

## COVID Wreaks Havoc on Businesses in Armenia

By Armen Festekjian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN – With now more than 39,000 coronavirus cases and more than 700 deaths according to the Ministry of Public Health of the Republic of Armenia, the country continues to fight to reduce their numbers and restore safety and health through restrictions and other protective measures.

All are required to keep social distancing rules and nearly everyone above the age of 6 is required to wear a mask in public spaces and in vehicles of more than one person. Businesses were allowed to reopen starting May 4, 2020 after the state of emergency announced on March 16, 2020 that required schools, universities, and businesses to close.

Small businesses, cafés, restaurants, and hotels struggle to remain open amidst rising numbers of cases, restrictions on the public, and new safety measures.

“The purchasing power of the Armenian



Best Western Plus Congress Hotel in Yerevan

people has been reduced,” claims Sebouh Mardirossian co-founder of AGROnet (agrodeals.net), a small business connecting Armenian farmers to the hospitality industry. AGROnet received \$300 in government assistance but needed much more. While many businesses were required to close during the initial lockdown starting

March 16, food related organizations remained open. Since the onset of the pandemic, AGROnet has had a 65-percent reduction in sales. Due to the closure of borders with neighboring countries and restrictions on travel, informal importation stopped altogether and formal

see BUSINESSES, page 3

## Turkey and Europe Exchange Diplomatic Salvos Over Eastern Mediterranean Drilling

ATHENS and YEREVAN (Combined Sources) – The diplomatic agencies of Armenia and Turkey have renewed their acrimonious exchange over the weekend after Yerevan voiced support for Greece and Cyprus in their dispute with Ankara over the latter's Mediterranean gas and oil search effort.

“We closely follow the latest developments and naval mobilization in the Aegean

see DRILLING, page 4



Turkish drilling in the Mediterranean

## Songs of Cilicia Celebrated

By Harry Kezelian III

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

DETROIT – The region of Cilicia occupies a unique place in the history of the Armenians, which began after the incursions of the Turks in Asia Minor in the 11th century and the exile of the Armenian nobility. From the time that Baron Roupen I gained a foothold in the mountains near Hadjin in 1080, the area was to become a second homeland for the Armenian people up until the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

see SONGS, page 14



Photo of Misak the butcher, published in the newspaper Tzayn Hayrenyats of Constantinople in 1909 with a caption asking “when will justice be served in his case?”

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Litter atop Mount Ararat

ISTANBUL (Armenpress) – Turkish climbers have littered Mount Ararat at an altitude of 4200 meters to an extent that photos taken in the area appear to show a large pile of trash resembling a landfill.

The Turkish *Sabah* newspaper said in an article that the video from the mountain was posted on social media.

The author of the article mentions how people who litter beaches or picnic parks are called “ignorant,” whereas this pile of trash is caused by professional mountain climbers.

“We are in trouble if even mountain climbers have started to litter the nature,” *Sabah* said, adding that taking an empty juice bottle back during descend shouldn't have been such a difficult thing to do for the climbers.

### Diaspora Commissioner Says Efforts Underway for Syrian COVID Victims

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs Zareh Sinanyan said on August 14 that discussions are underway to understand how they can help Armenians living in Syria in fighting the coronavirus pandemic.

Speaking at a press conference, Sinanyan said Armenians in Syria face not only financial but healthcare problems.

“Indeed, this issue exists and it was raised by our Syrian-Armenian compatriots. We are considering how we can help. The problem concerns medication, the most basic medications have become unavailable [there]. We are now thinking how we can [quickly] help our compatriots,” he said.

### Starmus Festival to Take Place in Armenia In 2021

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenia is expected to become an international center for astronomy, technology, science, music and arts for one week as it is going to host the 6th Starmus International Festival from September 6 to 11, 2021.

The event will be held in Armenia at the initiative of President Armen Sarkissian, with the support of the government of Armenia.

The event is expected to attract thousands.

The Starmus International Festival is an international gathering focused on celebrating astronomy, space exploration, music, art, and allied sciences such as biology and chemistry. It was founded by Garik Israelian, an astronomer at the Institute for Astrophysics in Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain.

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## Young Armenian-American Activists Amplify Armenian Issues through Instagram Posts

By Michelle Mkhlian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES/NEW YORK

– The Armenian community has produced a formidable

social media presence since the tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan reached a new peak on July 12. Armenian organizations, activists, and even meme accounts have taken to their platforms to compensate for the lack of coverage the conflict has received in mainstream American media.

Each of these pamphlet-like Instagram posts uses infographics to highlight a particular issue and provide users with actionable steps they can take to make a difference.

see INSTAGRAM, page 10



## News From Armenia

### Armenia Eases Mask Regulations

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Armenian government is easing the coronavirus restrictions and the mandatory face mask rule is being revised.

Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan, the coronavirus response task force leader and the Superintendent in charge of enforcing the state of emergency restrictions, published on August 14 a decision effective immediately defining the areas where citizens are no longer required to wear face coverings.

Citizens no longer have to wear face coverings in their personal vehicles, at resorts and beaches, in the mountains and forests and similar open areas. However, the mandatory facemask rule in these areas remains in force in the event of visiting historic-cultural sites, pilgrimages, during organized individual or group tours, hiking tours etc.

Other earlier rules are still in force: facemasks are mandatory in open air and enclosed public areas. Children under age 6 and people with respiratory illnesses are now required to wear face coverings.

### Soldiers in Recent Attack to Be Honored

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan has signed a petition asking President Armen Sarkissian to award a group of participants of the recent clashes along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border with the first and second class Order of Combat Cross, as well as to honor captain Ruben Sanamyan with the title of National Hero, Pashinyan wrote on his Facebook page on August 14.

Pashinyan noted that he has presented 71 servicemen for state awards, 16 for first-class Order of The Combat Cross and 55 for second-class Order of The Combat Cross.

Sanamyan is presented to the President for the title of National Hero and Motherland Medal.

“A while ago I had the honor to meet with Sanamyan. This is a real act of appreciation to all the participants of the victorious clashes in Tavush, all the servicemen of the Armenian army, officers and Generals, as well as all our heroes of the past and present, all our martyrs who inspired our present-day heroes with their own example,” Pashinyan wrote.

### New Coronavirus Cluster Reported in Stepanakert

STEPANAKERT (Panorma.am) — A new coronavirus cluster has been found in the capital city of Artsakh Republic, according to the country's Ministry of Healthcare. One new case has been confirmed, while the circle of contacts is being established.

The national virus tally stands at 255, of which 248 have recovered from the disease. The number of active cases is 6. Some 11 people are currently isolated in Artsakh.

One coronavirus patient is in serious condition, while two others are in moderate condition. As many as 8,207 tests have been performed since the disease outbreak.

### Summit of Minds in October

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian has sent a letter to Secretary-General of Commonwealth of Nations Baroness Patricia Scotland, inviting her to participate in the “Armenian Summit of Minds,” scheduled on October 10-11 and dedicated to geopolitics and artificial intelligence.

Sarkissian referred to the “Armenian Summit of Minds” and ATOM (Advanced Tomorrow) presidential initiative.

Among the presidential initiatives aimed at the development of science, technologies and artificial intelligence, President Sarkissian referred to ATOM program, noting that it has already gained interest among global giant technological companies and preliminary cooperation agreements will be signed in the near future with some of them.

## All Eyes on Belarus after Elections

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A leading Armenian political analyst believes that the establishment of democracy in Belarus will be of high significance to Armenia, a member of the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union and Collective Security Treaty Organization that also include Belarus.

In an interview with RFE/RL's Armenian Service (Azatutyun) on August 17 Richard Giragosian, the founding director of the Yerevan-based Regional Studies Center, said that in that case Armenia where a democratic change of government took place in 2018 will no longer feel “alone” in the post-Soviet groupings.

Giragosian thinks that the resignation of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenka is only a matter of time. “It's a question of days and even hours of what time he has left. But I don't think the question is if, but [I think it's] when he will leave power,” the political analyst said.

Hundreds of thousands of protesters have been filling the streets of capital Minsk and other Belarusian cities protesting the official results of the August 9 presidential election that they believe have been rigged in favor of Lukashenka who has ruled Belarus since 1994.

Many observers in Yerevan have been drawing parallels between the unfolding events in Belarus and Armenia's peaceful protests in 2018 that led to the resignation of Serzh Sargsyan, who attempted to extend his rule after completing two five-year presidential terms.

“In a general sense like Armenia's 2018 Velvet Revolution the movement in Belarus is everything except geopolitical. This is not about the European Union, it's not about Russia or the West. It's about a change of government in Belarus like in Armenia,” Giragosian said. “One key difference in what makes Belarus very different from Armenia is that in 2018 former President Serzh Sargsyan in many ways realized that his time had run out. And to his credit, he did not go out fighting. Lukashenka wants to go out with a battle.”

The political analyst also drew some parallels between the crackdown on opposition supporters in Belarus and the crackdown on Armenia's post-election protests in 2018 in which 10 people were killed. “[The] March 1, 2008 [crackdown] was replicated, repeated in Belarus with the overreaction by the security forces using torture, imprisonment of not only demonstrators, but even innocent by-standers,” he said.

Giragosian highlighted several important aspects of democratic change in Belarus for Armenia. “One is that Armenia is no longer vulnerable by being alone. We are no longer the only victory of non-violence and people

power and a democracy [in post-Soviet groupings]. Belarus will hopefully join us. And second, what this also means is that the real loser here is not just Lukashenka, it's [Azerbaijani President Ilham] Aliyev in Baku. Azerbaijan, after events in Belarus, is now much more isolated and vulnerable,” he said.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, the leader of Armenia's 2018 “Velvet Revolution,” sent congratulations to Lukashenka on his disputed reelection hours after Belarus's Central Election Commission announced the preliminary results of the vote on August 10.

Only a handful of world leaders have congratulated Lukashenka on his disputed election win. Among them are Russian President Vladimir Putin and China's leader Xi Jinping. The European Union has said it does not recognize the results, and the United States has expressed deep concern over the election results and the unrest, with President Donald Trump describing the situation unfolding in Belarus as “terrible.”

Pashinyan's move immediately drew criticism from his political opponents and some leading human rights activists who believe that the Armenian leader took a hasty step. Pashinyan himself refused to comment on the criticism, but other officials and pro-government lawmakers have defended his step.

In an interview with RFE/RL's Armenian Service on August 16 Secretary of Armenia's Security Council Armen Grigoryan said that decisions like the one to congratulate Lukashenka are taken on the basis of a “comprehensive risk assessment.”

“Security-related and other major decisions have grounds, they are not born out of thin air,” Grigoryan said. “In general, a complete risk assessment is made, and a decision is taken in the interests of the Republic of Armenia.”

Giragosian also questions the timing of the congratulatory message that Pashinyan sent to Lukashenka.

“My problem and criticism is not necessarily with the message itself, but the timing of the message. It was sent much too quickly and it would have been much smarter for the Armenian government to delay, to wait. Also, to send a message later would be lost in the overwhelming responses of other bigger countries. But we are someone exposed for the hypocrisy of it. In other words, doesn't that message to Lukashenka and that election in particular stand in contradiction to everything that the Armenian government is supposed to stand for? This is my problem. And it wasn't smart diplomatically. What was the rush? It should have and could have been delayed to a more cautious approach,” the political analyst concluded.

“IN A GENERAL SENSE LIKE ARMENIA'S 2018 VELVET REVOLUTION THE MOVEMENT IN BELARUS IS EVERYTHING EXCEPT GEOPOLITICAL.”

## Armenia Ready to Accept Lebanese Repatriates

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The government of Armenia is developing a package of regulations that will enable it to “worthily” receiving repatriates from Lebanon after the August 4 Beirut blast, the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs Zareh Sinanyan said at a news conference on August 14 after returning from the Lebanese capital where he led a delegation to assess the situation.

“We must be able to worthy receive the people who are willing to come to Armenia, live here, become full members of the society, citizens, taxpayers, soldiers, and try to build the homeland we dream about,” Sinanyan said.

Asked whether Armenia is implementing a repatriation policy for the Lebanese-Armenians, Sinanyan noted that he doesn't consider this description to be accurate. He said that in the event of repatriation policy it is the government that is creating the conditions which lead to people willing to return, whereas this isn't the case.

“In this case we are actually in the role of an observer,” he said, noting that the current situation was caused by different accumulating problems in Lebanon.

He pointed out the Lebanese eco-

nomics crisis, the banking sector's paralyzed condition, the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic and the August 4 explosion in Beirut. “And the blast was the last blow. As a result, we have what we have,” Sinanyan said.

In one month, more than 470 Lebanese-Armenians have repatriated to Armenia, Sinanyan said. Of those, 370 arrived on five different flights operated by Middle East Airlines on July 14, July 21, July 28, August 4 and August 11.

Another 101 were airlifted back to Armenia on board the emergency relief planes that delivered humanitarian aid to Beirut after the August 4 explosion.

According to him, Lebanese-Armenians wanted to leave Lebanon as early as 2019. He presented results of a 2019 survey conducted among 521 Lebanese-Armenians, with 58 percent of respondents saying they would leave Lebanon soon. A significant part of them had said they consider moving to Armenia.

“We, as a state, bear responsibility for our citizens. According to the embassy's information, there are 25000 Armenian citizens living in Lebanon, we have responsibility for our compatriots,” Sinanyan said.

Minister of Labor and Social Affairs of Armenia Zaruhi Batoyan added that “Following the Beirut explosion naturally our compatriots in Beirut and particularly the citizens of Armenia would expect the assistance of the Republic of Armenia. Now, when the government has provided first aid to Lebanon, the first steps are done and we must be ready to that if our compatriots living there decide to leave Lebanon for some reasons, they should come to Armenia so that they get new opportunities for living free, happy and prosperous in Armenia.”

The Minister noted that everything must be done so that after they arrive in Armenia, they should not think of moving to other countries like it happened with many Syrian-Armenians.

On August 4, a major explosion in the Port of Beirut sent an immensely powerful shockwave across the Lebanese capital, killing at least 220 people, injuring 7000 and causing massive destruction. Around 300,000 people were left homeless. It resulted in US\$10-15 billion in property damage.

Among the victims are 13 Lebanese-Armenians who died in the blast, and 300 other representatives of the community were injured.





## ARMENIA

# COVID Wreaks Havoc on Businesses in Armenia

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import prices increased. Only containers and big trucks were able to move through.

There was one month where AGROnet needed to have a document to permit transportation. Although there were many downsides to the restrictions on travel, traffic was lighter in Yerevan and deliveries moved faster for farmers.

In addition, wages in the greenhouses have fallen, and it has often been more economical for the vegetables to be thrown out rather than to be delivered to stores and restaurants with lesser prices.

“Farmers are losing their jobs. They have no business and they don’t have other options,” said Mardirossian.

While the prices of food items have remained stable for the general public, the price of food has collapsed for farmers delivering to restaurants. “They are throwing their food away.”

Before the pandemic, Chinese cabbage had been a new item in high demand for some restaurants and burger joints and therefore many farmers are now growing the cabbage. However, now that home cooked meals have become the norm for Armenians, such items that are not popular with home cooks, rather than restaurants, are being thrown out.

“They have to destroy their lands,” Mardirossian said.

Many farmers who are out of business are using this time to cultivate their lands with new crops in preparation for the possible recovery of the market. They hold on to the hope that the economy will start up again.

During the initial lockdown, restaurants and food stores remained open only for delivery, and employee temperatures had to be tested two times per day.

When restaurants opened for customers, all restaurants had to check the temperatures of guests. For some stores however, reports one citizen, “Frankly speaking you can consider the thermometer as a decorative item in the store.”

For food stores such as the Syrian-Armenian VS Food Stuff, there was a steep fall of sales for the duration of lockdown, which recovered afterwards. With already strict sanitary measures in place for food stores, VS Food Stuff sells most packaged products with no direct contact with the food. The only novel measure was to frequently sanitize hands with 70-percent ethanol.

Many restaurants are registered with Menu.am, the Armenian version of home food delivery service.

While DoorDash typically takes a 20-percent commission from restaurants, Menu.am takes 25 percent. Some restaurants can afford the high commission, however Armenians are gen-

ready to take vaccine for himself and his family but is not sure that everyone will agree to get vaccinated once one is created.

“There is big anti vaccine temperament. It’s not ridiculous for Armenians not to take the vaccine. Many people believe it’s a fake pandemic. You don’t see any distancing or masks being worn in the villages of Armenia,” he said.

## From Hotels to Hospitals

During the lockdown, many hotels were converted to hospitals. Best Western Plus Congress Hotel was not forced to be closed by the government and refused to be converted to a hospital for the sake of the health of future guests. The hotel has implemented new procedures of cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting which are strictly followed by all their departments. Hotel staff socially distance, wear masks and gloves, periodically disinfect their hands with hand sanitizers, and also provide guests with individual safety kits which include masks, gloves, and instructions on staying safe amidst the pandemic.

It was noticeable that at the beginning of the lockdown many people were not wearing masks and gloves because they had a skeptical attitude towards the virus, however after restrictions were put in place by the government many people started to use them regularly. Most buildings later have stations that provide masks and gloves which became a requirement to put on to have access to the building.

On March 16, the government prohibited events of more than five persons in attendance, implemented screening and quarantine measures, and restricted entry into Armenia. Many of the hotel’s events were cancelled because of the restrictions in place, however, their solution was to split the number of people for the events by days.

Although the removal of restrictions did not do much to help the hotel rebound completely, the hotel was able to reopen their Accent Restaurant and Bar.

The closure of borders and the restrictions in place until August 12 seriously impacted the hotel and resulted in an obvious lack of tourism and many canceled reservations. Employees impacted by the virus received financial support from the government though there is no information about any additional help from the government. The most devastated part of the business is bookings, as they have no guests from abroad, their usual clients.

In response, the hotel has begun to switch their focus to local guests and create packages specifically for them. While many hotels are closed, Hotel Congress is still active. Their main visitors now are guests at the pool where there



An employee at AGROnet

agency for that works with more than 100 brands. It took a big hit due to the hotels being converted to hospitals.

“There were many banners for giving up property for rent,” reports Sirapi Ghasabyan, CEO of Reezalt Creative Labs. “The whole street was putting them up.”

Reezalt Creative Labs had more than 5-6 hotels as clients that had to leave their agency. Luckily their team is small, consisting only 10 people.

“We are a small business and our amenities have allowed us to keep that distance of 1.5 meters” between co-workers, she said.

Reezalt Creative Labs does not meet with most clients physically but with the ones who need to meet with them in person, they do so as carefully as possible, with no physical contact, while wearing masks and keeping social distance.

The lockdown itself “was complete nonsense because everyone was out,” said Ghasabyan. “It hurt the economy and it didn’t have any effect on the spread of the virus. No one was charging you for not wearing a mask. It was like a 2-month holiday for Armenians.”

She added, “If everyone follows the rules, we can eliminate it.”

Employees must wear masks even in the office reported Ghasabyan, but employees do not wear masks during work time but still keep social distancing and have doors and windows open.

Before the pandemic, Reezalt Creative Labs provided digital advertising for hotels and social media marketing. However, there was a 20-30 percent loss due to lack of service and closure of hotels. For example, they lost contracts with some due to budget cuts of hotels and their conversion to hospitals. Due to the rising of tourism in Yerevan, “there are a lot of businesses that are being opened and a lot of tourists and companies could afford good marketing and good advertisement and now since COVID, they couldn’t afford this marketing.”

However, some clients such as the Fashion Design Chamber of Armenia, joined during the spread of the virus due to the fashion shows

going online rather than being in person. “All fashion shows became online, even London Fashion Week. To increase awareness of what they were doing, Fashion Design Chamber started cooperating with us and used social media to talk about their activities. They had a budget because they got sponsorship from British embassy of Armenia so they could take selective designers,” said Ghasabyan.

As for the closure of borders, “it is not an impact you can easily see,” said Ghasabyan, because lack of rest and proper vacation has a gradual effect on employees.

“Vacationing in Armenia is very expensive. If you want to get some rest, Georgia is the best alternative. Many people could afford traveling there because it’s cheap, but now you can’t even do that. People are tired because of the stress, and it has had an effect on people’s moods which effects business long term.”

The biggest difficulty for Reezalt Creative Labs was organizing jobs online. As for her business during the lockdown, the team was working from home and following the rules. “In our industry, discussion and brain storming is very important,” said Ghasabyan. Doing it online “wasn’t as productive as doing the brain storming together.”

After the lockdown and after transportation started working, they came back to the office. It would have been difficult to have come to the office without transportation and have to pay taxes so employees could come to the office. Nonetheless, during the time transportation was inactive, “you still have to pay for rent, whether you decide to come to the office or not.”

Despite difficulties, Reezalt Creative labs did not have to lay off any employees.

“It was very important for me that everyone keeps their job.” The assistance from the government was small. For every five employees you receive the average of their salaries once monthly. Reezalt received money three months consecutively. “It was really nothing. We are a small business and every single employee has to pay 26-percent income tax. At least they can reduce the income tax.”



Best Western Plus Congress Hotel in Yerevan

erally not fond of the delivery service. Most Armenians prefer to see what they are buying.

“Social life has been harder because everyone is very careful to make contact with others,” reports Mardirossian. Though the pandemic has helped people spend more time with family, there are fears of even stepping in a hospital for a mild illness because of the potential risk at clinics and dentists. While Mardirossian and many others do not shake hands, the younger generation is not so cautious. Mardirossian is

are restrictions implemented by the government. Hotel rooms that are booked are closed for three days subsequently to be deep cleaned and disinfected so that guests can be assured that the hotel is doing its best to protect its guests.

## Reezalt Creative Labs

Located in the city center just 2 kilometers away from Hotel Congress, Reezalt Creative Labs (reezalt.com) is a creative advertising





## INTERNATIONAL

## International News

## European Parliament Group Asks for Expulsion of Azerbaijan

BRUSSELS (Armenpress) — The European Parliament's second-largest political group on August 14 called for Azerbaijan to be "immediately expelled" from the Eastern Partnership. The call came as part of a statement published ahead of an emergency meeting of the European Union's Foreign Affairs Council to discuss the on-going situation in Belarus, the Brussels-based NGO European Friends of Armenia.

Labeling the elections a sham, the statement condemned the subsequent violent crackdown against protestors and honored their bravery. Drawing parallels between the elections in Belarus this month and Azerbaijan six months ago, Vice President of the Socialists and Democrats, Kati Piri MEP said: "We cannot be in partnership with countries where we witness the violent repression of political opposition and civil society. Dictators are the enemies of free societies."

## Former Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Prohibited from Leaving

BAKU (JAM news) — Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Elmar Mammadyarov has been put on the no-fly list in connection with an ongoing criminal investigation into corruption in the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry since April 2020.

Mammadyarov served as minister for 15 years and was considered an influential figure in the country when, unexpectedly, he was dismissed on July 16, 2020.

The dismissal was preceded by an angry statement by President Ilham Aliyev that on July 12, during fighting on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, everyone was at work, except for the minister of foreign affairs.

After Mammadyarov was dismissed, Jeyhun Bayramov was appointed the new foreign minister. This was also a surprise to the public and observers, since Bayramov has no diplomatic experience.

There have been a number of recent arrests concerning activities related to the foreign ministry.

On August 13, the ambassador of Azerbaijan to Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina Eldar Hasanov was arrested and accused of embezzling budget funds.

This arrest was the latest in a series of detentions of officials, including high-ranking officials, which began in December 2019.

## Meeting at Istanbul Patriarchate Addresses Needy Armenian Schools

ISTANBUL (Nor Marmara) — With the new school year starting in less than a month, the question of whether the Armenian schools of Istanbul will reopen is still unclear due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Regardless of this, however, there is another issue at hand — that of needy parishes in need of financial assistance.

This past week, a meeting was held at the Kumkapu Patriarchal Cathedral, with the chairpersons of parishes that operate the schools. The topic was the financial needs of the schools, and the meeting was presided over by Patriarch Sahag II.

Patriarch Sahag opened the meeting by indicating that, in reality, the Patriarchate does not have jurisdiction to intrude on such affairs, and that clergy must be relegated to spiritual issues, but that the gathering had been called because the community needed unity in this difficult period. He further stated that he believed that with equal efforts and good intentions, the problems could be resolved. Indeed, stated the Patriarch, the schools are facing hardships and are in a difficult situation, but it is not true that any schools need be closed or merged at this stage. It is necessary to work together to overcome the situation, he continued, indicating hope that Parish Councils with secure finances will certainly extend a helping hand to needy parishes.

# Pashinyan Rules out Military Solution to Artsakh During Appearance on BBC Program

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan ruled out any military solution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict during an appearance on the BBC news program "HARDTalk" on August 14.

He spoke about his proposed formula for the resolution of the situation.

"Peace can't be achieved through the unilateral actions of Armenia because we will be able to have real peace if Azerbaijan will reciprocate Armenia's efforts. Becoming Prime Minister of Armenia, I proposed a new formula for peace and the formula is the following: Any solution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict should be acceptable for people of Armenia, for people of Nagorno Karabakh and for people of Azerbaijan, and I am first Armenian leader ever saying that any solution of Nagorno Karabakh conflict should be acceptable for the Azerbaijani people too, but unfortunately the Azerbaijani president didn't reciprocate my proposal," Pashinyan said.

Speaking about his "Artsakh is Armenia, period," statement, Pashinyan noted that for many millennia Nagorno Karabakh has been populated with indigenous Armenian people.

"Artsakh name dates back several thousand years. The document of UNSC didn't mention Republic of Armenia or Armed Forces of Armenia, there is written about Nagorno Karabakh Armenians Self Defense forces. The reality is in the moment of this conflict 80-90 percent of population of Nagorno Karabakh was Armenian and Azerbaijan tried to clean this land from Armenians and conflict started from this moment."

Pashinyan disagreed with host Stephen Sackur's description of Armenia's stance to be "nationalistic," saying that Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh are facing an existential threat.

"Azerbaijan is exercising the policy of isolation and blockade of Nagorno Karabakh, and for Armenia too. Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh are under existential threat, and we are proposing Azerbaijan to renounce any possibility of use of force for Nagorno Karabakh conflict solution we should agree on very simple formula that there is no military solution for Nagorno

Karabakh conflict.

Any war is a chain of tragedies, that's why we say let's refuse any possibility of using force for solution of Nagorno Karabakh conflict, and any peace is comprise, and Armenia was and is ready for compromise," he said.

The Armenian PM also reminded about the Armenian victims of the Sumgait and Baku pogroms, noting that these tragedies had a key role in

by the way we are participating in peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan, in Lebanon, in Kosovo, in Mali, and we have quite effective military cooperation with United States too," he said.

Pashinyan reiterated that by saying "strategic" partnership he means long-term cooperation, and that at the same time Armenia has good relations with Iran and with the US.

"We have good relations with Iran



Prime Minister Nikol Pshinyan on "HARDTalk"

the NK conflict issue.

"The European Court has a catalogue on Azerbaijani atrocities against Armenians. We should mention the Sumgait events that happened in late 1980s, when the Azerbaijani government and Azerbaijanis initiated pogroms against Armenians of Sumgait city of Azerbaijan and in the capital," he said.

He also spoke about Armenia's strategic alliances with Russia and Iran.

"Russia is strategic partner of Armenia in terms of security. We are member of Eurasian Economic Union, which is economic union, and we have comprehensive and enhanced partnership agreement with European Union and by the way now the European Union is our main partner in our reform agenda implementation. We have quite effective cooperation with NATO, and

and we are doing our best to keep our good relations with United States and with Iran, and in the same time be fully devoted to our international commitments.

When asked about the increasingly vocal opposition in Armenia, he said he did not mind. He said he was happy to see that the opposition in Armenia is currently much freer than before the 2018 revolution.

"Armenia is a democratic country and the opposition is free to express [themselves] and I am very glad that now opposition in Armenia is acting much easily than before the revolution," Pashinyan said.

Pashinyan also added that in 2020 Armenia registered the largest two-year Democracy Score improvement in the history of the Freedom House's Nations in Transit 2020 report.

## Turkey, Europe Exchange Salvos Over Eastern Mediterranean Drilling

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and Eastern Mediterranean caused by the Turkish illegal and provocative actions. This destabilizing posturing in the Eastern Mediterranean manifests continued aggressive and expansionist policy that Turkey has been pursuing in its neighboring regions," Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement released on August 15. (See related editorial on page 18.)

Turkey dispatched scientific vessel Oruc Reis on Monday, August 17, into disputed waters not far from Cyprus to search for oil and gas in the energy-rich waters. The move prompted Greece to dispatch its own military vessels to monitor the situation and sparked a war of words between the two rivals.

The EU and Greece both claim Turkey's drilling in the region is illegal. EU lawmakers condemned Turkey's naval movements during a video conference on Friday and urged de-escalation.

The Oruc Reis, which is between Cyprus and the Greek island of Crete, will continue work until August 23, he added.

"We reiterate Armenia's unequivocal support and solidarity with Greece and

Cyprus and call on Turkey to de-escalate the situation, respect the International Law and cease all actions within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Greece and Cyprus," it added.

International efforts will not stop Turkey from carrying out energy research in disputed eastern Mediterranean waters, said President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday.

"We will not back down in the face of sanctions and threats," said Turkey's president, speaking in the northeastern city of Rize. "We will never bow to banditry on our continental shelf."

During a meeting on August 14, EU foreign ministers said Turkey's naval movements would lead to a "heightened risk of dangerous incidents."

They said a deterioration in the relationship with Turkey was having far-reaching strategic consequences for the entire EU, well beyond the eastern Mediterranean.

France on Thursday announced it was "temporarily reinforcing" its presence in the eastern Mediterranean in support of Greece.

French President Macron said he will increase military presence in the

Mediterranean over "unilateral" gas explorations by Turkey. He called on Ankara to cease the explorations in order to allow a "peaceful dialogue."

Macron asked Turkey to cease oil and gas exploration in contested waters that has spurred tensions with Greece.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis thanked Macron on Thursday for France's pledge to increase its military presence.

Mitsotakis tweeted that Macron is a "true friend of Greece and also a fervent protector of European values and international law."

In July, Macron had pushed for EU sanctions against Ankara for what he called "violations" of Greek and Cypriot sovereignty over their territorial waters.

The European Union's foreign policy chief expressed "full solidarity" with Greece and Cyprus and urged a "immediate de-escalation" by Turkey after EU foreign ministers held urgent talks Friday on high military tensions over offshore drilling rights in the eastern Mediterranean.

(RFE/RL and the Associated Press contributed to this report)



# Community News

## Primate Visits St. Gregory the Illuminator Church of Fowler

FWLER, Calif. – The faithful community of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church of Fowler welcomed and received the pastoral blessings of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America on August 9.

Derderian reflected on the pastorate of Fr. Yeghia Hairabedian who served the Armenian American community of Fowler from 2006 until his passing last year. In his remarks addressed to Fr. Yeghia's family, Derderian said "Dear Yeretgin Roberta and children, we know how painful the loss of Fr. Yeghia's has been painful for you and for the family of St. Gregory Armenian Church. However, Der Yeghia's passion and love for the Church and the faithful brings peace to your hearts."

The Primate also commended and recognized the dedication of Archpriest Fr. Kevork Arakelian, who for a period of one year, had fulfilled his pastoral duties at St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church of Fowler with humility, kindness and a Christian love.

As the day's celebrant and homilist, Derderian introduced to the congregation the newly appointed Priest of St. Gregory Armenian Church the Rev. Gomidas Zohrabian, calling upon the priest to serve the flock of Christ with



Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America greets worshippers.

renewed zeal and humility. "Dear Fr. Gomidas, my wish is that extend your heart and soul to this most deserving faithful of St. Gregory Armenian Church. And be assured that they too will embrace you and assist you in many ways to ensure that this church family is continuously strengthened and committed to serve God wholeheartedly," said Derderian.

The following statement was issued by the parishioners of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church of Fowler.

"We, The Parish of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church of Fowler, California would like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese, for celebrating Holy Badarak on Sunday August 9, 2020. This was a blessed day for our parish as we introduced our new Parish Priest Father Gomidas Zohrabian. We also acknowledged the dedication and service of our past Parish Priest Father Kevork Arakelian. We also observed Daretz for the one year anniversary of the passing of Father Yeghia Harabedian. At that time, Surpazan blessed a memorial garden that was planted by our Sunday School and its Staff in Fr. Yeghia's memory. May God bless *Surpazan*. We thank him for all he has done."

see VISIT, page 9



A young camp attendee cooks during a lesson.

## Diocesan Camps Take 'Virtual' Turn for Summer 2020

NEW YORK – The Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America's "Virtual Camp" took place July 26 through August 1, with 312 registered participants, including 100 first-time campers. The daily online gathering organized by the Youth and Young Adult Ministries department was the Diocese's creative response to the cancellation of its usual, long-running Hye Camp and St. Vartan Camp programs, in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The online format allowed campers from the two programs, usually separated by hundreds of miles, to "come together" for the first time in an engaging, interactive forum using the Zoom video conferencing platform. In creating the camp schedule, the camp administration felt it was most important to have interactive classes, with lessons in real-time in order to give kids the opportunity to see each other and feel connected.

"We were extremely pleased with the sense of camaraderie that developed among all the kids throughout the Virtual Camp," said camp administrator Kathryn Ashbahian. "It was a different experience for everyone compared to 'normal' summers. But even so, Virtual Camp Week was filled with energy and enthusiasm from all the campers."

Each day of the week was planned in detail, with activities running from morning to night. Campers gathered online for a daily morning service and message from the day's camp director, followed by classes on religion, Armenian culture and heritage. Afternoons were occupied with activities like Armenian cooking, arts and crafts, "bootcamp fitness," and Armenian dance. Clergy and volunteers from across the Diocese led the class sessions.

Along with activities geared towards campers and their families, the camp week also held daily meetings for the CIT and staff age participants. These meetings were a great opportunity for young adults to come together for the chance to grow as leaders through discussions and fellowship. Seda and Talin Propes, long-time St. Vartan Camp participants joined the daily CIT and Staff meetings.

They noted, "Camp is one of our favorite times of the year and not getting to go to St. Vartan Camp was so sad, but Virtual camp made the week feel like



Members of the clergy, including Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan, top row, center, with the camp attendees

we were all actually at camp! It was so great to be able to participate in Armenian Church events, especially since we don't have an Armenian Church in Oklahoma. We can't wait to all be together again at the Ararat Center!"

see CAMP, page 9

## Dr. Ohannes Kılıçdağı Named 17th Kazan Visiting Professor At Cal State Fresno

FRESNO – Dr. Ohannes Kılıçdağı has been named as the 17th Henry S. Khanzadian Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies for the Fall 2020 semester at Fresno State.

Kılıçdağı is a 2014 graduate of Bogaziçi University in Istanbul, where he completed a PhD titled "Socio-Political Reflections and Expectations of the Ottoman Armenians after the 1908 Revolution: Between Hope and Despair."

Kılıçdağı was the Nikit and Eleanora Ordjanian Visiting Professor at Middle Eastern South Asian and African Studies (MESAAS) at the Columbia University for Spring 2020. He was accepted between 2017 and 2019 as a post-doctoral fellow by the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University and completed a pre-doctoral fellowship (2011-2012) at the Armenians Studies Program, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Kılıçdağı will teach a course on "Awakening, Death, and Survival: The History of Ottoman Armenians in Modern Times" during the Fall 2020 semester. The course will follow the trajectory of Armenians in Ottoman-Turkish society from the early nineteenth century to the present. The history of Armenians in the late Ottoman Empire is a tale of ebb and flows,



Dr. Ohannes Kılıçdağı

hopes and frustrations. Their history in modern Turkey, on the other hand, is about the struggle to survive and silent resistance to complete disappearance. This course examines this oscillating history between hope and despair and their effort to exist in their homeland, and in this struggle how they invented the 'third way' of being Armenian in Turkey, besides in the Diaspora and in the nation state, Armenia, Soviet or not.

While at Fresno State, Kılıçdağı will give three public lectures, the first one on "Living Together Requires Dying Together": Conscription of Armenians into the Ottoman Army after the 1908 Revolution." It will take place virtually on Friday, September 18. The talk will be about how Armenians, along other non-Muslims started to be enlisted into the Ottoman army and served there as soldiers and officers after the 1908 Revolution, and the restoration of the constitution and parliament.

Kılıçdağı's special interests are the history of non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, intercommunal relations in multi-ethnoreligious societies, citizenship and minorities, the history of citizenship and military service, historical sociology, and the philosophy of history.

He has been writing a column in *Agos*, an Istanbul bilingual weekly Armenian newspaper established by Hrant Dink and his friends, since 2011.





## COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARIES

# A Doctor of the Diaspora, With Artsakh in His Heart: A Remembrance of Dr. Raffy Hovannessian (1938-2020)

By Levon Lachikyan

A physician, in the truest sense, is not defined solely by his choice of profession. What defines him is a lifelong impulse to help others: a commitment to treat fellow human beings with compassion.

That's how I have always understood the medical calling, in its highest expression. The doctors endowed with these qualities are rare, and very precious. So when we lose such a noble figure, we should do more than simply mourn that doctor's death. We should acknowledge, and celebrate, the life and accomplishment that preceded his passing.

Our community — our world — lost such a shining example this spring, in the person of Dr. Raffy Hovannessian. An Armenian-American physician of the highest caliber, Dr. Hovannessian was a well-known — and beloved — public figure throughout the Armenian world. His death at age 81 on May 27, 2020, following a long, brave battle against cancer, brought to a close an astonishing lifetime of accomplishment, compassion, and benevolent work.

He was born in Jerusalem, on August 16, 1938, the eldest child of two survivors of the Armenian Genocide. They instilled in their son the qualities that would be the foundation of his consequential life: a life inspired at the deepest level by his Christian faith and Armenian heritage, and nourished by the spiritual strength Raffy drew from his family, his church, and his homeland.

One iconic image guided Raffy throughout his life: the memory of his father, Arakel. Raffy would often lovingly refer to his father in conversation as “a simple shoemaker”; but it was clear that to this grateful son, Arakel Hovannessian was so much more: a patriot, a man of moral vision. To illustrate that feeling, Raffy would quote his father's explanation for having six children: “Son,” the Genocide survivor would say, “we lost so many souls in my generation. So this too is a way to serve our nation: by having many children.”

Raffy's mother Diruhi was a nurse — and the likely inspiration for his youthful decision to become a doctor. But the medical vocation also held a logical attraction for a boy with an instinct to help others. His parents encouraged him in every way they could. His father surprised Raffy one day by giving him a violin. When the boy asked how the instrument



would help him achieve his goal in medicine, his father replied that a good doctor needs precise, agile fingers, and the violin would be excellent training for that.

The family resided in Aleppo throughout Raffy's primary education, but for his medical training he applied to the American University in Beirut. It was while living in that city that Raffy met the beautiful Armenian woman who would become his future wife, Shoghag Varjabedian.

“I glorify God's blessing for giving me a wife like Shoghag,” he repeated with joy throughout his life. “She has always been a support for my spirit, an inspiration to lead me

forward. At the same time, she is an ideal mother and grandmother to our three children and seven grandchildren.”

“Together, these two were a most exemplary couple,” said longtime friend Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, currently the Armenian Church's Pontifical Legate of Western Europe. “They complemented each other in every way. And through their partnership, numerous vital projects were brought to life.” One of the most important of these projects was the rescue of America's St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, which was in danger of shutting its doors. During that crisis in the 1990s, the Hovannessians' leadership largely ensured the seminary's ongoing vitality as an educational institution, which persists to this day.

Some three decades earlier, when Raffy and Shoghag settled in Chicago in the mid-1960s, they had brought a similar energy to the local Armenian community, helping to establish an AGBU center in the city and its Sissag H. Varjabedian Armenian Saturday School.

The family took a special interest in the advancement of Armenian artists. Arriving in Armenia in the wake of the 1988 earthquake, Shoghag recognized the quality and talent of a number of Armenian painters. As an art connoisseur and curator of numerous prestigious contemporary art exhibits, she was enthusiastic about introducing these artists to a wider, international audience. But she was also moved by the poor conditions in which they lived. Together with her husband, Shoghag worked intensely to create secure lives for the painters, so they could continue to reside in Armenia while exhibiting their work abroad. “Our goal was to allow talented Armenian artists to stay in their homeland, so that we would not lose them abroad,” she said.

This is the attitude they brought to all the arts in Armenia: a sense of duty to preserve the country's native creativity. I vividly remember the visit Dr. and Mrs. Hovannessian paid to the Octet Music School in Armenia's second largest city of Gyumri, which had been devastated by the 1988 earthquake. After listening to the impressive performances of the gifted students, they decided on the spot to support the higher education of several young talents, and later made active efforts to improve the school building and its resources.

Throughout their many visits to Armenia, the Hovannessians would frequently be in the company of their  
see HOVANESSIAN, page 8

## Rose (Nakashian) Kerrigan Dedicated Mother, Volunteer

WAYLAND, Mass. — Rose (Nakashian) Kerrigan of Wayland, formerly of Lexington, passed away peacefully at her home on August 10, 2020 after a short illness.

She was the wife of the late Charles Hunter Kerrigan; mother of Dr. David Kerrigan and his wife, Becky, and Charlotte Janigian and her husband, Renie; grandmother of Charlie and Timmy Kerrigan, and Lillian and Alina Janigian.

She was predeceased by her parents, Jacob and Sima Nakashian, her sister, Dorothy Nakashian Howes, and brother, John Nakashian.

Born in Watertown, the daughter of an Armenian Genocide survivor, she graduated from Dorchester High School and the Katharine Gibbs School.

She worked as an executive assistant at the Union Central Life Insurance company where she met her future husband. They were married just 4 ½ years when he died unexpectedly, leaving behind a 3 ½ year old son and a soon-to-be-born daughter. Shortly after his passing, she relocated her children to Lexington, known for its schools, and its proximity to the Armenian community in Belmont and Watertown. She put all her focus in making sure her children knew the importance of education as well as their Armenian heritage and Christian faith.

She worked for the Lexington schools to mirror her children's school schedule. Later she would work for the Mitre Corporation and Newton Wellesley Hospital.

She was an accomplished pianist, who enjoyed gardening, baking and attending her grandchildren's recitals, concerts, games, and



other activities.

In addition, she always supported her church, the First Armenian Church in Belmont. Whether teaching Sunday School, helping in the church nursery, volunteering to cook for the annual bazaar, or helping with the monthly newsletter, she loved her church family. Some of her proudest moments were when her children obtained degrees from Tufts University, their father's alma mater.

Funeral services were held privately. A celebration of Rose's life will be planned for a later date.

Funeral arrangements were provided by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARIES

# Nahabed Melkonian

## Prolific Writer, Community Activist Dedicated to Jerusalem

GLENDALÉ — Nahabed Melkonian passed away on Sunday, August 9, 2020 at his home in Glendale. He was 69.

The level of Nahabed Melkonian's literary, cultural, social, spiritual, and national contributions is deep and prolific. Nahabed's life and dedicated work were blessings for his nation, for Jerusalem Armenians, and for the Jerusalem Holy Translators Alumni Association, in particular.

Melkonian was born on July 27, 1951 in Jerusalem to Vartan and Makruhi Melkonian. He had four siblings, Armine, George, Harout, and Pauline.

He received his elementary and secondary education at the Holy Translators Armenian School. In 1969, together with his family he immigrated to the United States, and settled in Los Angeles. He continued his schooling at Los Angeles City College. In 1972, he became certified as a computer operator and programmer by the Computer Learning Center of Los Angeles.

For many years, he worked as managing director of the production department of Science Dynamics Company.

At a young age, he became a member of the Homenetmen (Armenian General Athletic Union) of Jerusalem, under whose auspices he also studied the art of theater.

In 1976, he founded a theatrical group in Glendale, christening it as the Baronian Drama Group in homage to the illustrious satirist Hagop Baronian. That same year, the Glendale Chapter of the Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society was founded through his efforts.

From 1978 to 1979, he was editor-in-chief of the *Artsakank* ("Echo") cultural quarterly, a publication of Hamazkayin. From 1980 until 1982, together with Vahakn Savoulian, he published and edited the *Meghou* ("Bee") satirical-critical monthly.

In 1988, his first literary work was published by the American Armenian International College in La Verne. Entitled *Vosgi Zankage* ("The Golden Bell"), it is a play, which "deals with issues, about which we have often remained silent and which are heard only mezzo voce in Armenian circles." This play was presented for the first time by the Nor Pem ("New Stage") Theatrical Association in the playhouse of the Zenith Convention Center in Sydney, Australia on the occasion of the 1700th anniversary of the proclamation of Christianity as the state religion of Armenia.

In 1989, together with a group of former Jerusalem Armenians, he took the initiative and founded the North American Alumni Association of Jerusalem's Holy Translators School.

His second book, a historical-documentary volume, was published in 1992 under the title *Garmir Shushanner Azadutian Janabarhin* ("Red Lilies of the Freedom Path") in Armenian and English. It covers the critical and decisive period of 1988-1992, during which Armenia gained its independence.

In 1992, on the occasion of the 77th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, he lectured in Jerusalem during a program organized by the Joint Committee of Jerusalem Armenian Cultural Associations.

In 1993, together with a group of fellow writers, he founded the Armenian Writers Union of California and served as its secretary for five years.

From 1995 to 1998, he contributed to the efforts of the ARF Reform Movement. He also served as a member of the Executive Committee of the United Association of Los Angeles Armenian Organizations.

In 1999, his third book was published, entitled *Saghemi Khonarhner* ("The Meeks of Jerusalem").

In 1999 and 2001 respectively, at the invitation of the Armenian World Alliance, he participated as a keynote speaker in the commemorative program on the occasion of the 84th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, as well as that of the 10th anniversary of Armenia's independence in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Since 2000, he served as editor-in-chief of

the *Hye Yerosaghem* ("Armenian Jerusalem") Newsletter, a quarterly publication of the Jerusalem Holy Translators' Alumni Association.

In 2002, two new works were published consecutively, *Khogunneru Shukin Dag* ("In Contemplation") and *Voghp Yegeghetsvo* ("Lament of the Church").

In 2003, *Khogunneru Shukin Dag* was published in English under the title *In Contemplation*, translated by prominent journalist and editor, the late Aris Sevag.

The following year, he published the theatrical script of a well-known Biblical story, *The Prodigal Son*. The play was presented the same year by the youth of Nor Pem Theatrical Association in Sydney, Australia.

In 2005, two new works were published consecutively, titled *Armenian Short Stories and Vorpin Dzare* ("The Orphan's Tree"), a drama dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

The same year at the invitations of the Australian Armenian Association and Nor Pem Theatrical Association, he participated as keynote speaker in the commemorative program on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in Sydney. The same weekend, *The Orphan's Tree* was presented for the first time by the Nor Pem Theatrical troupe in the Science Theater of the University of Sydney, Australia.

In 2006, after attending Bible study classes by Dr. Sarkis Mesrobian, he edited the Easter Orthodox Version of *The Lord's Prayer*; 6000 copies of the book were published by Deacon Dr. Sarkis Mesrobian, Deacon Hrayr Nalbandian and Nahabed Melkonian. All 6000 copies were bought within a few months.

In 2009, he published the first volume of a satirical series entitled *Saghemi Choher* ("The Lords of Jerusalem").

In 2011, a new book was published titled *Yergenkee Jebide* ("Heaven's Smile"), which was translated into English and dedicated to the miracles of the St. Peter Youth Ministry Armenian Church of Glendale.

Later in the same year, he published one of his critical articles in book form titled *Two Liturgies for the Deaf*.

He later published *Saghemi Orer* ("Jerusalem Sketches"), *Chekaratsadz Karer* ("Breathing Stones") and *Martgayeen Yerigamunke* ("The Human Kidney").

On October 2013, a historic chapter was written in the life of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, as the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, Abp. Nourhan Manougian, presided over the solemn celebration of the Divine Liturgy at St. Leon Armenian Cathedral in Burbank.

During the service, Melkonian was honored by Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholics of All Armenians, for his contributions to cultural life in the Armenian diaspora. Approaching the nave with his wife, Annie Melkonian, he received the St. Sahag - St. Mesrob Medal. An accompanying Pontifical Encyclical was read in the Church.

Later that evening, the community celebrated the 40th anniversary of Melkonian's literary career, and paid homage to his leadership in the Armenian church and community. The event, which was sponsored by the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church and the Consulate General of the Republic of Armenia, was organized by a coalition of Armenian cultural organizations in Glendale. During the program, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem honored Melkonian and bestowed upon him the medal of the Apostolic Seat of Saints James in Jerusalem.

In addition, he was honored during the program by the United States Congress via a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition.

The State of California presented him two recognitions from the State Senate and the State Assembly respectively.

Los Angeles County honored him with a Congratulatory Recognition, while the City of Los Angeles, by way of Mayor Eric Garcetti and all City Council Members, honored him with a Resolution.

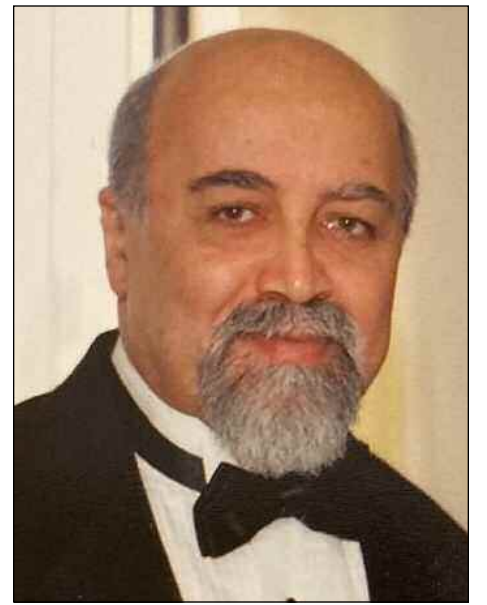
The City of Glendale honored him with the

Mayor's Certificate of Recognition and with a medal depicting the city's 100th anniversary.

The Consulate General of the Republic of Armenia presented him a Recognition Certificate, while Mashdots College honored him with its St. Mesrob Honorary Certificate.

Melkonian's satirical-critical articles, touching on national and social issues, have been translated into English and French, and have been published in the following newspapers and periodicals throughout the diaspora and in Armenia such as: *Hayastani Hanrapetutian*, *Aravod*, *Yerakouyn Troshag*, *Azg*, *Zartonk*, *Nor Hayastan*, *Sion*, *Nor Or* weekly, *Asbarez*, *Nor Harach*, *The Armenian Reporter International*, *Nor Seroonti Tsayn*, *The Mother Church*, *Massis Weekly*, *Nor Gyank*, *Kach Nazar*, *Arev*, *Nor Serund*, *Abaka*, *Spiurk*, *Arakasd*, *Antasdan*, *Lusapats*, *Paros*, *Hamaynapatker*, *Marmara*, *Louys*, *Karoun* and *Jamanak*, as well as in various literary blogs on the Internet.

He leaves his wife, Annie Melkonian; daughter and son-in-law Mihran and Talin Toumajan, and their son Nishan; daughter Talar Melkonian; his sister and her husband Sako and Armine Bedrosian, and their children; his brother and his wife George and Lena Melkonian, and their son; his brother and his wife Harry and Karen Melkonian, and



their children; his sister and her husband Vahe and Pauline Igdbashian, and their children. He also leaves members of the Melkonian, Mekhjian, Chakmakian, Klkhouni, Toumajan, Bedrosian, Igdbashian, Albina, Keuilian, Gugasian, Mishigian, and Metcalf families.

Adhering to the laws of the State of California in maintaining social distancing and wearing a mask, Nahabed's friends and admirers held a burial service on Thursday, August 20, at Forest Lawn Hollywood Hills Cemetery in Los Angeles.

# Hasmieg Kaboolian Yankelovich

## World Traveler, Arts Supporter, Businesswoman

ORLEANS, Mass. — Hasmieg Kaboolian Yankelovich, known to all her family and friends as Hassie, died on August 1. She was 96.

She was born in 1924 in Newark, NJ, to Kegham and Rosa Messomian Kaboolian, Armenian Genocide survivors. Hit hard by the depression, the family was forced to move to New York City, a city which Hassie grew to love and where she lived until the final years of her life.

Hassie's life represented the American dream. She was the third daughter of an immigrant family, but her poor beginning didn't hold her back. From a fourth-floor walk-up in Washington Heights to a life of international business, travel, art and engagement in the Armenian community both here and abroad, she moved in the intellectual world of post-war New York City. She was known for her style, grace and wit. She had exquisite taste and could mix clothes from The Gap with haute couture. She was a vociferous reader who never failed to amaze others by the depth of her knowledge about the literary and art worlds. She was an avid museum goer and supporter of the arts.

Ready for adventure even into old age, she took her first ride on an all-terrain vehicle after her 95th birthday.

Her vitality, optimism, and joie de vivre were infectious. She was a role model for all who were privileged to know her.

Higher education was not an option for her, so after graduating from Central Commercial High School in the Murray Hill area of New York, she went to work. Her first job was with the Girl Scouts of America where she quickly rose to a position in the financial sector, responsible for preparing the quarterly financial reports. After 10 years, she took a job at Nowland and Co., an industrial design firm, where she was in charge of the production reports department.

She met and married Daniel Yankelovich while both were working at Nowland. In 1958 they started their own public opinion and marketing research firm, Daniel Yankelovich, Inc. (later renamed Yankelovich, Skelly and White, Inc.). Hassie played a critical role in launching the business which would soon become a leader in public opinion and social science research. After their daughter Nicole was born, she retired.

A life-long New Yorker, she was a member of the Armenian Evangelical Church in New York



City and an active participant in many Armenian efforts including the first Armenian exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art - a collection of Armenian rugs.

She served on various boards and advisory committees, both Armenian and in the wider American community, including the Armenian Center at Columbia University and various civic organizations

in New York City.

She loved to travel and started as a young woman in her 20s with a dear friend, Mabel Minden. They saved from their meager salaries until they had enough to buy steamship tickets to Europe, the Caribbean and to Syria where she visited her mother's family. She was the first in her family to fly on an airplane. She and Dan traveled for business throughout the US and around the world. She had the opportunity to meet many dignitaries, including 9 US presidents (George H.W. Bush, Jimmy Carter, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Harry Truman, Gerald Ford, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Donald Trump), the Shah of Iran (as guests at the 2000th anniversary of Iran), and Mikhail Gorbachev in the final days of the Soviet Union.

In her later years, she made several trips to Armenia, went again to Syria and made a pilgrimage to Turkey in 2007 to visit her parent's villages, Agin and Arapigir.

At the end of her life, she moved to the Boston area to be closer to her daughter's family. It bought her closer, as well, to Cape Cod which she loved and where she had spent more than 50 summers including the last three months during the pandemic. She died peacefully in her sleep at home after suffering a series of strokes in the weeks prior.

She leaves her daughter Nicole Mordecai, her son-in-law David Mordecai, and her granddaughter Rachel Mordecai, in addition to many nieces, nephews and their children spanning 4 generations. She was predeceased by her siblings Arpen Abrahamian, Elmas Davidian, and Paul Kaboolian, all of New York. She loved each member of her family for their unique gifts, recognizing and encouraging them. They loved her in return. She will be sorely missed.

Services and interment were private.

Arrangements were made by the Giragosian Funeral Home.





COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARIES

# A Remembrance of Dr. Raffy Hovanessian

HOVANESSIAN, from page 6  
children – and later their grandchildren – in order to expose the new generations to the unique sights, sounds, tastes and aromas of their ancestral land.

Raffy Hovanessian grew up in an atmosphere of religious faith, observance, and piety and those habits of the spirit remained with him throughout his life. As a boy attending Aleppo’s Emmanuel College, he become engrossed in the Bible, conversant in its stories and message. He put these lessons to active use in the way he conducted himself.

“The church has always been in me,” the doctor would later confess. He was convinced that if Armenians had not embraced Christianity, their nation would have ceased to exist as an entity in history. At a more personal level, the Armenian Church, with its deep and rich spiritual power, was where he would seek guidance, consolation, and encouragement at every crossroad in his life.

He would build many friendships based on such shared character. A notable one was forged in Beirut, where he befriended a young clergyman named Karekin Sarkissian. Their relationship was a great source of joy in Raffy’s life, and a source of pride as well, as he watched his friend scale the church hierarchy to become a bishop, the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, and finally the Catholicos of All Armenians: His Holiness Karekin I.

In more formal roles, Dr. Hovanessian was a longtime member of the Diocesan Council of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, serving as its vice chair. Twice, in 1995 and 1999, he was elected to represent the Diocese at the National Ecclesiastical Assembly convened at the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin. Fellow church delegates from across the globe chose Raffy to chair those historic gatherings.

In 2014, the Eastern Diocese honored Dr. Raffy Hovanessian as its “Armenian Church Member of the Year” during ceremonies at St. Vartan Cathedral in New York City, surrounding that year’s Diocesan Assembly.

From his earliest years, patriotic Armenian songs were always in Raffy’s ear – often sung by his father. Armenian recordings and radio were part of the ambient sound of the Hovanessian home throughout his life; Raffy would quiet a crowd when an Armenian broadcast came on with the phrase, “Yerevan is speaking.”

But it took until 1986 for him to arrive for the first time in Armenia. He did so in the company of his son Armen, and together they scaled the heights of Dzidzernagapert to burn incense at the Genocide Memorial in memory of their ancestors.

He became a much more frequent visitor in the years following Armenia’s independence. His natural compassionate spirit was energized as never before when he witnessed the hardships being endured by his countrymen, and Raffy vowed to do whatever he could to stand by his people, and encourage their progress.

In his heart, Raffy paid little heed to the constricted political boundaries of his homeland. For him, Armenia included Javakhk and Artsakh, and the Armenians resident in those regions were equally the focus of Raffy’s attention and concern.

His motivation in all things was a commitment to national ideas, the preservation of Armenian identity and, more personally, a desire that his life would not be lived in vain. To these ends, he made his influential mark on the diaspora’s numerous educational and charitable organizations, among them the Armenian Assembly of America (where he was a board member from 1986 to 1989) and the Armenian General Benevolent Union (where he sat on the Central Council from 1989 to 2000).

Standing out among these efforts was his fruitful leadership role in the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), the humanitarian aid, relief, and development organization of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America. Dr. Hovanessian became an initiator and promoter of countless FAR projects, often focusing on the reform and advancement of medicine, medical education, and healthcare in the young Armenian Republic.

He was instrumental in launching FAR’s “Regional Doctor Training Program” in 2005, which trained physicians in Armenia’s far flung provinces, as well as programs that gave special attention given to medical personnel from Javakhk and Artsakh.

The truth is that following the Soviet Union’s collapse, healthcare systems among the former Soviet republics were on a hazardous path to failure. The programs and fundraising shouldered by Hovanessian, through FAR and the Armenian-American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO), gave Armenia and its medical professionals a fighting chance to improve their skills and upgrade the country’s health system, with benefits felt in the treatment of countless Armenian citizens. Today, most of the physicians and medical personnel working in Armenia and Artsakh have taken advantage of one or more of the innovative training programs resulting from these efforts.

Realizing that competent nursing played a crucial role in the healthcare systems of rural Armenia and Artsakh, Raffy prevailed upon his close friend, the great American-Armenian benefactor Nazar Nazarian, to fund a top-notch training and continuing education program for nurses. The practical model of first-aid training that emerged from the program has proved vitally important in a region that is under constant threat of war from Azerbaijan. It has also been effective in managing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the region.

Dr. Hovanessian also contributed to the progress of Yerevan State Medical University – becoming its “unofficial ambassador to

America,” in the words of Dr. Gevorg Yaghjian, a former vice-rector of the university and a board member of the FAR Medical Alumni Association.

In the final seven years of his life, Dr. Raffy Hovanessian fought a battle against cancer. He fought courageously, but also quietly: refusing to surrender a single moment to regret or self-

establish the “Raffy Hovanessian Educational Foundation.” Once again, the target of his concern was Artsakh and the development of its healthcare system.

It’s not surprising that as a physician, Dr. Hovanessian was concerned with the health and well-being of his countrymen. He gave voice to that sentiment in an interview he once gave: “Let us never forget that we are Armenians,” he said. “Our great connection to each other is that we belong to the same nation. The blood flowing in our veins is dis-



Dr. Raffy and Shoghag Hovanessian

pity; never losing any of his characteristic optimism.

As an immediate legacy of his passing, he left a bequest to the Fund for Armenian Relief to

tinctive, unique; to infect it with mutual jealousy, animosity, and opposition would be a costly mistake.”

(Translated by Chris Zakian)

## 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 on 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). Paper submissions 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





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Primate Visits St. Gregory the Illuminator Church of Fowler

VISIT, from page 5

Zohrabian was born in Tehran, Iran, on June 25, 1965, and was given the baptismal name Igit. In 1972, his family moved to Armenia. In 1983, he entered the Gevorkian Theological Seminary at the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin.

Upon returning to the seminary in 1985 after fulfilling compulsory military service, he continued his studies and graduated in 1990. On December 25, 1989, he was ordained as a deacon by Archbishop Housig Santuryan, the canon sacristan of the Cathedral of Holy Echmiadzin. Later Vazken I, the late Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of all Armenians, appointed him a supervisor of the seminary.

In 1991, he was assigned as an assistant to the manager of the museum of the Cathedral of Holy Echmiadzin. In May 1992, he was appointed to the Araratian Pontifical Diocese's St. Sarkis Church in Yerevan. He returned to the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin in 1994 as an assistant to the manager of the museum.

He arrived in the United States in 1995 and studied for two years at Concordia College in Bronxville, NY. He also studied at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary and at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary.

In 1999, Fr. Gomidas began working at the St. Vartan Cathedral bookstore and organizing an Armenian language Saturday School for the newly-settled Russian-speaking Armenians in Brooklyn, NY.

He was ordained to on February 22 and 23, 2003. From 2003 to 2020, he served as the pastor of St. George Church of Hartford, CT.

He and his wife Ellen have three children, Angel, Gregory and Anthony.



Congregants wearing masks at the service

## Diocesan Camps Take 'Virtual' Turn For Summer 2020

CAMP, from page 5

Evenings involved familiar camp activities adapted to the virtual format: a family fashion show, a bingo night, and two talent showcases. A Friday night dance and "campfire chat" allowed participants to socialize. Saturday brought Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel among the campers and their families for a poignant and prayerful closing ceremony.

"Our camp directors, clergy, and volunteers made this special summer camp successful, in spite of the restrictions we're all living under," said camp administrator Jennifer Morris. "It was especially memorable to bring our two Diocesan camp programs together. It all meant a lot to our campers."

### Unique, Armenian, and Spiritual

This aspect was important to staff member Alaina Kamalian, from St. Mesrob Armenian Church in Racine, WI, who said, "What I enjoyed about this year's Virtual Camp was combining both St. Vartan Camp and Hye Camp as a whole. I met a lot of new people in the sessions. As a long time Hye Camp participant, I am hoping to attend St. Vartan Camp next year, and I know that my participation in Virtual Camp will make the transition easier for me to ease into a new camp with all of the people that I met virtually this summer."

The camp directors were pleased with the success of the camp week. Fr. Stepanos Doudoukjian, pastor of St. Peter Armenian Church in Watervliet, NY, said, "It was a joy to see so many bright, smiling, energetic youngsters eager and ready to enjoy a day of camp through the blessings of Zoom technology. Short of being together at camp, one cannot replicate a unique, Armenian, spiritual camp experience, but using Zoom during a pandemic year provided an unforgettable experience for all.

He added: "My favorite part was at the end of each activity when we would all say goodbye; it brought a smile to my face to see all our campers waving to each other, looking forward to the next session or the next morning. I felt a void the following week after virtual camp ended, wishing I could see those beautiful, hopeful, cheerful faces once again through those zoom squares."

## Donations to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator COVID-19 Crisis

WATERTOWN – The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* received the following donations between July 25 and August 17, 2020 from subscribers, friends and supporters to maintain the publication of the first English-language Armenian Weekly in the US. The first and second lists were published in the June 27 and July 25 issues respectively.

We sincerely appreciate all contributors.

The fund raising continues.

Ardemis Matteosian \$1,000.00  
Watertown, MA In memory of Manooq Baghdasarian (Khan)  
Richard Mikaelian D.D.S., \$ 100.00,  
New York, NY In memory of brother Gregory Mikaelian  
Ralph C. and Knarig Khatchadurian Meyer \$50.00 Ridgwood, NJ  
Agnes Killabian \$100.00 Cranston, RI  
Cometas Dilanjian \$50.00 Skokie, IL



The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada gratefully acknowledges the following donations to the Krikor and Makrouhi Kuredjian Educational Fund:

Elizabeth M. Akian \$100  
Ara and Karen Mesrobian \$100  
Peter and Maryanne Bonjuklian \$100

Tekeyan Cultural Association

# SPONSOR



# 20<sup>th</sup>

## ANNIVERSARY

# a TEACHER

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COMMUNITY NEWS

# Young Armenian-American Activists Amplify Armenian Issues through Instagram Posts

INSTAGRAM, from page 1

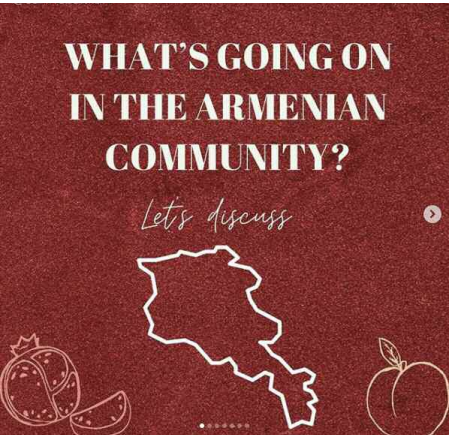
These types of posts have become especially prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic as mental health, worldwide human rights issues, and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement are of particular concern.



Via: <https://instagram.com/aliquenk?igshid=3p391x0lus2x>

Armenian youth are at the core of this united endeavor to amplify Armenian issues. Sixteen-year-old Alique Keleshian of La Crescenta, CA created the informational post above. Explicitly directed towards non-Armenian users, this viral post has received nearly 13,000 likes on Instagram. Alique was compelled to make this post after she noticed that her outspoken non-Armenian friends were failing to spread awareness about Armenia.

She exclaimed: “I was angry and frustrated about people choosing what issues are worthy of attention. It made me upset because those people who weren’t posting live in a really big Armenian community. My main goal was to get people to open their eyes to what is happening in Armenia and call them out for ignoring it and not posting about.”



Via: <https://instagram.com/sarinezeitlian?igshid=1tzmszlhwt41j>

In New York City, 16-year-old Sarine Zeitlian also utilizes Instagram to pursue justice and raise awareness for the Armenian cause. Her numerous posts about Armenian history, culture, and the current Armenian political climate have amassed over 30,000 likes on Instagram.

Sarine said: “All of this has inspired me to be more vocal... After the first graphic I made I realized people really liked the information I was sharing, so I geared myself toward activism.”

Tailoring her posts to non-Armenians, Sarine thoroughly presents issues by starting from the basics and building up to the greater issue. Rather than preach to the choir, activists like Sarine and Alique aim to educate those who may know nothing about Armenia. As a minority population, Armenians everywhere work diligently to garner their counterparts’ solidarity because there is strength in numbers. Synergy between Armenians and non-Armenians is necessary to initiate long-lasting change.

Sarine developed <https://helparmenians.carrd.co/> to further educate users about Armenian issues. Carrd is a platform that’s become an essential part of every activist’s toolkit because it allows users to easily make simple sites. This site has links to articles, petitions, as well as fundraisers for issues like domestic violence in Armenia, helping Armenia during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Artsakh, and more.



Sarine revealed her motivation: “I live in New York and it’s one of the most diverse places in the world, I sometimes feel lonely as an Armenian. In school, I’m usually the only Armenian and I see all these cultures bringing up their own issues and I feel obligated to talk about Armenian issues as well.”

Activists like Sarine and Alique spend a considerable amount of time creating their posts – researching, writing and designing. Visuals are of utmost importance as Instagram is inundated with informational posts.

“I wanted to make something cute and aesthetically pleasing for people to share to their [Instagram] stories. I realized if I want this to reach a lot of people it has to be pleasing to the eye,” Alique explained.

Activism, like technology has evolved. Sharing an Instagram post is the modern-day equivalent of handing out a flyer just like hosting a live stream is analogous to organizing a rally or lecture. Today, any passionate and educated individual can further a cause or draw attention to an issue with the click of a button. Sentiments of Armenian pride, unity, and connection are felt deeply amongst these passionate activists. Sarine gushed about her experiences so far, declaring: “I absolutely love it when other people as young as me make these posts and informational graphics because it provides me with more inspiration to continue my work and keep doing what I’m doing because I now have more support from others doing similar things. I have met other creators [many of whom are older than her] but they are all really supportive and kind and we’ve been able to discuss many things and help fuel each others’ creativity.”

Alique also shared effusive thoughts, stating “It gives me a lot of hope to see my own



## Help The Armenian Community

Information on how to help out and educate yourself on the often-overlooked issues concerning the Armenian community

generation have so much power to influence so many minds. It has been said in the Armenian community many times that the youth is the future and I didn’t really understand the meaning of that until I see it now, when young people are taking the responsibility to spread what’s right into their own hands.”

These young women and others like them model the power of doing. They recognized

an issue and paved their own path by channeling their frustration into action.

Sarine left me with this message: “Believe in yourself. Believe in the change you make because it can really happen when you put your mind to it.”

Indeed, the youth are our future, but they are also our present. In any case, young people like Alique and Sarine are a testament to how bright our future is.

## Knights and Daughters of Vartan Launch Lebanon Campaign

NEW YORK – The Knights and Daughters of Vartan have launched a fundraising campaign to aid Lebanon following the devastating explosive destruction that took place in its capital city of Beirut on Tuesday, August 4. Humanitarian assistance will be distributed to the residents who have been injured and who have lost their homes and businesses.

All funds raised will be distributed among the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) and the Armenian Relief Society (ARS). The donation page can be visited at <http://kofv.org/helplebanon>



# Arts & Living

## Jacques Kwesi Al Asmar Khoroizian:

**'Being Armenian Means Being Victorious and Honorable'**

**By Artsvi Bakhchinyan**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/ATLANTA — My interest in Armenians' participation in world dance scene and the Armenian communities of Africa intertwined in the persona of Jacques Kwesi Al Asmar. Living in Atlanta, Georgia, he is the chief executive officer at American Alternative Court Services. Before that he worked at Office of the Circuit Public Defender (Atlanta Judicial Circuit Worked) and at San Francisco Superior Court, but he is also an avid dancer.



**Dear Jacques, I am glad to introduce you to the Armenian readers of Armenia and the Diaspora. First of all, many of us would ask you about how you combine the serious profession of a being a psychologist with being a dancer?**

I specialize in addictive disorders. I have worked in the criminal justice system and the courts for over 25 years. Dancing has never been a profession for me. I dance because I enjoy dancing. It is my favorite hobby. Although I have performed and taught dance professionally, I never considered it a profession. It has always been a hobby and will remain that way. Dancing allows me to remain connected with my soul and what's truly important in life. My friends, family, and coworkers know the importance of music and dance in my life. I work with a lot of judges, attorney, and doctors who enjoy dancing. As a matter of fact, several of my coworkers dance with me and take dance lessons on an on-going basis.

**How do you characterize your dance style? Middle Eastern male belly dance maybe?**

I do not categorize myself as any specific style dancer. My dance style is referred to as "danse orientale." I enjoy many styles of dance. Some of my favorites are Arabic, Salsa, and Merengue.

**You are from an Armenian-African mixed family. What are some unique points of that combination?**

Most people question my skin color. Specially, if they hear me speak Armenian.

see KHOROZIAN, page 13



## 100 Years From Home

*Documentary to Air Sept. 1 on PBS*

LOS ANGELES — Lilit Pilikian's parents would have never met, and a new family and generation would have never formed, had her ancestors not been targeted and forced to flee their homeland during the Armenian Genocide in the early 20th century.

Pilikian came to the grim realization that the systematic killings of her people is a reason why she is alive today, and embarked on a storytelling journey that has led to "100 Years from Home," a documentary that makes its broadcast premiere on PBS SoCal on Tuesday, September 1 at 8:30 p.m. PT.

"100 Years from Home" is a vivid portrait of an American woman grappling with questions about cultural identity, intergenerational trauma, family, survival, and finding her place in her community and the world as an Armenian.

The film was nominated for "Best Documentary" at the 2019 Arpa International Film Festival in Hollywood, Calif. where it premiered to a sold-out screening.

The picture follows Pilikian's journey as she searches for her great-grandparents' house in modern-day Turkey in the location of which they were forced to abandon over a century ago during the Armenian Genocide, which killed over 1.5 million Armenians during and after World War I.

The home's blueprint was passed down from generation-to-generation until finally ending up in the hands of Pilikian. On the eve of the 100th anniversary of the Genocide on April 24, 2015, Pilikian embarked on an emotional journey to Armenia and Turkey in search of the house with her filmmaker husband, Jared White.

The harrowing-yet-hopeful documentary was produced by the duo and directed by White, a non-Armenian who offers a unique outsider's perspective on the subject.

"My culture and identity is something I've always struggled with, and it's probably something most people don't even know about," said Pilikian. "Jared and I were able to tell the '100 Years from Home' story in a way that allows people who aren't Armenian into this world."

The husband-and-wife tandem had to balance their roles as a couple and filmmakers while they captured the intimate and painful story.

Born in Los Angeles, which is home to one of the largest Armenian populations in the world, Pilikian never felt fully at home as an Armenian or as an American. Her struggles are common among American-born children of immigrants.

see DOCUMENTARY, page 17



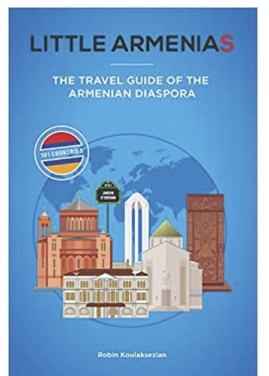
Jared White and Lilit Pilikian at the Arpa Film Festival

## Little Armenias: The Travel Guide of the Armenian Diaspora Published in English

PARIS — In 2018, the first edition of *Little Armenias* was published in French. It's like a Lonely Planet travel guide book, but for the Armenian Diaspora. One by one, the book presents the Armenian communities in 101 countries, including their history, geography, as well as fun facts. To prepare for one's trip, readers also can find information about every single Armenian place (churches, cultural centers, restaurants, markets, etc.). It's exhaustive, every place is in it, and it's up-to-date, thanks to a large network of collaborators. Also, because the author has visited most of the places himself.

The French edition was presented in more than 20 Armenian cultural centers in France, Belgium, Switzerland and Canada. After a meeting with the author in Lisbon in 2019, the Director of the Armenian Communities Department at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Dr. Razmik Panossian, suggested to have the book available in English too. The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation offered its generous assistance to translate and publish *Little Armenias* in English.

Entirely updated for the 2020 edition, the book is now available in English and a book tour in Europe and the USA will be organized soon.



The mission of the Armenian Communities Department is to create a viable future for the Armenian people in which its culture and language are preserved and valued. *Little Armenias* is a tool. It can be used to learn about Armenians in other countries, but more than anything, it's a tool to value our presence in the diaspora with a tourism approach. Our neighborhoods, our monuments, our sub-cultures, our territories all over the world are part of Armenia. Our diaspora is also our land, and it can be visited, as any other travel destination.

Robin Koulaksezian is a French Armenian traveler born in Paris. He graduated from Sorbonne University and ESSEC Business School, and worked for the French government. He notably lived in Syria and Russia, and speaks 8 languages. After visiting more than a hundred countries and collecting information from hundreds of locals, he decided to publish a travel guide dedicated to the Armenian Diaspora.

To order the book, write to the author at [koulaksezian@gmail.com](mailto:koulaksezian@gmail.com) or visit its page on Facebook: *Little Armenias* or Instagram: [@littlearmenias](https://www.instagram.com/littlearmenias)



Author Robin Koulaksezian





## ARTS &amp; LIVING



# Impresarios of Ballet

## Danilians Impeded by COVID

By **Aram Arkun**

Mirror-Spectator Staff

NEW YORK – Nowadays there are not too many old-fashioned impresarios left in the field of dance in the United States. Ardani Artists, in the person of founders Sergei and Gaiane Danilian, fills that gap, but its work is threatened, like many other things, by the novel coronavirus.

Their dream started decades earlier in Moscow, in 1990, when the duo founded this management firm. It brought many famous American artists to Russia and began sending Russian ballet stars to the US. In 1992, Gaiane, Sergei's wife, moved to the US with their two sons but Sergei worked in both countries and delayed finalizing his move till 1998. Ardani Artists established its offices in New York City Center in 1994.

### Background

Sergei was born in Sumgait, Azerbaijan but went to Russia for his education, where he met his wife and future business partner Gaiane. Gaiane was born in Yerevan and moved to Moscow at the age of 13. Sergei and Gaiane both studied in the Russian Academy of Theater Arts and afterwards worked for various theaters. Sergei eventually began organizing dance and theater tours. Gaiane and Sergei's son Armen was staying with his grandparents in Sumgait in early 1988. Gaiane relates that when tensions began to increase in Azerbaijan that year, she had a bad feeling or some sort of mother's intuition. She spoke with her mother-in-law and asked that her in-laws bring Armen and come together to Moscow, but the latter replied that everything was safe and that they were looking forward to celebrating Armen's birthday on March 1.

Gaiane insisted, and brushed aside the argument that it would be bad luck to come together to celebrate the birthday earlier. She sent tickets, and the mother-in-law brought Armen to Moscow.

Gaiane's father-in-law decided to stay and ended up a witness of the Azerbaijani pogroms against Armenians on February 29-March 1, 1988. He was kept hidden by Jewish friends, who later moved to Brooklyn, and saw Azerbaijanis throwing infants out of windows.

### In the USA

The first big project Ardani Artists organized in New York was in Carnegie Hall, Gaiane reminisced, in 1994. It was called

Interrupted Chime, and was dedicated to the 1988 earthquake in Armenia. The Danilians brought over the Nerses Shnorhali choir from Armenia, famous Armenian actor Armen Dzhigarkhanyan, and the Symphonic Orchestra of the Eugene Kolobov Novaya Opera Theater of Moscow (a versatile team of musicians and opera singers). They rented the large Isaac Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall, but did not realize that they need

Wheeldon, Arthur Pita and Alastair Marriott from England, Mauro Bigonzetti from Italy and Jean-Christophe Maillot from Monte Carlo. It brought famed companies like the Eifman Ballet of St. Petersburg, the Mariinsky Theater, and the Bolshoi Ballet to the United States and managed famous dancers like Diana Vishneva, Natalia Osipova and Polina Semionova. Its 25th anniversary gala in 2016 included, besides Osipova, other sought-after dancers like Marcelo Gomes, Friedemann Vogel, Joaquín De Luz, Denis Matvienko and Ivan Vasiliev.

Later, Gaiane said, they set up a series of projects called "Kings of the Dance" for some of the best male dancers in the world, and invited different choreographers from around the world to work with them and create special choreography for those dancers. These dancers included Nikolay Tsiskaridze, Angel Corella, Johan Kobborg, Ethan Stiefel, Marcelo Gomes, Ivan Vasiliev, Desmond Richardson, Jose Manuel Carreño, Roberto Bolle, Guillaume Côté and David Hallberg.

Ardani pioneered a sort of mini-ballet with solos for two, she said. In general, big companies like the Bolshoi or Mariinsky or Royal are great, but cannot pay attention even to their principal dancers. Ardani fills this gap and as a small company can give such opportunities. She said, "We are eager to see other sides of their talent, to give them that chance to be a star in their own ballet."

Over the years, the couple have accumulated quite an archive. Gaiane said that their posters and archives were shared between two museums in Moscow. In November 2016 various items were donated to the Sheremetev Palace's Museum of Theater and Music, while over 100 costumes were donated to the Bakhrushin Museum. The two museums held exhibits called Impresario: Dance Trajectory. It started first in late 2017 to 2018 at the Sheremetev Palace's Museum of Theater and Music, with rare photos of "cult figures," and a separate exhibit displayed dancers' costumes and props from various ballets at the Bakhrushin Museum in 2019.

They have also published a number of coffee table books, including *Diana Vishneva: Beauty in Motion* (2008), *Impresario: Dancer in New Dimensions* (2016) and *Choreographer: Boris Eifman, The Man Who Dared* (2018).

### With Armenians and Armenia

The Danilians always kept strong connections with Armenians and Armenia. Gaiane said that while there are many cultured and knowledgeable Armenians who go to the theater, opera and plays, there were initially not that many who would come to ballet, especially classical ballet. However, she said, "We are glad that we found our niche among Armenians and we find that love. We are so happy that we have so many Armenians now who come to see our performances, especially in California. They are so proud of us, and that is really beautiful. We are so happy that now they are coming with their families, bringing grandparents and grandchildren—it is really amazing. We have seen it grow over the years. We finally built our Armenian audience."

While there are not that many Armenian dancers, the Danilians have worked with a number of them. Gaiane said that furthermore they have friendships that have stretched over decades with many Armenians in other fields. She went back to Armenia in September 2016 and took her now Brooklynite mother in 2019 to Yerevan on her 80th birthday.

Charles Aznavour is among the creative Armenian artists the Danilians have admired and worked with. Gaiane reminisced that the first concert she could afford to go to in New York was of Aznavour and Liza Minnelli in 1993, in the last row of the balcony.



Danilians with the La Scala Ballet from Milan at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Costa Mesa, Calif. (photo Doug Gifford)

to have a public relations firm to write features about the event and advertise it.

She said, "Financially, it was a total disaster. We lost everything. But we built a name. We met a lot of very interesting and very powerful people due to our concept on that stage."

Ardani became very successful in the US. It promoted Russian choreographers like Boris Eifman, Vladimir Varnava, Maxim Petrov and Ilia Jivoy, and famous choreographers from other countries like Nacho Duato from Spain, Christopher

Then in 2009, Aznavour was supposed to perform in the New York City Center theater and Gaiane was asked to head the advertising and marketing campaign for the ethnic media (Armenian, Russian, French, etc.) to sell tickets in the tristate area for this performance. She immediately agreed, replying "without a doubt, I will do everything possible which is in my power to ensure that Charles Aznavour's concerts in New York City will have tremendous financial success. He invested in my homeland, Armenia, so much of his soul, talent and financial





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

resources to see the nation bloom economically and culturally.” She said later, “It was very important for me, because I know that he will help our motherland Armenia with every penny that he earned during his concerts.”

Ardani Artists was again in charge of a similar campaign in 2012, but unfortunately immediately after a press conference held at the Ardani offices, tour organizer Live Nation canceled the New York concerts. Gaiane said this was the result of a



From left, sponsor Ashot Khachaturyants, Gaiane Danilian, dancer Natalia Osipova, Sergei Danilian, at the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Music Theatre (photo Marinika Krylova)

shameless attempt to cut Aznavour’s fee which the latter did not accept (see <https://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/24/charles-aznavour-cancels-new-york-shows-in-contract-dispute/>).

Ardani also has a major Armenian sponsor in Moscow, Ashot Khachaturyants, who for the last three years provided great financial help. Thanks to him, it was possible to create “Dreamers,” a two-act ballet with the Mariinsky Ballet and orchestra, and the famous Big Children Choir of Television and Radio of Russia, as well as “Isadora,” a two-act ballet dedicated to the famous American dancer Isadora Duncan. He was the sponsor of the two aforementioned Impresario: Dance Trajectory exhibitions and the coffee table book on Eifman mentioned above.

### COVID-19 Changes All

Along with shutting down Broadway shows, Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera and many other cultural institutions in New York, COVID-19 forced an end to all ballet tours. Gaiane said that Ardani had to cancel performances of the Eifman Ballet at Lincoln Center and the La Scala Ballet of Milan, Italy and the Mikhailovsky Ballet of St. Petersburg, Russia, both at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Costa Mesa, Calif. She said that they paid for tickets, airfare and deposits for hotels, but received some of this money back.

The Eifman Ballet was almost sold out for its performance which was supposed to be this June, but Ardani tried to postpone it to March 2021. Gaiane said that she is not sure even if this date will work. She said, “We have to be ready mentally and feel safe to go to the theater.”

Even if the performances will be allowed to take place, the theaters state that the entire house cannot be sold out. For example, if there are 3,000 seats in Lincoln Center, only one-



Charles Aznavour, Gaiane Danilian, Sergei Danilian at the Ardani City Center office in NYC prior to Aznavour’s press conference in 2012 (photo Nina Alovert)



From left, Sergei Danilian, Gaiane Danilian, Roman Abramovich, Boris Eifman and Maria Abashova, NYC at Lincoln Center, David Koch Theatre (photo German Gureev). Roman Abramovich was the sponsor of the Eifman Ballet premiere of “Anna Karenina” with the New York City Ballet Orchestra.

third can be sold to allow for social distancing. Gaiane exclaimed, “Can you imagine, to bring a company and sell the house for one-third? You won’t even cover your expenses, and we are not even talking about profits. You will not have funds to pay the artists.” The Eifman Ballet has around 70 people so if this rule stands, Ardani will be forced to cancel, Gaiane said. The administration of Lincoln Center told Ardani that it is too early to decide and has promised more information at the end of August. Lincoln Center is not sure even if it can open at all next year, but still is selling tickets.

Gaiane pointed out that while it is wonderful that it is possible to watch performances online or broadcast at home, watching in your kitchen is a very different experience than in person. She said, “You go to the theater for live emotion—to react, to feel with our hearts...harmony with beauty and positivity. It is a different feeling. You make your hair, and put on a beautiful dress and high heels. You are going to meet magic—a miracle! And you get to meet your friends in the theater and get cham-

pagne. Even if it is 25 dollars a glass, it is the feeling of holiday. You are celebrating something very special.”

From March of this year, due to the preventative measures against the epidemic, revenue resources stopped and along with it, the Danilians’ salaries. Only the two Danilians are on the permanent payroll of Ardani Artists.

When they have projects, Gaiane explained, they hire people to work for them. There are more than ten people that work for the company, largely technical staff, who collaborate with the local technical crews of various theaters on lighting, carpentry, set changes, costumes and wardrobes. Before each performance, all production specifications are sent to the local venue to allow for preparation, but the Ardani technical director is in charge of the final arrangements on stage.

All technical staff, Gaiane said, went onto unemployment but the Danilians cannot do this.

As Ardani is not a non-profit, it applied for government support for small businesses, but so far has not received anything, according to Gaiane.

The entire entertainment industry, she exclaimed, is paralyzed. She said, “If the state simply does not provide serious financial assistance and does not help the entire industry, which brings billions of dollars to the US economy, the entertainment industry will not be able to recover for a very long time; an entertainment industry that attracted millions of tourists from all over the world, who came to the United States to specifically watch Broadway shows, listen to concerts at Carnegie Hall, watch the best opera and ballet performances and so on, throughout the country. And it’s not just ticket revenues. It is also revenues from booked hotels, airline tickets, and payments for theater workers.”



### Fans to the Rescue in the Meanwhile

In order to help Ardani survive this period, the Danilians’ two sons organized a GoFundMe campaign with a goal of \$100,000.

By August 6, almost \$18,500 had been raised. According to the GoFundMe description, contributions will help “provide much-needed financial support to members of the Ardani Artists staff and crew whose main sources of income are from live performances.”

Gaiane said, “The GoFundMe campaign is very touching. It is so wonderful. We did not expect our kids to do that. They decided, and said, listen, you have given your hearts to audiences and dancers. You dedicated your entire life to the art of ballet. You are one family.”

She added, “We are so grateful to the people who have helped us so far. They know how much effort and love we put into our performances.”

## ‘Being Armenian Means Being Victorious and Honorable’

KHOROZIAN, from page 11

Growing up it was extremely uncomfortable as people had many questions. However, as an adult, I enjoy being different. Some of the issues have included identity and cultural conflict. I was raised by the Armenian side of my family, so I don’t know much about the African side of the family. Jacques (Hagop) is my first name, Kwesi is my African middle name. Al Asmar is an Arabic nickname I have had since I was a kid. It means dark skinned or as we say in Armenian, tkhadem. My full name is Jacques Kwesi Antranik Khoroizian

### How did your father make his way to Ghana?

I believe my father Anthony Khoroizian lived in Ghana from 1965 till 1981. Initially, he worked for a company that specialized in import and export of goods. He later transitioned into structural engineering to build roads and later he shifted completely to the car business.

### I know there was also a Kassadjian family in Ghana. Have you ever met them?

Yes, they were close friends with my parents. I don’t remember them much because I didn’t grow up in Ghana. I left Ghana when I was less than a year old. I was raised in Beirut. I remember Barkev Kassadjian who was my dad’s close friend. I don’t remember the rest.

### You have studied at the Peter and Elizabeth Torosian Armenian Evangelical School in Lebanon. Do you read and write in Armenian?

Yes, I attended an Armenian school. I also attended the Armenian Seminary in Lebanon. I read and write six languages

fluently. Armenian is my primary language. The other languages I speak are Arabic, English, French, Spanish, and Turkish.

### Are you acquainted with Armenian literature? Do you have favorite authors?

I am a huge fan of Hagop Baronian, Levon Shant, Silva Kaputikyan, Gevorg Emin, Anahit Sahinyan and Vahram Sahakian.

### I am impressed. And what about Armenian dances?

Although I am very familiar with Armenian dances, I never had the opportunity to learn them properly. I can participate or I can follow someone. I would love to learn more about the various types of Armenian dances.

### You have participated in a film with an unusual part. How was that experience?

I participated in the film directed by Tina Bastajian, called “Pinched Cheeks and Slurs in a Language That Avoids Her,” because it was an Armenian short movie depicting a woman of color who is Armenian. Tina is extremely avant-garde and always ahead of her time. The role was exciting and difficult because I had to play the opposite gender. Capturing the true essence of a woman is impossible for a man; however, I interviewed several Armenian women in my community and I sought advice. I wanted to deliver a genuine and authentic experience through the screen.

### Are you in touch with Armenians in the US?

Of course, I have a lot of Armenian friends. A lot of my friends from Lebanon have moved to the US and we have all reconnected. I have also met new friends who have taught me more

about the Western Armenian culture.

### Your younger brother is DJ Raffy...

Yes, my brother is a DJ. He’s located in San Francisco. He is very popular and he does a lot of Armenian and Middle Eastern events.

### What do you like in Armenian culture?

I appreciate the rich history of Armenia. I love the fact that it was the first nation to accept Christianity around of 301 AD. In my opinion, Armenians are the most resilient people on this planet. Despite all adversities over the years, Armenians keep prospering and gaining recognition, which has been long due. Armenian food is heavenly. I can eat so much. I am so glad that my grandmother passed on all the traditional recipes to me. I enjoy *manti*, *vospov kofte*, *chikofte*, and *lahmajoun*.

### Have you ever been in Armenia?

Unfortunately, not yet. I would love to visit sometime. It is my dream to see where my ancestors came from. I understand Armenia is a beautiful country. I want to see Mount Ararat and I want to experience Khor Virab. Also, I heard that life is amazing in Armenia.

Growing up in Lebanon during the civil war and being Armenian had its pros and cons. I often wondered why everyone did not speak the Armenian. Life was not easy, but it taught me invaluable lessons of cultural appreciation and values that are unique to the Armenian culture. I take pride in my heritage and culture. To me, being Armenian means being victorious and honorable. We are one of the chosen people by God. We survive, thrive, and prosper no matter what we go through...





ARTS & LIVING

# Songs of Cilicia Celebrated

SONGS, from page 1

Thousands of Armenians and even the Catholicos had followed the exiled nobles to the area, and even after the Kingdom fell in 1375 and the Catholicosate returned to Echmiadzin in 1441, Cilicia remained home to a vibrant Armenian community. Its chief bishop retained his status of Catholicos as well, though subordinate to Echmiadzin. In literature, poetry, and song, the Armenian people extolled Cilicia second only to the homeland of Armenia itself. It is no wonder that during the war, so many Armenian young men signed up to fight the Turks as “gamavors” under French leadership in the specially created Armenian Legion, as the Allies promised them a homeland in Cilicia through the intercession of Boghos Nubar, head of the AGBU. Though the Allied and Armenian troops arrived in 1918 and ADL leader Mihran Damadian attempted to declare Cilicia’s independence on August 5, 1920, the French ceded Cilicia to the Kemalist Turks in late 1921 and evacuated their troops on January 4, 1922, forcing the Armenians into a second exile.

One of the earliest songs referencing the Armenians in Cilicia is the *Lamentation of Levon*. I will here paraphrase the remarks of Puzant Yeghiayan on this song, in his book, *History of the Armenians of Adana*.

“It is known from the history of the Armenians of Cilicia, that the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt, Baybars al-Bunduqdarr, receiving aid from the Crusaders’ Emperor Frederick II [actually, Frederick’s son King Manfred of Sicily] against the attacks of the unified Armeno-Tatar front, conquered Syria and Cilicia in a counter-attack, and in one fateful blow, Toros, son of King Hetoum I of Cilicia, fell in battle, while his other son Levon was taken to Egypt as a slave in 1266.

It was only four years later that Levon, being freed, would come and sit on the Cilician Throne as Levon III [King Leo II of Armenian Cilicia, ruled 1270-1289].

This little ballad, which repeats the well-known episode from the epic *Sassountsi Tavit* of Msra Melik playing with the ball, is perhaps a remnant of a Cilician epic similar to *Sassountsi Tavit*, or, even a prototype of *Sassountsi Tavit*.”

The song begins with *Avagh, uzLeonn asem, vor Dajgats toorn ungel ker*. The following is based mostly on the translation of the song printed in Father Leo Alishan’s (Mekhitarist) book of *Armenian Popular Songs* (1867), with some modernization and additions based on the version in Yeghiayan’s book.

On Levon, son of Hetoum I

I say alas, for Levon, who has fallen  
Into slavery at the court of the Muslims  
My light, my light, and Holy Virgin!  
The Holy Cross be helper to Levon and everyone!

The Sultan has come into the courtyard  
He plays with his golden globe  
My light, my light, and Holy Virgin!  
The Holy Cross be helper to Levon and everyone!

He played and gave it to Levon:  
“Take, play, and give it to your papa.”  
My light, my light, and Holy Virgin!  
The Holy Cross be helper to Levon and everyone!

Levon said to the Sultan  
“You play, the playing befits you,  
I and my papa are your slaves”  
My light, my light, and Holy Virgin!  
The Holy Cross be helper to Levon and everyone!

“Leo, if you become a Moslem,  
I will make you king”  
My light, my light, and Holy Virgin!  
The Holy Cross be helper to Levon and everyone!

Leo sitting in the fortress  
With a handkerchief to his eyes wept:  
“You caravan which goes to Sis,  
Take the news to my papa!”

When his father heard it  
He collected many troops of horsemen;  
He went against the Sultan,  
And made many rivers of blood flow.

He took his son Levon,  
And obtained the desire of his heart.  
My light, my light, my light, and Holy Virgin!  
The Holy Cross be helper to Levon and everyone!

At the time of the Kingdom of Cilicia, the art of Armenian Church music and writing of sharagans reached its peak, especially by the pen of St. Nersess Shnorhali. After the fall of Cilicia, the *sharagan* repertoire was closed. Therefore, it should be no surprise to anyone that Cilicia being as it were a kingdom wedged between the Byzantine, Arab, Turkish, and Crusader states and empires, the Armenian church music which was per-

fectured there should show similar melodic characteristics to the music of those cultures. However, we are not going to analyze the sharagans written in Cilicia other than to say that Nersess Shnorhali at this time composed the famous Arevakal service, today commonly used in Armenian Apostolic Churches on the Sunday mornings of Lent, to minister to those Armenians who continued to worship the sun and were called Arevortik, by comparing Christ to the sun.

Skipping forward to the modern period, we should note that Cilicia (Giligia as it is pronounced in Western Armenian) was seen as a second homeland for Armenians. Though the equivalent of Cilicia in terms of Turkish provinces was the *Vilayet* of Adana, including the cities of Adana, Tarsus, Deort Yol, and Sis, and Hadjin; the Armenians of Zeitun, Marash, Aintab, Musa Dag and Kessab also considered themselves part of Cilicia though Musa Dag and Kessab were geographically and historically speaking suburbs of Antioch, in ancient times the capital of Syria. Zeitun and Hadjin, as well as Tomarza just to the north in Cappadocia, were independent or semi-independent Armenian city-states, ruled by their own princes descended from Cilician nobility. Zeitun in particular guarded its autonomy closely, including their right to bear arms, and rose up against the Ottoman government in the famous rebellion of 1862.

The most famous song to be written about Cilicia was undoubtedly Nahabed Rousinian’s immortal *Giligia* (“Yerpvor Patzvin Turnern Houso” – When The Doors Of Hope Are Opened). Rousinian was born in 1819 in Efkere, a village of Gesaria and moved to Constantinople with his family at a young age. While Gesaria was technically a part of Cappadocia, judging from Rousinian’s song, he, and probably many other Western Armenian intellectuals, saw Cilicia as his homeland. He describes it as “the land which gave me life.” It is to be noted that while in modern times the inhabitants of the cities of Cilicia (Adana, Aintab, Marash) were entirely Turkish-speaking Armenians, and an extremely difficult Armenian dialect was spoken in the villages such as Hadjin, Zeitoun, Musa Dag and Kessab, at the same time, a more standard form of Armenian had been spoken in Cilicia during the period of the medieval Kingdom and in that period had been the place where some of the attributes of Western Armenian are first seen to emerge, such as the consonantal differences from Eastern Armenian. But, it was probably Cilicia’s political history, ancient and modern, as well as its economic importance in the late Ottoman Empire (people from other provinces would often go to Adana to make their fortune, as a sort of alternative to migrating to Constantinople) and its natural beauty that drew the fascination of Armenians from Constantinople and across the Empire.

Rousinian was a noted modernizer in the Armenian community, who with Krikor Odian and others conceived and drew up the Armenian National Constitution of 1860 (adopted in 1863), which democratized the functioning of the Armenian Millet (Nation), that is, the Apostolic Church in its function as a political institution under Ottoman law. He was also a promoter of the use of modern Armenian (ashkharhapar) as opposed to the Classical Armenian (krapar). After the Mount Lebanon Civil War of 1860, he, along with other Armenians, was sent by the Ottoman government to restore peace. After this trip, he wrote the poem “Giligia,” which was based on the French poem and song “Ma Normandie” (My Normandy) by Frederic Berat. While it is clear the lyrics are based on Berat’s poem, Rousinian made a truly inspired adaptation to the Armenian – inspired because of its clarity and ease of understanding as well as inspiring lyrics, despite the use of Classical Armenian forms here and there. Yeghiayan in his Adana book demonstrates how good Rousinian’s work really was by placing side by side his familiar version with another, inferior adaptation of “Ma Normandie” that was made by renowned poet Mgrdich Beshigtashlian.

The music of the song *Giligia*, while loosely based on the original, is also moving and was composed by Kapriel Yeranian of Constantinople, possibly the first to introduce Western compositional techniques into the Armenian community.

Yeranian published the periodicals *Oriental Lyre* (1857-1858) and *Armenian Lyre* (1861-1862) in which he printed for the first time Armenian songs in Western notation. His students included Nigoghayos Tashjian, notable for being the official compiler of what became the standard versions of most Armenian church melodies, as well as Dikran Choukhajian, notable as the first to write an Armenian opera (“Arshag II”) as well as the first to write Turkish operas (some of which, such as “Leblebiji” were later translated into Armenian). Yeranian was also the author of the patriotic song *Hayastan, Yergir Trakhdavayr* which has been considered by scholars the one of the very few serious contenders should the Armenian national anthem ever be changed from *Mer Hayrenik*. Since Yeranian died in 1862, the song *Giligia* must have been composed between 1860 and 1862, making it one of the earliest Armenian patriotic songs, along



Nahabed Rousinian

with others by Yeranian.

Tenor Armenag Shah-Mouradian, a protégé of Gomidas Vartabed, soloist of the Paris Grand Opera, and the most famous Armenian classical performer of his time, lived in New York from 1914 to 1930 and recorded a well-known version of *Giligia* in New York in 1918 for Columbia Records.

The following English translation of the song *Giligia* was made by Nina E. Rice, an American who taught at the missionary-run Anatolia College in Marsovan before the Genocide:



Armenag Shah-Mouradian

When doors of hope are open wide  
And dreary winter flees away,  
Our beauteous Armenia  
Beams forth in glad and smiling day;  
When swallows to their nests return  
And trees put on their leaves so bright  
I yearn for my home, Cilicia,  
The land where first I saw the light.

There comes to each a time of life  
When all our hopes are gone at last  
The poor soul longs and strives no more  
And dwells alone upon the past  
Then, when my breaking harp, unstrung,  
Shall sing to hope a last good-night  
I'll go to sleep in Cilicia  
The land where first I saw the light.

We conclude our discussion of *Yerpvor Patzvin* (Giligia) with the words of noted musicologist and one of the five disciples of Gomidas, Mihran Toumajan: “This is the song which, like a magnet, has pulled to itself and does pull and bring near all the ancestral emotions and dreams of the Armenian, giving an imprint to them, which is invisible, but exists and comes like a vision rolling down from the ages...”

The next song to be mentioned is a rather rare one in the Armenian repertoire, but was actually written in Giligia. The song *Aykoon Aykoon, Im Khtsgin Mod* (At Dawn, At Dawn, Near My Little Room) was, according to M. Toumajan, extremely popular in Cilicia between 1900 and 1915, but he does not know who the composer was, stating it was attributed to various famous poets. Puzant Yeghiayan in his work informs us that this song was sung often by Bishop Yeghishe Garoyan in Antelias in the 1930s and 40s, and that Bishop Yeghishe had stated that it was written by his classmate from the seminary in Sis, Mihran Isbirian. Isbirian, an Armenian-speaker born in Sepastia in 1873, had spent 6 years in the seminary, travelled throughout Cilicia and Syria, and become a teacher of the Armenian and French languages in his hometown before being murdered in 1915. Evidently he had written *Aykoon Aykoon* while in the seminary and the reference to “Khtsig” as a small room, also means a hermit’s or monk’s cell. Musicologist Toumajan believed that it was based on an “older, sharagan-style melody.” The lyrics of *Aykoon Aykoon*, translated, follow:

At dawn, at dawn,  
Near my little room  
With a bright smile, until the morning  
Sings my nightingale of Sis:  
Giligia, Giligia, Giligia

Spring comes, the flowers blossom  
In the fields, in the bosom of the valley  
But my little nightingale still laments:  
Giligia, Giligia, Giligia

Roses open in deep red color  
Again my mourning messenger  
Doesn’t change his sad cry:  
Giligia, Giligia, Giligia

Akh, the red petals of that rose  
Were painted with the blood of ancestors  
And those dewdrops are tears,  
Giligia, Giligia, Giligia

Be silent, nightingale, don’t sing anymore  
Don’t renew our old pains  
Be silent, your voice opens wounds  
Giligia, Giligia, Giligia

Unfortunately it is difficult to find a recording of this song. An Anatolian-style version was recorded in the US in 1928 by Gesaratsi singer Garabet Merjanian. However, possibly because the nightingale has a “bright smile,” Merjanian seems to interpret the song in a more happy, patriotic march-like style. However, it is also possible to sing the song in a sad way, as we hear in modern Armenia-based singer Lilit Pipoyan’s arrangement.





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This brings us to the next and perhaps most famous song about Cilicia – *Adanayi Voghpuh* (the Lamentation of Adana). This piece, written by Smpad Piurad (Smpad Der Ghazarian) is a direct reference and response to the Adana Massacre of 1909.

Piurad was born in Zeitoun in 1862, and educated in his hometown, as well as Jarankavorats in Jerusalem and the Sorbonne. He returned to Zeitoun where he became the superintendent of schools. However, after he and his wife were jailed and tortured during the 1890s, they went into exile, returning to Constantinople after the Revolution of 1908 when he became a Member of Parliament. During this period he participated in many political struggles and wrote numerous books. He was one of those rounded up and murdered on April 24, 1915.



Smpad Piurad

As most Armenians are well aware, after the proclamation of the Ottoman Constitution in 1908, the Young Turks (CUP – Committee of Union and Progress) took control of the Ottoman Empire, with the “bloody” Sultan Abdul Hamid reduced to a mere figurehead. Armenian political organizations and parties were supportive of this effort which was supposed to bring democracy and civil rights to Turkey. But in 1909, a counter-revolution by monarchists led to an outbreak of massacres in Adana and throughout the Cilicia region, leaving about 30,000 dead and half the city torched.

While the ADL and other parties opposed further cooperation with the CUP (the ADL in fact aligned itself with the new, pro-Western “Freedom and Accord” party that was briefly active until Talat and his clique took complete power over the government in 1913), the ARF continued their cooperation with the majority CUP party who held almost all parliament seats, until the CUP itself instigated their genocidal policies in 1915. Nevertheless, leading ARF members such as poet Siamanto, living in Boston at the time, decried the violence of 1909, as did all Armenians. Siamanto published his *Garmir Lourer Paregames* (Bloody News From My Friend) which included his horrific poem “the Dance,” remembered for its outburst, “Oh human justice, I spit in your face!”

Siamanto’s poem along with Smpad Piurad’s *Adanayi Yerkuh* (the Song of Adana, as it was originally titled), and other works formed the literary section of Hagop Terzian’s *Giligyo Aghede* (The Holocaust of Cilicia), published in Constantinople in 1912 (seemingly a brief high point of Armenian freedom) documenting the atrocities that had taken place only a few years earlier. Smpad Piurad’s song is described as coming from something called *Hayoon Yerkaran* (The Armenians’ Songbook) but I was unable to find this original work. The lyrics to this extremely moving song, as written in Terzian’s book, I have translated below:

The Song of Adana

The pitiless carnage, let the Armenians weep  
Splendid Adana has turned into a desert  
The fire and the sword, the mob and plunder  
The house of Roupen, akh, they turned to ruins

Bright sun, don’t give your light anymore  
But bind a necklace of mourning around your light  
A simoom from the south passed through our country  
It dried up and withered every tree and flower

A moment hadn’t passed, and the poor Armenians  
Fell beneath the sword and the terrible mob  
Churches and schools were lost in the flames  
Thousands of Armenians died unsparingly

The unfeeling, lawless evil left orphaned  
The child from its mother, the bride from her groom  
The shameless Jevad, the vile Adil  
Ate and were satisfied by the blood of the Armenian

Alas! Wealthy Adana is empty  
All of Cilicia has turned to ashes  
Only sweet Hadjin lived  
Why wasn’t rocky Zeitoun moved?

For three days and nights from within the fire  
The enemy’s sword and bomb, from outside  
Erased the Armenian from the face of the earth  
Blood flowed from our clear rivers

As seen in the song, *Jevad* (Cevad) *Bey*, the Vali of Adana Province, and Adil Bey, a representative of the Ministry of the Interior from Constantinople, were held responsible by the songwriter for the events of 1909. Adil Bey became notorious among Armenians for a telegram he had sent to Jevad with orders from the central government stating that “The financial institutions along with foreign buildings should be protected and peace should be preserved.” Armenian political leaders, especially Member of Parliament Krikor Zohrab, openly argued in the Ottoman Parliament that “preserve peace” or “restore order” was code in the language of the old regime for “massacre the Armenians.” The song’s reference to Hadjin recognizes that all-Armenian town’s successful self-defense during the massacre, while the reference to Zeitoun, seems to be a criticism or question by the Zeitoun native that his hometown, known for its uprisings and armed citizenry, should have per-

haps been able to oppose the massacres more vigorously. *Adanayi Voghpuh* to this day is sung in commemoration of what happened in 1909 and indeed the total loss of Armenian existence in Anatolia in 1915.

In addition to Smpad Piurad’s song, Terzian’s documentary book also includes a poem written in Turkish about the massacre – “Adananin Destani” (The Ballad of Adana) by Adana native Levon Ebeyan, otherwise known as Asik Ihsani. This was no surprise, as the Armenians of Adana were mostly Turkish-speaking. A song in the language they understood was obviously considered appropriate in a book about the suffering they had endured. Although “Adananin Destani” is no longer well known, another Turkish song about the incident written by Ebeyan is, to some degree. As previously stated, a number of Turks (many of them innocent) and Armenians were hanged in the aftermath of the massacre as scapegoats. The most infamous of these executions was that of “Kasab” (Butcher) Misak – a butcher by trade and not as a nickname – who was considered completely innocent, and in fact had not even tried to resist, but had hid in the local church with the women and children. Nevertheless, Misak was hanged for the alleged crime of killing 25 Turks. Misak was himself apparently an *ashough* (minstrel) and sang his last words as he was going up to the gallows, blaming his death as a punishment for not having actually fought back. Levon Ebeyan also wrote a song about Kasab Misak, which was so widespread that it was even sung by the Turkish-speaking Cappadocian Greeks to the north. A recording of it made in the late 1940s by Cappadocian Greek singer Theodoros Demirtzoglou (born in Nigde) ended up being a big seller in the Armenian-American community. The refrain of the song translates:

What kind of fate is this, Kasab Misak?  
Can anyone stand this situation?  
You were hanged like an innocent lamb  
Can the one who sees it, believe it?

The fact that a Greek singer was the only person to have preserved this song, shows that the Greeks, as fellow Christians and victims of Genocide themselves, were aware of what was happening to the Armenians and sympathized with them. The song also shows the hypocrisy of the Turkish government which tried to cover up the fact that Cevad Bey, the Vali of Adana, was implicated in the massacres, by having innocent people hanged.

Since we have reached the subject of Turkish songs, it would be unfair not to mention that Adana and the rest of Cilicia was the home of numerous Armenian musicians who played instruments such as the *oud*, violin, clarinet, *saz* (damboura), and *kanon*, and sang songs in Turkish. Many were connected to Adana such as *Aman Adanalim*, *Djanim Adanalim* and there were the famous Aintab songs *Halvaji Halva* and *Alli Da Yemenim*. In addition, the “chifte telli” was extremely popular as a solo dance. Aside from this “kef time” music, there were also the many Ottoman classical “sharkis” that had often been written by Armenian composers. In regard to that style of music, Kevork Chakmakjian of Larnaca stated the following: “Hadji Manoog Agha had a nice voice; he sang choice numbers of Turkish poetry authored by Armenian *ashoughs*, and we listened, hungry for it. Sometimes he explained and interpreted the meaning of difficult words, so we could understand. All the *destans* and *semahs* that he sang were full of moral lessons. Those poems charmed us and we marveled at their beauty. Many times he gave the biography of the composers, also.

“I loved the compositions of those Armenian *ashoughs* so much, that I had copied some 60 of them in my notebook, which I kept with care like a little book, but alas, that my notebook filled with those choice poems became fuel for the fire during the Massacre of Adana, April 14, 1909.”

One of the Armenian musicians/ashoughs of Adana was Oudi Movses Hagopian, who later moved to Syria and then repatriated to Soviet Armenia – where Stalin promptly sent him to Siberia on alleged charges of being an ARF member and/or having worked for the French. After Stalin’s death, Oudi Movses was released and returned to Yerevan where he performed for the Turkish-speaking repatriate community or “akhbars.” At the time of the deportation in 1915, Oudi Movses wrote a long poem in Turkish about the experience, and he did it again in 1920 when the French began to renege on their promise of a free Cilicia. His poem expresses frustration with France and fear of the Kemalists, and wonders where the Armenians will go now.

As most readers know, a similar Anatolian style of music was popular in the US, but was sung as often in Armenian as it was in Turkish, considering most of the immigrants to the US were from Armenian-speaking regions such as Kharpert, Sepastia, and Dikranagerd. Such an approach was also taken in Cilicia during the French occupation – some musicians who knew Armenian decided to translate the lyrics of the songs composed by Armenians in Turkish into Armenian so that they would be suitable for the new nation that the Armenians were trying to build in Cilicia. This effort seems to have been just as short-lived as French-Armenian Cilicia itself. Instead what happened, according to Dr. Vahe Tachjian, was that musicians in the coffeehouses would sing both Turkish songs and Armenian ones, usually patriotic. Patrons were angered that the “sacred” Armenian patriotic songs were sung before or after Turkish tunes, and fights broke out over the issue. The French put a stop to it by banning Armenian songs from the coffeehouses!

One song which seems to have emanated from this era, and

is still popular in the US “kef music” circles, is *Gamavor Zinvor*, first recorded in 1924-25 by singer Karekin Proodian with Udi Edward Bashian and violinist Harry Hasekian (a native of Marash). Although it is actually unclear from the text of the song whether the Cilician or Caucasus “gamavors” (Armenian volunteer fighters) are referenced, there seems to be a consensus that it is about Cilicia and the Armenians that fought under the French. Many of these fighters were recruited from the United States, where thousands of single young men had been immigrating for the prior 35 years. Several kef songs were written about the gamavors, including *Gamavor A Im Yares* (My Love Is A Gamavor) and *Ararayi Zinvor* (Soldier of Arara – a battle in which the French Armenian legion distinguished themselves), both of which were written in the popular “zeybek” rhythm. This Anatolian solo dance was a mark of male virility and highly popular among Armenian immigrants, but often considered a “Turkish” dance and certainly never had Armenian words. In an era largely before the Greek version (zeibekiko) was popular, it seems that giving this dance lyrics about the Armenian fighters was both thematically appropriate and killed two birds with one stone.

Despite these valuable rarities, *Gamavor Zinvor* remains the most famous of this group of kef songs, while the others are known only to a handful of collectors. It is unknown whether the song was written by Proodian himself, his close collaborator and master songwriter Hovsep Shamlian, or an unknown source perhaps in occupied Cilicia or elsewhere in Anatolia or the Middle East. The only clue that could be found was a reference in a book on Amasia that the song was “sung by the survivors after the armistice,” which could include any of the above possibilities. The lyrics, in the voice of a young girl who is in love with an Armenian soldier, translate as follows:

You are a volunteer soldier  
You are a balm for my wounds  
Every night I dream of you  
You are a piece of my heart  
I want to be, I want to be,  
I want to be your turtledove  
I only have one wish to ask of God  
That I be your fiancée  
You walk like a soldier  
Your stance like an officer  
You cannot find a girl  
Who would love you like me  
I want to be, I want to be,  
I want to be your turtledove  
In church, with a white veil  
I want to be standing next to you

Armenian-American Vahan Boyajian, born in Hussenig, Kharpert, was one of these Gamavor Zinvors. Arriving in America as a boy and living with his older sister in Providence, he signed up for the French Armenian Legion after the Genocide started. After serving in Palestine and Cilicia, he returned to America in 1920, settling in New Jersey. His short-lived recording career as a singer included both Turkish kef songs and Kharpert folk songs in Armenian – but his most well-known recording was *Der Zor*, the ballad sung by the Armenian deportees in Turkish during Armenian Genocide itself. Though most survivors of Der Zor seem to have known this song, it



Gamavor veteran Vahan Boyajian (far right)

seems likely that it was either composed by women from Cilicia, or just that it was composed in Turkish because those from Cilicia as well as Kayseri and Yozgat didn’t understand Armenian. There are numerous verses to this song, which has been studied in depth by Verjine Svazlian in Armenia. The lyrics of Boyajian’s version are as follows:

In the deserts of Der Zor, there are many wounded  
Don’t come, doctor, don’t come, there is no hope  
Aside from the one God, we have nobody  
Armenians going because of their nation

In the deserts of Der Zor, I fainted and remained  
My money ran out, I had to sell my child  
Mother, I truly can’t take any more of this  
Armenians going because of their nation

I woke up in the morning and the sun was shining  
The [mercenary] Chechens were sitting oiling their Martins [Martini-Henry rifles]  
In the deserts of Der Zor, blood was flowing  
Armenians going because of their nation





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Tessa Hofmann Book Pays Tribute to Poets Of the Genocide

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — On April 24, 1915, the Young Turk regime rounded up hundreds of Armenians, intellectuals, artists, writers, teachers, religious leaders, community elders in what Prof. Tessa Hofmann has called “elitocide.” It was the alarm that sounded the beginning of the Genocide that was to eliminate all layers of the population, young and old alike. A new book has just appeared in Germany dedicated to the poets murdered in that process.

Tessa Hofmann is well known as a pioneering genocide researcher in Germany, and her books and articles, published in German and English, are required reading for serious students of the genocide against the Armenians, Greeks and other Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire. She has also been a leading campaigner for recognition of the Armenian Genocide, and has launched initiatives to commemorate the victims, like the Promotional Society for the Ecumenical Monuments for Genocide Victims of the Ottoman Empire (FÖGG). Hofmann is also chairwoman of the AGA, the Working Group for Recognition, against Genocide, and for Understanding among Peoples, which issued a joint declaration with the FÖGG to protest of the Turkish decision to covert the Hagia Sophia into a mosque.

Recently, the Berlin-based scholar has published works of a literary nature. In 2019, she issued a book of fables and fairy tales, featuring works by Hovhannes Toumanyan. The German translation was the result of a collaborative effort with Gerayer Koutcharian, who is a professional translator and teacher of Old and Modern Armenian. That same year her own novel, *Tauben und Raben. Ein historischer Roman aus dem alten Irland*, (Doves and Ravens: A Historical Novel from Old Ireland) appeared. And in early summer 2020, a volume of poetry and prose was released, translated into German again with Koutcharian. The title is *Todesvision. Eine Hommage an die ermordeten Dichter Armeniens (1915-1945)* (Vision of Death. Homage to Armenia’s Murdered Poets (1915-1945)). It was published by Donat Verlag in Bremen, which is well known for numerous works dedicated to Armenian history and culture. The volume is illustrated with ten drawings by Khoren Hakobyan, portraits of the authors.

“The collection Todesvision,” we read in the introduction, “came into being in commemoration of Armenian authors murdered in the first half of the 20th century. The anthology contains poetry, fiction and non-fiction prose by nine West Armenian authors. With the exception of Vahan Tekeyan, Zabel Yesayan and Intra they were persecuted and killed during the elitocide of Armenian intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire.” Zabel Yesayan was one of the “few women ... who were on the police lists of names targeted for arrest. Like Vahan Tekeyan, she eluded capture through lucky circumstances. In this collection, she stands as a representative of those authors of West Armenian background who under Soviet rule were victims of the double victimization of Armenians in the 20th century: the second elitocide 1936-39 as well as the deportation of West Armenian ‘Repatriates’ in 1949.”

The selections include accounts not only of the 1915 genocide but also the Hamidian massacres in 1894-96 and 1909.

The anthology grew out of a series of public readings organized in 2014 and 2016 that took place on April 24 in Berlin and Jena, and the form reflects this origin. It is not merely a collection of short works but a poetical journey through the experience, guided by the testimony borne by one of the leading figures. The priest Grigor Balakian was one of the clergymen seized in the mass arrests on April 24, one of the few to survive and record the entire drama.

The saga begins with the arrests. The first poem, “It is Springtime,” is one of the hundreds of folk songs collected by Komitas, musicologist, composer and priest, who was among those arrested that night. A brief biographical sketch introduces the celebrated figure, and Balakian relates how in the coach they shared, Komitas began to display signs of the psychological trauma that would torment him for the rest of his life.

“Dream with No Way Out” and “Aurora” were composed by Artashes Harutyunyan, poet, critic and translator. Known by the pseudonym Garo, he represents the intellectuals arrested in the provinces and taken to their deaths.

Siamanto, considered the most significant West Armenian poet along with Daniel Varoujan, left Constantinople in the period of the Hamidian massacres and lived in exile in Cairo, Geneva, London and Paris, where he was influenced by French culture, especially the symbolist poet Paul Verlaine.

His first poem, composed in 1898, lends its name to the title of the volume, “Vision of Death.” Like many other intellectuals, he returned to Constantinople following the 1908 revolution; in 1909 he learned of the Adana massacres, which inspired his “Red News from My Friend.” The Dantesque images of violence and suffering will be echoed in works of other poets, for example, Vahan Tekeyan. Poet, teacher and social worker, Tekeyan was abroad in 1915, thus escaping the Genocide. His “survivor guilt” led him to doubt his faith in God, as expressed in “Diaspora,” a poem presented together with “Deportation.” In “You Will Fall,” he addresses the aggressors, foretelling their ruinous end and giving voice to the “hatred and wrath” of the victims, that will reappear in works by other poets.

Daniel Varoujan, we learn in the biographical sketch, studied with the Mekhitarist order in Venice and Ghent, and on his return, directed the Armenian School in Constantinople. Arrested on that fateful April night, he was deported with the rest, first to Çankiri. Later he was en route to Ankara, together with four others, when halted and murdered by a band of Kurds. Balakian’s recollection depicts them as they were leaving for Ankara, knowing that death awaited them. If in the poem “Dedication” he sings praise to the fatherland, and to its brave warriors who will seek revenge, in “Seas of Wheat” he paints a landscape whose waves of wheat roll like the waves of the sea. And in “Four Corners” he expresses a yearning for peace, development, joy and prosperity in all parts of the world.

A poet who suffered a similar fate was Ruben Sevak, who had returned to Constantinople after studying medicine in Lausanne. He too was dispatched to Çankiri and was to travel on with four other deportees, with assurances by the vice governor that they would be unharmed. Instead, Kurdish murderers together with police officials intercepted them, and, after killing them, divvied up the 450 gold pieces they had sewn into their clothing. Again Balakian records the tragic event, commenting, “This way our nation lost ... two talented poets and five loving fathers of small children. But unhappily we had hardly time to mourn them, because new massacres and rivers of blood awaited.” The short poem “Armenia” by Sevak concentrates in six lines images of the terror and suffering of the refugee, the starving, the murdered.

Three prose pieces follow, the first by Yervand Srmakeshchanlyan, a teacher and author known as Yeruhan. Writing in the late 19th century realist style, he composed short stories about the life of simple people in Bulgaria, where he had sought refuge. One such story, “The Washerwoman,” tells the tale of young Surbik, who eked out a living by washing the clothes of sailors, fishers and other workers in a port. One day she spies a handsome young man, a fisherman named Hovsep, and manages to win him as a client. She picks up his clothes and washes them with fervor and loving care, and her affections are answered by the young man, who satisfies her wish to receive an Easter dress instead of money for her labors. It comes to the point that he proposes marriage and her joy is complete. But there is no happy ending; when she returns to the port, she learns that he has drowned in a tragic accident. She gathers up his clothing, takes them back to her room, washes them with particular care and energy, torn between laughter and sobs.

Krikor Zohrab was a lawyer who defended Armenians and, under political pressure, fled to Paris, where he lived until 1908. Following the Young Turk revolution, he returned and was elected member of the Ottoman parliament, and of the Armenian National Assembly. In 1915 he was arrested along with another Armenian parliamentarian, Vardkes Serengulyan, and deported to Diyarbakir to be tried by a military tribunal. They never reached their destination, but were apprehended on government orders by brigands and near Urfa brutally murdered.

He composed poems and essays, and between 1909 and 1911 published three collections of short stories. “The Wretched Girl” is the story of Tigranuhi, an 18-year-old orphan, whose beauty made her the envy of her sisters. Her aunt married her off to a young coal miner, but the poor lad broke a leg in a mining accident and lost his job. Just at that juncture, Hadja Tyurik, an agent who recruited chambermaids for wealthy households, appeared and offered to take Tigranuhi to Bolis to work for Madame Surbik, wife of Monsieur Rasar.

Happy in her new job, in a wealthy home with other servants, good accommodations and pay, Tigranuhi worked gladly and sent her salary home to her husband. Meanwhile, the young, lusty son of the man of the house becomes obsessed by Tigranuhi’s beauty and seeks every opportunity to

approach her. The girl one day tells all to the lady of the house, who defends her son as simply a boy enchanted by her beauty. Hadja Tyurik reacts similarly, saying she should be happy to have a gentleman seek her favor. The young man, whose mother showers the young girl with gifts, succeeds in seducing Tigranuhi. For two years, the affair continues, until the chambermaid becomes pregnant. The lady of the house confronts her, calls for Hadja Tyurik to come immediately and remove the “slut” from her honored home. Claiming the girl had become pregnant by a male servant, and refusing to acknowledge that her son was responsible, in the end she has to admit that it was the son, and makes amends financially.

Four years later, Tigranuhi’s husband dies of a lung ailment and shortly thereafter, her young son also dies. With determination, Tigranuhi pulls together all the money she has to pay for a dignified funeral, with candles, priests and a closed coffin for the child. She purchases two plots in the graveyard and visits her son’s grave on commemoration days. When asked where she has been, she replies happily, “I went to my child, Madame!”

Rupen Zartarian was a teacher who was arrested in 1903 and jailed for a year for his political activity in the Dashnag party, then went into exile in Bulgaria until the 1908 revolution. He was a teacher in Constantinople, worked with the Armenian magazine *Zhamanak* (“Time”), and published the Dashnag party organ *Azadamard* (“Freedom Fighter”). He was also a poet and prose writer, as well as a translator of classics from French and English literature. On April 24, 1915, he was arrested along with the entire editorial board. He was supposed to appear before a military court but was assassinated by brigands.

In “A Wolfhound,” he tells the allegory of a proud mountain dog that had defended sheep until an injury forced him to seek a new life in the city. There, he encounters the pack of wretched hounds, whose miserable life disgusts him; better to fight the wolves and perish than to degrade oneself and beg – is the moral he draws.

Zabel Yesayan managed to flee and found exile in Soviet Armenia. Because she defended poets Yeghishe Charents and Axel Bakunts, she was declared an enemy of the people in 1937. Her death sentence later turned into banishment. The details of her death remain unknown. A selection from her 1911 book, *In the Ruins*, presents the heartrending story of one Genocide victim, an old woman. As she tells it herself, first, her husband is taken away to be killed. Convinced by her son that it is worth converting to Islam to survive, she reluctantly agrees. She does survive with both son and daughter, but the son is eventually killed and the daughter abducted. All her attempts to obtain justice fail.

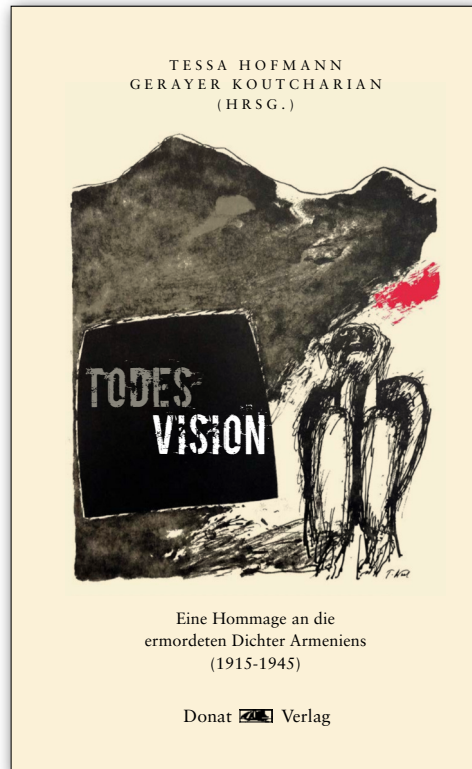
The last pieces are by Intra (Diran Chrakian), a poet, painter and teacher, persecuted as a member of the 7th Day Adventists. The atrocities in 1915 left him mentally unbalanced and in 1921 he was arrested and deported. The poems “Desire,” “On the Blue,” and “The Wish” are verbal paintings, whose vibrant images from nature express a yearning for the innocent life. The last lines of “Compassion and Love” read:

“For, the passion of the poet is nothing more  
Than mourning for the lamentable ephemeral  
And a love song to immortal creation.”

This small, scholarly volume is incredibly compact and powerful, a little jewel. The short pieces cover a vast range of human experience, depicting the pain and suffering of the victims, their yearning for justice and harmony; they express existential torment and doubt, as well as faith in the promise of a better future. There is sadness, hope, pride and despair – and also a desire for revenge – yet even in the direst of circumstances, dignity prevails. The poems are striking in their emotional force, enhanced by brevity of form, while the prose pieces testify to a rich popular literary culture in which the plight of humble people provides the subject for storytelling.

Koutcharian and Hofmann have worked together as a team, the former translating from his mother tongue into German, and the latter, recasting the idea-content in German poetical form. Citing titles and verses here in English necessarily represents a further departure from the original, and cannot do justice to the extremely convincing German rendition. The drawings are simply wonderful; they evoke the art of portrait photographs so familiar to those of us in the diaspora who cherish the images of the grandparents and great-grandparents we never knew.

(The authors’ names in the German edition are given in Armenian script, and are transliterated into Eastern and Western Armenian, according to German phonetics. Here I have transliterated for an English-speaking reader, and apologize for any errors.)







## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# 100 Years From Home Documentary to Air Sept. 1 on PBS

DOCUMENTARY, from page 2

Turkey's continued denial of the Armenian Genocide also perpetuated that, and its lasting impact on the descendants of survivors is a sentiment that is shared from various sources throughout the film. "100 Years from Home" illuminates many of the complex issues that have led to the tensions that still exist today at the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, as evidenced by recent crossfire between both countries. This state of affairs caused apprehension for

Pilikian to enter Turkey, where hatred of Armenians is still very common today.

The film also sheds light on the United States' role in providing humanitarian relief during the Genocide, just as they subsequently refused to officially recognize it as a genocide for the next century.

"I knew we would be mining some very difficult topics, and I wanted to be able to support Lilit in this emotional exploration," said White.

"Confronting these issues that I often avoided while growing up was difficult for me, but ultimately cathartic," said Pilikian. "The experience of making this film really brought the two of us closer together."

The documentary features interviews with luminaries like Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian, historian and UCLA professor Richard Hovannisian, social critic Vahe Berberian, documentarian Carla Garapedian, Archbishop Pargév Martirosyan of the

Armenian Apostolic Church, and Armenian studies scholar Shushan Karapetian.

While "100 Years from Home" deals with weighty issues, in the end, the story is a hopeful one. Pilikian comes away from the experience with a much stronger sense of herself and her heritage. "I became more comfortable in my own skin, in my own story," said Pilikian. "I realized I'm not alone in this."

To learn more, visit [100YearsFromHome.com](https://www.100YearsFromHome.com).

## Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian

### Armenian Vegan's Eggplant Casserole

This vegan Eggplant Casserole recipe was published in the San Diego Union-Tribune on April 8, 2014. It is one of many vegan recipes featured in Dikranouhi "Dee" Kirazian's Armenian Vegan cookbook published in 2013. During the six years it took her to write the cookbook, Dikranouhi insisted on telling no one about her project. "I wanted it to be a surprise," she says. With the assistance of her husband George, an accomplished author and editor, Dikranouhi meticulously prepared and tested over 200 vegan recipes using no animal products, taking photos, and documenting each step and ingredient along the way.

Born and raised in Beirut, Dikranouhi came to the United States in 1959, where she taught Armenian language classes at Holy Cross Armenian Church in Union City, New Jersey.

#### INGREDIENTS:

2 large eggplants  
Olive oil (for brushing eggplant)  
Salt, pepper and garlic powder, to taste

#### For the sauce:

2 medium onions, chopped  
4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped  
1/4 cup olive oil  
2 cups sliced mushrooms  
2 bay leaves  
1/2 teaspoon oregano  
1/2 teaspoon dried basil  
15-oz. can diced tomatoes  
8-oz. can tomato sauce

#### PREPARATION:

Wash eggplant and cut into 1/2-inch-thick round slices. Place slices on a large tray, brush with olive oil and sprinkle with salt, pepper and garlic powder. Turn slices over and repeat on other side. Put under a broiler preheated to between 350 and 400 degrees, and broil both sides until a light golden brown. When done, remove from oven and set aside.

Prepare the sauce while eggplant is cooking: Chop onions and garlic and sauté for several minutes in small amount of olive oil; then add the rest of the olive oil, mushrooms and other spices. Add diced tomatoes and tomato sauce, and stir frequently. Cook on medium heat for 10-15 minutes, then turn off heat.

Prepare for baking: Remove bay leaves from the sauce, then pour several spoons of sauce on the bottom of an 11-by-7-inch or 9-by-9-inch casserole dish. Layer the bottom of casserole dish with eggplant slices. Spoon some of the sauce on this layer; then add new layers, spooning sauce over each. Be sure to keep some sauce to pour over top layer.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees, and bake for 30 to 40 minutes. Serve as a main dish with pilaf or pasta, along with a crunchy baguette or Armenian bread. (This dish may be served cold as an appetizer.)

Serves 4.

For this recipe, go to: <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/lifestyle/food-and-cooking/sdut-armenian-cookbook-vegan-eggplant-casserole-2014apr08-story.html>

Order at: [https://www.amazon.com/dp/1494365189/ref=cm\\_sw\\_su\\_dp](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1494365189/ref=cm_sw_su_dp)

References:

<https://armenianvegan.com/>

<https://twitter.com/armenianvegan?lang=en>



## Calendar

### MASSACHUSETTS

**AUGUST 22 — Saturday, 9 am. Labyrinth Walking: Connection between Movement and Wisdom.** Facilitator: Kristin Asadourian, founder, KA Coaching. The Labyrinth Walking Wellness Series is a virtual program of Armenian Heritage Park in partnership with The Greenway Conservancy Fitness Program. For the link to register via ZOOM, email [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**SEPTEMBER 9 — Wednesday, at 10am. Celebrating What Unites Us!** A virtual cooking series, a collaboration of City of Boston Age-Friendly Boston, OLDWAYS and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to keep us connected, coming together. ARMENIAN CUISINE. Lena Tashjian, Cookbook author, recipe developer, writer, The Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook: Recipes and Stories from Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora (2020); founder, Vegan Armenian Kitchen.com. To register via Zoom, please email [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**SEPTEMBER 23 — Wednesday, at 10am Celebrating What Unites Us!** A virtual cooking series, a collaboration of City of Boston Age-Friendly Boston, OLDWAYS and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to keep us connected, coming together. BREADS! Andrew Janjigian. America's Test Kitchen Bread Expert. Editor, Cooks Illustrated. To register email [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**OCTOBER 7 — 10am Celebrating What Unites Us!** A virtual cooking series, a collaboration of City of Boston Age-Friendly Boston, OLDWAYS and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to keep us connected, coming together. NATIVE AMERICAN CUISINE Chef Sean Sherman member of the Oglala Lakota tribe Cookbook author, The Sioux Chef Indigenous Kitchen - 2018 James Beard Award for Best American Cookbook; co-founder, The Sioux Chef.com - 2019 James Beard Leadership Award. To register via Zoom, email [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

### RHODE ISLAND

**AUGUST 28 — The Cultural Committee of the Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church Presents Armenian Cultural Hour** Friday, at 7:30 pm. Popular Singer Janet Khalarian Concert "Zepoori Nman." Other Programs organized by the Church include:

- September 4 — Friday, 7:30 pm YEREVAN Chorale & Orchestra Of Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Cambridge, Selected Songs
- September 11 — Friday, 7:30 pm, Komitas Vardapet, Berlinyan Badarak, Premier Presentation in the US
- September 18 — Friday, 7:30 pm, Dedicated to of Armenia's Independence. A Special Program, "Salute to Armenia"
- September 25 — Friday, 7:30 pm "Meet with our Doctors" via the Zoom Conference Platform. Questions & Answers. Dr. Ara Sadaniantz, Cardiologist, Jason Martiesian, Moderator

You can find the LIVESTREAM of the event through the parish's Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/armenianchurchprovidence/videos/>





COMMENTARY

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Mirror Spectator

Established 1932

An ADL Publication

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The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is published weekly, except two weeks in July and the first week of the year, by:

Baikar Association, Inc.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

U.S.A.	\$80 a year
Canada	\$125 a year
Other Countries	\$190 a year

© 2014 The Armenian Mirror-Spectator  
Periodical Class Postage Paid at Boston, MA  
and additional mailing offices.

ISSN 0004-234X

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472

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Turkey's Adventures in the Eastern Mediterranean

By Edmond Y. Azadian

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's erstwhile political soulmate, Ahmet Davutoglu, who served as Turkey's foreign minister, was the country's major ideologue defining its foreign policy. The basic paradigm of that policy was that their administration would move to a position of zero problems with the neighbors.

Perhaps, the main reason that the two leaders eventually fell out was that Erdogan committed all sorts of transgressions to antagonize all the neighbors, contrary to their earlier stated position. Davutoglu, angered, disassociated himself from the Erdogan clan to form his own political party called Future.

We do not know what the future holds for Davutoglu, but one thing is clear — Erdogan is expanding the circle of his enemies far beyond Turkey's immediate neighborhood.

Turkey's aggressive stance in the Eastern Mediterranean drilling for oil and gas in waters internationally recognized as belonging to Greece, drew criticism from many quarters, including Armenia. (See related story on page 1.)

Armenia's Foreign Ministry issued a statement which read, "We reiterate Armenia's unequivocal support and solidarity with Greece and Cyprus and call on Turkey to de-escalate the situation, respect international law and cease all activities within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Greece and Cyprus."

That statement drew a stern and sarcastic rebuke from Turkey's Foreign Ministry.

Hami Aksoy, the Turkish Foreign Ministry's spokesman, said, "The issue at hand is the Eastern Mediterranean, not Lake Sevan. Following its provocative statement on the Treaty of Sévres, Armenia's expressing an opinion regarding the Eastern Mediterranean this time is a novel instance of impertinence and irresponsibility.

"Coming after the examples of the United Arab Emirates and France, the fact that Armenia, a country with no coastline to any sea, presumes itself worthy of speaking about the Eastern Mediterranean, unravels the dimensions of an insidious alliance that is being attempted to be forged against Turkey," he continued.

Aksoy did not forget to include a reminder that "Armenians have not learned their lessons from history."

The fact that Armenia does not have a coastline is thanks to Turkey. Also, reminding Armenians of the "lessons" of the past (while asserting that there was no Genocide!) has been a recurring threat from former Turkish leaders, dating back to Turgut Ozel and Tansu Çiller, up to Erdogan himself, all reminding Armenians that the unrepentant Turkish government is ready to repeat its murderous actions — or lessons.

The paranoia manifested in Aksoy's statement demonstrates that under Erdogan, Turkey has gone from zero problems with neighbors to a mentality of siege, which has indeed led to a coalition of nations whose sovereignty has been trampled on or resources usurped by Turkey.

President Erdogan defies and then defines international law and its application. Whether right or wrong, he claims that a major country like Turkey deserves to benefit from the natural resources of the region.

"We will not back down in the face of sanctions or threats," he said recently. "We will never bow to banditry on our own continental shelf."

Turkey has sent its scientific vessel Oruc Reis into the disputed waters off Cyprus to search for oil and gas, escorted by Turkish warships. On the other hand, Greece has sent its own military vessels to monitor the situation. Both countries are on a collision course.

French President Emmanuel Macron has said that he will increase France's military presence over "unilateral" gas explorations by Turkey.

The "insidious" coalition is growing against Turkey, as countries like Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Lebanon and Israel join it.

Recently, Egypt signed an agreement with Greece delineating their maritime boundaries and exclusive economic zones for the rights for the exploration of hydrocarbon resources. President Erdogan has called that agreement "worthless paper," while he had signed a similar deal with Libya's Tripoli government, headed by Fayeze al-Sarraj, which represents half of that country, the other half being controlled by Gen. Khalifa Haftar.

Cyprus and Greece are members of the European Union, whose foreign policy chief has tweeted that the EU is "in full solidarity with Greece and Cyprus, calling for immediate de-escalation by Turkey and recognizing dialogue."

All that solidarity amounts only to a call for dialogue, because Turkey has learned to pit one EU country against another. For example, though France is not the only country critical of Turkey's aggressive behavior, it also has not sent its warships to Eastern Mediterranean to warn Turkey of further escalation.

Meanwhile, the other powerful EU member, Germany is dragging its feet.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency, has said that "the provocations" that are taking place in the region "can't continue," adding, "nor can the Turkish drilling."

The statements clearly land Germany on Turkey's side, since it also is the German government which has derailed the regime of economic sanctions against Turkey contemplated by the EU.

Similarly, Turkey and Greece are NATO members, while Greece is getting short shift there too, as a weaker party in the alliance.

Armenia should not be comforted that the Turkish government has too much on its plate. Turkey has attained such a military status that it can be engaged on many fronts — and even wage wars on many fronts.

Many analysts believed that Washington has licensed Turkey to play the role of the policemen in the Middle East. But Turkey seems to have misconstrued the role, because while policemen



defend the parties under their control, Turkey has in fact targeted all the nations in the neighborhood.

The fact that Turkey is able to keep Russia at bay in the Caucasus and in Syria and Libya, all at the same time, indicates that it has been rendering valuable service to the US and consequently is being rewarded by America's benign indifference to its aggressions against weaker countries in the region. Turkey could not have dared to defy another NATO member nation like France, without receiving a nod of approval from Washington.

In his rebuke to Armenia, Mr. Aksoy has not forgotten to remind Armenia that Turkey will continue giving all possible support to Azerbaijan.

Within the context of these political developments, if war breaks out between Armenia and Azerbaijan, with Turkey's encouragement, Ankara's target will be Moscow, not necessarily Yerevan. Turkey is building up its military forces in Nakhichevan, to provoke and challenge Russia, especially now that Russia has a distressed Belarus on its hands.

Turkey is threatening Greece and Cyprus. The way the EU or NATO is handling those conflicts gives a clear indication as to what the leadership of these two structures can or cannot do for the targets of aggression, when the bully is Turkey.

That leadership in and outside of Armenia consists of the same politicians who advocated that Armenia will become a paradise by joining the EU or NATO.

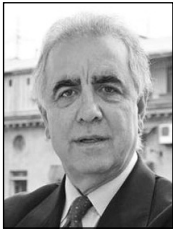
There was even a pointed question in the BBC news program "HARDTalk" by Stephen Sackur last week posed to Prime Minister Pashinyan, on whether Armenia will continue to remain as a suffering Russian ally or seek salvation by looking to the EU and NATO.

Those who are advocating the latter policy have their own selfish interests at heart, not Armenia's.





## COMMENTARY



## My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Cautiously Optimistic about Success of Biden/Harris in Presidential Elections

On November 3, 2020, the American public, including Armenian-Americans, will vote for the next President of the United States.

As to whom should we elect on November 3 to be President and Vice President is a highly controversial subject. There are strong and passionate feelings for and against Biden or Trump, often expressed in rude and offensive terms.

Given President Trump's pro-Turkishness, non-existent position on Armenian issues, and his erratic behavior, I decided to vote for the Biden/Harris ticket. In doing so, I am motivated not just by the merits of their candidacies, but even more so by the failings of the Trump/Pence duo. Therefore a vote for Biden/Harris is necessarily a vote against Trump/Pence. Four years ago, I did not vote for either Trump or Hillary Clinton, given my total disappointment with both candidates. However, I cannot remain neutral this time around because four more years of Trump would be the death knoll of democracy in the United States and American relations with the world. The United States cannot continue to be held hostage by the minority of radical right-wing US citizens who form Trump's base. Trump was saved in 2016 by the Electoral College, despite getting three million less votes than Hillary Clinton.

As far as Armenian issues are concerned, given the Armenian community's disappointment with previous US Presidents' lavish pre-election promises which they ignored afterwards, I am not optimistic that what Biden/Harris are

promising now will be fulfilled, should they be elected. Nevertheless, we have repeatedly witnessed Trump's love affair with Turkey's dictator Recep Tayyip Erdogan which is not about to end any time soon.

However, Turkish leaders are clever enough to woo Biden/Harris to their side after the election as they have done to Trump and many other previous presidents. This will be a critical battle between Turkish and Armenian lobbyists which regrettably has been won repeatedly by Turkey.

Presidential candidate Joe Biden and Vice Presidential candidate Kamala Harris have clearly expressed their strong support for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

In a letter to the Armenian National Committee of America on September 16, 2019, Presidential candidate Biden stated: "The United States must reaffirm, once and for all, our record on the Armenian Genocide. We must never forget or remain silent about this horrific and systematic campaign of extermination that resulted in the deaths of 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children and the mass deportation of 2 million Armenians from their homes. If we do not fully acknowledge, commemorate, and teach our children about genocide, the words 'never again' lose their meaning. The facts must be as clear and as powerful for future generations as for those whose memories are seared by tragedy. Failing to remember or acknowledge the fact of a genocide only paves the way for future mass atrocities."

While this is a very supportive statement, Biden has left out from his text the name of the perpetrator of the Armenian Genocide: Ottoman Empire or Turkey.

Biden has a long record of supporting various Armenian genocide resolutions as a US Senator, but when he was Vice President, President Barack Obama thwarted all efforts in Congress to recognize the Armenian Genocide, breaking his multiple campaign promises. Instead, President Obama repeatedly used the term "Meds Yeghern" (Great Crime) to describe the Armenian Genocide, which was copied by President Trump in the past four years. It is ironic that the two Presidents disagree on almost everything, except for their agreement to avoid the term Armenian Genocide.

Vice Presidential candidate Kamala Harris, as a US Senator, sent a letter to the Armenian Assembly on Sept. 16, 2019, expressing her support for the recognition of the

Armenian Genocide. Harris wrote: "I am proud to be an original cosponsor of Senate Resolution 150, which ensures that American foreign policy appropriately reflects and acknowledges the horrors of the Armenian genocide. When it comes to crimes against humanity, we can never be silent – we must always speak uncomfortable truths about the past, lest we repeat it."

Given the adoption of Armenian Genocide resolutions by the US House of Representatives and the US Senate last year, Armenian issues are no longer limited to the reaffirmation of the Armenian Genocide. There are several other important issues such as providing a larger amount of foreign aid to Armenia and Artsakh, improving US-Armenia relations, supporting the independence of the Republic of Artsakh, and pressuring Turkey to remove the blockade of Armenia. These are some of the key issues that Armenian-Americans should demand that Biden/Harris take a strong position on before they are endorsed for President/Vice President.

Ali Chinar, President of Turkish Heritage Organization, wrote in the Turkish newspaper Daily Sabah on August 12, 2020, describing Biden's negative views about Turkey:

"– He is against storing nuclear weapons at the Incirlik Air Base [in Turkey].

– He is against Turkey's military operations in Syria and stated that YPG/PKK was betrayed by the US

– He made statements relating to concerns about freedom of the press and human rights in Turkey.

– He emphasizes that, in collaboration with its allies in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey must be isolated.

– He sides with Turkey's withdrawal of Russian S-400 missiles; otherwise, he demands sanctions.

– He has not made any statements about the Gülenist Terror Group (FETÖ) or the extradition of its members to Turkey, and nothing was done on the issue during his vice presidency.

– He criticized the decision to turn Hagia Sophia into a mosque.

– He said that he would recognize the so-called Armenian genocide."

Between now and the Nov. 3, 2020 Presidential election, there is much more to be said in future articles about Biden and Trump and their positions on Armenian and Turkish issues.

# Turkey Takes Aim at Biden After Old Comments on Erdogan Resurface

By Amberin Zaman

The furor over comments by presumptive US Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden in December – in which he called Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan an "autocrat" and said he would help his opponents to replace him – shows no signs of abating, even though the former vice president made them so long ago. "You are no match for this nation, you brazen man!" howled the pro-government daily Yeni Safak on August 17. "Know your place," warned Yeni Akit, another government mouthpiece.

They were taking their cues from Erdogan's lieutenants. His head of communications Fahrettin Altun said Biden's words reflected an "interventionist approach" toward Turkey. "No one can attack our national will," he fumed. Presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin vented via Twitter, saying, "The days of ordering Turkey around are over," and that those who dared do so would "pay the price."

In his remarks during a round table with New York Times editors on Dec. 16, Biden had also taken aim at President Donald Trump's order for US special forces to withdraw from Syria's border with Turkey, paving the way for Turkey's October 2019 assault against the US-backed Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units. "The last thing I would've done is yielded to [Erdogan] with regard to the Kurds. The absolute last thing," Biden said.

All of this will have reinforced Erdogan's long held view that not only had the Barack Obama administration backed the failed 2016 coup to violently overthrow him but that its decision to support Turkey's Syrian Kurdish foes militarily was part of the alleged plan.

Embarrassed opposition leaders swiftly denounced Biden, saying they wanted nothing of his help. Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the chairman of the pro-secular main opposition Republican People's Party, said, "We do not accept even the shadow of any imperial power." Yet amid all the indignation, feigned or real, some observers are questioning why the video is making

the rounds eight months after it was published by the New York Times.

After all, Erdogan and his cabinet hardly uttered a peep when Trump threatened in an October 9 letter to Erdogan to "destroy" the Turkish economy if he carried his invasion of northeast Syria too far. History, he wrote, "will look upon you forever as the devil if good things don't happen. Don't be a tough guy. Don't be a fool."

The conventional wisdom is that Erdogan is using Biden to whip up nationalist fervor against the United States to further deflect attention from the country's deepening economic problems, compounded by an alarming rise in new COVID-19 cases. While this fits with Erdogan's pattern of igniting controversies to that end, there is little doubt that the prospect of a Biden presidency is raising alarms in Ankara. Thanks to the good personal chemistry between Trump and Erdogan, Turkey has managed to fend off the worst of congressional sanctions over its purchase of Russian missiles. Biden may prove less obliging.

Asli Aydintasbas, a senior fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations who closely monitors Turkey's relations with Washington, believes such thinking is overwrought. Aydintasbas told Al-Monitor in emailed comments, "I do not believe US policy will fundamentally change under Biden, though there would more of an emphasis on human rights and democracy. Publicly and privately Trump made it very clear that he did not care whatever happened inside the country, as long as he could establish a give and take with Erdogan."

Aydintasbas predicted, "That is likely to change but not dramatically. A Biden administration would still do business with Erdogan and try to cajole him to keep Turkey in the Transatlantic fold. I do not expect a radical departure. Turkey is too important and too critical to US strategic interests."

She went on, "Yes, the government is hyping up the Biden comments to further feed the domestic narrative that Turkey is surrounded by enemies who want to topple President Erdogan and that its economic woes are not self-made but an attack from abroad. This does tend to work with Erdogan's base but not really beyond."

It may be that Biden is electioneering too. Gonul Tol, the director of the Middle East Institute's Turkey program, contends that the domestic policy debate has become so closely intertwined with foreign policy under Trump that it's natural that Biden will attack him over authoritarian regimes he is accused of coddling: Russia and Turkey.

"Trump's opponents are vowing to do the opposite, to pressure these countries and their leaders on human rights. And while foreign policy is clearly not top of the agenda during this campaign, when it does come up it's three countries – Russia, China and Turkey – that are seen as the biggest headaches," Tol told Al-Monitor in

a telephone interview. Turkey's October assault against the Kurds roused Congressional ire that cut across bipartisan lines, she recalled.

Either way, history has so far shown that pragmatism will likely prevail, despite the angry noises emitting from both capitals. "Many in Biden's foreign policy team worked closely with Ankara during the Obama years and established good relations," Aydintasbas observed. "If Biden comes to power, President Erdogan will say 'My friend Joe Biden' and the two will find a way to work together," she said.

(This column originally appeared on the website al-monitor.com, for which Amberin Zaman is a regular correspondent.)

A BIDEN ADMINISTRATION WOULD STILL DO BUSINESS WITH ERDOGAN AND TRY TO CAJOLE HIM TO KEEP TURKEY IN THE TRANSATLANTIC FOLD. I DO NOT EXPECT A RADICAL DEPARTURE.





## COMMENTARY

## Tigran Arakelyan to Host New Radio Show in Washington State

SEATTLE – The radio station KPTZ-91.9 FM will present a new weekly music program called “Exploring Music,” hosted by Tigran Arakelyan, artistic director and conductor of the Port Townsend Symphony.

The show will air every Sunday from 3 to 4 p.m. He will share music that has inspired him throughout the years, and also playing new discoveries, in all genres.

“I am thrilled to join the KPTZ family as a host. I have been a guest numerous times since April of 2017 and love listening to KPTZ’s diverse programming. I want to thank Phil Andrus (longtime KPTZ host) for his support and encouragement during the past few years. Although my passion and work are in classical music, I enjoy a wide variety of genres. Growing up in post-Soviet Armenia and Los Angeles, I was exposed to genres ranging from folk, jazz and pop to rock, classical, hip-hop and more. On this show I will share music that has inspired me throughout the years but will also challenge myself to discover new works in all genres to share with all of you. There will be occasional guests from the vibrant Port Townsend arts scene or artists who are visiting to perform.”

“Tigran Arakelyan’s wide reach across various genres of music brings the kind of artistic stretch I like on KPTZ. He can include classical to jazz to folk genres, and go out to the experimental. Yet it all makes sense together,” said Larry Stein, KPTZ director of programming.

Tigran Arakelyan is an Armenian-American conductor and podcaster. He is the Music Director of Northwest Mahler Festival, the Port Townsend Symphony and Assistant Conductor of California Philharmonic. As the music director of Federal Way Youth Symphony and the Bainbridge Youth Orchestras, he has grown both organizations to the highest youth enrollment in history. Recently, he made his Walt Disney Concert Hall conducting debut and has played alongside Sir James Galway during his induction into the Hollywood Bowl Hall of Fame with the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra. Tigran won awards from The American Prize and at the Global Music Awards. He has programmed diverse concerts with works by William Grant Still, Amy Beach, Alma Mahler, Fanny Mendelssohn, Vasily Kalinnikov and conducted regional premieres by renowned composers Paul Hindemith, Keith Jarrett and James Cohn, among others.

Since 2009, Arakelyan has taken his orchestras to many unconventional venues from bars and cideries to cafes and homeless shelters. Invited by Maestro Morlot, Tigran earned the Doctor of Musical Arts in conducting from the University of Washington where he was the first student in the inaugural class of Ludovic Morlot and David A. Rahbee. As the host of Let’s Talk Off The Podium podcast (over 120 episodes), he interviewed legendary musicians such as: Evelyn Glennie, George Walker, Mark O’Connor, Christian McBride, David Harrington (Kronos Quartet), Richard Stoltzman, Ludovic Morlot, Sharon Isbin, Vijay Iyer, Christopher Theofanidis, and a long list of others.

The program will air on Sundays on KPTZ 91.9FM.



## Armenia Spends over \$300 Million on Pandemic Relief

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The Armenian government has spent a total of about 150 billion drams (over \$300 million) since March on relief and stimulus packages for businesses and individual citizens affected by the coronavirus pandemic, according to an official.

Economy Minister Tigran Khachatryan said at a press conference on Friday, August 14, that of this sum 93 billion drams (over \$190 million) have been allocated through banks in the forms of loans.

“We decided to focus on specific issues of each sphere and to direct funds of support for targeted solutions to emerging or existing and expected issues,” the minister said.

Earlier this week the government approved two more coronavirus aid packages targeting sectors most affected by the pandemic. Under these programs assistance will be given to the spheres of tourism and agriculture.

Khachatryan said that the government’s support for the tourism sector, which is facing problems all over the world due to the coronavirus pandemic, as well as related areas, including the hotel business and public catering, will be aimed at preserving jobs.

“We are dealing with a situation where companies see their turnover reduced by more than half. On the other hand, in this situation they want to save jobs and keep workers who are part of their workforce,” the minister said.

Under this program monthly support will be provided to companies with at least three employees. Those companies that have retained at least 70 percent of their personnel during the pandemic will receive from the government a full salary of every third employee. Otherwise, the government will subsidize the salary of every fourth employee.

“This is a very good message for businesses that if they are at the threshold of having retained 70 percent of their personnel they may hire new employees and receive government support for 33 percent instead of 25 percent of their payroll. So, they will be able to offset a significant part of additional financial expenditures for expanding staff or increasing salaries through government support,” Khachatryan said.

Under the other program approved by the government this week assistance will be provided to

grape purchasing companies and farmers. Because of the pandemic consumption of wine and brandy has fallen, leaving wine and brandy producers with less revenue. Assistance under this program will be provided in the form of interest-free loans to farmers who sell grapes to wineries and brandy-making companies.

According to the minister, there is no cap on the money provided for pandemic relief and stimulus programs. “We have not reached a point where we can say that if this limit is exceeded we



Armenian Economy Minister Tigran Khachatryan at a press conference in Yerevan, August 14, 2020


will not provide support,” he said.

He said that the government will soon announce new programs of support to exporters and companies that plan to be technically reequipped.

Khachatryan does not rule out that Armenia will close the pandemic-affected economic year with about a five-percent GDP fall. Last year, Armenia’s GDP grew by 7.6 percent and its economic activity index grew by 7.8 percent. The government said the figures were unprecedented for recent years.

“We hope that the results of the third and fourth quarters of this year will show some improvement over the second quarter,” the minister said.

He said that this forecast is in line with the trends of the world economy. “Leading international organizations predict a global economic decline of up to 6 percent. It is also expected that 2021 will be the main year of recovery. In other words, there is no higher global optimism until the end of this year than the indicators that I’ve mentioned,” Khachatryan said.



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

**100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TREATY OF SÈVRES  
AND THE PATH OF THE ARMENIAN DEMANDS**


*Keynote Speaker*  
**DIPLOMAT ARA PAPIAN**  
Founder and President of the Modus Vivendi Center

Welcoming remarks by *Shoushan Baghboudarian*


*Moderators:*  
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