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Activists Hope  
To Put End to  
Gold Mine

By **Mateos Hayes**  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — On August 20, a hot Thursday afternoon, scores of demonstrators from the Armenian Environmental Front (AEF) and the Save Amulsar movement assembled in front of the Armenian National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet. The rally was composed of Yerevan locals and a group of activists and concerned citizens from the southern resort town of Jermuk, who had travelled to Yerevan in a 200-car motorcade organized by Save Amulsar. The goal of the rally was simple: to raise awareness of the environmental threat to Amulsar, and to protest government inaction.

Delivering several speeches over megaphone and leading the crowds in chants of “Amulsar, Miayn Sar” (Amulsar must remain a mountain), the rally’s organizers led demonstrators on a march from the Opera down the sidewalks of Mashtots Avenue and past the shop fronts of Northern Avenue, before bringing the rally to the Armenian government’s front door on Republic Square.

AEF organizers repeatedly reminded attendees of the rally to respect social distancing and wear masks, and these rules were mostly observed.

Over the course of the rally, demonstrators were shadowed by a veritable army of Special Unit police officers who surrounded the peaceful demonstrators and blocked the entrances to government buildings. Speeches were routinely interrupted by loudspeaker announcements from police patrol cars, reminding demonstrators to



Protestors in Yerevan

maintain social distancing and to don masks in accordance with the law. Rally goers in turn tried to drown out the PA announcements with the chanting of slogans and the sound of drums. Demonstrators from Jermuk were photographed by police officers, and a few individuals were ticketed for not wearing masks. All of this combined to produce a frosty government reception for the environmental activists.

see PROTEST, page 2



Teens Face Life Issues  
During Pandemic

By **Ani Belorian**  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BOSTON — For months now, teenagers all over the country have been trying to adapt to a drastic new reality. Because of their malleable ages, high school students have been uniquely impacted by the pandemic. Moreover, they have had to deal with the lack of socialization, which is one of their priorities.

Although adults have borne the brunt of the slowing of time, adolescents have also experienced this new situation. With sports, extracurricular activities, homework, and increasingly challenging classes on their minds, until the lockdown, teens rarely had time to spend with family and friends, or just do nothing. It’s a strange feeling, realizing that there is literally nothing to get done by the end of the day. Probably none would have minded the idea of having nothing to do, but now, the novelty of freedom has passed.

see TEENS, page 14

Armenian Art through the  
Gaze of Western Institutions

By **Isabelle Kapoian**  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BOSTON — Conscientiously attributing artistic and cultural goods to their creator, culture and nation state is dependent on nuanced analyses.

Dr. Christina Maranci, Arthur H. Dadian and Ara T. Oztemel Associate Professor of Armenian Art at Tufts University and author of *The Art of Armenia: An Introduction*, mentions one of the many ways to identify a work is by its provenance: the chronological history of its ownership which, in some cases, can be traced back to the artist.

Another identifier is its similarly-monikered provenience, or the geographical and archeological find spot. Key indicators specific to a cultural tradition, creative process, artistic movement, group of people, or a record of the artist such as their signature can also be used. Visual similarities to other known works, often in



The Canon Tables of the *Zeyt'un Gospels*

see ART, page 16

**NEWS** IN BRIEF

**Armenian Soldier  
Taken Prisoner by  
Azerbaijan**

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — An Armenian army officer was taken prisoner by Azerbaijani forces over the weekend in disputed circumstances.

Armenia’s Defense Ministry said the junior officer, Gurgen Alaverdyan, lost his way due to “extremely unfavorable weather conditions” as he was about to inspect an Armenian frontline position on the evening of August 22. It did not specify whether the position is located on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border or the “line of contact” around Karabakh.

The Azerbaijani military claimed, meanwhile, that its troops deployed in the Goranboy district just north of Karabakh captured Alaverdyan while fighting back an Armenian commando attack early on Sunday.

Shushan Stepanyan, the spokeswoman for the Defense Ministry in Yerevan, dismissed the claim as “disinformation.”

“There was no [Armenian] sabotage attack,” said Stepanyan. “They are just trying to portray the officer who lost his way as a saboteur.”

As of Monday, August 24, it was not clear whether the Armenian government had asked representatives the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit Alaverdyan in Azerbaijani custody or ascertain his whereabouts. The ICRC has offices in Baku and Yerevan.

**Rising Democratic Star  
Mari Manoogian of  
Michigan Gets a**



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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Aeroflot to Launch Twice-Weekly Flights

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Aeroflot will start operating flights twice a week, every Thursday and Saturday starting August 27.

Tickets for the flights operated on Thursdays and Saturdays from Yerevan's Zvartnots Airport to Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport can be purchased only by those citizens who will continue their flights from Sheremetyevo Airport to Los Angeles, Shanghai and European counties.

According to a decision of the State of Emergency Commandant of Armenia, during the current state, those who arrive in Armenia must self-isolate for 14 days. The isolation period can be reduced with negative test results.

## US to Provide Additional \$1.43M to Address COVID-19 Impact

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The United States Government has committed an additional \$1.43 million through the US State Department and US Agency for International Development (USAID) to address the impact of COVID-19 in Armenia, USAID Armenia Office reports.

In total, the US government has committed more than \$4 million in emergency assistance to Armenia in FY20. The United States is providing support by coordinating with the government of Armenia, international humanitarian partners and other stakeholders to identify priority areas for investment.

In addition to the aforementioned COVID-19 assistance, the United States has invested more than \$1.57 billion in total assistance to Armenia over the past 20 years, including nearly \$106 million for health, the source said.

## Armenia Economic Activity Shrank 10.2 Percent in July

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Economic activity in Armenia shrank by 10.2 percent in July year-on-year, data from the National Statistical Service reveals.

Economic activity in the country has contracted as a result of a lockdown imposed in mid-March in a bid to curb the Covid-19 outbreak. Though the state of emergency has been extended several times, most restrictions have been removed.

In July 2020, construction and trade declined by 19.5 percent and 10.4 percent, respectively, while the industrial sector contracted by 2.3 percent.

Foreign trade turnover decreased by 14.3 percent year-on-year, exports and imports were down by 5.9 percent and 18.6 percent, respectively.

Average salaries, meanwhile, grew by 2.5 percent in the reporting period.

## Villagers Block Road Leading to Teghut Copper Mine

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Around 100 residents of Teghut village gathered at a checkpoint to Teghut copper mine on Monday, August 24, presenting their demands to the owners of the copper mine, Hetq.am reports. The residents are demanding to either offer job places for the locals or return the lands bought by the operating company.

According to sources, the villagers are also demanding that the owners provide compensation to pensioners from nearby Teghut and Shnogh villages for the damage done to the environment and health problems caused by mining. As an example they point to financial compensation offered to population living nearby Artsvanik tailing pond in Syunik province.

According to the report, the Head of Shnogh community Davit Ghumashyan and the head of regional police arrived at the scene to hold talks with protesters.

The mining activities at the Teghut deposit were



Demonstrators in Republic Square hold a banner which reads "As long as we exist, not one mine" (photo Mateos Hayes)(Mateos

# Activists Hope to Put End To Amulsar Gold Mine

PROTEST, from page 1

### Context

Amulsar is a mountain in southern Armenia which is the source of two major rivers. It is also the source of a network of dams and tunnels designed to feed Lake Sevan, the largest freshwater source in Armenia. A British mining firm, Lydian International Limited, discovered gold in Amulsar in 2006 and has been trying to construct a mine there since 2016. Though it has yet to open, the Amulsar gold mine's presence has coincided with the emergence of severe environmental crises in the surrounding region.

However, efforts to open a gold mine in Amulsar have met with stubborn resistance from the local population. Residents of Vayots Dzor province — where the mine is to be opened — have been blockading the area around the mine since May 2018, preventing construction vehicles from accessing the site. Furthermore, they accuse Lydian of skirting environmental regulations, using improper business practices, and conducting corporate extortion.

Opponents of the mine believe that Lydian's project has and will cause profound and irreversible environmental damage to their region and the country. They have made it clear that the only acceptable solution to this crisis is the total closure of the mine and the withdrawal of Lydian's mining operations from the country.

### Cause for Concern

Lydian's entry into Armenia predates the Velvet Revolution. Despite immediate local resistance, Lydian pushed on, safe in the knowledge that any resistance to its operations would immediately be suppressed by local authorities. Blockades were attempted prior to the revolution but were

quickly dismantled by police forces. But by 2018, the situation had changed drastically.

Armenia's Velvet Revolution caused significant shifts in the status quo, ushering in Nikol Pashinyan's premiership and promising a new era of democratization and transparency. Additionally, an uncontrolled explosion at the gold mine led to contaminated black water flowing from local taps. This was just one incident in a chain of environmental crises which emerged in the years following the commencement of construction. Since Lydian's arrival in the region, repeated explosions at the mine have coated surrounding communities in dust. To make matter worse, the mine's presence has severely disrupted local industries such as dairy farming, fisheries, and agricultural activities. The threat posed by the project to Armenia's fresh water supplies continues to be a major concern, as noted by Armen Saghatelian, director of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia. Mining, Saghatelian explains, can cause the release of acidic water and toxins, which can poison freshwater sources.

For the residents of Vayots Dzor province, black water in their taps proved to be the straw which broke the camel's back.

Catalyzed by the results of the peaceful revolution in Yerevan, local villagers began to organize resistance to Lydian. A round-the-clock blockade was put in place on the May 18, blocking roads leading to the mine. This time local police did not intervene, and the blockade continues to the present day and construction has halted. However, the crisis is far from resolved, as Lydian has now resorted to threats of arbitration. The mining company is considering litigation against Armenia in a \$-billion investor state dispute settlement (ISDS). Such

corporate court cases are often handled via a process of secret tribunals whose decision cannot be appealed. Since this means that Armenia — whose allotted government budget in 2020 was \$4 billion — could face up to 2 billion dollars in fines, this threat has been quite a potent weapon for Lydian.

### Government Response/ political division.

Following the 2018 Velvet Revolution, the government was generally uncooperative with Lydian. It refused to remove the blockade, and temporarily suspended Lydian's rights to operate in Armenia, pending an environmental audit of the Amulsar mine by an international consultancy group. The consultancy group hired for this audit, Earth Link and Advanced Resources Development (ELARD), released its report to the public in a live teleconference in August of 2019. In summarizing its findings, ELARD found that the data collected by Lydian in surveys of Amulsar was insufficient for a mining project of the proposed size. Furthermore, it found that Lydian had used this incomplete data to make oversimplified and unsupported conclusions.

The report also found that the potential risks of water pollution were small and could be mitigated. In this vein, ELARD issued 16 recommendations for Lydian concerning mitigating measures. Following the release of the ELARD report, the Armenian government appeared to side with Lydian, as Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced his intention later in August to restore rights of operation. Pashinyan argued that the ELARD report proved conclusively that the risks of water contamination were minimal and could be mitigated. To

*continued on next page*





## ARMENIA

# Activists Hope to Put End to Amulsar Gold Mine

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bolster these claims, the incumbent government pointed to the environmental audit's 16 recommendations, and the fact that Lydian claimed to be working towards compliance with them.

Incidentally, there are past connections between the current government and Lydian. Current President Armen Sarkissian previously served as director of Lydian International Ltd. Amidst rumors that he remained a Lydian shareholder, President Sarkissian categorically denied any connections to Lydian in a conversation with protestors in 2018.

## On the Ground

Disagreements continue to abound with regards to how ELARD's report should be interpreted.

When speaking to rally goers this Thursday, the discord between the government and activists seemed palpable. Whereas Pashinyan's government has argued that the ELARD report gives them no recourse to bar Lydian from operating in Armenia, the activists at the rally disagreed with that assertion. To them, the report was far from a glowing recommendation of Lydian's operations, but was rather an indictment of their substandard practices. Activists also argued that the report indicated that Lydian had failed to enact necessary mitigating practices to reduce the risk of their mine causing environmental pollution. They saw no reason to trust that Lydian would now become compliant in its mining operations it hadn't observed prior to the environmental audit.

Several people interviewed from both Jermuk and Yerevan said they wanted nothing less than the total cessation of the companies' mining operations in the country. As Anna Nikoghosyan of AEF stated, "the government has all the necessary facts and reports to unconditionally close Lydian's mine." Nikoghosyan also pointed to Lydian's dealings in Georgia and their lack of an established reputation as further red flags.

Prime Minister Pashinyan at one point supported the mine by stating that booting Lydian out of the country would reduce the incentive for foreign investment in Armenia. But the rally-goers were not swayed by this angle either. Levon Galstyan, a coordinator who has been with AEF for a decade and is a postgraduate candidate of the National Academy of Sciences, balked at this argument. Galstyan retorted, "I will support any foreign investment that brings growth to Armenia and builds its future. I will never accept however an investment that would poison our water, destroy our nature, and destroy our future in the name of profit. To me that is akin to selling one of my kidneys for a buck." Garik, a demonstrator from Jermuk chimed in, saying "We all know this mine is a real threat to people's health and to nature. We must defend our land and our mountains, as we have lost so much [land], we cannot lose more."



Demonstrators at Republic Square in Yerevan (Mateos Hayes Photo)

## Intersectionality

An interesting aspect of this rally was that it revealed a wide range of different causes finding common purpose in the Save Amulsar movement. Whilst the most prominent faction of demonstrators was environmentalists, the rally also included a significant number of LGBT+ activists. This issue resonates with other activist groups due to the common themes it shares. In their minds, the movement to save Amulsar is also a movement to preserve democracy, and to ensure the dignity and health of all human beings.

In other words, the rally-goers seek more than just to save a mountain: they seek to normalize a narrative in Armenian society that values the lives of people over profit, that elevates the voices of the voiceless, and calls to account those that abuse their power. As one self-proclaimed queer activist named Artak explained, "this movement affects all vulnerable people, and all those who oppose

a lack of privacy, and police brutality."

In the eyes of demonstrators, the post-revolution government had squandered a great deal of good will on this issue, not only by siding with Lydian, but also by remaining generally silent. As Nikoghosyan, an AEF activist, explained, "We are very disappointed with our government, our MPs, and our PM [Pashinyan]. They have had time to see the truth, but they aren't holding Lydian accountable. This is quite embarrassing, and it shows that real democracy lives in Amulsar, not in Yerevan".

Only time will tell if all that glitters is gold in the outcome of this crisis.

## Armenia Slams Turkey Over 'Destabilizing And Destructive' Approaches

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan spoke of Turkey's "destabilizing and destructive approaches" as he chaired a regular session of the country's Security Council in Yerevan on August 21.

In his opening remarks Pashinyan addressed last month's deadly escalation at the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, stressing that "the victorious battles in July came to demonstrate that there is no military solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh issue."

"I consider it important to state that Armenia continues with its constructive stance on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Our position is that the conflict should be settled through peaceful talks," he underscored.

At the same time, the Armenian leader slammed Turkey, which during the July border skirmishes expressed its unequivocal support for Azerbaijan.

He reminded that one of the factors specified in the recently adopted new National Security Strategy of Armenia is "Turkey's non-constructive policy in our region and in the world, in general."

"I think that Turkey's destabilizing and destructive approaches are causing serious concerns to our partners in the Middle East, the Eurasian region and the European region. This is an agenda that has already been formed, and our future action should be the subject of substantive discussions in the Security Council, the Government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and today's session will address this issue among other agenda items," Pashinyan said.

"The most important record we have to make is that the Republic of Armenia is in a position to meet the emerging security challenges. At the same time, we must set ourselves the task of improving the country's security environment every week, every month and every year," the Armenian prime minister concluded.

Officials in Armenia and Turkey, the two neighbors with no diplomatic relations and a closed border, have exchanged accusatory statements on a number of regional affairs during the past two weeks.

The most recent spat concerned Ankara's effort on the search of natural gas and oil in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean that Greece and Cyprus view as illegal and hostile.

## New Chapter of International Psychology Honor Society Founded at Yerevan State University

YEREVAN – On August 20, 2020, history was made in Armenia, when Yerevan State University (YSU) installed the nation's first chapter of Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in psychology.

Since its formation at Yale University in 1929, Psi Chi has grown into the world's largest honor society, with over 750,000 student and faculty life members at over 1,100 schools in the US, and (since 2009) over 20 schools worldwide. YSU is the first Psi Chi chapter in the entire Transcaucasian region, and may now become a model for neighboring schools and nations.

On August 20, the YSU installation ceremony was chaired by YSU Professor of Psychology Hrant Avanesyan, using zoom technology to involve leaders from many cities to install this chapter, and induct eight

YSU students as life members of Psi Chi.

Participants in Yerevan were YSU Vice-Rector Elina Asriyan, Dean Aleksandr Bagdasaryan, Dr. Diana Sargsyan. For Psi Chi: its Executive Director Martha Zlokovich (Missouri), President Deborah Harris-O'Brien (Washington DC), Associate Director of Membership Lisa L. Norman (Tennessee), Dr. Ani Kalayjian (New Jersey), Professor Harold Taooshian (New York). This 40-minute installation now appears online.

In 2019, Yerevan State University marked its 100th anniversary with an international psychology conference (Note 3 below), which led to plans for a new Psi Chi chapter at YSU. The new YSU members were invited to visit the USA and New York City in the future, to share the work now being done in Armenia.

## Wings of Tatev to Host Schoolchildren

YEREVAN – Wings of Tatev, the world's longest reversible aerial tramway (5,752m), announced this week a special offer for schoolchildren and kids from orphanages, who will get free access to the ropeway. The special offer is available from August 25 to September 15, IDEa Foundation said in a statement.

Children will get unforgettable memories and impressions from magnificent landscapes, Vorotan Gorge with its panoramic view and the aerial tramway soaring above the Tatev Monastery Complex.

Wings of Tatev, an aerial ropeway included in the Guinness World Records, has been operating since 2010. It is one of the landmarks of Armenia, contributing to development of local infrastructures and boosting both domestic and international tourism. Over the 10 years, it has hosted around 1.1 million visitors.

The abrupt decline in the tourist flow due to this year's Coronavirus pandemic requires additional funding from the founders to cover operational costs. However, Wings of Tatev continues the flights and offers attractive packages for visitors and guests.

Ahead of the 10th anniversary of Wings of

Tatev schoolchildren and kids from orphanages will be able to also visit one of the most famous religious, cultural and enlightenment centers of Armenia, the 9th century Tatev Monastery Complex.

"This will not only become an adventurous trip and exciting leisure for schoolchildren but also a journey into Armenia's history, culture, religion and educational traditions. To boost domestic tourism, we've organized various special offers this year. For instance, in July we announced a special offer for visitors getting 4 tickets at the cost of 3. It especially increased family travel to Tatev," said Director of Wings of Tatev Vahe Bagdasaryan.

Wings of Tatev was built within Tatev Revival Program which also includes reconstruction of Tatev Monastery Complex and development of neighboring communities. The aerial tramway is an example of venture philanthropy meaning the philanthropist doesn't expect return of the invested money. The project generates revenue from its operation which covers all the costs of operation. Moreover, the revenue from the tourism infrastructure is allocated to reconstruction of Tatev Monastery as well as various community development initiatives.





## INTERNATIONAL

## International News

## Annual Akhtamar Church Mass to Be Held Behind Closed Doors

ISTANBUL (Panorama.am) — The annual Mass at the Holy Cross Armenian Church on Akhtamar Island in eastern Turkey will be held behind closed doors this year due to safety concerns, Ermenihaber reported on August 24.

The Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople said in a statement that the liturgy offered every year since 2010 is set to be celebrated at the church on September 6 this year. It is noted that only Archbishop Sahag II Mashalian and the clergymen will be inside the church, while the island will remain closed for tourists and pilgrims.

After reconstruction Holy Cross Church turned into a museum, and Turkish authorities allowed to have liturgy there once a year. The church is still without a cross.

## Christie's Holding Auction to Help Rebuild Beirut's cultural scene

LONDON (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The British auction house Christie's announced on August 22 that it will support Beirut's throbbing art community with a charity auction, Grazia reports.

The tragic explosion in Beirut affected local businesses from essential services to restaurants, fashion and even the arts — shattering buildings and centers.

Dubbed “We Are All Beirut - Art for Beirut: A Charity Auction,” the online auction will take place from late October to the first half of November.

“Seeing the images of devastation on August 4 will always remain in all our collective memory and our thoughts are with all families, friends and artists who have lost so much. We hope to raise enough funds with this initiative to make a significant difference,” Christie's CEO Guillaume Cerutti, commented, continuing “we are committed to help and hope that many of our international clients, friends and collectors will follow our call to action.”

According to Caroline Louca-Kirkland, Managing Director at Christie's Middle East, the initiative will include approximately 40 to 50 lots of international and regional art, jewelry, design and watches. Funds will be allocated to restore the city's art and cultural community, including the Sursock museum - Beirut's modern and contemporary art museum.

## Greece and Turkey Carry Out Rival Military Exercises off Crete

ATHENS (Panorama.am) — Greece conducted navy and air force exercises in the eastern Mediterranean on August 25 in a move that drew an angry response from Turkey, which announced it will carry out training operations of its own, the National reported.

The Greek three-day exercises will take place south-east of the island of Crete, near where Turkey is searching for oil and gas.

The Turkish defense ministry said it would carry out the maritime training to enhance co-ordination.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan claimed that Greece was endangering the safety of all ships in the region.

Greece announced the exercise after the Turkish research vessel the Oruc Reis — which has been accompanied by the Turkish navy — would continue its work until Thursday. Greece has repeatedly demanded its withdrawal, sent its own warships to the area and placed its armed forces on alert.

Earlier this month, Athens said a Greek frigate and a Turkish ship collided while shadowing the Oruc Reis.

The tensions have reverberated across the EU, with France dispatching ships to the area to support Greece's monitoring of Turkey's work.

Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas was in Athens and Ankara where he will seek to resolve the tensions.

# Turkey Starves Syria's Northeast of Water as Virus Death Toll Mounts

By Amberin Zaman

ISTANBUL — Turkey has once again cut water supplies to the Hasakeh region of northeast Syria, and the autonomous administration says Ankara is risking hundreds of thousands of lives in the midst of the pandemic and soaring temperatures to placate Syrians living under Turkish occupation.

The outcry over Turkey's continued disruption of potable water supplies to the Hasakeh region of northeast Syria is growing louder. Humanitarian aid agencies and officials in the autonomous administration in northeast Syria say that Turkey is putting hundreds of thousands of lives at risk through its actions in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and soaring summer temperatures.

Some 89 civil society organizations noted in a statement published today that Turkey and its Sunni rebel proxies had once again cut off the supply of water from the Alok pumping station near Ras al-Ain on August 13. The station provides drinking water for around 800,000 residents and is also the main source of water for tankers supplying potable water to tens of thousands of internally displaced Syrians and Islamic State prisoners and their families. It was the eighth such stoppage since Turkey invaded Ras al-Ain in the wake of its military assault against US-backed Kurdish forces controlling the area in October 2019. Alok was rendered inoperable during the Turkish invasion and service has been only partially restored.

“Sporadic water forced the population of Syria's northeast to rely on unsafe alternatives, endangering their lives on top of their fight against COVID-19,” the statement read. “Suspending the Alok water station puts the lives of hundreds of thousands of people at risk, since washing hands with water and [soap] is essential to protect themselves against the pandemic,” the statement read.

At least 20 people have died as a result of the novel coronavirus in the Kurdish-administered area. There are 294 active cases, according to the Rojava Information Center, a research organization that publishes regular reports on northeast Syria. There is mounting worry about the pandemic spiraling out of control. The London School of Economics predicted in a recent study that the number of cases nationwide could reach two million by

the end of August.

Nushin Ibrahim, a 22-year-old woman in Hasakeh city contacted by Al-Monitor through the Rojava Information Center, said, “We haven't had water for the past 25 days. In this situation, with the virus spreading and the water cut off, we are unable to take any precautions against the coronavirus. The media tells us that we have to wash our hands every half an hour, but when water is unavailable this makes it very hard.”

Another resident of Hasakeh city said, “We don't have drinking water or even any water. The lack of water creates both health and psychological problems. Water is a basic human right. But we are struggling to find water because it's very expensive to purchase, and that's if you actually find someone who is willing to sell it.”

The autonomous administration accuses Turkey of weaponizing water as a means of forcing it to supply electricity to the territory covering 1,100 square kilometers (680 square miles) in northeast Syria currently under Turkish control. If Turkey were to have its way, people living under Kurdish rule would receive comparatively less power as a means to help Turkey placate Syrians living under its own occupation. The stoppages are seen as part of a broader Turkish effort to suffocate the Kurdish-dominated autonomous administration through a mix of political, economic and military pressure. Even as it starves the area of water, Turkey has kept up its attacks against Syrian Kurdish forces with artillery strikes and armed drones.

Sinam Mohammed, the Washington representative of the autonomous administration's political arm, the Syrian Democratic Council, told Al-Monitor that the administration had held “an urgent meeting with American diplomats in the region” about the water cuts and had “called upon the United States to impress upon Turkey that its actions are wrong and must be stopped without delay for the sake of more than three quarters of a million innocent Syrian citizens.” Mohammed said the meeting took place on Aug. 22. She said US officials had pledged to discuss the matter with Turkey “and try to solve the problem.” Turkey denies the accusations. The State Department did not respond to Al-Monitor's request for comment.

Jim Jeffrey, the United States' envoy for Syria engagement, is known to have raised the issue in private meetings with his Turkish counterparts numerous times. But Washington has yet to for-

mally condemn Turkey for the stoppage. Jeffrey is expected to travel to Ankara Thursday, August 27, after taking part in UN-sponsored talks between members of the Syrian opposition and representatives of the Syrian government that kicked off in Geneva today. The Democratic Union Party, which is part of the autonomous administration, remains unrepresented at the talks because Turkey opposes its presence.

Russia, which has been mediating between Turkey and the autonomous administration, is either unable or unwilling to get Ankara to change its stance on the water issue.

The central government in Damascus has offered the Kurds some rare support. The permanent representative of Syria to the United Nations, Bashar al-Jaafari, said in a telephone call with Guterres, “The Turkish aggressive behavior to cut off drinking water to Hasakeh is a war crime and a crime against humanity.”

Joseph Lahdo, the co-chair of the local administration and municipalities authority in northeast Syria, said emergency measures were underway to address the water shortage. They include digging 100 wells connected to a redistribution center in Khirbat Hammah northwest of Hasakeh. But Lahdo said this would solve only “50% of the problem.”

The flow from Alok reportedly resumed yesterday after the autonomous administration cut off electricity to the Turkish-held zone as a last resort. But the water has yet to reach residential areas in Hasakeh city, said Thomas McClure, a researcher at the Rojava Information Center.

“Even before [August] 13 many neighborhoods were without water for one or two months because the water supply is so low,” McClure told Al-Monitor.

In an Aug. 21 letter addressed to Antonio Guterres, the UN secretary general, the Damascus-based head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church called Turkey's actions “a crime against humanity.”

Ignatius Aphrem II said, “Using water as a weapon — which is not the first time — is a barbaric act and a flagrant violation of fundamental human rights. Yet, there has been no response from the international community to this atrocity despite the constant appeal of the people of the region.”

(This article by Amberin Zaman originally appeared on the website al-monitor.com on August 24.)

## Turkey Re-Converts Istanbul's Chora Church Museum into a Mosque

ISTANBUL (Ahval) — Turkey has ordered the re-conversion of Istanbul's Chora (Kariye) church, which has served as a museum since 1945, into a mosque and opened it to worship, according to a presidential decree published in the Official Gazette on Friday, August 21.

The decree stated that the site has been transferred to the administration of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) and will be opened for Muslim worship in accordance with Article 35 of the Law on the Establishment and Duties of the Presidency of Religious Affairs.

The move comes shortly after a similar decision to re-convert Istanbul's Hagia Sophia into a mosque from a museum.

Located in Istanbul's Fatih district, the Church of the Holy Saviour in Chora was constructed as part of a monastery complex in the fourth century during the Byzantine era.

It was converted into a mosque around 50 years after the Ottoman conquest of the

city in 1453. It was changed into a museum by a Council of Ministers decree in 1945.

In November 2019, Turkey's Council of State — Turkey's highest administrative court — ruled that the 1945 decision to change its status to a museum was unlawful. But the change in its status to a mosque had not been implemented until Friday's decree.

In July, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also announced the opening of the Hagia Sophia to Muslim worship after the Council of State ruled that the building's conversion to a museum by modern Turkey's founding statesman was illegal.

The Hagia Sophia, originally built as a Byzantine cathedral in 537, was turned into a mosque following the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul on May 29, 1453, and then became a museum in 1935 under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's presidency.

Over the years, Erdogan has repeatedly suggested turning the UNESCO World

Heritage Site into a mosque again to fulfill a long-standing demand by Turkey's Islamists.

The first Friday prayers were held at the Hagia Sophia on July 24, during which its Christian iconography and mosaics were covered up in adherence to Islamic practice which bans depictions of living beings in places of worship.

The decision to change the status of the Chora raises questions about what will happen to its extensive Byzantine mosaics and frescoes. Like the Hagia Sophia, the Chora building is also a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The Ottoman Turks hid its artwork under layers of plaster. Following its reconversion into a museum, the mosaics and frescoes were restored and have been on display since 1958.

Turkey has also recently turned other notable church-turned-mosques-turned museums back into mosques including Hagia Sophias in Znik and Trabzon.

# Community News

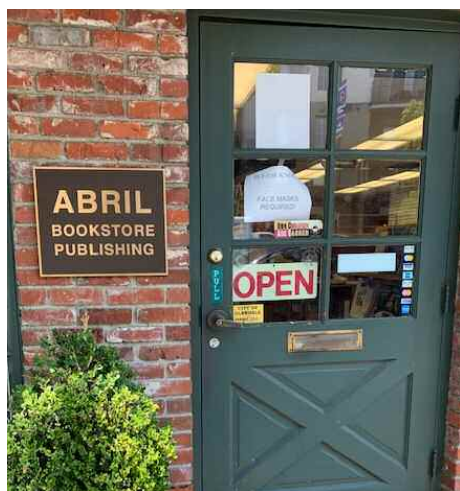
## Abril Bookstore's New Chapter

Will the Almost Half-Century-Old Cultural Center Survive?

By Ani Duzdabanyan-Manoukian  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GLENDALÉ — Abril Bookstore is moving from its location at 415 East Broadway to Adams Square, an Art Deco shopping center with operating Armenian businesses located in a different part of Glendale. The two-story building covered with bricks was the bookstore's home for more than 22 years. The green door beyond the two pink trees across the years was the entrance of the busiest Armenian community center in the city. Boxes filled with books and paintings carefully placed on the floor silently proclaim the end of an era. The last customer of the day hesitantly rings the doorbell, and Arno Yeretzian, the owner of Abril, realizes that he forgot to lock it. I wave "It's okay," so he can conduct one more sale before we start the interview.

Arno finds two folding chairs from somewhere in the office full of moving boxes. He is tired, physically and emotionally. It was a difficult month. Arno reopened the bookstore after the forced closure of Covid-19 and now he needs to pack. The landlord of the building, where Abril has been residing for more than 20 years, didn't make it any easier for one of the last standing Armenian cultural centers to survive. With a government loan, Arno was only able to cover two month rent and some small expenses. Moving seems to be the only way to keep his father's dream and his own future alive. "The Armenian



community was always supportive. A lot of people just came to shop only to help us with the income. But there are a lot of them who really need books. Abril became the heart of the community. They don't want us to close," Arno shares.

Abril was established as the first Armenian-language magazine in Los Angeles in 1977 at the address of 5450 Santa Monica Boulevard. Harout Yeretzian and his brother Noubar started it as a partnership. And of course Seeroon and Seta, Arno's mother and aunt, respectively, were performing their part in helping Abril to thrive. "They always look at the men, but in reality it's the women who makes it happen," Arno says with a smile.

Harut took care of the editorial work and Noubar dealt with the finances. Abril magazine covered all the artists, writers and other community members in the Diaspora. Soon, instead of printing Abril somewhere else, the brothers founded their own printing company and even started to take printing orders. The printing business expanded to the point that the Yeretzian brothers started to print books.

"There was always the need for books. People were coming to Abril, looking for Armenian see ABRIL, page 6



State Rep. Mari Manoogian

## Rising Democratic Star Mari Manoogian of Michigan Gets a National Stage

WEST BLOOMFIELD TOWNSHIP, Mich. — State Rep. Mari Manoogian's star has shone brightly in her home state of Michigan since 2018, when she was elected to the state's House of Representatives. Her district includes Birmingham, Bloomfield Township, Bloomfield Hills, and half of West Bloomfield Township, all

in Oakland County and in the northern suburbs of Detroit. The area is home to a good chunk of Michigan's Armenian population.

However, she made national news last week and was trending on social media thanks to her presence speaking in the 17-person virtual keynote address at the Democratic National Convention at which former Vice President Joe Biden was officially nominated as the party's nominee for president.

Manoogian agreed to an exclusive interview with the *Mirror-Spectator*, conducted by correspondent Harry A. Kezelian III, of Bloomfield Township, which is a part of Manoogian's district.

Manoogian grew up in Birmingham, where she still lives.

**HK: How did you get interested in getting involved in politics? Was there one particular incident that propelled you toward this field or was it a culmination of your experiences?**

MM: I would say it was more a culmination of experiences. I grew up in family that was really interested in public service, my dad was a union leader most of my life and my mom is a retired vocational rehab counselor, so my sister and I were raised to be really active in our community and good public stewards. I always thought I was kind of going to be behind the scenes rather than running for office myself. I thought I might be someone's chief of staff, or do research, but the opportunity presented itself to run for State Rep. The seat was open because we have terms limits in Michigan, and so I took a chance on the opportunity in 2018, and I ran, and won.

**HK: As a member of the House in Michigan, what do you hope to accomplish?**

MM: So, we've already accomplished a few things, obviously I really want to work on a lot more. I hope to get a bill I introduced in early February of 2019 across the finish line, hopefully this year. It's regarding distracted driving. I am really passionate about this issue because as a young person I think it's really see MANOOGIAN, page 8



State Rep. Mari Manoogian at her swearing in

## Pallone, Maloney, Bilirakis Lead Bipartisan Condemnation of Reckless Turkish Actions In the Mediterranean

WASHINGTON — Representatives Frank Pallone, Jr. (NJ-06), Carolyn B. Maloney (NY-14), and Gus Bilirakis (FL-12) on August 21 led a group of 16 bipartisan Members of Congress in condemning the Republic of Turkey's reckless actions in the Eastern Mediterranean that have increased tensions between North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members.

In a letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, the Members urged the Trump Administration to condemn the actions and work with the United States' regional partners to de-escalate the tension.

"Turkey's recent actions in the Eastern Mediterranean are part of an unfortunate pattern deliberately designed to destabilize the region and capitalize on the resulting chaos," Congressman Pallone said. "In this case, Erdogan has ordered Turkish military units to breach the sovereign territories of our NATO allies, including Greece and Cyprus, resulting in a series of near misses between Turkish and Greek, Cypriot, and French navies. The Trump Administration's deafening silence after Erdogan's consistent saber rattling must end. I thank my colleagues who joined me in this effort to urge the Trump Administration to condemn Turkey's actions and quickly halt any further provocations in the region."

"The United States needs to condemn

**"TURKEY'S AGGRESSIVE ACTIONS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS HAVE RAISED TENSIONS IN THE REGION TO DANGEROUSLY HIGH LEVELS.**

—CAROLYN B. MALONEY (NY-14)

Turkey's recent acts of provocation quickly and without ambiguity. Greece and Cyprus have the absolute right to develop the hydrocarbon resources within their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). We cannot let Turkey continue to destabilize the region and threaten the spirit of cooperation and collaboration that has taken hold," said Congressman Bilirakis.

"Turkey's aggressive actions in the Eastern Mediterranean over the past few months have raised tensions in the region to dangerously high levels. Turkey's illegal and repeated violations of Greek and Cypriot sovereignty in pursuit of drilling for natural gas is unacceptable and dangerous. In just the last few weeks, Greece has needed to rapidly mobilize its armed forces in response to threats from Turkey, raising the troubling prospect of a conflict between NATO-member countries. Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Esper must publicly condemn Turkey's actions and make it absolutely clear that the U.S. will not stay silent as Turkey encroaches upon two of our critical allies in the region, Greece and Cyprus," said Maloney.

Pallone was joined by 15 other Members of Congress, including Hellenic Caucus Co-Chairs Gus M. Bilirakis (FL-12) and Carolyn B. Maloney (NY-14) as well as Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-01), James P. McGovern (MA-02), Chris Pappas (NH-01), Dina Titus (NV-01), Jackie Speier (CA-12), Grace Meng (NY-06), Brad Sherman (CA-30), Jim Costa (CA-20), Albio Sires (NJ-08), Ted Deutch (FL-22), Barbara Lee (CA-13), Josh Gottheimer (NJ-05), and David N. Cicilline (RI-01).





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Abril Bookstore's New Chapter: Will the Almost Half-Century-Old Cultural Center Survive?

ABRIL, from page 5

authors (based locally and internationally), explains Arno. In 1978, the space next door to Abril Printing and Publishing emptied and the brothers decided to make it into a bookstore. Abril Bookstore was born and it became the first one in Los Angeles to import books from the Soviet Union. Abril soon became a community center where local intellectuals, political and religious leaders started to gather to exchange views, discuss recent events, argue about the new publications or present the book of the month. Many prominent authors like Hamo Sahyan, Silva Kaputikyan, Vardges Petrosyan had their book signings in Abril. "I grew up in that environment. The smell of coffee, cigarette smoke and food spiced up all that unique atmosphere," remembers Arno.

In 1984, Noubar Yeretzian was diagnosed with ALS (Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or Lou Gehrig's disease). In 1989, he passed away, leaving the Abril family in shock. The death of Noubar and the drastic change of the demographics of Hollywood eventually forced Harout to move to Glendale, following most of the Armenian community members, in 1998.

Arno and his cousins were involved in the bookstore all the time. At first, Arno was helping with the website and then started to work as a cashier. When Harout obtained the whole partnership, Arno, whose professional training was in film, made Abril his full time work.

In 2010, Harout was diagnosed with cancer and passed away in a very short time, leaving his wife and son devastated. "I had to learn everything by myself. I was always in the front, never dealt with other stuff. I was going through his papers, calling different people to figure out how to run a bookstore," Arno admits. One year later Seeroon was diagnosed with ALS. "It took me three years to recover



and to rebuild the business," Arno sighs.

Seeroon Yeretzian owned Roslin Gallery on California Avenue in Glendale since 1995. The gallery presented the works of Armenian artists from all around the world. When the cupcake shop next door to the bookstore emptied, Arno moved the gallery there to extend Abril and to make it a cultural center, just like his father and uncle had done years ago. The new Abril started to be built.

"When Border's closed down, I bought these shelves from them for a very good price. I kept some from the old bookstore as well. I enhanced the old cultural aspect. We started with three events in a month, then it became four or five. With the Armenian movie society,

we held the movie nights every first Friday and the music nights every Saturday. It became once again a very busy cultural center," Arno lists proudly.

Arno realizes the struggles that a small bookstore can go through when some are just closing down (Berj Armenian Bookstore), some minimizing their hours (Sardarabad Book Store) and some book industry giants like Barnes and Noble are closing hundreds of nationwide locations. Last year, Arno started the Siramarg [peacock] Cultural Center Foundation, which includes Abril Bookstore and Roslin Art Gallery,

to continue his parents' legacy.

Reopening Abril after several weeks of COVID-19 closure, Arno welcomed a lot of new customers. "That gives me a hope, a purpose to continue to work. I can still have a healthy business, but not with that rent in this building,"



Arno hopefully exclaims.

Abril Bookstore's new home is only 1100 square feet, less than half its previous size. The new Abril won't have a gallery, only a bookstore. During the last weeks, Arno was having a clearance sale to "lighten the load and raise some funds."

Arno is optimistic. It will take some time until customers get used to the new location. He only regrets that his daughter, who is 18-months old, won't see the old Abril. But she will grow up in Abril without a doubt. "This is a special place," he says, and raises his hands as if trying to wrap them around the 43 years of existence of the bookstore. "The name itself is very significant for all of us; Abril means to live in Armenian. And after all I met my wife here."







## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Stefan Ihrig to Speak on Armenian Genocide and the 20th Century

BELMONT, Mass. — Dr. Stefan Ihrig will give an online talk titled “The Armenian Genocide and the 20th Century” on Sunday, August 30, at 5 p.m. (Eastern US time). The talk is co-sponsored by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), and the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS).

The Armenian Genocide has long been sidelined in the histories of Europe and the world. This poses a whole series of problems for how we understand the past. In this talk, Ihrig will show how and why the Armenian Genocide was a central event for 20th century world history.

Understanding the wider contexts and implications of the Armenian Genocide is key to understanding the dark 20th century. This talk will also underline why the much-needed re-evaluation of its role in and for history should not and cannot be a partisan issue. It will also discuss why recognition of the genocide is simply not enough. Recognition is only the first step in reconstructing a new history of the last century.

Ihrig is a professor of history at the University of Haifa and director of the Haifa Center for German and European Studies. For his last book, *Justifying Genocide: Germany and the Armenians from Bismarck to Hitler* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2016), he received the 2017 Sonia Aronian Book Prize for Excellence in Armenian Studies from the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research. He is also the author of *Ataturk in the Nazi Imagination* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2014).

This event will be held live on Zoom (registration required) and streamed on NAASR's YouTube channel.

NAASR YouTube Channel Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/ArmenianStudies>

For more information contact NAASR at [hq@naasr.org](mailto:hq@naasr.org).



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## Local Armenian Turkish Group Advocates for Dialogue In Response to Recent San Francisco School Vandalism

OAKLAND, Calif. — Opening the Mountain dialogue group condemns the racist graffiti and hate-based vandalism at the Krouzian-Zekarian-Vasbouragan (KZV) Armenian School on July 24, 2020. “We are heartbroken and stand with the school and the community center against any form of violence and discrimination. In the face of dual pandemics — racial prejudice and COVID-19 — we value coming together in recognizing our common humanity,” said founder Ojig Yeretsian, MPH.

Though we don't know the people who committed this crime, we offer dialogue in response. This path can serve as a way forward to overcome hatred and stop the recurrence of violence. For too long, conflict has scarred the history and relations of Turks, Azerbaijanis and Armenians.

We stand in solidarity with KZV Armenian school and the larger Armenian community of the San Francisco Bay Area. Opening the Mountain encourages Armenian, Azeri and Turkish Bay Area residents to engage in non-violent communication and dialogue. Email [OTMdialogue2020@gmail.com](mailto:OTMdialogue2020@gmail.com) for more information.

Opening the Mountain is a living room dialogue group for Armenians and Turks in the San Francisco Bay Area. The group came together as a grassroots effort and not as part of any Turkish or Armenian organization, nor is it affiliated with any government. It was formed in 2007 and members have been meeting monthly in each other's living rooms and now on virtual platforms. More than ninety people have participated since inception and there are nearly two dozen current members. Sustained dialogue is an alternative model to the message of hate that tends to inundate mainstream media and nationalist narratives. Members are committed to listening to each other's stories with open minds and hearts, in an intimate, confidential setting. This process promotes understanding and acknowledges wounds of inter-generational conflict and genocide. We believe that the inter-ethnic cycle of violence which has existed for generations can be disrupted with non-violent communication and dialogue.

### 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

# Rising Democratic Star Mari Manoogian

MANOOGIAN, from page 5

important that we're advocating to keep — particularly young people — safe behind the wheel, although we know this is an issue that doesn't really discriminate based on age. We want to make sure people are putting their phones down when they're driving. In December 2019 I was able to pass this legislation, and we're really hopeful that we'll move it through the Senate this fall, and hopefully see it through to become law where be ban texting and driving in Michigan.

Right now, there is a law on the books that prohibits distracted driving by just texting, but it doesn't include using your smartphone. The law was written so long ago that it didn't envision cell phones as being mechanisms for watching movies or using other apps, and so it wouldn't stand up in a court of law because you could just say you were using Facebook or you were using something else, and they wouldn't be able to ticket you. We're expanding the legislation to make sure it includes any sort of use of your smart phone.

**HK: How has your experience been in public office? Is the work different than you imagined? Easier or harder?**

MM: I'm not going to say I had any preconceived notions of what it was like to be a State Rep because frankly no one in my family has ever done this before, so I didn't have anything to go off of. The thing that I think is surprising is just how seriously young people look up to the work that we do. It's kind of surprising to me that ... in particular we have so many engaged young folks in our district who know what's going on. They actually pitch me on bill ideas from time to time about voting access or things like that and so that's something that I think is kind of a huge surprise.

The other thing that's sort of surprising — I guess maybe not surprising, but different than I expected it to be — is even though I'm an elected official, some of my own peers treat me differently because I'm younger, and so, it's just a different challenge I have to overcome, and, you know, something we deal with on a day-to-day basis. But it is what it is.

**HK: What keeps you going day in and day out?**

MM: Especially during COVID what has been really helpful is just being in touch with the community. We've been doing a lot of phone banking and touching base to make sure people are OK, seeing if there's any different services we can get them, or questions they might have. That's something that's really been great, but I do want to highlight, especially this week [the week of her appearance on the virtual Democratic National Convention] it's been kind of a whirlwind of events. What has been really great is to see how many young Armenian girls were excited about seeing me on TV, and talking about how they kind of see that there's a possibility for them, not just in politics, but in doing something as big as this, and just seeing that, I can even serve as a small inspiration to kids is a huge deal for me, and definitely keeps me going when times are difficult.

**HK: Has there been a situation where you felt you made a real difference?**

MM: Right now, there are a lot of challenges with some people getting access to their unemployment benefits because the system has been so overwhelmed. One of the big challenges in government just generally is that it's clunky and antiquated, and, our computer systems are updated, and things crash all the time. They're not super user-friendly, so it makes it really hard for people to have trust that the system's actually working for them. And so truly, anytime I'm able to get somebody access to a benefit that they were deserving of ... I have a close friend in the Armenian community whose teacher pension for some reason was messed up. We were able to fix that for her. It's these small things, that are seemingly small, they are not big pieces of sweeping legislation but they're meaningful differences in people's lives and that's what this is really all about.

**HK: Who are some of your mentors in terms of your career? Who are some of your role models and why?**

MM: Rep. Kristy Pagan who is from Canton, she is a third-term representative, and she has

been a mentor of mine since I announced my run for public office. She's someone who was also an underdog who won a really tough primary and a tough general election, and she's actually my seatmate on the floor of the house. It's really beneficial to sit next to her and talk about different legislation and different ideas we have. I serve as the treasurer of the Progressive Women's Caucus and she's the chairwoman so we spend a lot of time together. And of course, Governor [Gretchen] Whitmer and I are pretty close. I'm really fortunate to have her in my corner and she's been incredibly supportive of me this week, because I was quite nervous before what aired for the DNC speech (laughs) so it was really great to have her. And then of course my parents have been super supportive and the work that my mom did in her field, although it's not exactly the same thing, she's such a role model and inspiration for me. She's someone who got her education later in life. She went back to school when she had two kids and got a PhD. She's served as a role model and inspiration for me as well.



State Rep. Mari Manoogian with Ambassador Samantha Power, right

**HK: Do you have any sort of political role models when you were getting into politics at a young age, was it like, "oh I want to make a difference like this person..."**

MM: Yeah, I mean there are certain figures in politics that I've looked up to. I really was inspired to get into public office because of Barack Obama's historic presidential run. He had a campaign office in Birmingham down the street from my house and it was the first presidential campaign I saw actually make an effort to talk to people in Birmingham. That said, I worked for Congressman John Dingell on the Hill in 2012 and the work that he did and the work that his wife continues to do for conservation and for the environment is something that's super important to Michigan and it's an issue that I continue to champion. We secured \$120 million for replacing lead and copper service lines [for water] around the state and I like to think that's something that the late Congressman would have loved to see done.

**HK: So that ties into the whole Flint crisis, they had lead still in their pipes which was causing the problem.**

MM: Yes, yes.

**HK: That's interesting that you mention environmentalism with Dingell, because most people hear Dingell and think of the auto industry.**

MM: Yes, there's a wildlife refuge actually named after John Dingell in his district; it's a huge deal. He was an avid outdoorsman, an avid hunter. When we would walk into the office there was an amazing picture of him and Bill Clinton in a duck blind, which was hilarious, and when you walked into his office he had stuffed deer mounted on the walls and things, but you know what's kind of surprising that people don't really understand if they're not from Michigan is, you know, folks who are hunters in our state are huge outdoorsmen and they're very much into being conservationists. They understand that the sport of hunting is

that, it's a sport, but it's really important to protect the environment so you can continue to practice your sport.

**HK: That's like a Teddy Roosevelt [idea]...**

MM: Yes, it's very much, exactly! The first memo I wrote when I was an intern there [for Congressman Dingell] was about Zebra Mussels and their expansion into the Great Lakes and sort of what we could do to prevent ships from dropping ballast water into the Great Lakes, because they would take their saltwater that they had put into their ships and they would dump the saltwater into our Great Lakes, and with that, all of these mussels and basically invasive species that live in the ocean were introduced to our ecosystem. It's totally changed the ecosystem of the Great Lakes. The fisheries are totally impacted by a changing ecosystem, absolutely.

**HK: You were one of just 17 young Democratic Party VIPs from across the US in the first virtual DNC convention. Why were you picked and how did you feel when you were asked?**

MM: (laughs at being referred to as a VIP) So, I think, I can't really say why I was picked necessarily. I got a call from the deputy political director on Biden's campaign who I've been working with since Joe Biden campaigned in Michigan to win the Michigan primary. From the beginning, from endorsing Vice President Biden prior to the Michigan primary, I told his campaign, "My family, my dad in particular, has been a longtime fan of the Vice President and whatever I can do to lend my voice to assist him getting elected I'm more than happy to do." When the opportunity presented itself, I was just really excited to accept the offer to speak.



State Rep. Mari Manoogian speaks at the Michigan House of Representatives.

**HK: Were you nervous about speaking before millions?**

MM: I don't know that I was that nervous. Obviously I was worried about how the speech would turn out and how people would receive it but as a young elected official, I'm asked to give speeches all the time. The other day I spoke on the floor of the Michigan House about a resolution to request Congress to get aid to Lebanon to rebuild Beirut. And I saw that as an opportunity to get a practice in, and it's important to speak on that issue, but it's part of my job. Obviously there are always butterflies when it's before a big stage but I view speaking in public and being an effective communicator as an important part of the job.

**HK: I think from a lot of peoples' perspective, someone at the DNC just wrote that whole script, but you told me that you actually wrote some of that stuff, on issues that you thought important.**

MM: Yes, so we worked with speechwriters to make sure that we were effectively representing our communities. There was a question about "what did I want to speak about," and I said, I

specifically wanted to highlight small businesses in our district because we have a really thriving downtown area, and you know, I grew up in downtown Birmingham so I thought it was really important to highlight them and shout them out. Also, obviously as a native Michigander, the auto industry's really important. If I had to think of things that reminded me of Michigan and Joe Biden, I would think the auto industry and what happened in 2008 [the federal bailout]. And then of course also, the issue of healthcare. It affects everybody, so to be able to deliver the punchline of the whole speech was really an incredible opportunity, and as much as it was a silly moment, people are talking about it, and if it gives Americans an excuse to talk about healthcare, I'm here for it. [Manoogian delivered a punchline in the convention speech about Biden's support for healthcare reform, by leaning into the camera as if telling an inside joke and then saying "That's A Big Effing Deal," which was a humorous yet pointed reference to Biden's accidentally saying the same thing on a hot microphone — but using the real "f-word" — during the passage of the Affordable Care Act]. My good friend [Representative] Colin Allred tossed me the alley-oop on that one.

I didn't expect it to be what it turned out to be, and now I'm like a meme on Twitter. If it gives people an excuse to talk about the risk that we have — just this week it was announced that the Supreme Court is hearing the case before them that could repeal the entirety of the Affordable Care Act — I'm here for it, I'm happy to make that joke.

**HK: What sort of feedback have you gotten?**

MM: It's mostly been very positive. Both from Armenians and non-Armenians alike, people in the district. My dad is a huge volunteer, and he drops off the yard signs to peoples' homes, and he was out in the community dropping off yard signs just a couple days ago. And someone said to him, "you know, obviously I really love what she's doing and I'm happy to count on her to do the right thing but we're just really grateful that she's now a national voice for the issues in Michigan." And so, you know to be able to shine that spotlight on our district and our community ... and the things that we are doing here that are amazing, that make us a really strong community, and the things we need to do to improve it, I think is really great.

**HK: We saw on Twitter your message about the negative comments you get from your own Armenian community, particularly some men. How do you cope with that?**

MM: Oh boy...(laughs)... I mean, seriously, this is the thing that is really important to understand, that Armenian women have been the backbone of Armenian history since the dawn of our people, and for me, I see that [negative commentary] as, people view me as a threat because I'm an Armenian woman with power.

I know people don't always agree with what I do, and that's completely OK, but the most important thing here is that Armenian-Americans have a voice in government in a way that they may not have had before. And I always try to center being Armenian whether it's implicitly or explicitly. And so, for example, if you are Armenian and you tuned into the speech you saw that I was wearing an Armenian necklace. You knew that I was here for the community; you could see it in my name but you saw it implicitly in what I was doing. And to have Armenian young girls look up to the speech, that's how I deal with the negativity. There's so much more positive reaction that drowns that out. And "haters gonna hate." And you can put that in there. Armenian women stepped up for me and went to bat in a way that was something I'd never seen in the community before. They totally rallied behind me and just shut these guys down.

**HK: Well, and I mean, this is the problem with the internet, anyone who wants to say something completely off the wall, comes on the Internet.**

MM: Well, and, a few weeks ago I kind of





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# of Michigan Shines on National Stage

went viral on Instagram because I explained what was going on between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and Khloe Kardashian reposted it, and it became a thing. Armenians and non-Armenians read it because there was a lot of exposure to it. And I actually had to work with Instagram and Facebook to monitor the comments because we were getting death threats in the office from Azerbaijanis.

**HK: So, like a hundred years after we've been living in this country still, there's...**

MM: There's still really gross negative misogyny and hate that's out there and I have to educate my staff about how to deal with it, I have non-Armenian staff that work for me, so I've talked to them about all of this and sort of explained to them about it all. And that's the thing, it's sort of an interesting challenge, and I don't mind it, I understand that that's what comes with the territory, but, you know I want folks to understand, yeah we have to work twice as hard because we're doing our job but also dealing with this other sideshow insanity.

**HK: Well, that leads to the next question. Please speak a little bit about your background: family, schooling, previous jobs.**

MM: I'm really honored to represent the district I grew up in. I grew up in Birmingham, went to Birmingham Public Schools, graduated from George Washington University, started at Michigan State and transferred so I have the experience of being at an in-state school as well. I have a bachelor's and master's degree from the Elliott School of International Affairs at GW. I previously worked for Congressman John Dingell; it was my first job in politics as an intern, and then I have also worked for Ambassador Samantha Power at the US mission to the UN in 2013, and also worked in a couple different offices at the State Department prior to moving home and running for office.

**HK: What do you plan to do when it comes to the Biden campaign in the coming months?**

MM: Frankly, whenever the Biden team needs assistance on social media, or they need someone to write an op-ed or anything like that, I'm more than happy to stand in and help with that. A lot of what I've been doing is for their ethnic communities engagement, so helping lead their outreach to the Armenian-American community, also help a lot with young voters as well, and basically helping to rally the troops to get people to volunteer with the campaign, phone bank, etc. They also ask my opinion on policy every once in a while, which is nice.

**HK: On your website, you put your personal phone number and email address. How many calls/messages do you get? Is it unusual to have such openness?**

MM: I don't know that it's ever been that open in this district before but we get text messages and calls all the time. Even in the past week, I think I might have received – I get maybe two or three phone calls a day, and I get text messages even more frequently than that, and we maybe receive probably between, I don't know, 10-15 emails a day. And that's just on the campaign side.

**HK: Do you think Armenians are involved enough in politics? If not, how would you encourage them to become more active? Why does it matter to get involved?**

MM: Well in this district they are! In this district they're very involved on both sides of the aisle. You know I think, relative to the population, for as small of an ethnic community as the Armenians are, we have an outsized role that we play in politics. We've seen Armenians get elected to governorships, we've seen them throughout different posts in the executive branch all the way up through presidential appointments, and even the 40th district, I'm not the first Armenian to represent the 40th district before, in Michigan, which is unusual. [Republican John Jamian was State Representative of Michigan's 40th District from 1991-1996] And so I think that, while I say all of this, there could absolutely be a ton more engagement. I'm really fortunate to have a lot of Armenian-American volunteers that had never volunteered on a campaign before but they knew me, and they knew that I was running for office and so...friends of mine from St. John, they knocked doors for me in the rain two years

ago when I was running. There's always a bigger role that Armenians can play but, I think what's really important is, yes Armenians are volunteering and doing all that good work, but I want to see more Armenian-Americans run for office because that's truly where we can really push and have a true Armenian-American agenda, at all levels of government.

So they would get to see everything in action, I would show them my notes and how I know how to vote on things, they'd come to committee with me and see me debate bills. One of the things I really wanted to set out to do, which for me, being an elected official is not just about passing legislation, it's about using the "bully pulpit" of my office to make a difference in the

**has COVID-19 changed your life and your approach to both life and work?**

MM: So, I'm just going to be really open and honest about this, the first six weeks of this were horrible. I live alone; I have parents that are older. My dad, he specifically said, "you know, we're on the older side, if you're going to be out in the community and you have to go



State Rep. Mari Manoogian at the DNC. She can be seen on the left.

**HK: But you think we are pretty active in this area, and do you think...the rest of the country?**

MM: Mm-hm, yes, in Glendale the majority of the City Council is Armenian, I think at this point it might be entirely Armenian. And there are Armenians that are elected to the California State Assembly; the Speaker of the House in Maine is Armenian [Democrat Sara Gideon], and she's running for Senate, so we may have our first Armenian-American Senator. And I will also say this; it's a she. Right? You have Anna Eshoo, you have Congresswoman Jackie Speier, Sara Gideon is running for the Senate seat in Maine, so there's a lot of, particularly a lot of elected Armenian-American women. And that's a huge deal for our community.

**HK: Do you speak to young people, both Armenian and non-Armenian, about getting involved with politics?**

MM: Frequently, almost every day. I get messages – I'm very frequently active on Instagram, I get tons of DMs from kids who are in high school all the time, that went to my high school, asking about how they can get involved in politics, like I said they pitch me on bill ideas, they ask a lot of really good questions, it's wonderful.

**HK: That's really interesting, so that shows the positive side of the internet, there's so much more connectivity, and people are all of a sudden – it's not as difficult to talk to somebody like you and get in touch, and then, like whoever heard of a high school kid pitching a bill idea 30 years ago, or 20 years ago?**

MM: Well, and this is the thing that I really like to emphasize, is the way I ran my campaign I was super accessible. I knocked on 10,000 doors across the district in 2018 and, was very serious and it wasn't just a line that I said about being accessible, you mentioned that I have my phone number and my email online; and also just my DMs are open on Instagram and so, there can be negative things that are said but by and large it's a lot of positive things, especially young women who are messaging us, just saying how grateful they are to have representation. We have a really robust shadow program. So, prior to COVID happening, once a month I would have two students from the district come up and shadow me in Lansing, they'd spend the full day with me, I'd take them to lobbying meetings, I would take them on the floor and introduce them to the whole House.

community, and making the office as accessible to the people as possible, and one of those things was making sure our young people had a lot of opportunity to be interacting with their government. With regard to the Armenian-American community, I've travelled the country speaking to young Armenian-Americans, different groups ranging from ACYOA to AYF have invited me, I spoke at a conference in California a year ago about this in particular, and it's just a wonderful opportunity.

**HK: How would you characterize our current era, when we have outspoken demonstrators for human rights as well as COVID and an administration that seems to be ignoring both issues.**

MM: I think Joe Biden outlined it probably the clearest I've ever seen a politician outline it last night [Thursday, August 20], where he spoke about the big crises that our country is facing. We're facing a pandemic. We're facing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. We're dealing with the issue of joblessness as well, and dealing with the issue of racial injustice, and all of these things sort of created this perfect storm where Americans are sort of fed up with the way things have been, and none of these issues will be solved overnight. I think that's something that needs to be really made very clear, but the reality is people are very tired and elections are often based on this, are you better off than you were two years ago, or four years ago, and that's, I think, a really important way to frame the conversation. I was super inspired to see young people who graduated from the same high school I went to, and never in a million years did I think they would be able to shut down Woodward Avenue and have protest for racial justice in Birmingham [Detroit's northern suburb Birmingham, Michigan], one of the whitest cities in my community, and yet thousands of people showed up. I think it's just a testament to people being sick and tired of the way that this administration has just bungled the response to the virus. You know, I had a lot of hope that we'd be able to get it under control ... but the unfortunate reality is we don't have enough testing right now in our country, we're not able to get the virus under control, and people just want to go back to their regular lives and I'm really hopeful that we'll be able to get it under control soon.

**HK: That leads to the next question, how**

work," which I do as an elected official, I'm obligated to be there for votes, and I'm not going to miss a vote, but [Manoogian's parents said] "we need to be protective of us." And so, I didn't see my parents for three months. And that was a huge challenge. Because the crisis came in a tidal wave, our office was inundated with questions. In the first weekend of the pandemic and schools shutting down, we received 3,000 emails. And we responded to every single one of them. We've done town halls on Zoom, have spoken to small business owners in digital round tables, and continue to try to do that kind of outreach that we have been known.

**HK: What are your hobbies?**

MM: Do I have any hobbies? (laughs) I mean, I bought a basketball last weekend... I work out a lot actually, it was an investment but I bought a Peloton before Covid hit... I take out my aggression on my bike, when I'm stressed out it's a really good place to escape and I'm glad I made that purchase before things got really shut down, because I'm someone who was a figure skater and a basketball player when I was growing up and really appreciate being active, and truly, being able to stay active even though I had to stay inside was a huge escape. I also read, but who wants to know that?

**HK: What is your ultimate goal in terms of politics?**

MM: Truthfully I didn't think I was going to run for office in the first place, so overall...I think what happened this week was an incredible opportunity, and it continues to be an incredible opportunity to, A., talk about the things that are really important to my district and my community, and B., give our district a voice that it's never had before on the national stage, and so, whatever opportunity arises from it, I am hopeful that we continue to be able to have outsized impact on policymaking, and in a way that is meaningful to people here in our district, and so in whatever capacity I can do that, whether it's as a State Representative or otherwise, is something I'm happy to entertain.

**HK: What are your plans for the future decade?**

MM: Hopefully I'm finishing up my third and final term in the House, and from there we'll have to see. We're excitedly looking towards redistricting, we're unsure of what that may look like, but at the end of the day I'm just excited to run for re-election and sort of see where things go from there.





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Armenian Day Schools In the US Face COVID-19

By Taleen Babayan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK – The COVID-19 pandemic upended lives around the world, affecting public health, the economy and the education system. As the school year opens this fall across the United States, institutions are working hand-in-hand with their state governments to devise, adjust and experiment with new approaches and techniques as they face never-before-seen circumstances. Coming off of an online-only spring semester where student engagement came to a halt and family dynamics were altered when schools shut down, administrations are on track and better prepared to meet the needs of their student populations.

While the new school year unfolds, Armenian day schools across the country have adjusted to the challenging situation. Due to the diminishing infection rate numbers in the East Coast, the Armenian schools have adopted a hybrid instruction, in line with state guidelines.

## Armenian Sisters Academy

Located in Radnor, Penn., a suburb of Philadelphia, the Armenian Sisters Academy is ready to launch its remote and in-person model when classes begin on September 8.

The school serves 130 students from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade and is led by Principal Sister Emma Moussayan and Vice-Principal Daniel Commale. Pennsylvania, like its neighboring states, has been able to get a handle on the virus throughout the spring and summer months. Thanks to the progress, faculty and staff look forward to welcoming students on campus for the first time in six months.

“The adjustment was pretty seamless,” said Commale of the switch to remote learning. “We had to close on a Thursday afternoon and quickly go into a digital format in order to have everything available online for parents and students by the following Monday.”

Although the remote lessons could have caused more stress to students and families, Commale noted that some students “excelled” while others still “craved that face-to-face human interaction.” A common observation amongst the faculty, however, was that students were not as jovial as they were while physically in school.

When school let out in June, the teachers continued to design new lesson plans for the fall and participate in online meetings over Zoom. By early August, many came back to school to set up their classrooms.

“Our priority has always been to prepare a safe, loving and caring environment for our students,” said Sister Moussayan. “Our teachers are prepared and they know the responsibilities expected from them.”

The Armenian Sisters Academy, which offers a bilingual curriculum in Armenian and English along with Spanish language lessons for all grades, was founded in 1967 and maintains the Montessori-based philosophy, encouraging spiritual development and cultural initiatives. This year, however, while Armenian cultural celebrations will continue to thrive in the classroom, special presentations to the ASA families will be temporarily on hold.

“Unfortunately we can’t have all of the students and parents together in the building, but we are thinking of alternatives to keep that collective cultural part alive in our school,” said Sister Moussayan.

As the school year begins, the plan is to offer in-person instruction five days a week for students, who can opt to come in everyday or spend one half of the week in-class and the other half attending their classes remotely. To elevate cleanliness standards and ease the fears of students and teachers alike, the Armenian Sisters Academy has made an extra effort to update sanitizing stations, increase ventilation systems and airflow, mandate mask-wearing in the classrooms, and hire more cleaning professionals who will be on campus all day.

## Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School

When the doors to the Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School in Bayside, Queens, open on September 9, Principal Seta Megherian, alongside her staff, are ready to receive their students with open arms.

“We have missed the children and they, too, want to make that connection,” said Megherian, who noted that students used Zoom throughout the spring semester, where the children received an enriching experience in English and Armenian. “The school is doing everything to ensure a safe return for the kids, families and teachers.”

Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School, which was established in 1967 initially as the Hye Bardez Nursery School, currently has 90 students and emphasizes an Armenian language and cultural education, while focusing on legacy. Megherian credits the small-school setting as a reason why they were able to successfully transition to an online model over the last few months.

“Our wonderful parents saw what our school provided when the pandemic hit and they appreciated that there was no waiting period and no unknown,” said Megherian, herself an alumna of Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School. “The teachers taught on Zoom and classes resumed as normal as normal can be.”

Maintaining a positive and upbeat virtual environment was a priority for Megherian and her faculty, who observed that students were surpassing their curriculum content and moving onto higher levels of reading and science.

“We have been working very tirelessly with our Board and our teachers to welcome our stu-

dents back into their family home space,” said Megherian. “We want to ensure the safety of our students and make sure everything is ready to go.”

Board Member Natalie Gabrelian, who is an alumna of Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School, acknowledged that there was “no disruption” to the students’ learning thanks to the “dedicated teachers who went above and beyond with their creativity to bring classrooms to life.”

“These unprecedented times have brought to light so many of our daily heroes, and we owe immense gratitude to our educators and school leaders who have been fighting at the frontlines of education since March, when they were called into action to make a quick transition to remote learning,” said Gabrelian, who serves as Director of Education at AGBU.

She appreciated the efforts of Megherian and Secretary Maro Jamgotchian, who together with the committed Parent Teacher Organization made sure that the students and families stayed connected with entertaining events, including virtual trips, scavenger hunts, family Bingo night, graduation and the “verchin zank” last bell celebration on the final day of school.

“In its vast history, the unprecedented experiences of the last few months will definitely stand out in our history books,” said Gabrelian. “As we approach the start of a new school year, we are forever grateful for our dedicated administration and faculty and our community of staunch supporters. Together we can ensure the next chapters tell the story of a much brighter future.”

## Hovnanian Armenian School

Across the river in New Milford, NJ, the Hovnanian Armenian Day School has also adopted a 100% in-person model, according to Acting Head of School Chris Sarafian, who set up technology for remote instruction inside the classroom for any students who choose to continue learning from home.

“While we’re encouraging everyone to come back to campus, we won’t turn away a family who wants to leave their child at home for the term,” said Sarafian. “We believe it’s better for students to learn in person, particularly for the social and emotional aspects, and we have had open communication about this with our parents.”

Coming off a “challenging spring semester” where teachers had to “reconfigure their way of teaching with no notice,” Sarafian is optimistic for the fall term. While he acknowledges that there may be anxiety for some who are returning to campus, there is also enthusiasm for physical interaction.

“Our teachers have been creating and recreating, adopting and adapting to the new environment, as are the students,” said Sarafian. “Some students did very well online and were more productive and focused, whereas others did not do as well with the online component.”

During the months of remote learning when the pandemic forced a lockdown, Sarafian started a volunteer class called “Kicking it with Mr. Chris” to keep students engaged when he heard from a parent that their child was unhappy and hadn’t smiled in a long while.



Parents bring their children to pick up class materials on the first day of school at Columbus Elementary School in Glendale, CA, on August 19

“Hearing that bothered me,” said Sarafian. “Even though it was by definition a senseless class, the students loved it because they laughed and it was like a once-a-week vent session.”

When students return to school, there will be an in-person counselor to talk to them about their concerns. A wellness class is also on the schedule so students can discuss the impact the pandemic has had on them and their families.

Developed in conjunction with the Hovnanian School Alumni Association, the R.E.A.C.H. Initiative (Readiness for Education, Activities, Care, and Health) will help raise funds for the upcoming school year in terms of acquiring and installing equipment, technology and supplies to ensure a safe and secure opening for the upcoming school year.

“This year there was an increased request for financial aid,” said Sarafian. “Through this initiative, we can award more scholarships and financial aid to encourage families to send their children to Hovnanian School.”

R.E.A.C.H. aims to also offset the increased expenses as a consequence of COVID-19 that were not budgeted into the school year, such as bulk purchases of hand sanitizers, masks, gloves, disinfectants, PPE equipment, added cleaning staff and a Clorox 360 Electrostatic Sprayer, among many other items.

The school, founded in 1976, currently has an enrollment of 135 students from 8 weeks old through the eighth grade.

The school will also set up tents and sun shades outside to accommodate outdoor classes and an outdoor dining area, weather permitting. The classrooms will be rotation-based and the school will encourage students to be outdoors as much as possible, where the risk of the virus is much less likely to spread.

Looking towards the 2020-2021 school year, Sarafian sees it as a community effort.

“Everyone will have to buy-in this year and that includes staff, parents, teachers and students,” he said. “We all have additional responsibilities this year to protect our children and our staff. It’s important everybody works together to achieve that goal to keep everyone safe.”





## COMMUNITY NEWS

### St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School

St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School in Watertown, Mass., organized a special advisory Task Force to devise a reopening plan for the preschool, kindergarten and elementary school students.

"We are working hard to prepare for the academic year, ensuring health and safety issues, without sacrificing the quality of education," said Principal Houry Boyamian. "We are in the midst of a pandemic while trying to maximize the educational experience for our students."

The administration and the school's Education Committee and Health Committee have been following all educational, health and state guidelines when the fall term opens on September 14. St. Stephen's will offer two operations for its elementary students, including a mix of two days on campus and three days remote, or one hundred percent remote. Faculty and staff will continue to assess the status and progress of students in both the hybrid plan and remote-only plan, as well as monitor the state of the pandemic throughout the school year.

"Our detailed planning and preparation will allow us to shift our elementary program to either one hundred percent in-person instruction or one hundred percent remote learning when COVID-19 guidelines and circumstances change during the academic year," said Boyamian.

The approach for the preschool and kindergarten students will be different, since they are housed in the newly constructed and spacious Afeyan Building, with plenty of room for social distancing. Students in kindergarten will receive four days of in-person instruction and one day of remote learning, whereas the preschool students will have a one hundred percent in-person program, while complying with the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) guidelines and implementing advanced cleaning protocols, according to Boyamian.

Maintaining open communication and academic school year plans with parents has been a priority for Boyamian and her administration. They have shared details about the education, health and safety plans with parents to give them the full scope of the upcoming months in order to help them decide what learning model they want to choose for their children. Parents were also encouraged to participate in online Zoom meetings and submit questions to the school's administration.

"St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School continues to provide an excellent bilingual education to our students, who are eager to return to school after three months of remote learning," said Boyamian of the bilingual school that was founded in 1985 and promotes the Armenian language and culture in an intimate school community and environment. "I'm very thankful to our teachers for their resiliency, flexibility and cooperation, and their ability to come back and resume teaching in person."

### AGBU Alex & Marie Manoogian School

In the Midwest, the AGBU Alex & Marie Manoogian School evaluated whether they should reopen with a hybrid model or remain remote when they start classes on Tuesday, September 8. While the large classroom spaces were conducive to social distancing and the administration drew a 32-point plan for hybrid teaching under Principal Hosen Torossian's tutelage, the Board ultimately decided to open the school with distance learning for the month of September and assess month by month.

"Our decision is common to most Michigan schools with the same dilemma," said Torossian. "We understand face to face teaching is better than online teaching and the students crave being in school together with their teachers, but the Board will continue to evaluate its position."

He cited concerns with the quantity of materials presented online, which were particularly challenging for the elementary school students who found it difficult to sit in front of the computer for up to six hours a day. The bilingual curriculum that fosters the Armenian language, mathematics, science, history, language arts and the encouragement of developing a strong cultural and individual identity, has been easier for the high school students to adjust to remotely.

Despite the pandemic's impact on educational institutions and learning, there has not been a decrease in enrollment at the kindergarten through twelfth grade school, named after benefactors Alex and Marie Manoogian when it was established in 1969.

"There is a tremendous bond within our Manoogian School community and we have extremely dedicated parents and teachers," said Torossian. "They are one hundred percent behind our decision."

That longtime confidence was further instilled last March when Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer shut down all of the schools to combat the coronavirus in the state - and the Manoogian School was one of the few that "turned on a dime."

"Within days of the announcement all of our teachers began teaching online and we were fortunate we never lost a day of schooling," said Torossian. "The teachers did an outstanding job switching immediately from face-to-face instruction to online, to the great satisfaction of the parents, students, administration and the Board."

Each student coped differently during the months of online learning and the teachers stayed on top of who was motivated and who needed an extra push. One math teacher in particular sent and received 34,000 screenshots within the three months of online learning, according to Torossian, highlighting the level of devotion of the teachers to ensure their students understood the materials presented virtually.

Special counseling was offered to students as well, including ESL teachers and teachers working with special needs students to "minimize the impact on students who needed help the most."

"We have never experienced anything like this, but given the circumstances, kudos to the Manoogian teachers for giving two hundred percent during these dire circumstances," said Torossian, who acknowledged that some of the families within the school were impacted by COVID-19 and the school paid special attention and engaged counselors to lend a hand. The administration also offered technology for anyone who needed a computer, hardware or internet access and will continue to do so in the upcoming school year.

As of now, scheduling remote learning remains a priority for Torossian and his faculty to make sure that homes with multiple children who attend the Manoogian School are all able to have the appropriate time with their computers and resources during the distance learning period.

"We have to be careful with how we schedule so all siblings have equal access to technology at home," said Torossian. "We are working to create equitable access to all."

### Glendale Unified School District

The surge of COVID-19 on the West Coast, particularly in California, has caused Governor Gavin Newsom to issue a county watchlist, resulting in the majority of schools to teach fully online in the fall. In Los Angeles there has been a recent boom in cases, causing the school systems, such as the Glendale Unified School District, which serves 26,000 students - a heavy proportion of whom are Armenian - to kick off their school year virtually on Wednesday, August 19.

Glendale Unified School District Board of Education at-large member Nayiri Nahabedian was on site at the Columbus Elementary School on the first day of school when parents and students visited the campus to pick up textbooks and all related stationary for the school year, from notebooks to pencils.

"It's important that all of us be positive and enthusiastic and energetic about the school year," said Nahabedian, who was first elected to the Board in 2007. "There is no question that these are challenging times, but we need to work together and be patient with one another and ourselves in order to have the best possible learning experience for our students."

While the numbers have been improving over the last couple of weeks, Nahabedian said the Board of Education will remain "committed" to following the safety protocols of Los Angeles County and the State of California as long as they remain on the watchlist.

"We will see how we can, as safely as possible under the circumstances, bring our students back to the classroom in the future," she said.

Nahabedian acknowledges remote learning relies heavily on family circumstances and children in vulnerable families are "at risk of learning loss."

"Public education is supposed to be the great equalizer and bring kids together of all backgrounds to have equal opportunity," said Nahabedian, who noticed that during the pandemic some families have had the means to create learning pods while other children haven't had that same privilege. "There are parents who are capable of sitting with their child and working with them throughout the day on their schoolwork, while other parents don't have that same capacity or the luxury of working from home, causing those kids to lose out."

Moving forward, the potential plan is to move into a hybrid model later in the fall. State, health and education officials will monitor the caseloads, new infections per capita, test positivity rate and hospitalization rates - but until conditions improve and counties are off the list for at least two weeks - they will continue to teach online.

The Glendale Unified School District, which serves preschool through twelfth grade in over 30 schools in the region, has earned the National Blue Ribbon honor, the U.S. Department of Office of Education's highest designation. It's also one of the area's largest employers, with more than 3,000 teachers, administrators, and support staff.

Throughout the months of remote instruction last spring, Nahabedian observed that many students thrived on structure and being present in the classroom with a live teacher giving instructions. The district bridged the gap, technology and equipment-wise, by providing a Chromebook to every student who requested one and hotspots for Internet access.

"Our challenge is having the students work with the equipment and understanding that the equipment is the bottom minimal standard and we need to think beyond that," said Nahabedian.

If the public health situation does change and students are permitted to receive in-person instruction in the classroom, GUSD will remain committed to maintaining and accommodating a remote option if parents are not ready to send their children back into classrooms.

In the meantime, for the families who are essential workers or have special circumstances and must send their children to school this fall, GUSD created technology pods for elementary school students, an initiative that Nahabedian said is "unique and forward-thinking."

"Technology pods give students the opportunity to be back in their elementary classroom with their Chromebook, while following all safety protocols, and do distance learning from inside the school," said Nahabedian, who noted that more than 1,000 elementary-aged students are taking advantage of this option.

"Our teachers are teaching from their classroom as well because they have found that the classroom is a safe and a more convenient way for them to conduct distance learning," said Nahabedian, emphasizing that all teachers follow safety protocols and the Board has ensured they have a clean space to work in.

"It's challenging for our employees, our parents and our students," said Nahabedian. "But it is the moral responsibility of the adults right now to show up for the children and to care for them and to teach them."

A Virtual Lecture Organized by the  
**Armenian Rights Council of America (ARCA)**  
**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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# Arts & Living

## Missionaries and Their Efforts to Help Armenians Focus of New Online Project SAVE Database

By Alin K. Gregorian  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN – Project SAVE is continuing its mission of preserving the past by tapping into the latest technology.

In a recent interview, Tsoleen Sarian, the executive director of the organization, said Project SAVE has just launched its online collections database, with a particular focus on the efforts of missionaries in the Ottoman Empire.

Sarian said that to accomplish the task, the group applied for and received grants from the state of Massachusetts for digitizing and making accessible the images from their archives, as well as donations from the Dadourian Foundation, the Bilezikian Family Foundation



Two unidentified young women posing with a donkey. The Near East Relief star is visible on their hats. Sivas, Turkey, 1919, photographer unknown. Courtesy of Lucina Thompson Beeching

and the Souren Maroukian Charitable Trust.

The story of the missionaries is one that is intertwined with the Armenian Genocide. Many of the missionaries and their families, Sarian said, established schools and hospitals in the lands where the Armenians were being slaughtered.

“They were usually highly, highly educated, from Ivy League schools,” she added. “They often went and stayed through the Genocide. They were emissaries of news and built elite schools and hospitals.”

“They sounded the alarm and served as witnesses” regarding the Genocide, she added. “They were truly formidable people who believed in the idea of service. It wasn’t easy to leave and to literally go to the other side of the world. We have images of their homes, offices, how they worked with the local community.”

She added, “Protestant Missionaries from the US and Europe traveled the countryside with their cameras to meet the people and consider their needs, attracting them to attend

see PROJECT SAVE, page 15



## ‘100 Years from Home’ Takes Us To Kars and Back

LOS ANGELES – The effects of the Armenian Genocide continue to ripple down through the generations, and a new film, “100 Years from Home,” provides more evidence for this. The film features the story of Lilit Pilikian, who is the great-granddaughter of genocide survivors from Kars, a city now in the Republic of Turkey. A documentary, it is a personal story bolstered with plenty of historical and cultural background, making it accessible to a non-Armenian audience, though perhaps even more moving to Armenians with a personal stake in this tragedy.

By Aram Arkun

Pilikian is a first-generation American Armenian, who was born and raised in Los Angeles. She is an industrial designer by profession, so she needed the collaboration and support of her husband Jared White, who happened to be a filmmaker, to carry out this project.

White declared, “It was definitely her idea,” while Pilikian jumped in to say, “but he agreed with it. My profession is to come up with crazy ideas.”

White had been working for a few years as a filmmaker. He had done mostly scripted films, shorts and web series, as well as commercials, and Pilikian occasionally helped him in a production design way. This was his first foray into documentary filmmaking.

“This was a kind of a departure for me, from my usual work, but it was something that was close to Lilit and close to me as well. It became a passion project that we both decided to pursue,” he said.

He suggested that perhaps Michael Arlen’s book *Passage to Ararat*, about Arlen’s quest to understand his Armenian identity, may have been in the back of his mind during the process.

Pilikian said that the centennial of the genocide played a big part in inspiring her to do this. She went to Armenian elementary school, and as a child participated in marches on the April 24th anniversary of the genocide, but never had been more actively involved in the issue. Growing up in the US, she felt caught between the Armenian and American cultures.

Some years ago, Pilikian helped take care of her grandmother Burastan Muradian toward the end of the latter’s life. Muradian’s family was originally from

continued on next page

## Dr Matossian’s Volume Focuses On First Republic Of Armenia at its Centennial

FRESNO – An edited volume by Bedross Der Matossian, with a preface by Richard G. Hovannisian, titled *The First Republic of Armenia (1918-1920) on its Centenary: Politics, Gender, and Diplomacy*, has just been published.

The book is the second in the newly launched Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) Publication Series published by the Press at California State University, Fresno. Subvention for the publication of the book was provided by the Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. The volume is dedicated to Richard G. Hovannisian for his outstanding contribution to the field of Armenian Studies over the past half-century.

The First Republic of Armenia (1918-1920) was born from the ashes of the Armenian Genocide and war. In one of the most critical periods of modern Armenian history, the Republic was able to face a multitude of external and internal challenges. The Republic of Armenia was significant as the first independent Armenian state since the collapse of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia in 1375. This edited volume provides a multifaceted and interdisciplinary approach to studying the fascinating history of the Republic. Through an analysis of the politics, gender and diplomacy of the period, the volume enriches our understanding of the short-lived Republic, which played a crucial role in guaranteeing the perseverance of Armenian identity, and ultimately laying the foundation for the modern Republic of Armenia.

“It was a profound honor to work on this project. This peer-reviewed edited volume discusses aspects of the First Republic that have not been hitherto dealt with. The reader will see the extent to which the leadership of the First Republic worked diligently in the most difficult circumstances in order to save the Armenian nation from the ashes of Genocide. Indeed, without the First Republic, statehood today would be a page pertaining to past history,” said Der Matossian. “I would like to thank Barlow Der Mugrdchian, the general editor of the Armenian Series of the Press at California State University, Fresno, for his unconditional support in realizing the project.”

The list of contributors in the order of their contribution are Der Matossian, “Introduction”; Richard G. Hovannisian, “The Republic of Armenia: A Contextual Overview”; Houri Berberian, “From Nationalist-Socialist to National Socialist? The Shifting Politics of Abraham Giulkhandanian”; Ari Sekeryan, “Rethinking the Establishment of the First Republic of Armenia: Reactions of the Ottoman-Turkish and Armenian Press in Istanbul (May-October 1918)”; Seda D. Ohanian, “The Role of Women in the Social and Political Life of the Republic of Armenia (1918-1920)”; Rubina Peroomian, “The Subversive Activities of Armenian Bolsheviks: A Critical Factor in Yerevan-Moscow Negotiations (1918-1920)”; Vartan Matiossian, “The Recognition of the First Republic of Armenia in South America (1918-1920)”; Jakub Osiecki, “The Visit of Rev. Antoine Delpuch to the South Caucasus in 1919: An Attempt to Establish Diplomatic Relations Between the Holy See and Yerevan?”; Garabet K. Moumdjian, “Domestic Politics in the Republic of Armenia, 1918-1920: A Flip or a Flop,”; and George Bournoutian, “The Unrealistic Territorial Demands of the Armenian Republic 1919-1920.”

see BOOKS, page 17





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## '100 Years from Home' Takes Us to Kars and Back

from previous page

Moush, in Western Armenia, and had fled to Tsaghakasar, a village near Gyumri in Armenia, probably around 1900, where Burastan was born.

Burastan had preserved the blueprint or plans of her in-laws' family house in Kars, a house they had built themselves. Muradian's mother-in-law had entrusted it to her right before passing away. Pilikian said, "Every now and again she would bring it out and show it to me and say it was important to her. It was something she held onto till the end." It represented the dream of going back home to their (interrupted) lives and homeland, Pilikian's mother Mariam had said.

Muradian passed away in 2012, passing on the blueprint to the younger generations. The blueprint had a long journey to the United States. Muradian's husband Ruben was very young when his family fled Kars in 1920 along with other Armenians who were able to flee to Russia. The Turkish Nationalists took over Kars from the Armenians and made it part of the new Republic of Turkey.

In Russia, Ruben's four brothers either were killed or died for political reasons. The rest of the family eventually ended up in Soviet Armenia, during the movement for repatriation after World War II, and that is where Ruben met Burastan, and where Lilit's parents were born. Eventually Lilit's family came to the US, and Muradian brought the blueprint there with her.

### The Road Back to Kars

The story of the blueprint awakened something in Pilikian, who began looking for the location of the house in Kars via Google maps in 2014. She then started discussing the possibility of doing a documentary with her husband and going to Armenia for the centennial of the genocide. She said, "I was suggesting, let us go



Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan taken by drone at the centennial in 2015

tral family home, they decided the safest way was to take a group tour from Armenia. The trip to Turkey was short but tense and brought up a lot of emotions and anxiety for Pilikian in particular.

White reflected that "I am there with the camera filming her as she is the subject of the film. At the same time, I know that she is going through all of these difficult emotional feelings, and especially when we went into Turkey...I was trying to be there for her and support her as much as I could while filming her with the camera. It was a strange balancing act, but at the end of the day, I think making the film actually brought us closer together." "Yes," Pilikian quietly interjected.

White said, "There was a sort of therapeutic aspect to making the film." Being interviewed, Pilikian said, "helped me deal with those emotions, and where I fit in all this." White added,

Pargév Martirosyan from Artsakh are just some of the participants.

Pilikian said, "When we reached out, they would say, you know who you need to talk to next? And then they would recommend others." Shushan Karapetian at UCLA served as an adviser in this process.

White explained that in the case of cofounder of the social news website Reddit Alexis Ohanian, he just sent a private message via Reddit when he saw that Ohanian was going to be in Yerevan for a tech conference while the filmmaking couple were there. Raffi Krikorian, former vice president of engineering for Twitter, was at the same conference, and White connected by tweeting him.

The striking visual images of places like Yerevan's Armenian Genocide Memorial, Ani, Kars and Van were made richer with a blend of different types of music.

Pilikian said, "Our wonderful composer Emily Rice helped us with much of the music you hear—the placement of it." White said, "She incorporated a lot of Armenian elements into the score." Popular Armenian composer Ara Gevorgyan permitted the use of his music, Lusaber Choir performed some traditional music and Ruben Haroutunian played what Rice wrote for different parts of the score on the duduk.

Making the film was a long process requiring great expenditure of time, and the filmmaking duo donated their time for the good part of four years. They raised money through a Kickstarter campaign initially to get the necessary equipment, and then self-funded the rest.

Pilikian said, "Thankfully, we had enough passionate friends who were also very talented and willing to work on this project for a reasonable amount, on a shoestring budget." White had his editing setup in their home and so was able to do a lot. Pilikian said, "Jared was good in getting things started, and then we would bring in a professional to do the last bit of polish." Postproduction on music and sound was important. Having Gayane Grajan as co-editor was useful because she understood the Armenian-language interviews. Most importantly, White said, "Our co-editor helped a lot with honing in on the most powerful parts of the story. We had an outline, a plan, going in, but it changed so much."

As the film was being edited, the couple said they did occasional informal test screenings with filmmakers and other friends. They asked questions to understand what audience members might want to learn more about and their opinions about various parts of the film. One important thing they quickly learned, White said, was that when they showed it to non-Armenians, they would think that the trip to Turkey was like a holiday or nice vacation. They did not understand what the big deal it was, so material was expanded in the film to make it clear why this was a big deal, with the ongoing hatred of Armenians, general political restrictions making it dangerous to criticize the government, and specifically mention of the Armenian Genocide potentially being considered a crime.

Pilikian said, "We want to give the information necessary for someone who doesn't know anything about it, but only so much as they

need to know in order to understand what we are showing them." The couple, she said, watched a lot of prior Armenian Genocide documentaries to see what they covered. She said, "We didn't want to do the same things they did. We saw that we don't have to do this historical retelling in-depth of the genocide. These things already exist."

### Distribution

The couple offered the film to festivals and premiered it at the Arpa International Film Festival in Los Angeles in November, 2019. They did a private screening for the cast and crew and others who helped in the US, and another one in Armenia.

They also began submitting the film to various television outlets. White said, "PBS was the goal from the beginning for me." Consequently, the couple was very happy that it is showing on September 1 at 8:30 p.m. at PBS SoCal KOCE in the Los Angeles area.

As it will be during a pledge drive for the station, there will be three 12-minute pledge breaks through the film. Pilikian and White will be interviewed at the first one, and Vahe Berberian and Carla Garapedian will appear later. The making of the film and the importance of genocide recognition, among other topics, will be discussed. DVDs of the film will be available for sale on the PBS SoCal website, and Armenian subtitles are being added to it at present as an option.

There is a second Armenian film earlier that night called "What Will Become of Us," and other prominent Armenians like comedian Lory Tatouljian and musician Sebu Simonian will also appear during its pledge breaks.

He said, "We hope to take the film to more PBS stations throughout the country. The better it does on the broadcast on September 1, the better chance we have to take it to other stations and maybe streaming services." Viewers (and readers of this article) can request the documentary to be shown at their local PBS stations.

White said, "I don't think we can have a full theatrical run, especially now that movie theaters are not open. We would also like to take it to schools, when it is safe to do so, and we are looking at education distribution to universities as well as schools."

Until it comes to your home town, people can keep up with developments concerning the film through its website, 100yearsfromhome.com, as well as Facebook and Instagram sites bearing the same name.

### Epilogue: Love and Truth

The film presents Pilikian as its protagonist so lovingly that I could not help but ask White whether the documentary could be considered a homage to his wife. He accepted that it could be seen that way, while Pilikian merely noted that during a test screening one of the comments of the viewers was that it was like seeing her through his loving eyes, as a sort of love letter.

White emphasized that though "the personal aspect was definitely there, I also did want to help raise awareness for the Armenian Genocide. I don't think enough people have heard about it. I am half-Jewish myself, so I could relate because both peoples went through their own genocide."

He concluded, "What I was struck by in the process of making the film was the importance of the truth. The countries that deny the genocide or other countries that don't acknowledge it and allow the former to continue to deny it, I feel just give tacit permission to other countries to commit further atrocities. I think the best way to fight against more genocides happening is to acknowledge them, to recognize and talk about them, so they don't happen again. I was really struck by the need to fight for the truth and for what is right. It is not just a morally good thing. It is dangerous otherwise to not acknowledge these things."



Mariam Pilikian examining the blueprint for the family home in Kars with her daughter Lilit Pilikian

for the 100th [anniversary]. Let us film all these prominent Armenians who will be there, and while we are there, we will look for the house."

They began work on the project in early 2015 and did not finish until 2019. Pilikian did not fully understand the various displacements her ancestors underwent until this time. She said, "The making of the film forced my family to sit down and talk about it, not in a way that, listen, you should already know about it. Having Jared there as the camera allowed them to say it to me in its full context."

Like Pilikian, the plan for the film changed over the course of time. The original goal was more of a general film on Armenian identity as well as the genocide. Pilikian said, "We wanted to get Armenians from all walks of life. It was about getting those different voices and different perspectives on the language, the future of Armenia, the land and on so many other things."

White said, "It was in the process of making it that her [Pilikian's] story became more central to the film. We figured that Lilit's story is a good window into this world, especially for non-Armenians who don't know anything about the Genocide or much about Armenians. It wasn't just a history lesson then — it was a more engaging story."

In order to get to Kars to search for the ances-

"I better understood her through that process as well."

In Kars, White said, "She was literally walking in the footsteps of her ancestors in the town they lived and walked in." Pilikian pointed out, "Walking in those footsteps, you give it a physical face. I don't know how different I am from the previous generations in the sense that they kept that blueprint and they had the intention of going back at some point. I was the first one who had the means and felt secure enough to be able to travel there. Maybe my parents could have, but I don't think they wanted to, maybe because they felt closer to those stories."

The search for the family house in Kars was suspenseful. The city had grown and changed over a century, while street names were in Turkish.

### Compilation and Editing

The presentation of general information about the Armenian identity in the film was lively and unusual because in part it was through a series of well-known Armenians in different fields. Comedian Vahe Berberian, historical architecture specialist Samvel Karapetyan, historian Richard Hovannisian, political figure Raffi Hovannisian, filmmaker Carla Garapedian, journalist and lecturer Maria Armoudian, and church leader Archbishop





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Teens Face Life Issues During Pandemic

TEENS, from page 1

March 13, 2020. Friday the 13th. The day that many teenagers remember as the start of it all. There was talk of the coronavirus in school, but it seemed like the usual gossip. Many didn't see the school closure coming.

Ava Movessian, a rising junior at Westford Academy, remembers that in the days leading up to the cancellation, "it was kind of chaotic in school, like, everyone was talking about it. And I knew that school was going to be cancelled, and I was kind of the one saying to my friends, 'Oh, you know, I think school's going to be can-

celled. They were like, 'No, Ava, it's not going to be cancelled, what are you talking about?'"

For others, it was completely unexpected – and very welcome. Rising Junior at Belmont High School, Tasha Simmons, recounts calling her friend and asking her what was happening at school. Her friend replied that it was all over Instagram that school was out for two weeks. "I was super happy about it," she stated, "Like it was all excitement at that point."

Up until the day that school was closed, Narine Mahserejian, a rising junior at Belmont High School, recalls teachers telling their students, "I'm working on the schedule that we're not shutting down. Everything is normal until we get the say that we're shutting down."

This is what made it so unbelievable to her, because even the teachers didn't have a clue. Many adults suspected that students would not be going back to school for the rest of the year, but many teens were holding out hope.

Nathan Kefeyan, a rising junior at Belmont High School, initially thought it was "a minor thing and we were just going to go back in two weeks and everything was just going to go back to normal." When asked if he knew then that it was going to get as major as it did, he responded, "No, definitely not."

School is such an immense aspect in the life of a teenager. It is something that kids don't realize that they rely on so much until it suddenly disappears. Suddenly, one of the pillars that had kept teens stabilized was disturbed, unsettling the structure of daily life.

"Honestly, I don't remember what I did in the beginning. Actually I do," added Rose Tinkjian, a rising senior at Newton South High School, with a laugh. "I watched all of 'Brooklyn Nine-Nine.' And I did, y'know, some baking, here and there. I did a lot of sleeping, which was nice."

"In the beginning of quarantine, I felt really alone," Ava Movessian stated, "because I was allowed to see nobody and the only way I could contact people was on Zoom or on FaceTime."

Narine Mahserejian noted, "Towards the end, I kind of started doing stuff because I figured out that I was going to be in quarantine for a while. So finding things to do around the house, going outside, walking my dog."

It seemed as though everyone was waiting for something to happen, then suddenly, when they realized nothing was changing, they knew that they couldn't stand by and watch their days trickle past.

Hardly anyone followed a routine. "I just sat around, because I didn't know what to do...it took me a little bit to get an actual schedule for the day. School helped because

it was something to do in the middle part of the day and then afterwards, I knew that for most of the day if I had school, then I had to make the best of the other part of the day that I didn't have school," said Nathan Kefeyan.

It turned out that just having some sort of activity to accomplish gives value to one's time and how they spend it.

Additionally, this pandemic hindered many teens from getting to do things they were happily anticipating. Simmons and Mahserejian were both planning on taking part in the Belmont Girls Rugby Team. Both were very dis-

appointed to hear that they would not be able to play this year.

Simmons said, "This year, I wasn't going to be a starter, but I was going to be on varsity for the first time. And now next year, we're not going to have the experience from this year [because] the freshman never were taught how to play. I don't know any of the freshmen, which is crazy."

Mahserejian agreed. "It was my second year, and I had become close with the seniors this year, so I was excited to play games with them and get better," she said.

Coincidentally, both girls also have sisters who were seniors. "I wanted to see her graduate," said Mahserejian, "Didn't get to see that happen."

Simmons was also distraught for her sister, saying, "It was a big thing, like she was an adult now."

As for sports, Kefeyan, Movessian, and Tinkjian were all saddened to hear that their prospects in hockey, volleyball, and crew, respectively, would be affected.

Kefeyan said, "I was on the J.V. [hockey] team and I was on the practice squad, so it just sucked because a lot of the players were looking forward to it and it hadn't happened in a while."

Movessian was on a club volleyball team and their season got cancelled. "It was really sad," she said, "because I was just getting really good and I was on a really good team and having fun."

Lastly, Tinkjian's spring season of crew was cancelled, "Spring is supposed to be the best season for crew because you get all the races, like a race every week. It would have been so fun."

**Summer Camps**

Many Armenian teens were extremely saddened to hear that Camp Haiastan would not be taking place. The 16-year-olds were especially disappointed, as this would have been their last year of teen session.

"I always love seeing my Armenian community because I don't see much of them throughout the school year and summer is when I go to all the dances, and I get to spend two weeks at Camp Haiastan with all my Armenian friends," said Ava Movessian, who has been attending Camp Haiastan since she was 10. Tinkjian added that it would have been her "first and last year of teen session, because I didn't go last year."

Kefeyan called it, "the highlight of the summer."

The teens interviewed – doubtless like their older counterparts – are looking forward to the return of ordinary things, like hugs and relaxed social interactions.

Movessian said that she longs for a day when she is able to "live life and not always be in fear of catching a virus. I hope we can go back to somewhat having a normal life."

Tinkjian said she awaits a day that "you can go and there's a lot of people and you don't have to worry." When asked what the first thing that she would want to do if life goes back to normal, Simmons replied, "Hang out with my friends – and not have to think about it."

Most teens seem to be adversely affected by the act of having to socialize while social distancing and wearing a mask. The two combined are stark reminders to them that they can't unwind or relax, making social gatherings tense and awkward at times. All of a sudden, these kids, who never needed to be on alert when they were with their friends, have to keep their guard up at all times.

Education is going to be carried out in a very different manner for the next few months, if not more. These changes will surely have an impact on the future of high school students.

Kefeyan said, "They may try to cram a lot in or they may just leave some stuff out so it'll affect my learning experience because we had to miss some school [in March]."

"I think it's going to take a while for things to get back to normal," noted Mahserejian, "so everyday life, I guess, going to college, having senior, junior year, education in general, things are going to change."

"It's making problems more immediate," said Simmons. She thinks people are going to stop and consider certain issues more than they used to because this virus allowed a lot of people to gain perspective.

Pertaining to school, Simmons said, "It's so different online, like we really benefit from person to person contact."

Similarly, Movessian stated, "It's really difficult to learn online and I definitely can say that not being in school for this long, I've lost a lot of habits of studying," adding with a laugh, "I also think that it's insane that I passed or failed my entire third, fourth semesters. In a way also,

Simmons reflected on the state of society and the natural changes that were occurring during this pandemic. She said, "I think part of the reason...obviously the Black Lives movement was a huge thing and it should've been and it would've been, but I don't think it would have been as big if people hadn't just been on their phones all day. Which occurred to me because everyone's posting on Instagram constantly, everyone's just like in it because there's nothing else to do, which I think probably played a really major part in that."

Movessian and Mahserejian both talked about gratitude and actively recognizing all the blessings in one's life.

Movessian said, "I have to appreciate all the little things in life and all the people that I have in my life that I'm always surrounded by. Like I said, I always dreaded going to church at eight o'clock in the morning on Sundays...and now I realize, 'Oh my gosh, I would do anything to just go back to church and Armenian and Sunday School.'"

Mahserejian agreed, saying, "Just appreciating things more, because I think I took things for granted and now I'm not going to do that. Seeing my friends every day, being able to see family, and go places, travel, all that stuff. It makes you realize how life is really short and you have to appreciate things."

Kefeyan took this opportunity to discover more about himself and push the boundaries that were set for him during the school year, which consisted of a balance between school work and sports.

"It gave me time to pick up some hobbies and think about what are some things that I can do besides just school and sports. Even though there was school, I still had more time," he said.

Teenagers are filled with hopes and dreams and aspirations, and these things give their life meaning. Life goes on and time does not stop for a virus. High schoolers all around the world, whether they realized it or not, came to learn this lesson. They found things to do, ways to be

"I THINK PART OF THE REASON... OBVIOUSLY THE BLACK LIVES MOVEMENT WAS A HUGE THING AND IT SHOULD'VE BEEN AND IT WOULD'VE BEEN, BUT I DON'T THINK IT WOULD HAVE BEEN AS BIG IF PEOPLE HADN'T JUST BEEN ON THEIR PHONES ALL DAY. FACETIME... WHICH I THINK PROBABLY PLAYED A REALLY MAJOR PART IN THAT"

—TASHA SIMMONS



I think, when college applications start, the coronavirus is going to be a big topic for all the essays because it definitely changed a ton of lives."

In many schools, grades had to be altered in a way in order to be fair to all because of the upheaval this pandemic caused.

Tinkjian said, "Our grades are in weird formats now, so I think that means that colleges are going to start doing different application systems where they have to look more at your person instead of your grades."

## Lessons Learned or Time Wasted?

Finally, the million dollar question: Are there any lessons that you will take away from this period in the world's history? The answers were all very similar yet unique.

productive when school was gone. It was a shocking shift in thought, when school and socialization were at the forefront of their daily lives, then suddenly, they were gone. At a time in their lives where they are discovering who they are and what they want to stand for, teenagers were challenged to ask themselves harder questions. Their characters will be forever altered by the way they choose to answer these questions that are both internal and external.

And maybe one day, they'll look back on March 13, 2020, and remember it as the day that changed their lives forever.

(Ani Belorian is a rising junior at Belmont High School. She enjoys creative writing, singing, and Armenian dance.)





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Missionaries Helping Armenians Focus of Online Project SAVE Database

PROJECT SAVE, from page 12  
their churches with the special offer of education for the children. Then, as new needs appeared, the missionaries set up clinics, hospitals, and orphanages. During the Genocide years (1915-1923), the missionaries provided safe haven for Armenians fleeing the destruction of their families and homes.

"Missionaries had their feet on the ground and communicated to the world the desperate situation in which Armenians found themselves, living in their own homeland under the brutal rule of the Ottoman Empire."

The collection will have a little fewer than 2,000 images, she said.

Sarian added that Project SAVE has a total of 15 different collections.

The collection of the missionaries, she explained, covers the period between 1900 and 1920. It was chosen because it was the era "most requested" by the greatest number of people, including people in New England Turkey, Armenia, as well as Assyrians and Greeks, especially because the collection contains a great many street shots.

Many, she said, ask, "Can we see Armenians and their neighbors living together. The street images fulfilled that. They are mostly taken by European or American missionaries."

Sarian added that as the Armenian Genocide was being waged by the Ottoman

authorities, photography was banned. It was therefore only possible for those not citizens of the empire to take photos.

The photos have had a great impact, she said, not only for Armenians descendants, but non-Armenians, and have been used by those who are interested in human rights and refugees.

Sadly, she added, similar crimes are still happening.

One thing that the organization does is not only preserve the photos but try to collect as much information as possible about the photograph as well as who took it and where.

"We make high resolution images available for a small fee for journals, books, scholarly articles and documents," Sarian said. That side of the business helps bring in a steady income to the organization.

In addition, the Project SAVE photos can be used without fees for exhibitions as well as genealogical searches for regions, family and regions.

Project SAVE has a total of roughly 45,000 photos, of which 11,000 have been digitized.

"The majority comes from private family albums. The missionary ones we received from the relatives of those missionaries," Sarian explained. "They knew we were serving the Armenian community."

Project SAVE is always looking for old pho-



Food distribution center at Yeni Mahalle camp, Adana, 1909 Courtesy of the family of Harry G. Dorman, M.D., 1876-1943

tos and encouraging members of the community to donate old photos. "We prefer to sit down with the photo donor and record the

names, dates and places. Often they might not know." She added that with the wealth of photos Project SAVE has, they might be able to fill in some gaps.

"Our biggest competition by far is people discarding photos. We are able to take them and use them. By cloud sourcing we may be able to know and help," she noted, adding, "The unknown photographs are just as valuable."

And it is not just old photographs that they accept. "Even images from 2020 are valuable today," Sarian said.

Through photographs, the organization can record Armenian life through the decades.

One popular item that Project SAVE issues every year is their themed wall calendars.

"It has been very successful for us. It is a way to share the images and they are priced well so they are easy to give as gifts," she added.

Sarian said that the organization's staff has

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Food distribution center at Yeni Mahalle camp, Adana, 1909 Courtesy of the family of Harry G. Dorman, M.D., 1876-1943

pondered issuing a book, however, pricewise it might pose a challenge. She didn't rule it out entirely, however. "A children's book, maybe," she added.

The online exhibit was helped by a spring fundraiser.

She praised the donors, saying, "They did so generously."

As with all organizations, she expressed concern going forward. "How the economy will affect that we don't know," she said, adding, "We have had a very robust annual appeal."

Sarian has been the executive director of Project SAVE for the past three years. Ruth Thomasian founded the organization in 1975. The organization currently has about 45,000 photos.

To see the photos of the missionaries, visit [www.projectsavet.org](http://www.projectsavet.org).





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Armenian Art through the Gaze of Western Institutions

ART, from page 1

conjunction with the dating and identification of the materials of a piece, can additionally establish it chronologically in a latticework of cross-cultural artistic influence. This “constellation of ways” through which a piece can be identified is also used to establish the context of its creation.

Maranci states, “You have to hope that these criteria would be considered by museums,” and that they would then be able to identify an object as having an Armenian provenience, an Armenian creator, or as being of an Armenian style or tradition. However, in many major museums in the West, it is, “quite common,” that this isn’t the case.

The impetus? A lack of education on Armenian art in most American and European universities which is exacerbated by prejudice.

The gaze of Western art history has been historically preoccupied with Euro-centric art and influence, too often leaving behind the cultural histories of regions outside of this immediate and obvious sphere.

“Despite some very important recent contributions,” confers Dr. Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh, Fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, professor of Art History at the University of California, Davis, and author of *The Missing Pages: The Modern Life of a Medieval Manuscript, from Genocide to Justice*, “there are still enormous gaps in our understanding of the history of Armenian art.”

Maranci notes how art history has become more inclusive of non-Western cultures since the 1980s but is still “not integrating many major important and beautiful traditions.” Today, this is “the shape of art history,” she notes: art historians and curators are not trained on Armenian art. “So where would the average curator come into contact with an Armenian work?”

## Attribution within Western Institutions

In Western institutions, the ramifications of this ignorance is seen in Armenian art often being attributed using regional labels such as Greek, Byzantine, Turkish, Ottoman, South Caucasian, Ancient Anatolian, Crusader, Middle Eastern, or Islamic. Each label has specific uses and can be at least partially accurate, reflecting how Armenian history has not been isolated from the influence of other cultures. Rather, it has actively communed with them for centuries to the extent that, as Maranci re-centers, “Through Armenian art, you’re going to learn about Greek sculpture, Roman temple architecture, Islamic art, and Byzantine art. You’re going to learn about Western Europe. You’re going to learn about East Asian art...”

However, Dr. Vazken Davidian, Faculty of Oriental Studies and Calouste Gulbenkian Postdoctoral Fellow in Armenian Studies at Oxford University, acknowledges these labels lack “an understanding of the cultural networks and exchanges that have influenced Armenian artists or craftsmen and women, and how these Armenian objects, individuals, and visual vocabularies have influenced and enriched those of the wider region.”

In context, they often are encouraged by negligence and contribute to ignorance concerning Armenian artistic creations rather than appreciation for the various populations which have lived within Armenia, the identities of the artists who have created in Armenian styles, the dance of cultural exchange Armenia embraced, and the breadth of ethnically Armenian artists throughout the world, he continues. “Where works are displayed is of course central to how they are displayed,” he notes – and in the West, institutional mislabeling is endemic of academic whitewashing.

Maranci makes it clear that even when there are numerous indicators which would normally signal a work as being Armenian, if the dealer, seller, or curator has not been critically

exposed to Armenian culture, it may still be mislabeled. This lack of education often leads to instances of unacceptable oversight when “there is this beautiful object that was labeled as Islamic” with no mention of Armenian maker or origin, “but you turn it around and there’s an Armenian inscription on it.”

This is not to gloss over nuance – there are many unknowns when it comes to art attribution. Maranci

shares the status of many beautiful silver vessels which were excavated at Erebuni, an Urartian site occupied during the 4th c. and 5th c. BCE which has been historically Armenian. Though the provenance is known, “We don’t know [who made them]. We don’t know if they were the product of trade. We don’t know if they were commissioned. We don’t know the identity of the artist,” she says. Even when the provenance is known, the identification of its creator may be elusive. For example, as Davidian points out, “if a carpet style is common among Kurds and Armenians in the Moush region, it is difficult to say who the cre-

ators were.”

Attributing art to Armenians is further nuanced by ethnically Armenian artists who themselves did not identify principally as Armenian.

“For example, particularly Armenian nobles in the medieval period understood themselves primarily as members of their family,” Maranci contributes. Even in modern times, Hrag Vartanian, critic, curator, editor-in-chief and co-founder of Hyperallergic, reveals, “a lot of modern artists in the US for instance, did not want to identify as Armenian because they didn’t see benefits,” due to the initial status of Armenians as non-white immigrants to this nation, which threatened deportation. Attribution is conversely further obfuscated when art is produced by diasporic Armenians, for in these cases the ethnicity of its creator may need to be recognized in addition to its context of creation.

Davidian adds: “Reclaiming what is or is not produced by Armenian artists or craftsmen or women does not mean erecting proverbial ‘walls’ around objects such as the head of the goddess Anahid in the British Museum or a ceramic vase or tile from Kutahya and declaring them as ‘uniquely Armenian.’ It is about understanding the context of their production and the processes and exchanges with cultures near and far which have influenced them – just as critically defined Armenian art has influenced other cultural processes. Only then can we properly reclaim these... mis-identified or stolen objects as part of our own cultural heritage.”

## Turkish Influence

“The presentation of an artistic or historical object as ‘Armenian’ or not during the 20th century and today is very strongly intertwined with the legacy of massacre and genocide and how the history of violence” has been and has continued to be “narrated and silenced,” says Davidian. He adds that due to the total appropriation, or Turkification, of Armenian art which followed the Hamidian Massacres and Armenian Genocide, many ethnically Armenian cultural goods including rugs, ceramics, embroidery, woodwork, and other crafts, “especially items lacking signature or identification marks of their producers,” are still “presented largely as Turkish or Kurdish art.”

This history of Turkification and continued academic negligence regarding Armenian art and cultural artifacts has affected the degree to which institutions are able to identify those objects that came to them as a product of theft or state-sanctioned looting. This problem extends to many of the objects remaining in catalogs from the early twentieth century, which are most likely related to the trafficking of goods after the Genocide.

Additionally, Armenia or Armenians may not be mentioned in attributional labeling because of “certain political agendas that would be pushed in by modern states” regarding their relations with the Republic of Turkey, Maranci explains. This motivation has caused Armenian art to be exhibited by ahistorical monikers in Western institutions such as a gallery entitled “Ancient Turkey” in the famed British Museum. (At the behest of a petition organized by Gagik Avagyan, the gallery was renamed “Anatolia and Urartu” in 2013.) However, “one cannot always assume, fairly, that the sort of sinister implications go all the way down from the donor or the seller to the museum to the curators. We can’t implicate the curators necessarily, but we can educate them” – in these cases, first on the history of Turkish violence against Armenians and its subsequent denial, then on the violence committed against our cultural heritage and its subsequent denial.

Until Genocide denial is stifled and the background education regarding Armenian culture is incorporated into curricula, Dr. Maranci expresses these other labels are always a red flag: “They sound like they’re actually pushing something aside... Why is that [label] being used? Why are they not using the term ‘Armenian’?”

## Impact of the Western Gaze on Armenian Art

This ignorance and prejudice regarding Armenian art has drastic implications on how it is presented. Mr. Vartanian observes, “any discussion of Armenian art becomes very broken, fragmented, and it doesn’t actually take it on its own terms, but often fits it into bigger categories that end up instrumentalizing Armenian art and making it always secondary rather than central to the conversation.” Thus, most of these mis-attributed Armenian objects remain deemphasized in the storage of other cultures – further erasing Armenian art and any chance it has of being seen publicly – let alone through an Armenian lens. Tucked between the cracks, a wealth of Armenian art resides within the palms of those hands which participated in cultural exchange with Armenia for years – utterly peripheral.

This narrative skews perception concerning Armenian art and cultural goods – from their significance in relation to neighboring artistic traditions to “actually developing a real sense of how big this corpus is” Dr. Maranci states. As it stands now, “how can we know how much [Armenian art] is out there?” For scores of Armenian works have already been discovered and stored but remain buried within the storage of institutions which have erased Armenian art for decades. “I would actually say there’s probably a lot more out there than we know.”

Cataloging works through a Western lens which is blind to Armenian culture not only shrinks our corpus but also flattens the vibrance of our historic tangible culture. Mr. Vartanian



Dr. Vazken Davidian

declares, “We are never going to get a full picture of Armenian art when we use Western ideas around art because all the best Armenian art isn’t just oil on canvas or sculptures,” as is often heralded in the Western canon. “Some of it is handicraft. Some of it is dance. So we have to expand our notions of art to incorporate those worlds within those boundaries.” Mr. Vartanian further expresses that this blasé attitude toward Armenian art has “created Armenians that only know little parts of our history and end up feeling like there isn’t a significant history of Armenian art.”

Even our perception of the function of Armenian art has been harmed by the Western lens: “a lot of the most precious artifacts of handiwork and art were actually stored and shown only on precious occasions for people as an almost individual relationship [with them] which is very much against the traditional idea of how we see art, at least in modern American art history,” comments Vartanian.

## Cultural and Artistic Reunion

Sometimes, persistence in correcting the correct identification of a work of art pays off.

This past February, five years after the historic settlement between the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America regarding the provenance of the Canon Tables of the Zeyt’un Gospels, a new model of attributional recognition was exercised in the collection of The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Md. A collaborative week-long inspection of their 18th-century Jeweled Gun of Sultan Mahmud I was undertaken by Armenian experts and those at the Walters Museum at the request of the National Museum of Armenian Ethnography and the History of the Liberation Struggle in Araks, Armenia to re-examine its attribution. At its conclusion, the artifact’s label was revised to attribute the jewellery of the piece to Armenian Christian Hovhannes Agha Duzian while maintaining recognition for the many other artisans who were integral in its creation.

Davidian identifies that for continued productive change, we must “make sophisticated arguments because the contexts of art production, like all intellectual activity, whether Armenian or not, are complex and don’t take place in a vacuum... We must find a way of proposing labeling practices that are inclusive and true of all their components and contexts in which they were created.”

In the meantime, Maranci declares that Armenian viewers “may be the closest thing to an expert that these objects have ever seen.” She emphatically recommends perusing museums’ online catalogs – which have recently expanded largely due to COVID-19 – for Armenian art, arguing that Armenian communities have both the ability and responsibility to exercise their familiarity with Armenian language and history by educating their local institutions. In this way, Armenian communities have the capacity to, after years apart, reunite these timeless works with the corpus of Armenian art and include them in the legacy of Armenian cultural history.

(Isabelle Kapoian is a student of economics, art history, and international affairs in the Class of 2021 at the University of New Hampshire. She holds professional interests in cultural property law and art market economics, plays the harp, and most enjoys reading and contributing to the Arts & Culture section of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*. Isabelle has participated in the Armenian Assembly’s Terjenian-Thomas internship program in 2019 in Washington, DC and the AGBU’s Global Leadership Program, is co-president of her university’s Middle Eastern Cultural Association, and sings in the choir at Sts. Vartanantz Church in Chelmsford. She has been the summer intern at the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* through the Armenian Students Association Journalism Internship Program.)



Dr. Christina Maranci





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## Calendar

## CONNECTICUT

**SEPTEMBER 19 — Armenian Open 2020,** Saturday, 11 a.m. Tallwood Country Club is the home of the Armenian Open which provides a unique, traditional experience for this golf tournament. The three churches of St. George, St. Mark and Holy Resurrection have combined their efforts to continue on the tradition, at the original site of where it all started. The committee is working dili-

## MASSACHUSETTS

**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 13 — Trinity's On-The-Go Picnic,** Sunday, Noon – 3 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Pre-Orders Only! Place your orders online or download the mail-in order form to place your order by Wednesday, September 9.

**SEPTEMBER 20 — St. James Fall Kick-Off To-Go! Hosted by the St. James Men's Club and Hye Café groups,** in lieu of in-person September events. 12:30 - 2:30pm. Meals will be available for pre-order curb-

side pickup only. Online ordering will be available starting on September 1st at <http://stjameswatertown.square.site>. St. James Armenian Church - 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown. Please contact [info@sthapog.com](mailto:info@sthapog.com) with any questions.

**SEPTEMBER 22 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston 2020 Gregory Hintlian Memorial Golf Tournament.** Tuesday, Marlborough Country Club, Marlborough. Please submit completed registration information directly to the Church office via mail or e-mail. Questions? 617 354-0632

**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 Khalian Concert "Zepyoori 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, Berlyan 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/>

## Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian



## Kharperts-style Kufta from Fresno

Recently, the Armenian Cultural Conservancy (ACC) of Fresno hosted its third annual Armenian Heritage Culinary Arts Class in the Armenian-American Citizens League Hall (AACL) at the California Armenian Home (CAH) Guild. The featured recipe was traditional Kharperts-style kufta from Fresno – so celebrated, yet made less often in Armenian homes today. There are many versions of stuffed kufta recipes throughout the Middle East, but this is one of the most traditional. Kharperts-style kufta is stuffed with ground beef, onions, pine nuts, and spices, and boiled, and is usually served in a bowl with the cooking broth. (These same kufta, made smaller and in the shape of mini-footballs, may be baked or deep fried and served as an appetizer.) Students and guests enjoyed a kufta lunch, including salad, cheese boureg, bourma, and persimmon cookies. Each attendee received a printed recipe and additional kufta to take home, along with memories from a morning of fellowship and learning about Armenian culture and traditional cuisine.

## FILLING ("POR") INGREDIENTS:

4 lbs. ground lean beef  
3/4 lb. butter  
5 lbs. chopped onions

## PREPARATION:

Spray frying pan with oil and add 1/8 cup water. Add 4 lbs. ground lean beef and brown, chopping and stirring until it is the consistency of taco filling (30 minutes.). When the liquid has dissipated, place the meat in an 11 x 17 baking pan and bake at 425 degrees, uncovered for another 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add 3/4 lb. butter, cut up. When melted, add 5 lbs. chopped onions, and cook about one hour, stirring every 15 minutes. Cook until onions are soft and transparent (no longer crunchy).

Take out of oven and add: 1 bunch chopped parsley, 1 tablespoon salt, 1 tablespoon black pepper (fine), 1 tablespoon sweet basil (rahan), and a dash of cayenne pepper. Stir and chill overnight.

Break up the filling before using a scoop to make balls of filling the size of a walnut. Place them on a cookie sheet lined with parchment and freeze. Then bag for future use or use frozen.

## OUTER SHELL (HOBART MIXER METHOD) INGREDIENTS:

5 lbs. ground lean beef (like meat used for kheyima, this must be triple-ground)  
3 lbs. fine (#1) bulgur (cracked wheat)  
2 tablespoons salt  
1 tablespoon white pepper

## PREPARATION:

Begin with 32 oz. of cool water in mixer. Add 3 lbs. fine bulgur and beat for approximately 20 minutes. (Make sure mixture is softened thoroughly and not sticky to touch.)

Add 5 lbs. meat and beat at least 10 minutes. Gradually add another 32 oz. of cool water and beat another 20-30 minutes. Add more water if consistency calls for it.

Use 1/4 cup measure for uniform amount for each ball. Make like a "pinch pot" making walls thin. Place a ball of filling and close, shaping into a ball. Place on a tray lined with parchment paper.

To serve, make a broth and salt to taste. Add tomato sauce, if desired. Drop kuftas a few at a time and cover until it comes to a boil. Then take the lid off and continue boiling until kuftas float to the top, about 15-20 minutes. Use a strainer spoon to remove kuftas so it won't puncture the balls. Serve with or without broth.

Yield: Approximately 75 kuftas or 6 dozen. Freeze overnight, then store in freezer bags.

These kufta are best served with rice or bulgur pilaf, yogurt, Armenian salad, cheese, olives, roasted peppers, and fresh lavash or pita bread.



The Kufta Team from left: Suzanne Barton, Jeanette Machoian, teacher Patty Kalajian, Margaret Tejerian, and Janice Maroot.

## Book Focuses on First Republic Of Armenia at its Centennial

BOOKS, from page 12

The volume also includes rare images from the period.

This volume was inspired by a 2018 conference titled "Innovative Approaches to the History of the First Republic of Armenia, 1918-1920," organized by the Society for Armenian Studies and the Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Der Matossian is an Associate Professor of Middle East History at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. He is the president of the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) and the author of the award-winning book *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2014); coeditor of *Routledge Handbook on Jerusalem* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2018); and the co-editor, with Barlow Der Mugrdchian, of *Western Armenian in the 21st Century: Challenges and New Approaches* (2018).

Copies of *The First Republic of Armenia (1918-1920) on its Centenary: Politics, Gender, and Diplomacy* are available for purchase from: The Armenian Prelacy, National Association for Armenian Studies & Research (NAASR) Bookstore, and Abril Bookstore.





EDITORIAL

# Lebanon: Target of Turkey's Ottomanist Ambitions

By Edmond Y. Azadian

While Armenia is concerned with Turkish expansion in the Caucasus through its regional satellite, Azerbaijan, and the Europeans are alarmed by Turkey's mischief in Greek and Cypriot waters, Ankara is extending its tentacles to Lebanon, where a thriving Armenian community has existed for almost a full century.

Armenians found a safe haven in Lebanon after the Genocide and through the network of schools, churches, cultural centers, newspapers and sports groups, developed a fully-realized community, which also enhanced its political clout, landing Armenians in state leadership posts.

The Lebanese Armenians have also exported their cultural and educational strength to other Armenian communities in Western countries.

Now, all that is coming to a grinding halt, first because of the destruction of that once-prosperous country and also because of the ominous shadow that Turkey is casting.

To demonstrate how political life has changed in Lebanon, it is sufficient to remember that in earlier years, when the Armenians commemorated the anniversary of the Genocide every April 24, the entire country joined them, shutting down businesses and government offices.

Earlier this summer, however, when an Armenian television anchor, Neshan Der Haroutiounian, criticized President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's nefarious policies in the region, he landed in a courtroom. Even more ominously, immediately after making his comments, his television station offices were surrounded by an angry throng waving Turkish flags and threatening Armenians. They called themselves *Mardillis* and pledged allegiance to Turkey.

In addition, the Turkish government reacted angrily when the Lebanese President Michel Aoun said that in 1915 the Ottoman rulers had created an artificial famine in Lebanon to kill its citizens.

For a long time, Turkey has been infiltrating Lebanon through trade, television programs and so-called charitable activities.

Lebanon has always served as an open forum to all Middle Eastern rivalries and political conflicts but the major players had been the Arab countries and since 1982, when Israel occupied southern Lebanon.

One of the major conflicts has been between the Sunni Muslims and the Shiites; it is a dispute the flames of which were particularly fanned by the West to divert the Arab Street's anger from Israel to Iran. The Western media tried to convince the Arabs that Iran was the enemy and not Israel, though the latter occupied the West Bank and Gaza.

It was an ironic turnaround when Yossi Cohen, the head of the Israeli secret service, Mossad, according to the Times of London, stated to spymasters from Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, that "Iranian power is fragile but the real threat is from Turkey."

Turkey thus far has benefitted from the religious divide between the Sunnis and Shiites, vying for the leadership of the former, which in turn has alarmed Saudi Arabia and Egypt, who seek the same plum prize. Iran, of course, through Hezbollah, has the control of the Shiites.

Since the August 4 explosion at the Beirut harbor, aid flights are arriving from around the world – from Egypt, Morocco, Russia, Saudi Arabia and 30 other countries.

French President Emmanuel Macron was the first head of state to arrive, walking the streets of the city surrounded by an enthusiastic crowd. The scene apparently frustrated President Erdogan, who that day sent his undersecretary, Fuat Oktay, and Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, who vowed to rebuild the port and issue citizenship to anyone who has claims to Turkish or Turkoman ancestry.

All the aid flowing in is not without strings attached, particu-

larly for parties which pledge to participate in the post-explosion reconstruction projects, estimated to hit the \$100-billion mark.

The Saudis, who had withdrawn their financial support for Lebanon after a fallout with former Lebanese Premier Saad Hariri, have joined the recovery effort in a grand way, to counter Turkey's ascent in Lebanon.

The Turkish government's religious arm, the Diyanet, has distributed cash in envelopes among the Sunni community. As we can see, the parties have been trying to exploit the misery of the Lebanese people.

Turkey has also resorted to all-too-familiar methods to gain influence, ones that it first used in Iraq and to better effect in Syria. It is arming its murderers and mercenaries who have wreaked havoc on Syria and today in Libya. Turkey has built a solid political base in the northern Lebanese cities of Tripoli and Akkar.

Recent photos show that Turkey's "charitable" hand has been creeping further down all the way to Junieh, where Turkish barges have docked to help with the neglected electricity sector. Junieh is mostly Christian, just north of Antelias, where the Armenian Catholicosate is located. Somehow, that help involves the dissemination of weapons.

The news broadcast by Al Arabiya English reveals a familiar pattern of Turkish behavior.

"We are pretty worried about what's going on. The Turks are sending an incredible amount of weapons to the north," a Lebanese army intelligence sources is quoted in the report, following a surveillance operation.



This is exactly how Turkey started the war in Syria, by infiltrating that country through its mercenaries and supplying them with weapons. That was a blatant foreign aggression, which the Western media, in collusion with Turkey, branded a "civil war."

It looks like a similar scenario is being drawn up in Lebanon. It does not take too much to ignite a civil war in Lebanon. This has been done time and again, in 1958 and later in the 1970s; the latter lasted for 15 years, to be concluded by the Taif Agreements in 1989 in Saudi Arabia. Any faction in or out of Lebanon can explode a bomb at a church or mosque through its intelligence services and blame the opposite community. Next thing you know, everyone is at each other's throats. The army, in its turn, will split along religious lines and then you have a perfect storm on your hands.

A commentary in the Jerusalem Post this week states: "A man who inherited a promising economy that was built with American and European support is now leading a country to the brink of bankruptcy. In his quest to revive the 'Ottoman Legacy,' he has brought blood and destruction not only to his own people but also on hundreds of innocent civilians throughout the Arab world. Erdogan, the leader who promised to promote democratic reforms in his country, turned his back on Turkey's democratic institutions and placed them under the tight grip of organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood."

The pursuit of that Ottoman legacy has threatened Armenia and Armenians on all fronts; yesterday, in neighboring Karabakh and today in Lebanon.

Arab public opinion believes that Erdogan's drive is to extend  
*continued on next page*

# Mirror Spectator

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Turkey's Leaders Furious at Biden For his Attack on President Erdogan

Democratic Presidential nominee Joe Biden was interviewed by the New York Times editorial board on December 16, 2019. In his interview, Biden called Turkish President Erdogan “an autocrat,” urged his “isolation” and sought his “defeat” in the next elections.

Even though the interview took place eight months ago and was published by the New York Times on January 17, 2020, the Turkish government and media showed no reaction at the time. A week ago, several months after the interview became public, a series of orchestrated hysterical attacks were launched in Turkey on Biden’s comments to the New York Times.

Let’s start with what Biden told the New York Times last December:

“I’ve spent a lot of time with him [President Erdogan of Turkey]. He is an autocrat. He’s the president of Turkey and a lot more. What I think we should be doing is taking a very different approach to him now, making it clear that we support opposition leadership. Making it clear that we are in a

position where we have a way which was working for a while to integrate the Kurdish population who wanted to participate in the process in their parliament, etc. Because we have to speak out about what we in fact think is wrong. He has to pay a price. He has to pay a price for whether or not we’re going to continue to sell certain weapons to him. In fact, if he has the [Russian] air defense system that they’re flying F-15s through to see how they can try to figure out how to do it.”

Biden went on: “So I’m very concerned about it. I’m very concerned about it. But I’m still of the view that if we were to engage more directly like I was doing with them, that we can support those elements of the Turkish leadership that still exist and get more from them and embolden them to be able to take on and defeat Erdogan. Not by a coup, not by a coup, but by the electoral process. He got blown out. He got blown out in Istanbul [during the mayoral elections]. He got blown out in his party. So what do we do now? We just sit there, and yielded. And the last thing I would’ve done is yielded to him with regard to the Kurds. The absolute last thing!”

Biden concluded: “I had a couple of those meetings with him about the Kurds, and they did not clamp down at the time. We have to make it clear that if they’re looking to, because, at the end of the day, Turkey doesn’t want to have to rely on Russia. They’ve had a bite out of that apple a long time ago. But they got to understand that we’re not going to continue to play with them the way we have. So I am very concerned. I am very concerned. I’m very concerned about our airfields [in Turkey] and access to them as well. And I think it takes an awful lot of work for us to be able to get together with our allies in the region and deal with how we isolate his actions in the region, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean in relating to oil and a whole range of other things which take too long to go into. But the answer is yes,

I’m worried.”

On August 16, 2020, in response to Biden’s above comments, the Jerusalem Post reported that Turkish presidential adviser Ibrahim Kalin slammed Biden, accusing him of ignorance, arrogance and hypocrisy. “The days of ordering Turkey around are over,” he tweeted. “But if you still think you can, be our guest. You will pay the price.”

Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu also attacked Biden after meeting US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, calling the Democratic Presidential nominee ignorant. Speaking about Biden’s comments, Çavusoglu said: “It’s weird that someone this disinformed [sic] wants to run the country.”

It is understandable that Turkish leaders would be upset at Biden for talking about removing the Turkish President from office. Furthermore, given Erdogan’s chummy relationship with President Trump, it is also understandable that Turkish leaders would not want to see Trump replaced by Biden. A few days ago, Trump told Fox News that Erdogan listens to him. In fact, it is the other way around. Trump is the one who listens to Erdogan and does his bidding.

Nevertheless, there are deeper reasons for Turkish leaders to whip their public into frenzy against Biden. Erdogan is engaging in his favorite political trick of distracting his people’s attention away from their economic and social deprivations by blaming the foreigner, Biden! Erdogan is also relying on the long-standing Turkish hostility to Western Europe, the United States and Christianity. Erdogan is used to whipping the emotions of his uneducated followers to stand by him, regardless of his poor performance. Instead, Erdogan has conveniently pivoted towards Russia and China, despite his country’s NATO membership!

Should Biden win in the Presidential elections, it remains to be seen if he would maintain his hard line approach to Erdogan and Turkey.

Lebanon: Target Of Turkey’s Ottomanist Ambitions

from previous page

his rule’s influence over Lebanon and beyond. But in the meantime, the Armenians community will sustain the collateral damage.

During the war in Syria, Erdogan’s target was Bashar Assad’s regime, but his proxy mercenaries took special pains to bomb the Armenian neighborhoods in Aleppo and completely destroy Der Zor and the Armenian town of Kessab.

Since Erdogan is in pursuit of the Ottoman dream, he must also have in mind the goals of the Ottoman rulers. For example, when US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau asked Talaat Pasha why innocent Armenian children were also being massacred, his cynical answer was, “Because they may grow up and seek the revenge of their fathers.”

That message continues to ring in his mind as the Sévres Syndrome. Any Armenian who in his description is “the sword’s remnant,” will remind him of the revenge which Talaat had feared.

In Lebanon, Erdogan is betting on two political scenarios.

If Lebanon survives this crisis and continues to be ruled by the coalition of 18 confessional groups, he can seek power-sharing through his Ottomanist surrogates.

If Lebanon plunges into a civil war and eventually is partitioned, which some of the neighbors are pondering, he has mercenaries ready in the north to implement his plans.

During the last Lebanese Civil war, Armenians had the wisdom to stay away from the warring factions and adhere to a policy of “positive neutrality.” This time around, they have no alternative other than to continue that policy.

Belarusians Can Learn a Lot from Armenia’s Velvet Revolution

By Prof. Anna Ohanyan

In the last two weeks, tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets in Belarus to protest against the widely disputed results of the country’s August 9 election, which handed President Alexander Lukashenko some 80 percent of the popular vote and a sixth term in office. A police crackdown on peaceful protesters in the days after the vote saw nearly 7,000 demonstrators arrested, and sparked allegations of abuse and torture at the hands of security services. The opposition candidate, Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, who refused to concede defeat against Lukashenko, was forced to flee the country two days after the election.

Lukashenko managed to remain in power for 26 years without facing a significant challenge to his authority by playing the West and Russia against each other. Despite this tactical jockeying, however, Lukashenko always stood closer to Russia, entering his country in Russia-led regional groupings. In 1999, when the then Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, was weak and his power was leaching away, Lukashenko even proposed to unify his country with Russia, with the hope that he would eventually emerge as the leader of the new union. The rise of Putin eliminated such hopes for Lukashenko, but the idea to merge Belarus and Russia remained under consideration. Indeed, Putin started pushing for a merger last year, partly as a way to sustain his own rule beyond 2024.

The Belarusian protesters are facing unique challenges, not only because they are revolting against a violent and highly authoritarian regime, but also because they are trying to trigger a democratic transition in a country placed firmly in Russia’s authoritarian security orbit.

Among those with strong security and economic ties to Russia, Belarus is only the second state, after Armenia, where people have risen against their Kremlin-backed rulers. As such, Armenia’s “Velvet Revolution” in 2018, during which the masses successfully triggered a democratic transition through peaceful disobedience, offers a range of tactical lessons for both the opposition movement and the government in Belarus.

Three key lessons emerged from Armenia’s democratic breakthrough.

First, the protesters in Armenia worked hard to keep the protests strictly local. They resisted attempts by the ruling forces to frame the protests as another Western-instigated “color revolution”, which would have delegitimized the movement. To achieve a successful democratic breakthrough, the Belarusian opposition should mimic this approach, and capitalize on the grassroots nature of the protests.

Second, the leader of Armenia’s protest movement, current Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, signaled early, clearly and consistently that the movement, if successful, would not lead to a shift in foreign policy away from Russia. This messaging played an important role in keeping the

Russian soldiers in their bases during the revolution. While Armenia’s security needs are quite different from those of Belarus, protest leaders in Minsk could also benefit from managing Russia’s threat perceptions.

Third, Pashinyan held formal and informal negotiations with incumbent political forces from the very beginning. As a result, Armenia’s protest movement unfolded within an imperfect but, nevertheless, constitutional order. This ensured some level of political stability, increased the perceived legitimacy of the protest movement and emboldened more people to take to the streets – a key marker of successful disobedience campaigns everywhere.

In many respects, the movement in Belarus is similar to Armenia’s Velvet revolution of 2018. Just like Armenia, Belarus is a former Soviet nation that still has strong economic, political and social ties to Russia. Both countries are members of Russia-centric regional organizations such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union, and they are both economically reliant on Russia.

But there are also some significant differences between the ongoing protests in Belarus and the Velvet Revolution that took place in Armenia.

Unlike Armenia, there is not a strong civil society in Belarus. In the post-Soviet era, Belarus has always been under a strict dictatorial regime while Armenia has been led by what could be described as “soft authoritarians”. This allowed Armenia’s civil society enough space to organize itself and consolidate a protest culture through a long string of public protests before an opening for democratic transition appeared in 2018. Such processes are only beginning in Belarus.

But the protest movement in Belarus is perhaps in a better position than Armenia’s in a few important aspects - Belarus is not involved in an unresolved regional conflict. In the region, dictatorial regimes often use prolonged conflicts to create a false dichotomy between security and democracy, and silence opponents. This tactic was used by Armenia’s pre-revolution rulers for years and is currently being used in neighboring Azerbaijan by Ilham Aliyev to silence opposition forces inside the country.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Lukashenko is trying to contrive an external threat where there is none. He has claimed, inaccurately, that NATO forces are building up in Eastern Europe, attempting to portray the protest movement in Belarus as a threat to its, and Russia’s, security.

Another advantage the pro-democracy movement in Belarus has over the one in Armenia is the democratic character of its immediate neighborhood. As I have written elsewhere, the extent of regional connectivity in Russia’s vicinities can make or break the Kremlin’s incursions into its “near abroad”, be they military or hybrid. The democratic consolidation in, and regional ties between, the Baltic states, therefore, is an obvious political asset for the pro-democracy movement in Belarus. Furthermore, Belarus also shares a border with Poland, and therefore the European Union.

This is in sharp contrast to Armenia which is surrounded by authoritarian states, the sole exception being Georgia to its north. The Armenian pro-democracy movement formed a democratic dyad with Georgia, which helped it constrain Russian involvement and complete its Velvet Revolution. Intervening in Belarus would be much more costly for Russia, given the regional resiliency around Belarus from the Baltics to Poland. And unlike in Armenia, Putin’s past attempt to formally unite Belarus with Russia created a backlash among the populace in Belarus, exposing the disingenuous nature of Putin’s claims of “protecting” Belarus’s security and independence. Russian intervention in the context of post-election protests can revive such fears and push more people into the streets.

(This commentary originally appeared on Al Jazeera on August 21.)



# Armenian News From Turkey

## Garo Paylan Addresses Questions to the Government of Turkey

Istanbul (Agos) – After the new regime transferred all the powers of government to the president of the Republic, the National Assembly of Turkey to a large extent lost its authority. The representatives of the two political parties that make up the majority within the Assembly generally are satisfied [merely] to ensure the ratification of the legislation or bills coming from the presidential palace. The members of the opposition parties justify their vocation as representatives by directing official questions to various ministers. In that regard one of the notable opposition politicians is Garo Paylan, who recently directed one question to the Minister of Culture about the looting of the abandoned cemetery in the once-Armenian village of Stanos near Ankara, and another to the Minister of the Interior, about the mayorships his HDP party has won.

The historical village of Stanos is located in the district of Sincan near the capital, Ankara. The people of Stanos had immigrated from Persia in the past and brought with them a developed knowledge of weaving. The famed Angora (Ankara) Wool existed because of them. After the Genocide, the completely abandoned village cemetery was subject to perpetual looting by treasure-hunters.

The second point Paylan turned to is the takeover by the government of 47 out of 65 mayorships that his party won.



Stanos Armenian Cemetery

## Surp Partoghimeos Church Near Van Damaged by Earthquake Across Border in Iran

Istanbul (Agos) – Friends in Van with ties to Agos report that the recent earthquakes that took place in Iran damaged the church of Surp Partoghimeos near Van. A piece of the wall fell during the quake. Years ago, experts were sounding the alarm and demanding immediate repairs to the church. Until very recently, Surp Partoghimeos was located in a forbidden militarized zone. Lately, the army has relaxed the restrictions of that area and the church has become the target of treasure-hunters.

Sources revealed that from the same causes, the old broken-down house which belonged to William Saroyan's family in Bitlis has also been damaged. This news has not been verified, since it is debated whether the house actually belonged to the Saroyans.

The monastery and church of Surp Partoghimeos, or St. Bartholomew, in the region of Aghpag (Bashkale) was traditionally considered by the Armenian Apostolic Church as the resting place of the Apostle Bartholomew. Its diocese once stretched from Aghpag in the hinterlands of Van province where it is located to the Urmia region of Iran.



Saint Bartholomew Armenian Monastery

## Esayan School of Istanbul Faces Problems in Coronavirus Era

Istanbul (Agos) – The coronavirus has created critical conditions in many countries within the field of education. The Turkish Ministry of Education has delayed the start of the school year from August 31 to September 21. Meanwhile distance learning is being planned and classrooms having less students may have face to face learning. In all this, the Armenian community's schools are also trying to conquer their particular and multifaceted problems. Currently, the Armenian public's attention is directed to the Esayan School, where the positions of the two dismissed principals have not yet been filled. Unless secret preparations have somehow been made behind closed doors, it is very likely that Esayan will start the school year without a principal in either the primary or the secondary divisions.

Aside from all the problems related to this unresolved situation, two worthy teachers have resigned: Armaveni Miroglu and Yeva Buyuksimkesyan. The productive Armenian language teacher Armaveni Miroglu indicated to Agos that she was dissatisfied with the firing of the two principals in such an unethical way. The English teacher Yeva Buyuksimkesyan also expressed the same opinions and put an end to more than 24 years of service in this school.



Esayan School



# The Tekeyan School of Beirut



The Vahan Tekeyan School was damaged by the August 4 explosion in Beirut. It serves a low-income segment of the Armenian community and already was struggling due to Lebanon's economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. Now the school is trying to reopen for the fall semester. The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada is sending aid and asks your assistance.



Send your donations by credit card at <https://givebutter.com/bXn8Lm> or send checks to the Tekeyan Cultural Association (memo: Beirut Tekeyan School), at its headquarters (755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown MA 02472). All administrative costs for this campaign will be borne by the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada. For more information, email [tcadirector@aol.com](mailto:tcadirector@aol.com) or call 617 924-4455.