to national efforts to identify and support a candidate against the latter, which turned out to be Adam Schiff. Krekorian instead ran for State Assembly but lost. Nazarian said, “Fortunately, we learned a lot from that loss and we were able to come back and win that seat



Adrin Nazarian being sworn into office in December, 2018

six years later.”

Who was part of that initial group of Armenians? “Paul and I have been joined at the hip and have been working together for over 20 years...When I say we, I mean Paul, myself, our consultant, who is Eric Hacobian [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWrRNfrfIB4] (who has been both my consultant as well as Paul’s), and a young group of Armenian activists who are now in their 30s and 40s, and have all become chiefs of staff or are holding different political positions.”

What they shared, Nazarian said, was the idea that it was not enough to campaign one time. Armenians had to work their way through the process, becoming staffers, and then political direc-

tors of unions, major corporations or other organizations, lobbyists or specialists in specific issues (e.g. environmental or civil rights issues) so that there would be a broad supporting network in place when needed for those directly in political office. He concluded, “So you become part of this long march of becoming embedded in the political system.”

Nazarian, Krekorian and Hacobian thought, said Nazarian, “if we run a campaign and if we energize the young voters, they’ll participate and they’ll come out. When you bring ten people out at least one or two are going to stay on, and they are going to continue in that career or arena. So we started through campaigns to generate a lot of interest.”

Nazarian recalled that there was no Armenian organization committed to voter registration. He said, “Every community organization was too busy doing too many different things, so if they did a drive, it was for a week or a month.” Instead of setting up a new organization just for this purpose, the campaign process itself served as registering method and raised its own financing.

After the 1999 city council win, the 2000 Krekorian loss, in 2001, 2003, and 2005, and in every successive Glendale city council, school board, community college and then city treasurer and clerk race, Nazarian said they successfully expanded the number of Armenians in representative office in Glendale. Beyond this, he said, “My goal was always to further expand and look at how you can integrate Armenians more in the mainstream political arena rather than just in the confines of its own community, a small geographic political community as well.” Speaking to issues people find important would create a constituency base outside of just the Armenian community, he said.

It should be clear that Krekorian and Nazarian were Democrats from the very start but many of the new registrants, Nazarian said, did not want to choose a party, so they were being registered as “declined to state.” Though Armenians are in general a conservative community, over time, without any pushing, more Armenians began to register as Democrats, he observed.

A second important component of the process was after registration to encourage Armenians to vote in large numbers at a higher percentage than the average population. “If Armenian Americans start voting at a rate of 50 percent registration,” he said, “guess what is going to happen? Everyone is going to want to talk to Armenians. That is how you get attention.” This approach became so successful, Nazarian proudly remarked, that the New York Times stated during the race between Rogan and Schiff in 2000 that it all came down to which of the two would be a better advocate for the Armenian community and recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

## Assemblymember Nazarian on Armenian Issues

As an assemblymember, Nazarian has directly accomplished a variety of things for the Armenian community. To increase the momentum of Armenian political involvement, he worked to raise money for the California Armenian Legislative Caucus to create an annual fellowship program for Armenian youth to come for two months and be assigned to an assemblymember’s office or a committee for an internship. This creates a whole new set of opportunities for Armenian-Americans to become embedded in the bureaucracy and American political system.

Every year he has played a leading role in advancing a resolution on the Armenian Genocide and getting other legislators involved. He said, “I usually ask a colleague to introduce it because I want my colleagues to carry the Armenian Genocide resolution. It shouldn’t just be the token Armenian doing it.”

He followed the same principle by creating an essay and visual arts contest to motivate students of all backgrounds to learn more about the Genocide, with the reward of a free trip to Sacramento and \$1000 from the California Armenian Legislative Caucus. However, he said, “I don’t want to just commemorate the Genocide. I want to show that we are better for it and California is better for it. Because of the Genocide, there is a thriving Armenian community that contributes to the arts, literature, science, medicine and politics of California.” So instead of writing directly on the Armenian Genocide, every year the essay contestants must nominate and highlight a notable Armenian-American with a strong connection to California to the California Hall of Fame located in the California Museum of Sacramento.

Nazarian has worked to expand the teaching of the Armenian Genocide in the California state curriculum, building on the initial 1985 bill AB1273. In 2014, a bill Nazarian authored, the Armenian Genocide Education Act (AB1915), was signed into law encouraging the use of Armenian Genocide survivor and witness oral testimony in human rights lessons in California classrooms and professional and resource development for teachers on the Genocide. Nazarian followed up with the California State Board of Education and the Instructional Quality Commission, concerning a new history-social studies curriculum framework, adopted in 2016, which expanded the language and scope of treatment of the Genocide. Nazarian said, “So whether it is in US history, world history or civics, whatever year or grade level it is, there is ample coverage of the

Armenian Genocide and how that shaped that community’s and subsequently that region’s outlook or cultural presence, with a lot of migration to other Middle Eastern countries as well as into the United States.”

Another step against Turkish genocide denial is the Divestment from Turkish Bonds Act (AB1320), introduced and primarily authored by Nazarian, and signed into law in October 2019. It prohibits the boards of the California Public Retirement System (CalPERS) and the California State Teachers’ Retirement System from renewing investments in Turkey, or making any additional or new ones, after federal sanctions are imposed on Turkey. Nazarian said, “it was a labor of love and very difficult. This was something I wanted to work on when I was first elected. When I saw that there was a movement among the UC [University of California] students and they were passing resolutions on campuses to divest any campus investments, I thought this was a good time to use that as a starting place...”

Nazarian admitted that the bar for action, based on federal sanctions, is set pretty high, but pointed out that other things



Adrin Nazarian, at right, recognized Lusy Gradzhyan and Avo Koshkaryan, of Lusy's Mediterranean Cafe and Grill of Van Nuys, as the 46th Assembly District Small Business of the Year (Sheraton Grand Hotel, Sacramento, June 16, 2014)

have happened as a consequence. He said that CalPERS instituted a geopolitical risk factor in its decision making, so that forthcoming investment decisions concerning Turkey would be calculated differently than in the past.

On a different topic, Nazarian is a supporter of Armenian charter schools. He was one of the founding members of Ararat Charter School, established in 2010. He also strongly supports the public education system but remarked that until recently despite waves of new immigrants, including Armenians, Israelis, Iranians and Filipinos, to the San Fernando Valley, nothing was being done to cater to their needs and integrate these new populations at the district level. Charter schools, he said, offered an avenue to achieve this.

## General Assembly Work

Nazarian said, “When you are elected to an office like this, you obviously are the voice of your constituency. You represent their interests on the policy issue areas, whether through the legislation you are crafting, or the way you are voting on bills.” Consequently, he said, “I think, first and foremost, the important issue is to listen and to make yourself available.”

You work as a problem solver for constituents. He said: “If my constituents have a problem with the DMV [Department of Motor Vehicles], the Department of Health Care Services or medical-related issues, or if they did not get their cosmetology license, preventing them from getting that job, they can call my office and I will help expedite those issues.

You also regulate and oversee industries, so that they run in the paths and vision set out for them, he said.

Legislatively, Nazarian’s concern for equity, mentioned above, motivated him to formulate a bill on foster youth even in his first term in office. He said, “When you look at all the different constituency bases, you see that this is one group that is one of the most voiceless that there are, and if you don’t speak out for them, hardly anyone else will.” He proposed the expansion of a program which would allow foster youth to stay at UCLA year-round to become immersed in the positive environment, but the bill only got one vote in the policy committee. He said, “There were such entrenched interests; there were organizations working in that arena for so long that they don’t want the funding sources to shift. They don’t want anything to change, even if it is better for the constituency that they are serving.”

In a more successful effort connected to equity, four years ago he developed a bill to give every child when born in California a savings account with at least a nominal amount, while encouraging local jurisdictions and philanthropic organizations, along with parents, to help complement this amount. Nayiri Nahabedian, a member of the Glendale Unified School District’s Board of Education, served as an adviser to Nazarian on this. In





## COMMUNITY NEWS

(OPOTO: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ARMENIA)



Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian, third from right, led a 9-member California legislative delegation to Yerevan (Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex, October 5, 2017;

2019, the California Kids Investment and Development Savings (KIDS) program with universal opt-out enrollment was established through two bills he promoted.

Nazarian was always interested in the elder community, his second main focus. In 15 years, he said, one out of four Californians would be 60 or older, and this “tells you everything else is going to come into question: our level of healthcare service, our education quality, how we are advancing individuals to the workforce so they can provide the services necessary, what we are going to deem essential service providers.” In 2019 he became chair of the Assembly’s Committee on Aging and Long-term Care.

Nazarian felt that “right now we are not doing a great job.” Those taking care of the elderly are being paid the bare minimum.

Nazarian’s third general area of emphasis is infrastructure and he serves on the Assembly’s Committee on Transportation. He said, “For me, infrastructure is critical for the long-term stability and resiliency of the Los Angeles area.” As the car culture capital of the world, Nazarian said that oil companies and the auto industry benefited while a good public transportation system was lacking. Now that real estate is at a premium, he said, “we have to make the hard investment of purchasing properties to build rail.”

In addition to transportation, water is critical, he said, for California, especially when Los Angeles is located in practically a desert region. He said that there was a large underground reservoir of water contaminated over the decades by industry and business, so that it would take some time to clear it up.

Aside from constituent votes, an assemblymember needs financial support to stay in office. Nazarian exclaimed, “Campaigns are ludicrously expensive. It has become so expensive that you really can’t have people who decide to jump in and see what this whole process is about... Who is the political process open to? You either come from supported groups that want to make sure they have their candidate in office, or you have to be independently wealthy, or you have to have the right name or the right heritage or background to reflect an area. Or you just have to work your tail off.”

Nazarian said that as a staffer for 14 years, he benefitted from getting to know a lot of community leaders and overnight had over 100 local endorsements. He did not seek out public office endorsers, he said, because “you don’t need to know or care whether someone from Northern California is endorsing me, but whether someone down the street from you is.”

Though not always dominant, outside money plays a big role. In his first assembly race, a teachers’ association disliked one of his opponents with a lot of money, so they spent around \$400,000 to attack the latter, while three charter school organizations spent over 1.8 million dollars to support his opponent. In this race, Nazarian only got two contributions from Sacramento organizations, while most of the latter either stayed neutral or did not support him. He raised about 60 percent of his money from his electoral district, he estimated, and perhaps 95 percent in all was from the greater Los Angeles area, because of his Armenian supporters and friends. That, he said, “allowed me when I came up here to be very independent. I am a pro-

gressive Democrat, but I had the benefit of also just voting exactly the way I felt would be best to serve my district, and in all honesty, where I want to see California go as well as a state.”

In later races, Nazarian said that various organizations, such as the State Building and Construction Trades Council of California, “when they saw the work that I am doing, and saw that the work that I care about actually ends up benefiting their membership, started supporting me.”

He added that the Assembly committees he serves on also made a difference. For example, when he got onto the Health Committee, he said, “as the various segments of the health industry got better acquainted with me, there was support coming in from places I never thought I would get support.” He said that the pharmaceutical industry has been a very big supporter although on various occasions he voted against its interest.

Why? He responded: “Whether I support them on that one issue or not, they know we can work together on figuring things out on a myriad of other issues. Yes, I will vote for the transparency bill that allows the public to know three months in advance when they want to raise their prices, but at the same time I will speak out against health insurance companies that are superfluously contributing to costlier access to medication, [costs] that the pharmaceuticals themselves did not contribute to.”

Ultimately, Nazarian concluded, “I could either vote up and down with labor or with business, or I could vote for my constituents. When I vote with my constituents, sometimes I am going to vote against labor and sometimes I am going to vote against business. At the end of the day, you end up not belonging necessarily to any one group, but you are being a representative of your constituents.”

Outside money, however, continues to play a big role in American politics. Nazarian said, “Until we have real political campaign contribution reform and make it into public money, so that we are not creating an environment where campaign contributions create a cloud of influence, ... then we are going to continue having these issues and not really trust the system that is contributing to long-term policymaking.”

#### Black Lives Matter

Nazarian said that he viewed the Armenian Genocide not just as an Armenian issue, but as an issue for humanity. The same thing is true for ongoing oppression of blacks in the US. He said, “Martin Luther King [Jr.] said that you have to protect the weakest link, because an injustice in one place is an injustice in every place. Of course we are going to have the issues which we are having now, because we don’t resolve what has happened in the past. This is one of the motivating factors for why I even got involved in politics.”

He continued, “We had the Civil War. We had the civil rights movement 100 years later, but there still has not been resolution, and from that resolution, programs or investments that help create parity between communities to a place where you don’t even have to think about the programs anymore. Every time an upheaval would break out, we would then come up with temporary solutions that would become these benefits to a very small segment of the community rather than an overall benefit

and progress for the entire community, so you have disparities within the black community as well.”

Although Nazarian serves a very diverse electoral community, where whites are around 20-23 percent of the population and Latinos 45 percent, blacks are fairly few, less than 5 percent, according to Nazarian. Nonetheless, his perspective led him as an Armenian to become allied with the black, Latino and Jewish communities. He said, “I always worked in the margins and I tried to find friends in communities where the common denominator was the same, where they felt disenfranchised, where they felt that they were passed up, where they felt they had their own challenges.” He added, “That is also when I realized the importance of relationships and being able to reach into different communities, establishing that trust so that when they ask me for something I also can help them with those issues.”

He went on to say that he hoped this movement will have staying power, because it is getting a lot of young voters engaged, and that they will begin to work to improve things within the existing political system, though entrenched interests will fiercely fight to keep things the way they are.

Nazarian on the one hand pointed out that the fact that Los Angeles city had a large police capacity allowed it to stop outbreaks of violence and plundering during the protests, unlike places like Santa Monica and West Hollywood. However, he questioned the need for use of rubber bullets and tear gas, saying, “We are doing things that even the UN convention does not allow or advocates against.”

Nazarian supported some of the contemporary demands for police defunding, declaring, “I think there are a lot of misnomers and lack of communication on the issue. If you were to really explain what it means, there are a lot of aspects of it that make sense. I think it needs to be implemented over time.” He noted that in Los Angeles police forces had been continually bulked up into paramilitary units. Furthermore, he said that since he has been in office, the legislature has rolled back a lot of the sentencing enhancements that had been passed in the 1980s and 1990s.

He said, “You look at the investments California has made in the last 20 years. We have built 20 prisons. We only built one UC campus. Which is a better investment? Providing more opportunity for investment and research and potential economic flourishing because you are producing kids who are going off and doing research and analytics? Or do you want to put people in prison and pay upwards of \$80,000 a year to house them without rehabilitating them? To me, these things are not even a conservative or liberal issue. It is a matter of what you want your society to look like.”

He also said he has worked on bills on gang database related issues (e.g. AB829 in 2015-16) which would allow a better means to contest wrongful designations as well as not to treat less serious violations in the same manner as graver crimes.

While he supported much of the current movement for change, he also said that when violence accompanied the protests, “I am extremely sympathetic to the businesses that lost their life’s investment. What hurts me most about this is that usually it is the common denominator people who usually end up suffering the most.”





COMMUNITY NEWS



Discussion Takes on Armenian Heritage and Need for Global Understanding of Race and Culture

RACE, from page 7

Rothberg elaborated on the theme of his book, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*, arguing that the categories of victim, perpetrator and bystander can only give an incomplete account of a person’s connection to injustices past and present. In subtle and structural ways, he suggested, the consequences of injustice filter throughout a society and time; even those that may feel no personal or group involvement as a perpetrator can still be implicated in a prevailing system of inequity.

“Acts of injustice,” he explained, “especially acts of racial injustice, but also gender violence, gun violence, effects of climate change, exploitation of workers, colonial violence – all these forms of violence – are only possible because a large group of implicated subjects stands behind a much smaller group of direct perpetrators or agents of violence; so what I mean by implicated subject are those of us who enable, perpetuate, inherit and benefit from both historical and contemporary injustice without directly perpetrating those injustices.” Echoing Theriault’s sentiments, he related this both to the broader contemporary American scene and the experience of Armenians and Jews who “have inherited legacies of victimization, suffering, violence, and genocide” by recognizing that “we are today implicated subjects; we are responsible

for the kind of violence and racism that are affecting other people.”

Kohar Avakian, who is an Armenian, Black and Nipmuc scholar, offered insights from her ongoing doctoral study of racial formation in the Armenian diaspora, detailing legal constructs and court decisions that facilitated racial and socioeconomic inclusion for some while perpetuating barriers for others in Worcester. She brought to light the differentiated experience of Armenians, other Asians, Blacks and Worcester’s dispossessed indigenous Nipmuc population of which she is a descendant. To grasp the nuanced dynamics of systematic racism, the emerging scholar advised viewers to consult the works of academic titans including Angela Davis, Tony Morison, Alice Walker, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Kimberle Krenshaw, and Saidiya Hartman. Her plea to viewers was to look at questions of Armenian identity in new ways and from novel perspectives, including the “broader contexts of settler colonialism, slavery, and Asian exclusion.”

McCalpin’s talk drew on his voluminous research on the Armenian Genocide and the transatlantic trade in Africans. He examined the evolution of systems of oppression, from enslavement to mass incarceration, inflicted upon the Black community. “Black pain is not only for Black people,” he said. “It should be the pain of everyone who loves justice” just as

“the cause for justice for the Armenian Genocide is not just the responsibility of the Armenian people.” His foray into issues of denial, recognition, justice, reparations, and reconciliation established explicit links between Black enslavement in the United States and the genocide of Ottoman Armenians. He focused on levels of culpability and responsibility in maintaining and disestablishing (not reforming) our country’s racist architecture while noting that “white silence gives continued consent to police brutality and racial injustice.” He ended with a quote from author and activist Angela Davis: “In a racist society, it is not enough to be non-racist, you must be anti-racist.”

On the heels of the panel discussion, St. Leon Armenian Church has organized an online seminar for high school students titled “Names, Monuments, and Racism: A Global Perspective”. Prof. Khatchig Mouradian will lead the 4-week course, which explores how rethinking the words we employ, and the monuments we erect in public spaces constitute important steps on the path to confronting racism and injustice. The course will examine case studies from the United States, Armenia, Turkey, Germany, Lebanon, Namibia and Japan. Classes will be held via Zoom on Tuesdays starting July 14 at 7 p.m. Eastern Time. To register on Zoom, go to <https://bit.ly/3g1nVKI>.

White House Mention of Armenian Genocide Receives Media Coverage

MEDIA, from page 1

protests. She stated, “There seems to be a lack of understanding and historical knowledge when the Armenian Genocide Memorial, remembering victims of all crimes against humanity including slavery, is vandalized” (see accompanying video clip on the Mirror website).

Despite the increase in US-Turkish tension in recent years, President Trump and the State Department have studiously avoided using the term Armenian Genocide up until the present, which makes the motivation behind this statement curious.

John Haltiwanger, a senior political reporter for *Business Insider*, sought reactions from both State Department and the White House, and the Embassy of Turkey to Washington, D.C. Haltiwanger wrote that State Department referred him to the White House, which in turn did not respond to his inquiry, while the Embassy of Turkey in Washington, D.C. called McEnany’s statement “an unfortunate slip of the tongue” and concluded “In any case, these expressions cannot be accepted.”

In his July 6 article in the *Business Insider*, Haltiwanger wrote: “The Turkish Embassy falsely stated the ‘allegations on the events of 1915 ... do not rest on any legal or historical facts.’ Advocates for Armenian Americans, however, hailed the White House press secretary’s statement.”

The well-known reporter quoted Bryan Ardouny, the executive director of the Armenian Assembly of America, declaring “We appreciate that the Administration has taken note that the Armenian Genocide memorial in Denver was vandalized and of the need for a better understanding of historical knowl-

edge,” and the Armenian National Committee of America’s comment that McEnany’s statement “could mark the first steps toward “all-of government recognition of the Armenian Genocide in the US.”

Haltiwanger recalled last year’s full recognition of the Armenian Genocide by both chambers of the US Congress. In that context, he related the Armenian community’s active supporter Adam Schiff’s (D-CA) comments. “We cannot pick and choose which crimes against

humanity are convenient to speak about. We cannot cloak our support for human rights in euphemisms. We cannot be cowed into silence by a foreign power,” Schiff had said. The history of the term “genocide” is intrinsically linked to the atrocities committed against the Armenians, he continued.

Trump’s statement on Armenian Remembrance Day this year called it the “Meds Yeghern” instead of using the English word genocide. Last year it referenced Raphael Lemkin, a lawyer of Polish-Jewish origin who coined the term “genocide” while again avoiding directly calling it a genocide.

The Washington Post’s Aaron Blake opined about McEnany’s statement that “President Trump’s close ally, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, may not be happy about this

one. After decades of the United States government declining to acknowledge the Armenian genocide because it would alienate Turkey, the White House on Monday invoked the term – albeit indirectly.”

Evaluating US-Turkish relations in the context of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide Blake noted that: “The use of the actual word by McEnany is particularly striking from the Trump administration, though, given that Trump has carved out an especially close relationship with Erdogan. Among other things, Trump withdrew troops from northern Syria, which detractors, including many Republicans, argued allowed Erdogan to slaughter the U.S.-allied Kurds in the region.”

Blake suggested that “The White House will surely argue that McEnany was simply referring to a memorial by its actual name, but even using that name has been a no-go for many years inside the White House.”

On July 8, the White House responded to an inquiry from *Asharez* newspaper that its position on the Armenian Genocide “remains unchanged.”

It is difficult for the public to ascertain whether this step was part of an attempt to pressure Turkey for concessions on some other issue, or to garner Armenian votes in the upcoming November elections by telegraphing some degree of support on the genocide issue.

“THERE SEEMS TO BE A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING AND HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE WHEN THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE MEMORIAL, REMEMBERING VICTIMS OF ALL CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY INCLUDING SLAVERY, IS VANDALIZED”

KAYLEIGH MCENANY  
WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY





# Arts & Living

## Rock Singer Yasar Kurt Finds Armenian Heritage, Gains Enemies

ISTANBUL (newsarium.org) – “Once, while walking through the streets, I bought a compact disc with the music of the great Armenian composer Komitas. I noticed that Komitas pictured on the disc looked like me. I was amazed – why do I look so much like an Armenian if I am a Turk?” singer Yasar Kurt said.

This thought and an inexplicable feeling of comfort in Armenia did not give the rock singer peace of mind even after returning to Turkey. Yasar had previously noticed that his parents were hiding something very important from the history of his ancestors. Now, he knew for sure that something was wrong there.

Demanding from his father to tell the whole truth about the descent of the family, Kurt discovered for himself the most important secret of his life – he is an Armenian.

It turned out that the ancestors of Yasar had lived in Van Province, in the Armenian village of Andzer. In 1915, their large family was massacred. Only a 9-year-old boy survived who would later become known as Ismail. He reached the Black Sea coast on foot where he would be sheltered by good people. This boy was Yasar’s great-grandfather.

Finding out after 40 years that he was not a Turk but an Armenian turned out to be a difficult psychological test for Yashar. As he



Yasar Kurt

himself admits, it took him about two years to recover. But the musician has adequately passed the test.

The decision to become baptized by the Armenian Church was made by Yasar without much thought. Having received a new name after baptism – Arshak – Yasar began to study the history of Armenia and learn the Armenian language.

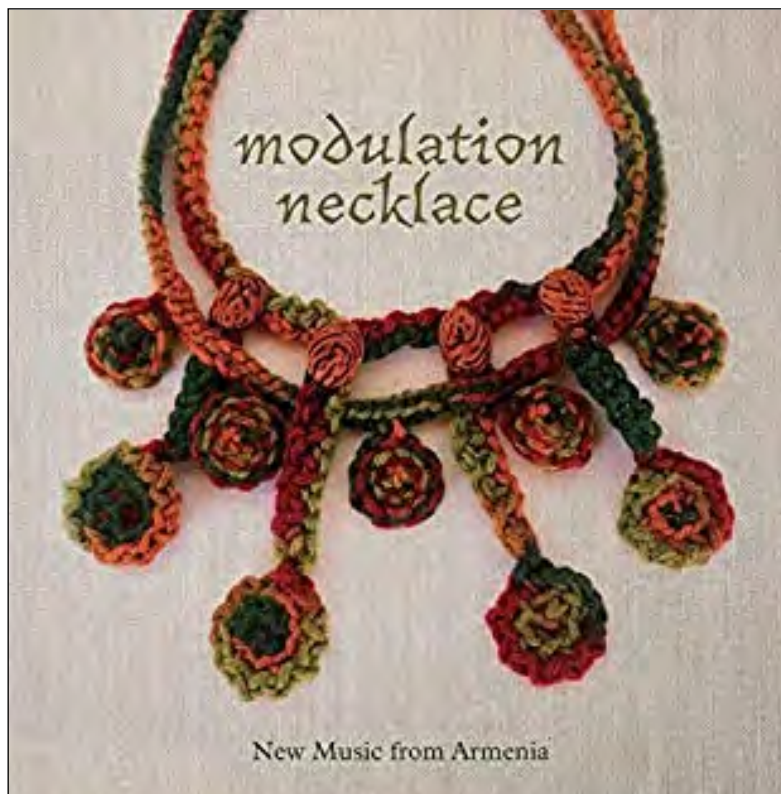
Among Yasar’s friends, many disappeared from his life forever after finding out about his Armenian descent.

“After declaring aloud that I was an Armenian, I gained many enemies. Even some of those whom I considered friends turned away from me.

Some people said: ‘Well, since you are an Armenian, then begone to Armenia!’ It’s hard for me to explain that if I am an Armenian, then I am at home here. The homeland of my ancestors did not become part of this country at their own free will. But, despite this, the Armenians have done so much good for this country that I can safely be proud of my descent,” says Yasar.

In 2009, Yasar Kurt met musician Arto Tunchboyajyan. Together, they created the Yasar project dedicated to the memory of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink assassinated in Turkey in 2007.

“I owe much to great Komitas. If not for him, I probably would not have known that I was an Armenian. Thanks to Komitas, I found myself, found harmony, and restored faith,” says Yasar.



Cover of “Modulation Necklace”

## Violinist Movses Pogossian Pulls Together a Stunning, Uneasy Album of New Armenian Classical Music

NEW YORK (*New York Music Daily*) – It’s astonishing how influential Armenian music has been, considering how small the country is, not to mention the pre-World War I holocaust there which resulted in the murder of as much as 85 percent of the population and most of its intelligentsia. While Armenian culture has thrived throughout the global diaspora, in the past hundred years the country managed to withstand a stifling Soviet occupation and

emerged with wellspring of new music. Violinist Movses Pogossian’s new album, “Modulation Necklace” – streaming at Bandcamp – celebrates a series of intense, powerful, edgy works by 21st-century composers from throughout the global Armenian community.

Artur Avanesov’s somber, stately, acidically crescendoing *Quasi Harena Maris* begins as a microtonal string quartet played by Pogossian and Ji Eun Hwang, violist Morgan O’Shaughnessey and cellist Niall Ferguson. The composer enters, on piano, with a brood-

ing minimalism as the strings recede to wisps and washes. His fierce block chords shift between dark neoromanticism and unsettled close harmonies, the strings echoing the dichotomy between anthemic intensity and relentless, blustery unease. The sparse, clustering suspense on the way out is chilling. On one hand, there are echoes of the great Danish composer Per Norgard; on the other, this is like nothing you’ve ever heard. What a showstopper to open this album.

The quartet of Avanesov, violinist Varty Manouelian, violist Scott St. John and cellist Antonio Lysy play Ashot Zhrabyan’s *Novelle*. The ache of the string introduction is more visceral here, Avanesov pouncing in as they reach a horrified peak. Hazy atmospherics alternate with bracing swells, together and individually, the pianist punctuating the storm as it passes through and then returns with a marching vengeance. A stabbing, suspiciously petulant insistence peaks out, then the stern strings take over and end with an unexpectedly quiet triumph.

Avanesov, Manouelian and Tyler deliver Michel Petrossian’s *A Fiery Flame*, a *Flaming Fire* with equal parts individual playfulness and a tight cohesiveness, yet one which remains unsettled until a starkly decisive conclusion. It’s an exploration of identity in an increasingly syncretic world. Have we lost a heritage, or are we creating a brand new, more universal one? The answer seems to be yes to both questions.

The UCLA VEM Ensemble: Hwang and O’Shaughnessey with violinist Aiko Richter, cellist Jason Pegis and mezzo-soprano Danielle Segen tackle Artashes see MUSIC, page 16



Violinist Movses Pogossian

## Letters for Peace Publishes 54 Letters Between Youth in Armenia, Azerbaijan

### *Students Articulate Vision for a Peaceful Future*

YEREVAN, ARMENIA & BAKU, AZERBAIJAN – Letters for Peace (LFP), a project at the intersection of creative writing and conflict transformation, announces the publication of its full catalogue of letters exchanged between Armenian and Azerbaijani youth. A total of 54 letters – available in English, Armenian, and Azerbaijani – can now be accessed on the website [www.lettersforpeace.org](http://www.lettersforpeace.org), and soon in a physical book published by Zangak Publishing House.

Participants in Yerevan and Baku wrote letters after a series of two-week workshops – two in the summer of 2018, and four in the summer of 2019 – involving guest lecturers, site visits, and exercises. Through writing and dialogue, LFP participants explored the possibilities for peacefully transforming the protracted conflict over Nagorny Karabakh. For most participants, LFP marked the first opportunity to have an extended dialogue with a citizen on the other side of the closed border.

“Although I was a kid at the time, I remember the war, the dark and cold years,” wrote Tatul, an Armenian participant from a border village in the northeastern Lori region. “Despite all this, I don’t consider you an enemy, but a like-minded person, and from now on, without any preconditions, without seeking the guilty ones, will seek only peace.”

Letters for Peace belonged to a cohort of projects made possible by the ‘Peacebuilding through Capacity Enhancement and Civic Engagement’ (PeaCE) programme funded by the European Union under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP). Eurasia Partnership Foundation in Armenia (EPF-Armenia), Eurasia Partnership Foundation in Azerbaijan (EPF-Azerbaijan) through Caucasus Research Resource Centre in Georgia (CRRC-Georgia), and International Alert (IA) implemented the PeaCE programme since January 2017. The duration of the PeaCE program was 36 months.

The PeaCE program aimed to re-engage Armenians and Azerbaijanis from geographic areas affected by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in peacebuilding activities, as well as revive the peacebuilding process within and between these societies. The PeaCE programme expected that interested civil society actors and grassroots would be able to contribute to bridging the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict divide via implementing innovative in-country, bilateral or multilateral peacebuilding initiatives. Letters for Peace represented one of those initiatives.

“We must think about future generations,” wrote Zulfiyya, an LFP participant from Baku. “I can empathize and understand the hardships of people who lost their relatives. Exactly for that reason we must stop the fighting...We are stronger together!”

The limited edition physical books will be kept in various libraries and institutions in the Caucasus, Middle East, Europe, and North America.

The Letters for Peace pilot project was made possible with support by the EU-funded ‘Peacebuilding through Capacity Enhancement and Civic Engagement’ (PeaCE) programme and Davis Projects for Peace. Additional institutional support was provided by Columbia University School of the Arts, American University of Armenia Center for Creative Writing, Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation, Impact Hub Yerevan, International House New York, AGBU Armenia, and a variety of partners in Azerbaijan.





# Diasporalogue

## English Version

Reviewed by Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

History often comes down to us in the form of memorized acts and dates or else completely fictionalized as literary discourse. So it's a pleasant change to read a series of biographical dialogues between two incisive and successful members of the Armenian diaspora. Serge Avédikian and Tigrane Yégavian have both made their mark in French and French-Armenian circles, the first as a filmmaker and actor ("Paradjanov," "We Drank from the Same Water"), the latter as a journalist and author of several books. (*In the Shadow of a Sacred Mountain, Mission*). In many ways their work is notable not only for its objective content but also for its ability to have mixed the French and the Armenian contexts and cultures with their own biographical journeys.

Much of what Avédikian and Yégavian discuss in the present volume is in a sense old hat — double allegiances, double cultures, double (sometimes triple) languages — but the personal stories that they interject here render these themes interesting again and gives them new blood. We learn for example that Yégavian's father ran the Maison de Étudiants Français in the Cité Universitaire in Paris and moved to Lisbon to work for the Gulbenkian Foundation after a bomb exploded in his father's office, a reaction it seems to recent ASALA bombings and the fact that the Cité housed a number of known ASALA members. Avédikian was born in Soviet Armenia to parents who had repatriated from France during the great reverse migration of 1946-47 known as the *nerkaght* or return before the family later returned to France.

To me the best parts of this book recount specifically biographical details, as when Avédikian recalls his life in as a child in Armenia: "Yes, I was the son of a repatriated foreigner; that is to say, they called me 'François' to mark this fact, or sometimes, in a more vulgar way, *akhpari d'gha*, 'son of a brother,' (the word 'brother' was said with the accent of Armenians coming from outside, from diaspora, to mark the difference). We lived in a semi-basement of a building and the passersby saw what was going on in our apartment. My mother and her girlfriends smoked while drinking coffee, a tradition that is more occidental than oriental." (p30)

Fascinating as well is the role that books and culture played for both: the *Comte de Monte Cristo* which Avédikian's dad read to him as a child stands out, while in Yégavian's case his formative years at the Lycée Français de Lisbonne provided a continuation of his own French identity and culture. *Diasporalogues* opens with a well-known quote from Noghos Sarafian about being thrown out into the sea of world affairs as an Armenian and learning to survive: and many of the scenes that Avédikian describes about his father's existence in Marseille and the factories that Armenians worked in will echo in a welcome way scenes from Sarafian's *Bois de Vincennes*, for example.

The book is divided into four parts in which Yégavian and Avédikian broach Armenian and Soviet history; Ottoman and Soviet legacies, as well as the meaning and ways of existing in diaspora at the turn of the 21st century. As in some other parts of the book, Part One ("The France of Our Dreams, The Countries of Our Childhood") displays a tendency to ramble and to pat oneself on the back.

Part Two "Our Unreal Armenians" is an intellectual dialogue on Armenian identity that will appeal to those vested in issues of identity and dual belongings. The most interesting and rich of the four parts, "Part 3: Language and Transmission," discusses cultural transmission in general; the fourth part on Turkish-Armenian relations seems the most incomplete.

At one point Yégavian declares something that Armenians everywhere will recognize and which may summarize one of the main arguments of the book, i.e. that in different ways Armenians have been unable to integrate their culture into the mainstream, in the way that perhaps Jews have done in the American and European contexts. For example: "I don't want to make comparisons with other diasporas, but the fact of not mastering the linguistic tool, the fact of not being sufficiently integrated in the spheres, the Armenian and the French spheres, is at the root of the situation in which we are today. To me, the mistake was in having wanted to make us believe that this language couldn't be anything but 'maternal'. A regrettable error for which to this day we pay the price." (p114)

English translation issues pervade the text, as in the following passage which mixes up verb tenses and vocabulary, but overall it is an easy enough if sometimes grating read: "We spoke French, which is my mother tongue, while cultivating my Armenian origins. Being named Tigrane (probably the only one in Portugal) is more than a matter of an identity card... Portuguese is the third identity that is imposed, a language exclusively spoken in the

# DIASPORA LOGUE

## ENGLISH VERSION



Essay / Dialogue

Serge  
AVÉDIKIAN



Tigrane  
YÉGAVIAN

### *Diasporalogue: English Version*

By Serge Avédikian and Tigrane Yégavian (Translated by Karen Jallatyan with editorial assistance by Alec Ekmekji; Marseille: Editions Thaddée, 207 pp.)

preschool." Also many of the arguments presented are tendentious, but presented as a dialogue or Q & A, they become more opinion than factual assertion.

For all that, *Diasporalogues* will be of interest mainly to Francophones and Franco-Armenians and to students of diasporan studies. Its specificity is both its strength and its weakness. As mentioned above, the third section "Language and Transmission" is perhaps the strongest, as it addresses issues that affect Armenians worldwide — namely how to transmit a living culture and language long after the last member of the School of Paris, for example — the last great movement of writers who composed in Western Armenia in the Diaspora — Sarafian himself, passed away in 1972.

Overall *Diasporalogues* is a unique work, an intergenerational as well as inter-artistic text: one generation dialoging with another, journalist and filmmaker, trying to make sense — and ultimately succeeding — in a history (and biographies) uncharacteristically rich in many ways. It's been almost fifty years now since Sarafian's death and yet many of the questions that existed then about Armenian identity persist today...At the end of the text, the authors exhort Armenian Americans and Armenians living in other linguistic contexts to take up their challenge and create their own versions of the present text, new *Diasporalogues*. Let's hope that that this is just a beginning and that other, equally rich dialogues will emerge in the coming years.

## Mega Art Dealer Larry Gagosian Received a PPP loan for Up to \$5M

By Emily Smith

NEW YORK (*New York Post*) — Larry Gagosian, the mega art dealer to the world's wealthy elite, got an early PPP loan for up to \$5 million.

He has 18 galleries worldwide, and usually clears around \$1 billion in sales each year. His clients are a who's who of Hollywood, the jet set and Wall Street elite including Leonardo DiCaprio, David Geffen and billionaire Steve Cohen.

Yet on April 9, Gagosian, based on Madison Avenue, got a \$2 million to \$5 million PPP (Paycheck Protection Program, designed to help small businesses) loan, via JP Morgan, according to data released on the SBA website.

He states he has retained 203 employee jobs. He has also successfully set up an online art sales operation.

Having shuttered his galleries across the globe from Hong Kong to Los Angeles, with some now reopened, Gagosian, 75, has been quarantining at his estate in the Hamptons in an 11,000-square-foot Amagansett house, titled Toad Hall, a modernist masterpiece designed by architect Charles Gwathmey. He is said to have a net worth of \$600 million.

He told Bloomberg in May that the gallery had furloughed part-timers and paid interns, but more tough decisions may be made. "You want to keep your business healthy," he said. "You are stupid if you just pretend that nothing is going on." He added, "Buying art is not a priority even for active collectors," he said. "They have other concerns now."

### Enlarge Image

The biggest challenge is getting the art to the customer, Gagosian said. "It's very difficult to even move a painting, to get a truck, to get someone to do a condition report. All the things the art world takes for granted have become very problematic." However, online sales have been brisk.

Gagosian represents stars such as Urs Fischer, Takashi Murakami, Damien Hirst, Richard Prince and Jeff Koons and handles works from late artists including Basquiat, Francis Bacon, Willem de Kooning and Cy Twombly. His clients include billionaires Steve Cohen, Leonard Lauder, Leon Black, Steve Schwarzman, DiCaprio and Geffen, who calls him "the most important dealer in the world."

Gagosian's art shows and private dinners are always starry events. In May, Adrien

Brody, Diane von Furstenberg and Steve Martin were guests at Gagosian's private dinner at Beverly Hills hot-spot Mr Chow, in celebration of the Andreas Gursky exhibition at the expanded Beverly Hills location of the Gagosian Gallery. Gagosian artfully dubbed it, "The Last Supper."

A Gagosian rep did not get back to us.



Larry Gagosian





ARTS & LIVING

# Gianni Ephrikian: “We Are Proud of Our Armenian Origins and Our Names”

**By Artsvi Bakhchinyan**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

TREVISO/YEREVAN – Italian composer and conductor Gianni Ephrikian has collaborated with numerous artists of all musical genres. He has produced several records on his record label Holly Music. In 2015 and 2016 he received the International Artist of the Year and International Music Producer for instrumental music at the Los Angeles Music Awards. In 2017 he received an award in Las Vegas (the Best of Las Vegas) for instrumental music and in November 2017 again in Hollywood as “Outstanding International Conductor.” In 2019 he won the Film Music Contest with the soundtrack of Slovakian short film “Water for Africa.”

Ephrikian is a grandson of philologist Sukias-Hakob Ephrikian (1873-1952), originally from Akhaltsikhe, in the historic Javakhk region that gave many eminent representatives to the Armenian culture. Sukias Ephrikian was a member of the Mekhitarian Congregation in Venice; his voluminous study *Illustrated Dictionary of the Historic Homeland* remains one of the most important Armenian dictionaries.

He met Italian Laura Zasso, whose grandfather, artist Giuliano Zasso (1833-1889) created some painting on Armenian mythology by order of Mekhitarists. Sukias-Hakob (Giacomo)



Gianni Ephrikian

lived an isolated life in Treviso, far from the Armenians, working in a printing house. This union devoted to Italian culture produced an eminent musicologist, composer and violinist, Angelo-Vahan Ephrikian (1913-1982). In turn,

Angelo Ephrikian and his Venetian wife, Bruna, gave two professionals to Italian art: composer and conductor Gianni Ephrikian and film actress Laura Efrikian.

**Dear Gianni, I was impressed to listen to**

**your music, regardless of your Armenian surname. Is it difficult to establish yourself as a composer in such a musical country as Italy?**

It is quite difficult nowadays to establish oneself with a certain type of music both in Italy and in other countries for various reasons, the most important of which is due to the difficulties with dissemination which is currently very fragmented. Furthermore, to produce such music, a large orchestra is needed, therefore incurring unsustainable costs. Fortunately with the technology of digital libraries, today it is possible to make music at an excellent level.

**For a long time, many musicologists and musicians were worried about the crisis in classical music. How right they are?**

This is a problem that has been around for a long time, but it seems to me that there is an increasing orientation of the general public, all over the world, towards “classical music” and “contemporary classical music.”

**Could you please speak about one of your last projects, the opera “On the Eighth Day”?**

It is a modern opera on which I am still working. The cast includes: a narrator, a symphony orchestra, a small rock band, the choir and a ballet corps. The theme is the path of man, from the beginning, and the damage he has caused socially and ecologically with the sole objective of profit and power, bringing humanity close to an irreversible catastrophe but, in the end, there will be redemption. I have been working on this project for three years, but now I am almost at the end. It is a very expensive production. Now all that remains is to find a producer who will stage it.

**Can we say that your musical skills you have been inherited from you father, conductor Angelo Ephrikian, who is more known as a musician who has rediscovered Vivaldi’s musical heritage?**

Yes, I must say that my father Angelo Ephrikian was my greatest teacher of life and music; unfortunately he passed away very early when I needed him most. When I was a child he was working on the Vivaldian Rediscovery and I grew up immersed in Baroque music and beyond. After studying piano and music theory, I applied myself a lot to the study of harmony and composition (not at the Conservatory) and I started writing for orchestra in the early 1970s.

**Your full name is Gian Claudio Vartan... I assume, it was your grandfather Sukias-Hakob Ephrikian who gave you and your sister Armenian names – Vartan and Gaiané.**

It was my grandfather who chose the names of Vartan for me and Gaiané for my sister Laura. And my father’s Armenian name is Vahan.

**What can you tell about your grandfather? I read he was arrested during World War II. Have you any idea why?**

During the last war my father and mother were partisans in the mountains and my father was inscribed on the list of those who were to be shot by the fascists. When those of the political police came home to arrest him, they did not find him, and then they arrested my grandfather Hakob who, however, was released after a few days.

**When in 1949 your father had given his first concerts in Milano, at a reception given by the Armenian community, said he was proud of his Armenian heritage. What about his son?**

Today both my sister and I we are proud of our Armenian origins and our names. Unfortunately my grandfather did not want to teach my father the Armenian language because he did not want him to feel like a refugee in Italy but to feel Italian while never denying his origins; therefore we grandchildren consequently have never been able to learn the Armenian language.

**Do you know about Armenian music?**

It is generally a beautiful music, full of pathos and suggestion, with wonderful evocative sounds.

**Have you ever been in Armenia? It will be great to host you with a concert of your works...**

Two or three years ago I wrote the music for “The day of memory” of the Armenian Genocide. I will be very happy, as soon as possible, to come to Armenia and offer you some of my music again!!! Actually it was in my plans to travel to Armenia and I hope to do so as soon as this horrible covid pandemic ends.

## Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian



### Grandma Mary’s Delightful Cake (or Church Delight Cake)

This recipe is featured in the *Collections from the Grapevine Cookbook*, published by the Ladies Society of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church in Fowler, California.

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 1/2 cup raisins
- 2 1/2 cups water
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 1/4 cubes margarine or butter, at room temperature (this equals 3/4 cup)
- 2 eggs, at room temperature
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 3/4 cup flour
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon mace (or nutmeg)\*
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 3/4 cups walnuts, chopped, to taste

**FROSTING:**

- 1/4 cube margarine or butter
- 1/4 cup milk, heated
- 3/4 box powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- Juice of 1/2 lemon

**PREPARATION:**

Wash raisins. In a medium pot, combine water and raisins and cook until the water has been reduced to 1 1/2 cups. Reserve cooked raisins to add later.

Measure into a mixing bowl: the sugar, margarine or butter, eggs, and salt, and blend well together. Measure into a flour sifter: flour, baking soda, cinnamon, and mace; sift together three times. Gradually add sifted mixture into wet mixture. Add the cooled raisin water to this mixture. Add vanilla. Blend well, and stir in walnuts and the 1 1/2 cups cooked raisins. Pour into a large 12” X 17” greased and floured baking sheet. Bake at 300 degrees for 25 minutes.

Frosting: Mix all ingredients in a medium bowl. Spread on warm cake before cutting into squares.

Makes 54 (2”) squares 1/2” thick.

\* Possible mace substitutes include nutmeg, allspice, cinnamon, ginger or pumpkin pie spice.







## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# *I See Wings* Ballad from 'An Armenian Trilogy' Now Available as Film

## *Released in Five Languages*

FARMINGTON HILLS, Mich. — *I See Wings*, the passionate symphonic ballad recorded by Detroit performing artist Kenny Watson and featured in the award-winning documentary "An Armenian Trilogy" has been released on iTunes, Apple Music and Spotify.

The film about American composer Dan Yessian's journey from advertising Hall of Fame music creator to writing his first classical composition in remembrance of the 1915 Armenian Genocide victims, has also now been released with subtitles in French, Arabic, Russian, Spanish and Eastern Armenian on Vimeo. The film was recently released on Amazon. Yessian composed *I See Wings* in collaboration with his longtime songwriting partner David Barrett, who is well known for composing the NCAA Men's Basketball Championship anthem "One Shining Moment". Images, film, and album assets here.

"The song *I See Wings* is a memorial to all souls lost to the atrocities of hate," explained Yessian, who wrote it using thematic elements from the third movement of his classical trilogy. "While the Armenian Genocide happened a century ago, the age-old question of why people harm others due to differences remains too relevant today. My hope is the language of music

can provide some healing."

Kenny Watson studied vocal music education at Wayne State University in Detroit. He performs a variety of styles including classical, jazz, Broadway, and R & B. "The lyrics are about a connection to ancestors and for me that would be to my African heritage," said Watson. "The song is beautiful, moving and calls out to anyone whose relatives have suffered unjustly."

Yessian, who is of Armenian descent, was asked by his priest to write a classical composition to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, when 1.5 million Armenian citizens were massacred by the Turkish Ottoman Empire from 1915-1922. The three movements of the composition, called "An Armenian Trilogy - The Freedom, The Fear and The Faith," were originally written for piano and violin before being fully orchestrated. The documentary follows Yessian from his childhood as a budding clarinet player, to the early years of his business, through the success of his international music company, and then to Armenia where his composition was performed by the world-renowned Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra. The film has been shown at festivals throughout the U.S. and won Best Score, Audience Choice and Exceptional Merit awards. "An Armenian Trilogy - Live in Yerevan," performed by the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra, was recently made



Dan Yessian

available on iTunes, Spotify, and Amazon.

Yessian is the founder of Yessian Music Inc., with offices in Detroit, Los Angeles, New York and Hamburg, Germany. He was inducted into the Adcraft Hall of Fame in 2018 for his contributions to the advertising industry. The company creates TV commercial music for brands such as United Airlines, Ford Motor company,

Macy's, McDonald's, Taco Bell, Nintendo, Disney, Walmart, Toyota and Mercedes-Benz. It has also provided music for many television shows including NBC's "Sunday Night Football," "The Voice" and "America's Got Talent," ESPN's "College Football" and all "Major League Baseball" and other themes and promos on NBC, Disney Channel, HGTV, Lifetime, PBS and CBC. The company provides sounds for movie trailers, video games, theme parks and memorials, including the One World Observatory at the site of the former World Trade Center in New York City; in 2020 Yessian prepared a 360-degree audio experience for Aerosmith's Las Vegas residency.

## New Armenian Classical Music

MUSIC, from page 13

Kartalyan's *Tekeyan Triptych*, a setting of poems on longing and posterity by Vahan Tekeyan, a major 20th century figure. In the liner notes, Segen gets high marks from the ensemble for her Armenian pronunciation; the dynamically shifting music echoes late Debussy, with echoes that range from the baroque to Armenian traditional melodies, most anthemically in the second number.

Saxophonist Katisse Buckingham and percussionist Dustin Donahue's take of Ashot Kartalyan's five-part *Suite for Saxophone and Percussion* shifts from kinetic high/low contrasts, to jaunty bits of vibraphone jazz, a hint of furtive suspense, a beautifully bittersweet ballad and a booming, dancing coda. Avanesov ends the album with seven miniatures from his *Feux Follets* collection, which range from warm neoromanticism, to lingering minimalism and biting Near Eastern modes. If this is typical of what's coming out of the Armenian world now, we need to hear more of it!

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# Calendar

## MASSACHUSETTS

**JULY 25 — Saturday, 9 a.m., "Labyrinth Walking: The Power and Health Benefits of Active Meditation."** Facilitator: Armineh Mirzabegian, M.D., Internal Medicine, Reliant Medical Group, part of OptumCare; UMass Memorial Health Care. Virtual program of Friends of Armenian Heritage Park in collaboration with The Greenway Fitness Program. For link, email [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**AUGUST 22 — Saturday, at 9 a.m. "Labyrinth Walking: Connection between Movement and Wisdom."** Facilitator: Kristin Asadourian, founder, KA Coaching. Virtual program of Friends of Armenian Heritage Park in collaboration with The Greenway Fitness Program. For link, email [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)





## COMMENTARY

## EDITORIAL

# The Drumbeat of War Gets Louder

By Edmond Y. Azadian

While the coronavirus pandemic has stopped normal life, political activities are not similarly frozen; Saudi bombs continue to fall over the misery that is Yemen, military movements have been creating new realities in Libya and Israel is rushing to grab more territory in the West bank, before the anticipated departure of President Donald Trump.

Behind all these developments, Turkey plays a tacit role.

Even more close to home, the flare-up in the Caucasus, is taking place with Turkey's encouragement if not full participation.

The specter of war has been looming over the Caucasus since the collapse of the Soviet Union, even after a ceasefire was signed in May 1994 between Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, the resumption of hostilities is no longer confined to the two parties; the intricate web of political interests and conflicts between those parties manipulates it. Therefore, to trace a spark that would conflagrate a war, one must analyze the interaction of the points in that web.

The former regime in Armenia was subservient to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) message, always repeating the mantra of that group, that the fate of Nagorno Karabakh has no military solution. At the same time, Azeri President Ilham Aliyev would continue spewing bellicose rhetoric without any reprimands from the co-chairs of that body's Minsk Group, tasked with brokering a peace deal in Karabakh.

The administration of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has adopted a more aggressive tone and posture. Just recently, Mane Gevorgyan, the spokesperson of the prime minister, retorted to Aliyev's war rhetoric that if conflict is supposed to be resolved by force, then Karabakh has already settled the issue.

Gen. Norat Ter-Grigoryants, one of the founders of the Armenian Army, said in a popular statement: "Pashinyan has to call Aliyev and tell him that we are sick and tired of your war rhetoric. If you want war, let's start one, on condition that you will not regret it later on."

It is clear that Azerbaijan has been experiencing some domestic turbulence. The crash of the energy market has dented its oil-reliant economy severely and the voice of the political opposition is getting louder.

In addition, Baku is no longer in a position to buy modern military hardware to its heart's content as it used to in the previous era when it was flush with petrodollars.

Another issue however, has left the country with a bloody nose: the conflict between the Absheron and Nakhichevan clans. One manifestation of that political tension was the raid by the security forces of the Foreign Ministry offices, where they arrested one of the closest allies of Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov. Before the attacks on Armenia Monday, rumors flew about the imminent resignation of Mammadyarov, as the voice of Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov echoing Aliyev's belligerent statements had become louder.

Analysts believe that Hasanov's allegiance lies with the Turkish military staff rather than to his own president. That is how President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been pulling the strings of war and peace in the region, particularly when his military forces have been stationed in Nakhichevan.

The presence of Turkish forces in Nakhichevan is not meant only to intimidate Armenia but also to serve as a counterbalance to the Russian military base in Gyumri, while keeping an eye on Iran.

Turkey is waging aggression against Cyprus, Iraq, Syria and now Libya, where its forces are supporting Fayez al-Sarraj's government of National Accord, with Islamic tendencies. Turkey not only used its mercenaries in Libya, but also its own military because the competing government of Gen. Kahlifa Haftar was supported by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Russia and its NATO ally, France. Egypt threatened to intervene militarily to stop Turkey but the latter continued to march and took over Tripoli. The next target is Sirte, a strategic coastal town, with an abundance of oil and gas deposits.

Turkey's pattern of military aggression has alarmed all of its neighbors and adversaries. The US seems to be disinterested in Libyan affairs, but in fact, Turkey has once again assumed the role of the one doing the dirty work of NATO and the West by keeping Russia at bay in Syria and Libya. It has already given a bloody nose to Moscow in both fronts. Washington no longer

considers Russia its main rival on the world stage, given China's rise as a military and economic juggernaut. The Trump administration has been directing its vitriolic rhetoric against Beijing instead.

Turkey has also been inching toward replacing China in the US economic supply chain, as Mr. Trump attempts to wean the US economy from China.

We should not be surprised that the White House announced that it had not changed policy regarding the recognition of the Armenian Genocide after Congress supported the resolution condemning that crime.

The configuration of world and regional forces are undergoing a new realignment. Turkologist Ruben Safrastyan, in Yerevan, said recently that he believes that Turkey no longer is interested in joining the European Union, as it can wield more power by acting independently on the international scene. This changing of gears does not auger well for Armenia.

As these developments were taking place regionally, the war rhetoric was getting louder. Azerbaijan's Hasanov announced that "as defense minister, I have reported to President Aliyev and to the Azerbaijani people that armed forces from our country are ready to perform their duty to liberate the occupied territories."

In his turn, former Minister of Defense of Armenia Vagharshak Harutyunyan announced Armenia's preparedness for war, citing potential targets in the enemy territory. Those targets included the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum oil pipelines. He noted, "The 'golden bullet' will be the Minkchaour dam, which needs surgical precision. If we hit the last target, two thirds of Azerbaijani territory will be inundated with water. God forbid for us to go that far, but with Azerbaijan's unpredictable behavior,

we may have to consider the worst option."

Watching the escalation of the war rhetoric, Russian military commentator Vladimir Yevseyev said that Azerbaijan may wage a war of attrition, by gaining a piece of territory with every act of aggression, as it did in the April 2016 Four Day War.

All these developments have led to the flare-up on July 13 when Azeri forces tried to infiltrate Armenian territory in Tavoush. They were repelled with 17 human losses as well as that of a strategic position.

The fact that the attack was directly against Armenia and not Karabakh has serious political implications. Technically, any

attack on Armenia must invoke the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) treaty obligations, which will draw Russian in the conflict. It is very apparent that the strategy was planned in Ankara to draw Russia into the conflict, in line with Ankara's role to engage Moscow in as many conflicts as possible, at the behest of the West. Thus far, Moscow has refused to take the bait. Armenia's Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan has appealed to the CSTO to come up with a political statement and not necessarily a military response. But Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's office has issued a neutral appeal to both countries, calling for restraint.

Rumors abound that Moscow is strong-arming Azerbaijan to dump President Aliyev before it gets seriously involved with peace efforts.

On the other hand, Turkey, which as an OSCE member is supposed to observe a neutral stance, has voiced its support for Azerbaijan, threatening Armenia. After extending its condolences to Azerbaijan for its losses, Turkey's Foreign Ministry issued a warning against what it called Armenia's "aggressive nationalistic posture."

The statement blames Armenia for getting engaged in adventures "beyond what its forces would allow."

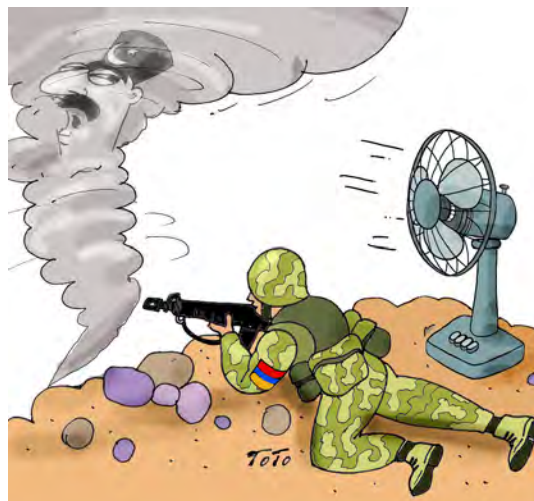
With Turkey's involvement, it is very apparent that this episode goes well beyond the violation of the cease-fire regime to which Armenia adheres; it signals a major escalation in the scope of the war.

Armenia seems to be well prepared to repel any attack by Azerbaijan and carry the war into the enemy's territory. But when Turkey is in the equation, the conflict takes a much more ominous nature.

Armenia's armed forces are ready but the people also must be ready and united. There is a terrifying polarization in Armenia's domestic political life. A former prime minister, Hrant Bagratyan, at a peak of anger, recently stated "if I were Aliyev, I would attack Armenia within a few weeks."

Such imprudent statements encourage the enemy to take advantage of the country's internal divisions.

If the love of the homeland is not enough to unify the people, the threat of war should.



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## COMMENTARY

# The Pashinyan Chapter Must Close



**By Philippe Raffi Kalfayan**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

From the outset, I wanted to make clear that my analysis and opinions are based solely on the defense of principles and are not related to partisan interests.

This point of view has led me to take personal public positions: against the constitutional reform of 2015 in which Serge Sargsyan sought the post of prime minister in early 2018, after serving as president. I launched an international petition in support of the peaceful demonstrations in April 2018 and praised the strategy that allowed then Member of Parliament Nikol Pashinyan, a longtime vocal opponent of the regime, to come to power.

Very early (mid-August 2018), I raised an alarm about the unsuitable revolutionary method used by the new prime minister, supported by an authoritarian and divisive discourse which relied on challenging the rule of law. Since then, I have regularly denounced the repeated attacks on the rule of law and the Constitution. It is in the name of these principles that I consider that the Pashinyan chapter must be closed.

The policy of hatred and division advocated by the prime minister is one that a small country cannot afford for objective reasons, including the outbreak of an intergenerational conflict. Yet, he continues the process of destroying traditional democratic institutions established since independence. The fight against corruption was beneficial for the electoral elections of December 2018. It could have been the basis for a transparent and public questioning, through the establishment of a truth commission, of the unjust enrichment of former members of the government. Pashinyan has made it, on the contrary, a means of extortion, or worse, blackmail, to silence any political opposition. In any event, it has resulted in an autocratic trend.

Pashinyan is hostage to his personal obsessions and is unchecked as he ignores all the constitutional safeguards. He has concentrated all power and has eliminated any opposing voices. A position of power without a system of checks and balances makes one easily blind, deaf and arrogant. It leads to a dangerous position not just for Armenia, but for Armenians.

The assault on the rule of law and its institutions in Armenia is comparable to that of Poland. On May 25, the European Parliament published a draft interim report denouncing unprecedented breaches of the rule of law in a EU country. The report denounced the usurpation of the powers of constitutional revision by the Polish parliament, the use of expedited legislative procedures, and total control of the judiciary by the Executive. Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the former president, rules the majority party at the Dieta (the Polish Parliament). He is the real power behind the government and controls the National Assembly, all layers of Justice, and Public Media.

Political change is the only way to envisage a gradual development of Armenian democracy. However, the prime minister does not seek it, and he does everything in his power to destroy any political opposition on behalf of the “people” without having received a mandate for it. In my last article (<https://mirrorspectator.com/2020/05/11/national-concord-plan-needed-to-save-armenia/>) I called for a pact of national concord, justified by economic and national security threats ahead of us. The prime minister did not care. He crossed the red line, as did Sargsyan when he ran for prime minister after constitutional reform despite contrary signals. This Pashinyan chapter must therefore close.

## The Rule of Unlawfulness and Irresponsibility

The political and social situation in Armenia is appalling. Its leader has divided the country like never before. The rule of law no longer exists, a de facto single-party parliamentary regime (because it controls 2/3 majority) adopts unconstitutional laws to take control of the last institutional power guaranteeing the rule of law, the Judiciary, although no situation occurred to indicate that the justices have misused their offices or hindered judicial reforms.

The next target will be the media. As reported in my last article, the law on the state of emergency has given birth to official restriction of the freedom of information, worthy of the finest pages of Bolshevism. While the law has not been implemented yet, the recent summons of journalists by the National Security Services (SSN) and the official threat of eventually implementing it are signs of tension again, mirroring the nervousness of the Executive.

The government of Armenia anticipated this situation from the start of the COVID-19 crisis: it disseminated among inter-

national institutions a statement for derogation from the rights and freedoms protected respectively by the European Convention on Human Rights and by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights from March 16, 2020 and this exemption is renewed regularly every month at the request of Armenia. It is the only country among the 47 in the Council of Europe to have dared to abrogate media freedom.

Even worse is that the Executive does not assume its responsibilities. The pandemic is progressing in an uncontrolled manner across the country, while the government does not question its point person, Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan and his crisis management strategy. Instead, the blame is put on the “people” and on the political opposition and media sponsored by the opponents. Beyond the absurdity of this accusation (as if opponents care less for their loved ones), the behavior of the “people” is the excuse. The latter’s opinions were to be used in a referendum for the adoption of constitutional amendments, but ultimately the prime minister, who continues to claim his legitimacy on behalf of the people, does not seem to have enough confidence in the loyalty of the very same people to go through with the referendum. The excuse is the pandemic. Proof of this fear to assume responsibility is the example of the Amulsar gold mine: the situation has been in a persistent vegetative state for both environmental protection advocates and investors.

The failure to impose a new framework for the settlement of the Karabakh (Artsakh) negotiation, while diplomatic pressures to resolve the Karabakh conflict are getting more insistent, is not masked by self-serving statements. The excuse this time is easier to spot: Azeri President Ilham Aliyev. Pashinyan is directly calling on the “people” of Azerbaijan to blame Aliyev.

Prime Minister Pashinyan’s approach to “neutralize” former President Robert Kocharyan and the Constitutional Court illustrate to what extent his mode of governance has little to do with legality. Advisory opinions have been requested from the European Court of Human Rights (on the government’s alleged retroactive application of the law aimed at convicting Kocharyan for the attempt to forcibly overthrow the regime) and the Venice Commission (on the legality of the amendments aimed at putting an end to the mandate of some judges of the Constitutional Court). Despite strong pressure from the Armenian government, the conclusions of those consultations are not sufficiently assertive in the way the Armenian government hoped; hence, the latter is taking radical measures even before the Armenian judges in office can use these opinions to form their decisions. This explains the rush by the authorities to have a single party in parliament adopt (it has the quorum necessary to do so) a law with immediate effects to change the composition of the Constitutional Court, depriving the Armenian president of its power to promulgate the law for the occasion, bypassing the control of constitutionality of the said law, and not respecting the due administrative process to notify the concerned justices. Realizing the latter mistake, the Parliament hastily adopted new amendments on June 30, but this time the President indicated to the Parliament Speaker that he will not sign the adopted amendments.

All these unimaginable and open violations of the constitution deepen the crisis and show the mediocrity of the ruling executives. It is an incredibly humiliating situation for Armenia vis-à-vis foreign observers and a weakening of foreign policy, where democracy is a component of Armenia’s diplomatic sales pitch.

Pashinyan has adopted paranoia: he no longer has confidence in anyone, and his circle is narrowing steadily. We are witnessing an incredible turnover among the department heads, ministers, Army staff officers and ambassadors. And his cabinet is not spared, either. Nobody knows whether all those executives are sacked because of corruption or because of alleged sympathies towards former ruling circles. The circle of trust is almost reduced to the family, and the latter intervenes more and more in Armenian public life.

Parliamentary democracy no longer exists. The majority party does not accept any challenge or discussion of bills or criticism of the government and they have enough members to adopt any desired law without the participation of minority opposition blocs. The opposition parties have boycotted the Parliament for the laws amending the Constitution and the Parliament has become a notary for the Executive.

There is an open attempt to silence the Prosperous Armenia party (BHK), thanks to legal proceedings initiated first against one of Gagik Tsarukyan’s commercial lieutenants, then against that latter when he dared to demand the resignation of the prime minister. The coincidence of the proceedings has not escaped anyone. Since this is not enough, the prime minister has started threatening all political forces who may be tempted to challenge his power in the future or who criticize his policy in the management of the health crisis.

The Republican Party has been the first target, and more surprisingly the ARF has become the victim of a rant strangely reminiscent of that of President Levon Ter Petrossian 28 years ago, from an era that was thought to be over. Furthermore, the speech reveals inconsistent: the ARF is quoted as being nothing and with no political future, and promised to end up in the dustbin of history, on one hand, but obviously still influential enough to justify an all-out attack.

## The Role of the Diaspora

The diaspora has relapsed into passivity. The same people, cautious at the idea of supporting the peaceful protests against Sargsyan two years ago, are now in the opposite camp: they turn a blind eye to the excesses of Pashinyan. Let’s not talk about those who have a very partisan conception of human rights and freedoms. We can no longer hear them. Others openly express their partiality: the deaths of March 1, 2008 would require the conviction and the incarceration of a head of state but the the members of the commandos of “Sasna Tsrer” who killed three police officers would not deserve to be tried and imprisoned.

But the most important element of the analysis lies elsewhere. The Armenian nation is attacked on several fronts by Turkey as never before. These threats are serious because Turkey operates in freewheeling manner, without brakes. Its neo-Ottoman ambitions are unsurprisingly verified. Turkey has managed to impose its will on both the United States and Russia, after having humiliated Europe and NATO. It intervenes militarily in several countries in defiance of international law (it is not the only country in this case). The Kurds are the first victims of this approach.

Regarding the treatment of Armenians, the strategy is twofold. First, Turkey intends to intensify its official activities against the international recognition campaigns of the Armenian Genocide in order to improve its image. The recent announcement of a new operative structure for this purpose is nothing new. Such structures have existed since the 1960s, often in discreet or even secret form. What is new, however, is the institutionalization of the structure and the mobilization of substantial academic and legal resources for its operation.

The second front is that of Karabakh. Turkish support for Azerbaijan has taken on a new tone, in line with its policy of military intervention and its desire for political unity with the Turkish peoples of Central Asia. Turkey has made it clear that if Azerbaijan takes military action to regain its claimed territory, then Turkey will support it. The proven links between Turkey and certain branches of Muslim fundamentalism, including certain jihadist groups (the new leader of Daesh is Turkmen), may pose serious risks.

Hence we come to the link with the internal situation of Armenia. It is trivial to say that the internal division weakens the diplomatic and military defense of Armenia. What the diaspora does not see or refuses to see, in particular when it relates to its structures acting for Armenian affairs (recognition of the Genocide, penalization of Genocide denial, independence of Artsakh, etc.) is that all these actions will never succeed without the Armenian state and its diplomacy acting in unison and in communion with the diaspora. Today, this consciousness and awareness are not yet a reality, neither in Armenia nor in the diaspora. The current accepted scope of the Armenian Cause by the Armenian State is limited to support for diplomatic action in favor of international recognition of the Genocide. It is not specific to Pashinyan, but nothing changed for the better since he came to power.

I have advocated since the beginning of the 2010s a radical change of strategy concerning the Armenian Cause. There is no doubt in my mind that the resolution of certain components of the Armenian Cause, in particular the question of collective reparations for the Armenian Genocide and the settlement of dispute between Turkey and the Armenians, relies exclusively upon the Republic of Armenia. There is no solution without the leadership and active participation of the Armenian state in the resolution of these problems. Turkey and its supporters clearly agree with this viewpoint.

Contrary to popular belief, the diaspora is less essential for the resolution of these questions but more useful for the institutional and economic strengthening of the Armenian State, in particular through its representative or lobbying structures. The diaspora is a unique asset that very few states possess. One fact is certain: the fate of these two entities is mutually dependent.

That is why I consider it a priority to solve the domestic political crisis and consolidate the state around a pan-Armenian policy. The more time elapses, the more chances for reparation claims vanish. For two years there has been no discussion with the diaspora about all those strategic issues and we must deduce from this that there is no interest. The only campaigning relates to the call upon the diaspora to provide economic and financial support to Armenia, but without any trade-offs on the political plane. This is the retrograde policy of old times.

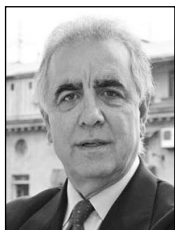
A recent editorial in a French Armenian online publication wonders whether the diaspora should interfere in the political life of the Republic of Armenia. The partiality of the reasoning proved that, by failing to tackle this question globally, the intention is precisely to prevent voices speaking for or against Pashinyan. Meanwhile, an earlier editorial in the same paper unhesitatingly advocated the pursuit of the revolution!

Considering the interdependent fate of Armenia and the diaspora, we need to make sure the rule of law governs Armenia, regardless of whoever or whichever party is in power, since the advancement of major issues relating to the Armenian question depends on the will and policy of the Armenian State. I propose that specific duties are conferred upon the diaspora to intervene in Armenia’s domestic politics to put an end to this self-destructive situation, which at the same time paralyzes pan-Armenian affairs.





## COMMENTARY



## My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Turkish Scholars Acknowledge Armenian Genocide on TV Program

I just found a video in which two Turkish scholars are advocating for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Republic of Turkey. The discussion took place in 2015 on the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The conversation between Erdogan Aydin and Aydin Chubukchu is in Turkish with English subtitles on the video. The name of the one hour and 37 minute-long program is “Tower of Babel” (“Babil Kulesi”). The title of this particular segment was “Facing the Genocide.”

The unnamed Turkish moderator started the program with the following questions: “What really happened in 1915? What people lived through? Was it a genocide? Was it a deportation?”

Here are excerpts from that discussion:

Erdogan Aydin: “Let’s remember that the deportation in 1915, when one focuses on the details, means the same thing as the genocide of 1948.... If the deportation is not carried out by the consent of the people who are exiled for their own security – by the way, deportations are not carried out for this [reason]. It is done to enlarge sovereignty of states, punish society, settle others if the land is productive. So, if it is done against the will of the people, if all of them, including women, children and the elderly are sent away, then this is a Crime Against Humanity.”

Moderator: “Davutoglu (former Prime Minister of Turkey) says so. He says, he repeats everywhere that deportation is a Crime Against Humanity. He accepts it as such.”

Aydin Chubukchu: “...But when we examine the articles of the 1948 Genocide Convention, we see that they in fact define this practice....”

Erdogan Aydin: “The documents that historians examine

are not so important. What is important is the way of interpretation of those documents and how a final report would be penned and to serve which policy. The historian is not someone like a physician in a laboratory. History is not definite or closed to interpretation. It cannot be explained by strict cause and effect relations. All those who have studied the documents and made claims until today are already historians. Ultimately, those who will settle the question under the light of facts that historians present are the politicians. Of course, it is political. When it comes to politics, what historians say is not so important. Documents, statistics, laws showing the state practice on the abandoned properties have already showed that the Armenian people have reached the zero point as they had consisted of a large population in this country. Where did this people go? Where did this pedigree go to? The question is so simple. If they were not massacred then what happened to them? They did not vaporize, did they? As very well-known facts show, war and the Russian invasion in the region of Van, Bitlis, etc., until Erzincan were a pretext to exile Armenians from those lands. How? By being deported. Yes, villages were emptied. People, including children on foot, bare and hungry, were forced to walk to Syria. They were deported from Erzurum, Kars, Erzincan and Van to Syria under the transportation conditions of the time. They could not reach [Syria] because, according to the plan, unarmed miserable, naked, hungry civilians, women with their babies, as we see in the photos behind us, were also attacked by gangs along the way. They were robbed on the way, held as captives, massacred. Eventually, only one fourth of the Armenians who were deported from Turkey reached Syria. Three fourths died on the way. Ottoman documents also accept these deaths due to epidemics or assaults, [but] they say they had nothing to do with it. Historical documents are clear. The critical point is how the state politically will handle and what it will infer from them. Historians have already done what they should do. Telegram sent from someone to someone – thousands of documents like this. Thousands of documents are exposed. No secret document remains. If there is any secret document, it is a part of the documents transferred from the Ottoman Empire to Turkey. The documents that prove the genocide by saying ‘massacre them on the roads while deporting’ are being hidden of course. We can never see them. As [Turkish journalist] Veysi Sansozen said yesterday, we demand the evidence of the murder from the murderer. Does he give? No, he does not. It will never show up. Documents that Armenians have are rather based

on testimonies and reports prepared by clergy, foreign diplomats, and journalists. Most of them obviously reflect the entire tragedy. There are photos and films shot at that time despite very limited opportunities. The annihilation of the Armenian people is doubtless. They were annihilated. This is the point.”

Aydin Chubukchu: “Let me add this. This was not done by historians, but by politicians. Cleaning it is also their job. Secondly, as my brother Aydin mentioned, the perpetrators of these kinds of jobs usually delete the documents, use expressions that are not possible to decipher. So, when a felon oppresses, he tries to fabricate a cover for it. In fact, the most important document is the actual and physical eradication of a people from their historical land.”

Erdogan Aydin: “After 100 years have passed from the event, the 100th anniversary of the genocide should be a turning point. This is how world public opinion looks at it. Why couldn’t this question be solved for 100 years? This is a problem. On the other hand, considering Turkey’s foreign policy and its relations with the West and the US, we can talk about cornering Turkey. Undoubtedly, this issue is now a political card. It also has that aspect. But this does not change the fact that Armenians were annihilated. When one says that the French, Germans, the Pope want this [recognition], our domestic public opinion perceives it as if all Christians of the world, all ‘giavours’ [infidels] have united and attacked us. It is obvious that as long as this crime sticks on them, all Turkish governments and the state will have trouble. That part interests the state, but the same thing is also a shame for us and a shame for the Turkish people. We want to get rid of this. Whoever wants this. But we want it. We are all today guilty and responsible for the ignominious murder against the Armenian people. We should feel this. So we want to get rid of this. Undoubtedly, there is another aspect. Facing the genocide is an important chapter of our struggle for democracy. If we defend the ideals of fraternity of peoples and peaceful cohabitation, we should perform our duties retrospectively too. Additionally, the Armenian Question is a topic that continuously nurtures fascism and bigotry. Animosity against Armenians is an essential part of fascist propaganda. Therefore, in the struggle for democracy, this question should be settled; genocide should be recognized to break and bury the arms of fascism, bigotry and chauvinism.”

(Part II to follow next week)

# Time to Remove Monuments to Senator Byrd

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Americans are living through a time of reevaluation concerning the treatment of black Americans and Native Americans, race relations, colonialism and many aspects of history in general. On the popular level, mass movements sometimes have led to the direct action of toppling statues of Confederate leaders or Christopher Columbus, while in other cases official deliberations concluded with local governmental bodies deciding to remove various statues. The legacy of the late Robert Carlyle Byrd (1917-2010), the longest serving senator in US history, has come under renewed focus along with that of many others, and here, Armenians have something to add.

Most infamously, Byrd began his political career in West Virginia as a leader of the Ku Klux Klan, recruiting 150 members to a chapter that he headed. In a 1945 letter to a racist Mississippi senator, he wrote: “Rather I should die a thousand times, and see old Glory trampled in the dirt never to rise again, than to see this beloved land of ours become degraded by race mongrels.” He filibustered against the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and opposed the Civil Rights movement of the time, calling Martin Luther King a “self-seeking rabble rouser.”

Later in his life, Byrd apologized numerous times for his racist actions and ostensibly changed his political views, though some questioned his sincerity and suspected political opportunism. He also changed his positions on international affairs. A supporter of the Vietnam War, Byrd later opposed the contra war in Nicaragua in 1987 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

One thing though did not change.

Throughout his career, Byrd was renowned for bringing federal money to his home state of West Virginia, to the extent that he was called the “king of pork.” He brought around \$4 billion in federal money over some twenty years to his home state, according to Citizens Against Government Waste.

Perhaps similar pragmatic motivations, along with the usual range of Cold War era international politics, that explain his closeness to Turkey. As the president of the Turkish Coalition of America, G. Lincoln McCurdy said in 2010, “With the passing of Senator Byrd, one of the most dedicated public servants this country has ever seen, Turkish Americans have lost a friend and a champion.”

His first Congressional trip overseas included a visit to Turkey in 1955 and Byrd made further visits over the years. In 1978, Byrd pushed through the Senate the repeal of the 3 ½ year old embargo on US military assistance to Turkey. He worked to provide aid for Turkey in 1988 as a US ally with its “vital strategic position for the NATO alliance” and in a late 1990 visit to Turkey declared, “The United States does not have a more loyal, trustworthy and better friend and ally than Turkey.” He even wrote a poem “To the Turkish People” which he read in a goodbye speech at the airport during that visit (Turkey Today, October/November 1990).

In the spring of 2000, he helped launch the Appalachian-Turkish Trade project, which became an official program of the US Commercial Service, designed to create trade and investment relations between Turkey and the 13 Appalachian states.

He called the US reaction to the Turkish parliament refusing to allow the US to use Turkish territory in the 2003 invasion of Iraq intemperate and bitter.

Most significant for Armenians was the key role Byrd played in scuttling a resolution for the

recognition of the Armenian Genocide in 1990. His three-day-long filibuster defeated Senate Joint Resolution 212 despite the backing of Senator Robert Dole. Byrd parroted the line of the Turkish government about the Armenian Genocide when he proclaimed, “We simply do not know for sure what happened.” He said, “This resolution asks the United States Senate to endorse a particular view of these events and to take sides in a historical debate” and worried that the resolution could “damage the stability of democracy in Turkey” as well as relations with the US. In what itself might be considered a racist view of the peoples of the Balkans and the Caucasus, he said, “Our actions on the Senate floor could fan the flames of the politics of yesteryear in the tinderbox known as the Balkans and in the Caucasus at a singularly inappropriate time when ethnic passions have ignited.”

Political scientist Julien Zarifian in a scholarly article speculated about the complex set of reasons that may have led Byrd to take this position. One such rationale is relevant to his racist past concerning African Americans, though difficult to prove: the fear of setting a precedent for the United States in its turn to be subject to demands for genocide recognition and reparations from Native Americans and descendants of slaves.

Whatever Byrd’s motivations, he played the key role in scuttling the resolution and for this and many other supportive acts, ended up a hero to Turkey. The Assembly of Turkish-American Associations, which played an active role in opposing recognition of the Armenian Genocide, awarded Byrd its Distinguished Service Award (a “Gold Medal of Honor”) in May 1990 at its annual convention for his successful fight against the resolution.

He received various other awards later, such as the first Atatürk Peace and Democracy Award of the Atatürk Society of America in May

1995. At the award banquet he declared to his hosts, “Consider me an ally in your mission to infuse Atatürk’s guiding principles more solidly into both our societies and throughout the rest of the world.” After he died, the Turkish Coalition of America created the Robert C. Byrd Memorial Scholarship Program to honor Byrd. Back in West Virginia, Byrd’s name is found throughout the state on everything from schools to buildings to highways he helped fund. Dozens of federally funded projects bear his name. He managed to get a larger-than-life Byrd statue erected in the state capitol while he was still alive, violating state law mandating that government officials cannot be memorialized through such statues until 50 years after their passing.

While West Virginian political leaders have remained silent in general on this issue, a crack in the protective attitude of West Virginians who benefited financially from his largesse or worked with him has emerged recently. Bethany College this June removed Byrd’s name from its health center and its president, Tamara Rodenberg, declared “we recognized as a campus that the name of our Robert C. Byrd Health Center created divisiveness and pain for members of the Bethany community, both past and present.” A petition is underway to remove Byrd’s name from Marshall University, where his name is on the Robert C. Byrd Biotechnology Science Center and the Robert C. Byrd Center for Rural Health, both constructed with federal funding obtained by Byrd. As of July 13, it received 1518 signatures out of its goal of 2,500.

If public monuments and names convey values and meaning, there is sufficient cause to remove Byrd’s name from public monuments and institutions due to his segregationist and racist past that brings dishonor to America. Armenians have additional reason to join their voices to this broad movement.





COMMENTARY

# Turkey’s Test Of Civilization

By Prof. Taner Akçam

Basically, the whole Hagia Sophia affair can be summed up with the phrases “improper” or “a shame.” But I think that the audience whom I am addressing do not possess the cultural delicacy to find these words meaningful. For their sakes, it would better to formulate it in a frank manner that they could more easily understand: the deed that is being performed in regard to Hagia Sophia is a clear show of barbarism.

It is a declaration of a “Turkish lack of culture and destructiveness” to the entire world. And the pairing of President and AK Party leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan with MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli is the political alliance through which this lack of culture and destructiveness has been made manifest.

“But, why?” you may ask. Because with this step it’s being said to the world that “Even though we live in the 21st century, our mentality is still that of 1453. Even now, in the 21st century, we are utterly unconcerned with preserving the cultural heritage of humanity. Among us, there’s no sense of a greater cultural inheritance beyond that which was left to us; we have nothing to contribute to humanity’s cultural treasures. We are unable to create any new cultural value ourselves. We seize the cultural treasures of humanity, we break them and/or we destroy them.”

This is what’s being done. Here, now, in the 21st century, the Hagia Sophia, one of the most significant monuments of human culture will again be “conquered” and turned into a mosque, just like in 1453.

What’s being performed here is an act of cultural vandalism.

One wonders: will this partnership of Erdogan and

## OPINION

Bahçeli understand the reasons that world opinion once held such an utterly negative image of Turkey and the Turks?

The famous 19th century Russian thinker Nikolai Danilevski once divided human societies into “civilization creators” and “civilization destroyers.” He listed the ten greatest unique civilizations in chronological order: Egyptian, Chinese, Ancient Semitic (Assyrian, Babylon, Phoenicia, Chaldea), Indian, Persian, Grecian, Roman, neo-Semitic (Arab), and Germano-Roman (European) and had the following to say about them: “[B]eside these positive... civilizations there have also periodically appeared in the ages of humanity certain transitory actors like the Huns, Mongols, and Turks, whose candles have suddenly flared up and gone out, passing quickly into history. After completing their task of destruction, of assisting in the deaths of moribund civilizations and scattering their remains, they return to their previous insignificance and disappear. We may call them the negative actors of history.”

Not only among the intellectuals, but throughout the West there has been no end of things said about the cultural vandalism of the Turks.

“In the Balkan Peninsula, with his every step, the Turk has trampled underfoot the products of thousands of years of culture.”

“Where ever the Turk sees a tree, he cuts it down”; “The Turks have obliterated cultures at every turn and have not preserved those things of which they have taken possession. They were not a people of culture in a sense whatsoever and have failed to build one on the cultural foundations that they have occupied.”

“The places where the Ottoman has set his foot have not flourished”, the places where the Turk has stepped “have withered and died.” “The Ottoman rulers have done nothing with the places they have conquered other than to raze and destroy, to blight.”

Some sources even mention that the cruelty and mercilessness of the Turks was not only toward foreigners. Turkish rulers “would cruelly strangle and kill their own people if they felt even the slightest trace of suspicion.”[\*]

If we were to repeat these utterances today, would Erdogan and Bahçeli be able to reasonably object?

Just look at the state to which they have brought the country. Almost everyone who has attempted to speak out against the powers that be has been intimidated and suppressed, they’ve been jailed and imprisoned, and none of it has shown any sign of letting up.

There is no one left who hasn’t been cowed into silence, who hasn’t been crushed by the oppressive weight of the state. The cultural heritage that exists on these lands, and beyond that, nature itself, have both been dealt their share of this destruction.

The things that have been done—that are still being done, are the product of nothing less than the unrestrained exercise of power; of a ravenous appetite for destruction.

Indeed, the Erdogan-Bahçeli partnership is only the most recent manifestation of a barbarism and tradition of destruction whose roots run deep in these lands.

The geography of Anatolia today is one of destruction, of ruin; it is filled with thousands of churches and other holy places being used as stables or warehouses.

The Erdogan-Bahçeli partnership (and we can just as easily add Patriotic Party (VP) head Dogu Perinçek) represents this tradition of destruction that has razed Anatolia, that has not only deported and liquidated whole peoples, but also destroyed their cultural heritage and attempted to erase all trace of them.

Today, Turkish vandalism, Turkish destructiveness holds the reins of power as the Erdogan-Bahçeli-Perinçek coalition.

Every Turk must therefore understand that opposing this axis is, at its core, the waging of a war for civilization.

The regime’s imprisonment of the wealthy philanthropist Osman Kavala, who as the founder of the Foundation for Anatolian Culture desires to preserve the cultural heritage and civilization of these lands, is perhaps the most poignant example of the struggle.

What is at stake here is nothing less than whether Turkey will stand the test of civilization.

In the end, civilization will triumph; but those who oppose it may not...

(Taner Akçam is Robert Aram, Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Chair in Armenian Genocide Studies Clark University.)

# Hunters of Armenian Treasures

By Raffi Bedrosyan

The word “talan” has the same meaning in both Turkish and Armenian languages – meaning plunder, pillage or looting. It is a historic fact that the rise and success of the Ottoman Empire was directly linked to the “talan” of the newly conquered territories until the 16th century, and when the Empire could not conquer any more territories the decline started. By the beginning of the 20th century, when almost all of the conquered territories were lost and the Empire was about to fall, the “talan” became internal, going after the possessions and wealth of the two main minorities, the Armenians and the Greeks. In this article, I will try to highlight the still ongoing “talan” today, of the houses and churches left behind by the Armenians, more than one hundred years after the Armenian Genocide. In fact, the “talan” has now become a real industry, equipped with tools of science, technology and social media.

If you google in Turkish ‘treasure hunting in Armenian houses’, you get more than 800,000 hits. If you google in Turkish more specifically ‘what to look for when treasure hunting in Armenian houses,’ you get more than 400,000 hits. Similarly, searching for ‘treasure hunting in Armenian churches’ in Turkish would result in over 700,000 hits, with another 200,000 for ‘treasure signs in Armenian churches’. There are hundreds of instructional YouTube videos or articles which demonstrate what to look for, where to look for in Armenian houses and churches, as well as the significance of Armenian symbols, signs, letters and words which would be clues for hidden treasures left behind by the Armenians. These videos have hits of tens of thousands each. The instructors in the videos have various titles, ranging from professor to archeologist to professional treasure hunter. They invariably state that the trea-

sures are left behind by the Armenians who decided to leave the country during the First World War or shortly thereafter, but some hoped to return at a future date, and that is why they buried their treasures which they could not carry with them. This statement is always uttered in a very normal, matter of fact manner, as if it happens all the time ordinarily, naturally, like the changing of the seasons.

Some of these professional hunters of treasures in Armenian homes and churches appear as guests on talk shows on national television stations. The ‘expert’ shows up with metal detectors to demonstrate how he can locate coins, silver or gold behind a brick or concrete wall, while the television hostess admires him in amazement. The professional hunters sometime give further advice to the viewers not to trust fake treasure hunters who would only swindle and charge exorbitant fees for their services without delivering the goods. Another piece of advice is how to deal with Armenians from Diaspora who come back to Turkey, pretending to be tourists but in fact who have come to retrace their ancestors’ homes and take away the buried treasures. One piece of advice is to bring these Armenians in search of their family treasures to a professional treasure hunter who would facilitate a treasure sharing agreement between the Armenian, the present owner of the house and the treasure hunter himself.

There are hundreds of blogs and forums dedicated to treasure hunting in Armenian homes and churches, where amateur treasure hunters seek advice from so-called experts about a particular Armenian sign, symbol or word. Some of the blogs are in real time with statements like: “I am digging beside the tree in the garden shown on the treasure map, but how deep do I dig before giving up and going to the other tree?”

Years ago, these amateur treasure hunters would come to Istanbul from villages of eastern and southeastern Turkish provinces of Van, Mush, Bitlis, Erzurum, Diyarbakir, Urfa, Antep, Adana, Kayseri or Kars with a piece of paper in their hand. The late Hrant Dink would be the only Armenian name they had heard and they would go find him and ask him to interpret the maps or Armenian symbols on the piece of paper. Hrant used to tell us these people arrived almost daily, in hopes of making a quick buck by finding an Armenian treasure, either buried in their own home, or in an abandoned Armenian church or cemetery nearby. There was even a market for treasure maps, with people buying and selling these maps. Hrant would tell these people: “The real treasure is not buried underground, but it was the people who worked and produced this wealth.” Nowadays, people chat on hundreds of blogs, Facebook or Twitter in search of advice or interpretation of clues.

There were indeed thousands of Armenian homes in eastern

Turkey (western Armenia) which were abandoned in haste when the deportation orders came in 1915. Many families did hope to return to their homes after the war and did bury some of their wealth that they couldn’t carry with them. There were many Turks and Kurds who seized these houses, who would suddenly become wealthy after finding some buried gold and would immediately start buying large tracts of land, many more houses or shops. Stories of this kind, real or imagined, would circulate in many villages, driving people to a frenzy to dig into the walls and floors of their own houses, or in abandoned Armenian houses, churches and cemeteries. Most of the churches left standing after 1915 fell victim to the attacks of the treasure hunters who dug under the foundations, hastening the collapse of the churches, as there is widespread belief that the clergy gets buried under the church floors along with valuable golden crosses.

Here are the links to two of the ‘instructional’ videos explaining the most likely locations in an Armenian or Greek house, as well as in an Armenian church.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rI46SR1BTfA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3WV3SXOn8M>

Even if you don’t understand Turkish, the videos are mostly self-explanatory. The most probable locations are listed as under the hearth, oven or fireplace, under the first or third steps of a staircase, under the door entrance, beside the oldest tree in the garden, in a secret compartment in the ceiling of the living room, in the thick walls under a window, in the stables under the hay storage, in the chimney, in the well or cistern. The second video gives clues on treasure hunting in and around Armenian churches and the significance of Armenian cross signs.

The Turkish state does not officially encourage these activities, but obviously does not deter them, either, as the subject of treasure hunting of Armenian homes is openly and freely discussed in printed media, social media and in talk shows. In fact, when the government decided to demolish a row of 500 historic Armenian houses in Mush to build hundreds of public housing units, it allowed the owners of the Armenian houses as well as other eager applicants to demolish the houses themselves in order to search and find whatever Armenian treasures are hidden in the walls and floors. With tacit approval of local municipalities, permission is given to dig in abandoned Armenian churches and cemeteries, not only by hand, but by construction equipment such as backhoes, drills and even by the use of dynamite.

Genetic science has proven that acquired characteristics eventually result in changes in DNA. After centuries of practicing “talan”, it is safe to say that the urge to continue “talan” is in the DNA of people living in Turkey.