

## CyArk Uses 21st Century Technology to Preserve Ancient Armenian Monuments

**By Isabelle Kapoian**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, accessible online models of Armenian cultural sites can transport Armenians to the Motherland from the safety of their homes. These 3-D models are available online via CyArk, a nonprofit organization committed to "digitally record, archive and share the world's most significant cultural heritage and ensure that these places continue to inspire wonder and curiosity for decades to come." The global breadth of their digital database has been used to educate on a multitude of histories and cultures, document the existence of threatened monuments, inform on-the-ground preservation work of ancient sites, and tell the stories of the people who still use them today.

CyArk has worked with the My Armenia Program at the Smithsonian Institution for their "Armenia: Creating Home Folklife Festival" in 2018, the United States Agency for International Development, the Ministry of Culture for the Armenian government, and trained many Armenian students from the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies in Armenia to document sites



Using a light scanner in Geghard Monastery

such as the Geghard Monastery, churches in Ani, the Areni-1 cave complex, and the Noravank Monastery.

I had the opportunity to sit down with Kacey Hadick, CyArk's Director of Project see TECHNOLOGY, page 5

## Bishop Daniel Findikyan Elected to Appeal of Conscience Foundation Board of Directors

NEW YORK – Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, was elected by unanimous vote to the board of directors of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, the New York-based humanitarian organization that has advocated throughout the world on behalf of human rights and religious freedom.

Findikyan received the welcome news in August, during a personal phone call from Rabbi Arthur Schneier, who leads the foundation as its president since establishing it in 1965.

The Eastern Diocese has long played an active leadership role in the organization under the tenures of Bishop Daniel's predecessors as Diocesan Primate, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian and Archbishop Khajag Barsamian.

Later this month, Findikyan will be taking part in the 55th Appeal of Conscience



Dr. Noubar Afeyan and Bishop Daniel Findikyan in 2019

Foundation Annual Awards Dinner, scheduled to go forward as a virtual event on the evening of Thursday, September 24. The hour-long program will involve see AWARD, page 9

## Russian, Armenian Army Chiefs Meet Amid Drills

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) – Russia's and Armenia's top army generals met in Moscow over the weekend as troops from the two countries began a joint military exercise near the Armenian-Turkish border.

Lieutenant-General Onik Gasparyan, the chief of the Armenian army's General Staff, held talks with his Russian opposite number, General Valery Gerasimov, after attending the closing ceremony of the annual International Army Games organized by the Russian Defense Ministry.

Official Armenian and Russian sources said the two men discussed close military ties between their nations but gave very few details.

In a statement, the Russian Defense Ministry cited Gerasimov as calling Armenia Russia's "ally and key partner in the Transcaucasus." For his part, Gasparyan described Russia as his country's "strategic see DRILLS, page 2

## New COVID Cases in Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – A total of 108 new cases of COVID-19 were registered in Armenia last week, bringing the cumulative total number of confirmed cases to 44953, the Armenian Center For Disease Control reported. 471 patients recovered, raising the number of total recoveries to 40592.

Three people died from COVID-19, increasing the death toll to 903. This number doesn't include the deaths of 276 (1 in the last 24 hours) other people infected with the virus who died from other pre-existing conditions, according to health authorities.

As of, September 8 the number of active cases stood at 3182.

## Memorial to March 1 Victims Will Be Installed in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The Yerevan City Council this week approved the installation of a memorial in honor of the 2008 March 1 victims.

The memorial will be installed at the Children's Park near the St. Gregory the Illuminator and Zakiyan intersection.

During the City Council session the councilors held a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the unrest.

Earlier the government had allocated 2 million drams to the Yerevan City Hall for the designing works.

The design of artist Albert Vardanyan was awarded the project in an open tender.

March 1 colloquially refers to the 2008 post-election unrest in Yerevan, when 10 people – including two police officers – died in clashes between protesters and security forces.

## Gyumri Gifts 1 Million Drams to Lebanon

GYUMRI (Armenpress) – Gyumri, Armenia's second largest city, will provide 1 million drams (\$2,000) in aid to Lebanon's Armenian community affected from the recent explosion in Beirut.

The respective decision was made by the City Council.

The money will be provided to the Hayastan All Armenian Fund as a donation which in its turn will direct these funds for that purpose.

"This is the case when we all unanimously support providing that assistance. Even 1 million AMD is not enough, but our budget now has this capacity, if we manage, we will further increase that money," Gyumri Mayor Samvel Balasanyan said.

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## Istanbul Pogroms of 1955 Not Forgotten: Sirapian Publishes French-Language Book

**By Aram Arkun**

Mirror-Spectator Staff

pogroms in Istanbul on September 6-7, 1955. They had an important impact on the ethnic makeup of Istanbul and served to stiffen the resolve of many Greeks, Armenians and Jews to emigrate from Turkey. Varoujan Sirapian's new book, *Les pogroms de 6-7 septembre 1955, Istanbul-Izmir* (Paris: Sigest, 2020) provides the basic information on these events for French-language readers, as there have been few works in French on this topic. see POGROMS, page 11

PARIS – Among other notable historical anniversaries with significance for Armenians, this year brings the 65th anniversary of the



The destruction of a café/restaurant on Istiklal Caddesi (Street) (photo copyright Fahri Çöker)





## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Ambulances Given to Rural Regions

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Armenian government adopted a decision on September 3 according to which hospitals operating in the provinces will be provided with modern ambulances within the frames of the 2020 state budget.

During the Cabinet meeting first deputy minister of healthcare Anahit Avanesyan said five ambulances would be provided to Tavush province, three to Syunik and two to Aragatsotn provinces.

The deputy minister said that a total of 21 ambulances have been purchased.

## National Archives Director Dismissed

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Director of the National Archive of Armenia SNCO Amatuni Virabyan has been relieved from the position by the decree of Justice Minister Rustam Badasyan, the minister's spokesperson Lusine Martirosyan said on Facebook.

"As I receive inquiries from media outlets about the grounds for Mr. Virabyan's dismissal, I would like to inform that based on a number of appeals the Justice Ministry has started an examination aimed at checking the legal activity of the SNCO and submitted an inquiry to the State Revenue Committee for getting information about the tax inspections carried out in the National Archive. According to the information received, Director of the National Archive of Armenia SNCO Amatuni Virabyan conducting the accounting with such violations which caused tax decline as a result of which the tax liabilities were not made on time", the spokesperson said.

Virabyan had been serving as director since 2003.

## Tainted Vodka Kills 11

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Lab tests of the bootleg vodka which left 14 people dead from poisoning in the town of Armavir confirmed that the drink contained methanol.

The Food Safety Inspection Agency said the methanol levels in the samples taken from the confiscated bottles were "multiple times" higher than the maximum admissible.

A total of 38 alcohol poisoning cases were registered in Armenia from August 31 to September 3.

A total of 25 poisoning cases were registered in Armavir, 12 in Yerevan and 1 in Kotayk Province.

A man from Armavir is under arrest on suspicion of running the bootleg business. Two other suspects are also under arrest.

## Asset Recovery in High Gear

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The General Prosecution this week announced new key appointments of prosecutors responsible for stolen asset recovery functions.

Prosecutor General Artur Davtyan appointed Siro Amirkhanyan as the Head of Department of the Confiscation of Illicit Assets. Tigran Yenokyan will be Amirkhanyan's deputy, while Ani Sargsyan and Gevorg Kocharyan will serve as Senior Prosecutors, and Tigran Davtyan will serve as prosecutor.

Earlier on September 1, former Deputy Minister of Justice Srubhi Galyan was appointed as Deputy Prosecutor General in charge of the stolen asset recovery functions.

As the required number of prosecutors of the department are officially appointed, the department is formally considered launched and the stolen asset recovery law is fully initiated.

Prosecutor General Artur Davtyan commented that the department will implement functions of unprecedented nature and volumes for the country, and noted that the mission requires greater responsibility, high professionalism, integrity, team work and devotion. He said he expects "absolute impartiality, principled work and resoluteness to be guided exclusively by the letter of the law" from the team.

The law, officially known as the Law on Confiscation of Assets of Illicit Origin, was adopted by parliament earlier in 2020.



Top Russian and Armenian military officials meet in Moscow, September 5, 2020.

# Russian, Armenian Army Chiefs Meet Amid Drills

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ally" and stressed the "special significance" of Russian-Armenian relations for Yerevan.

According to the statement, he also thanked the Russian military for helping to contain the spread of the coronavirus among Armenian and Russian military personnel serving in Armenia. Moscow sent a team of Russian army medics and special equipment to the South Caucasus state for that purpose in April.

Later on Saturday, September 5, Russia's Southern Military District announced the start of a fresh Russian-Armenian exercise held at two training grounds in northwestern Armenia. It said the drill will involve about a thousand soldiers of the Russian military base headquartered in Gyumri, 200 tanks, artillery systems and other military hardware as well as two dozen Russian and Armenian warplanes.

A statement released by Russia's Southern Military District on Monday said Russian MiG-29 fighter jets engaged in imaginary dogfights with enemy aircraft and struck ground targets as part of defensive and offensive operations simulated by the two mili-

taries. It said the jets, which are normally stationed in Yerevan, then landed at an airfield in Gyumri, Armenia's second largest city located just 10 kilometers from the Turkish border.

The Armenian Defense Ministry did not issue any statements on the drill as of Monday afternoon.

Armenia hosts up to 5,000 Russian soldiers as part of its military alliance with Russia. Successive Armenian governments have regarded the Russian military presence as a crucial deterrent against Turkey's possible military intervention in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The likelihood of such intervention appears to have increased after deadly hostilities that broke out on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in July. Turkey blamed Armenia for the escalation and pledged to boost Turkish military aid to Azerbaijan.

Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said on July 16 that the Armenians "will certainly pay for what they have done" to his country's main regional ally. In what appears to be a related development, Turkish and Azerbaijani troops held last month joint two-week exercises in various parts of Azerbaijan.

The Armenian government responded by accusing Ankara of undercutting international efforts to resolve the Karabakh conflict and posing a serious security threat to Armenia. Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of Armenia's Security Council, said on August 2 that Yerevan counts on Moscow's support in its efforts to counter that threat.

Armenian Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan clearly alluded to Turkey when he denounced the "expansion of some countries' ambitions" in the South Caucasus in a speech delivered in Moscow last Friday.

"The Russian presence in the region as well as the deepening of military-political cooperation between Armenia and Russia are a very important deterring factor that helps to maintain regional stability and security," Tonoyan said at a meeting of the defense ministers of several former ex-Soviet states, China, India and other countries.

Tonoyan addressed the meeting during what was his second visit to Moscow in less than two weeks. He met with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and attended the opening ceremony of the International Army Games on August 23.

# Another Former Armenian Official Indicted

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A law-enforcement agency brought on September 1 corruption charges against a notorious former lawmaker and influential member of former President Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK).

The Investigative Committee said Mher Sedrakyan abused his powers to sell a large part of a public park to his son and brother when he ran Yerevan's southern Erebuni district from 1999 to 2008. It claimed that Sedrakyan helped his relatives privatize the 12,000-square-meter plot of land in 2004 after they illegally built on it.

It was not immediately clear if Sedrakyan will plead guilty to the accusations. The 69-year-old was not arrested pending investigation. The Investigative Committee had him sign instead a pledge not to leave the country.

Sedrakyan, who is better known as "Tokhmakhi Mher," held sway in Erebuni for many years, controlling many local businesses and strongly influencing election results there. Press



Mher Sedrakyan

reports repeatedly implicated his clan in violent attacks on opposition activists and journalists as well as vote rigging.

Sedrakyan was also dogged by scandals when he represented the former ruling HHK in the Armenian parliament from 2012-2017. He reportedly insulted and threatened journalists on at least two occasions, drawing strong condem-

nations from the country's leading media associations.

Also facing criminal charges are several other controversial HHK figures and former officials. Some of them have fled to Russia to avoid imprisonment. Only one of them, former parliament deputy Levon Sargsyan, has been extradited to Armenia so far.





## ARMENIA

# More than 1,000 Emigrate to Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — More than a thousand ethnic Armenian citizens of Lebanon have immigrated to Armenia since last month's devastating explosion at Beirut port warehouses, according to a government agency in Yerevan.

The office of Zareh Sinanyan, the Armenian government's high commissioner for Diaspora affairs, says that the vast majority of them have expressed a desire to stay in their ancestral homeland for good.

According to various estimates, there are between 80,000 and 120,000 Armenians living in Lebanon at present. The once thriving community struggled to cope with Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis even before the August 4 explosion which killed 181 people and left tens of thousands of other Beirut residents homeless.

Following the blast the Armenian government faced growing calls to facilitate the "repatriation" of Lebanese Armenians. Government officials stressed that they are free to immigrate to Armenia, pointing to twice-a-week Beirut-Yerevan flights carried out despite coronavirus-related restrictions imposed in both countries.

Aline Galemkerian, an Armenian woman from Beirut, arrived in Yerevan with her two young sons two weeks ago. One of the boys is already taking piano lessons there.

Galemkerian said she and her husband had decided to relocate to Armenia and try to

start a new life there even before the Beirut blast that seriously damaged their apartment.

"I wish we had not seen [the blast] and come here much earlier because it affected us a lot in many ways," she told RFE/RL's Armenian service.

"I kept crying," she said. "Tears in my eyes would not dry up for days. We lost many Armenian and Arab friends."

Galemkerian's husband will join the family soon. "If my husband finds a job here we will stay here [for good,]" said the young woman. "I feel good here. But I don't know if we can have the same [living] standards if we live and work here."

Another Beirut Armenian, Elias Kalajian, owned and ran a small company manufacturing furniture in the Lebanese capital until moving to Armenia last week.

"I arrived alone. My son and his wife are coming here on Monday," he said, adding that his other son plans to join them later on.

Kalajian said that he would like to set up a similar furniture firm in Yerevan and has already asked the Armenian Ministry of Economy to help him find and rent premises for his small factory. The ministry has promised to explore the possibility of such assistance.

While being mindful of Armenia's own economic problems aggravated by the pandemic, Kalajian seemed upbeat about doing business in the country. "I must definitely try



Lebanese Armenian Aline Galemkerian and her children, Yerevan, September 4, 2020.

to work and succeed here," he said.

Speaking to RFE/RL's Armenian service late last month, Sinanyan said that his office is now working on a "social, economic, educational and healthcare package" aimed at facilitating the immigration of Lebanese Armenians. "We want to bring them to Armenia," said the official. "We do not want them to move to another country."

Kalajian confirmed that more Lebanese

Armenians are now thinking about settling in Armenia. "Many friends told me: 'You go there and we'll follow you,'" he said. "They want to see what I can achieve here before they decide to come here. If they are encouraged they too will come."

"Just like me, they have families, children and grandchildren," added the businessman. "Everyone wants to come. But they need a bit of encouragement."



The Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory

## Byurakan Observatory to Hold Summer Session for Young Astronomers Online

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The seventh Byurakan International Summer School (7BISS) for Young Astronomers in the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO) in Armenia began September 7 and will last until September 12. The theme this year is "Astronomy and Data Science." Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year the summer school is taking place online as a safety precaution.

This will be the 7th school of the series of Byurakan International Summer Schools (BISS) founded in 2006 and being held once every 2 years, one of the most important and regular astronomical summer/winter schools in the world. According to the analysis of the IAU Division C (Education, Outreach and Heritage), BISS is among the top-3 astronomical schools in the world (together with IAU ISYAs and Vatican schools, VOSS), as well as the NEON/OPTICON schools are among the best ones.

This time BISS focuses on Data Science and it is entitled "Astronomy and Data Science", as it will be followed by a Symposium "Astronomical Surveys and Big Data 2" (ASBD-2, 14-18 Sep 2020). During the school the students will have lectures and practical tutorial sessions on Astronomical Surveys, Digitization of astronomical data, Astronomical Catalogues, Databases and Archives, Astrostatistics and Astroinformatics, Big Data in Astronomy and Virtual Observatory tools. The first ASBD in 2015 was very successful with participation of representatives of large surveys, VO projects and computer scientists and we will continue with its update in 2020. Active students that will propose talks for ASBD-2 meeting, will be also invited to participate in it and stay in Byurakan for the second week as well.

In addition, on 18 Sep 2020, the Byurakan Observatory will hold the Official Award Ceremony of Viktor Ambartsumian International Science Prize 2020.

Running such a school was astrophysicist Viktor Ambartsumian's brainchild, and he attempted to organize the first international youth school in 1987 in Byurakan, but the project was never continued because of the Soviet Union's collapse.

Byurakan International Summer Schools was revived by the incumbent director of the Byurakan Observatory Areg Michaelyan and Armenian Astronomical Society in 2006.

## Armenian Health Ministry Details COVID-19 Spending

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The Armenian Ministry of Health said on Thursday, September 3, that it has spent almost 11.5 billion drams (\$23.6 million) since March on treatment of people infected with the novel coronavirus and preventive measures against the spread of the disease.

The figure is equivalent to more than 10 percent of overall public spending on healthcare projected by Armenia's 2020 state budget. The budget was drafted by the government and approved by the parliament late last year before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A report released by the ministry says that more than a quarter of the sum has financed the current expenditures of Armenian hospitals treating COVID-10 patients. Another 2.9 billion drams has been spent on the purchase of medical equipment for those hospitals and medical labs.

According to the report, the ministry has also bought 1.8 billion drams worth of medication as well as protective gear for medical personnel worth 876 million drams. Bonuses paid to

Armenian healthcare workers at the frontline of the fight against the pandemic have cost the state an additional 826 million drams.

The Ministry of Health stressed that its coronavirus-related expenditures do not cover measures against the pandemic that have been financed by other Armenian government agencies.

The ministry has recorded 44,271 coronavirus cases and at least 887 deaths caused by them so far.

In addition to the extra healthcare expenditures, the government has allocated about 150 billion drams (\$310 million) for wide-ranging financial assistance to people and businesses severely affected by the pandemic. The stimulus package has included cash handouts to various categories of the vulnerable population as well as loan subsidies and grants to businesses and farmers.

The state budget for this year calls for a total of 1.88 trillion drams (\$3.9 billion) in government spending.

## Prime Minister Attends Medal Ceremony in Stepanakert

STEPANAKERT — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his wife Anna Hakobyan recently attended a solemn ceremony of awarding the highest awards of the Artsakh Republic in Stepanakert. The event was attended by the President of the Artsakh Republic Arayik Harutyunyan with his wife, the Primate of the Artsakh Diocese Archbishop Parg Martirosyan, the representatives of Armenia, the governments and parliaments of Artsakh and others.

During the event, the President of the Artsakh Republic Arayik Harutyunyan awarded the first chairman of the Supreme Council of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic Arthur Mkrtchyan with the posthumous awards of the 4th Rifle Battalion of the Artsakh Republic Defense Army N C Unit, Captain Armenak Urfanyan with the Golden Eagle Medal.

On the occasion of the 29th anniversary of the proclamation of the Artsakh Republic, Vahram Tamrazyan, a reserve non-commissioned officer, was awarded the Combat Cross Order of the First Degree Order on the occasion of the 29th anniversary of the proclamation of the Artsakh Republic.

Hovsep Hovsepyan was awarded the Order of the Battle Cross of the First Degree Order on the occasion of the 29th anniversary of the

proclamation of the Artsakh Republic for his exceptional courage and bravery in the battles for the defense of the Motherland.

In his speech, Prime Minister Pashinyan, in particular, noted, "It is very symbolic that today the title of Hero of Artsakh is awarded to the representative of the first generation of our liberation war, the representative of the modern generation of our liberation war. They are awarded on the same day, in the same place, at the same time many prominent participants of our liberation war are rewarded for their services, past and present."

He added, "The formation of the Third Republic, the formation of a free Artsakh, an independent Artsakh, this is the whole, this symbol, which is extremely important."

In general, thought, mentality, perception are very important. We have recently adopted a national security strategy, and it is very important to base this strategy on a reference to our roots and values."

And he concluded, "I am convinced that our heroic boys, our soldiers, our officers, generals who are going to march today have the heroes of the past before their eyes. Our martyrs are not indifferent to this work, because with this event today we emphasize their presence today, here, now, next to us."





## INTERNATIONAL

## International News

## New Dutch Ambassador Presents Credentials

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The new Ambassador of the Netherlands to Armenia Nico Schermers presented his credentials to Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan on September 4.

Mnatsakanyan congratulated the ambassador on assuming office and expressed hope that Schermers' activities will contribute to further strengthen Armenian-Dutch relations and boost dialogue on different levels, the foreign ministry said in a news release. In this context both sides attached importance to the establishment of the Dutch diplomatic representation in Yerevan.

Mnatsakanyan and Schermers exchanges ideas regarding a bilateral agenda, the multi-sector cooperation and partnership in international arenas.

## Artsakh Official Says Turkey's Provocations Make it Unsuitable as Minsk Group Member

YEREVAN (Arka) — A statement by the Turkish government in support of the provocations and violations of the ceasefire regime by Azerbaijan is unacceptable, Artsakh Foreign Minister Masis Mayilyan said in an interview with Barcelona-based Nationalia news agency.

"We emphasize once again that such a position of Turkey makes its membership in the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] Minsk Group senseless," the minister said.

Turkey, he said, has never been neutral in its stance on the conflict despite its membership in the OSCE Minsk Group that through its tripartite co-chairmanship mediates the peaceful settlement of the conflict.

"This is the only country in the region that has not only publicly voiced its support for the brotherly Azerbaijan but also has backed the Azerbaijani blockade of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh. It is not a secret that Turkey also helps Azerbaijan in army-building, considering that many Azerbaijani officers are trained in Turkey and Turkish military consultants advise the Azeri military leadership," Mayilyan said.

He said that the South Caucasus is a region with a very complex geopolitics and multiple players; both regional and outside with varying levels of interests. And it is not by chance that the Minsk Group co-chair countries dealing with the conflict are Russia, France and the United States.

The Group's permanent members are Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland, and Turkey, as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan. On a rotating basis, also the OSCE Troika is a permanent member.

## Macron Awards Astrid Panosyan France's National Order of Merit

PARIS (PanARMENIAN.Net) — French-Armenian politician Astrid Panosyan has received France's National Order of Merit — the second highest national order after the Legion of Honor in the country — from President Emmanuel Macron, Armenian ambassador to Paris Hasmik Tolmajian said in a Facebook post on Tuesday, September 8.

"A well-deserved honor for this woman of conviction and heart!" Tolmajian wrote in a tweet about the event in .

Panosyan, who is also an entrepreneur, is the co-founder and member of the executive board of the political party En Marche!, founded by Macron in 2016.

She is also the Chief Resources Officer at Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield SE, a European commercial real estate company headquartered in Paris.

The order is usually awarded for "distinguished services, acts of dedication, bravery, generosity, real merits or a measurable commitment to the service to others or to France."

# Belarus Protests: Lukashenko Raises Prospect of Fresh Elections

MINSK, Belarus (DW) — On Tuesday, September 8, President Alexander Lukashenko acknowledged that he may have "overstayed" his time in office, but said he was the only person capable of protecting Belarus for now.

The 66-year-old, who has been in power since 1994, said a rerun of a disputed presidential vote could only be held after constitutional changes, without giving further details.

"We are ready to carry out the reform of the constitution," Lukashenko was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency. "After that I do not exclude early presidential elections."

Read more: Under threat from authorities, Belarusians go into exile

Lukashenko said he would refuse to hold talks with opposition politicians after EU governments called for "dialogue."

Interfax reported that Lukashenko

told a Moscow radio station that he would not negotiate with the opposition Coordination Council "because I do not know who these people are."

Lukashenko also suggested that Russia would be next if his regime falls in the face of a wave of mass protests.

"You know what we concluded with the Russian establishment and leadership? If Belarus falls, Russia will be next," state news agency RIA Novosti quoted Lukashenko as saying after he spoke to reporters from numerous Russian media outlets.

Lukashenko's rival from the disputed August 9 election, the exiled opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, has called for sanctions against the president and his aides.

"My country, my nation, my people now need help," Tsikhanouskaya said in a speech via videolink on Tuesday to the

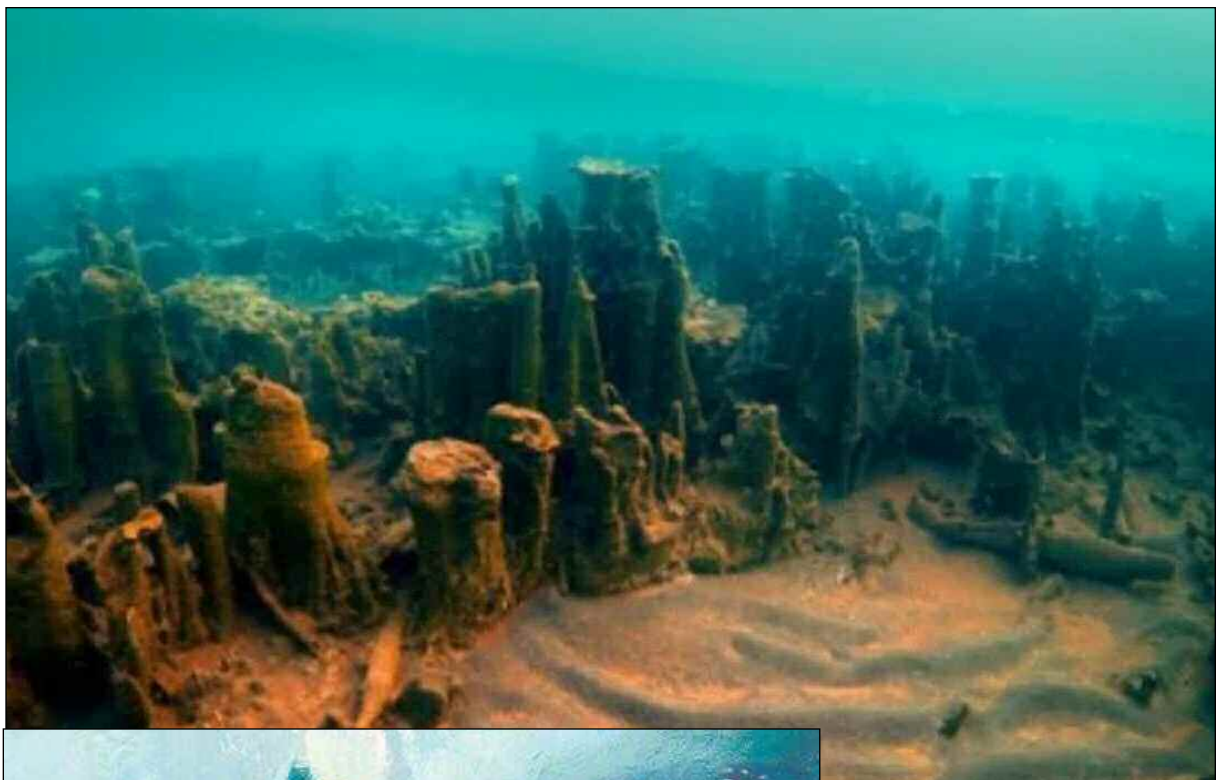
Council of Europe, a European human rights watchdog based in Strasbourg, France, separate from the EU.

"We need international pressure on this regime, on this one individual desperately clinging onto power," she said. "We need sanctions on individuals who issue and execute criminal orders that violate international norms and human rights."

Tsikhanouskaya, 37, fled Belarus for Lithuania after the contested election in August, fearing for her safety.

Last month, the European Union said the election was neither free or fair." Foreign ministers from the 27 countries agreed to introduce sanctions against those responsible for the violence and alleged electoral fraud.

The bloc's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, has called for the "immediate release" of protesters and political prisoners.



The fortress, seen underwater, previously. Now it is fully visible above the waterline

## Receding Waters of Lake Van Yield Armenian Fortress

ISANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The remains of an ancient Armenian fortress have emerged due to declining water level in Lake Van, Ermenihaber.am reported on September 7.

The fortress used to be part of the city of Old Archesh, which was gradually abandoned and went underwater due to the rising water level of Lake Van.

Years ago, when the water level dropped due to the drought, the "sunken city" emerged once again, but many of its buildings were seriously damaged in the 2011 earthquake of Van.

The building is now visible again, and according to researcher Selahattin Kosar, a section of the fortress will be restored to become a tourist center.





## INTERNATIONAL

# CyArk Uses 21st Century Technology to Preserve Ancient Armenian Monuments

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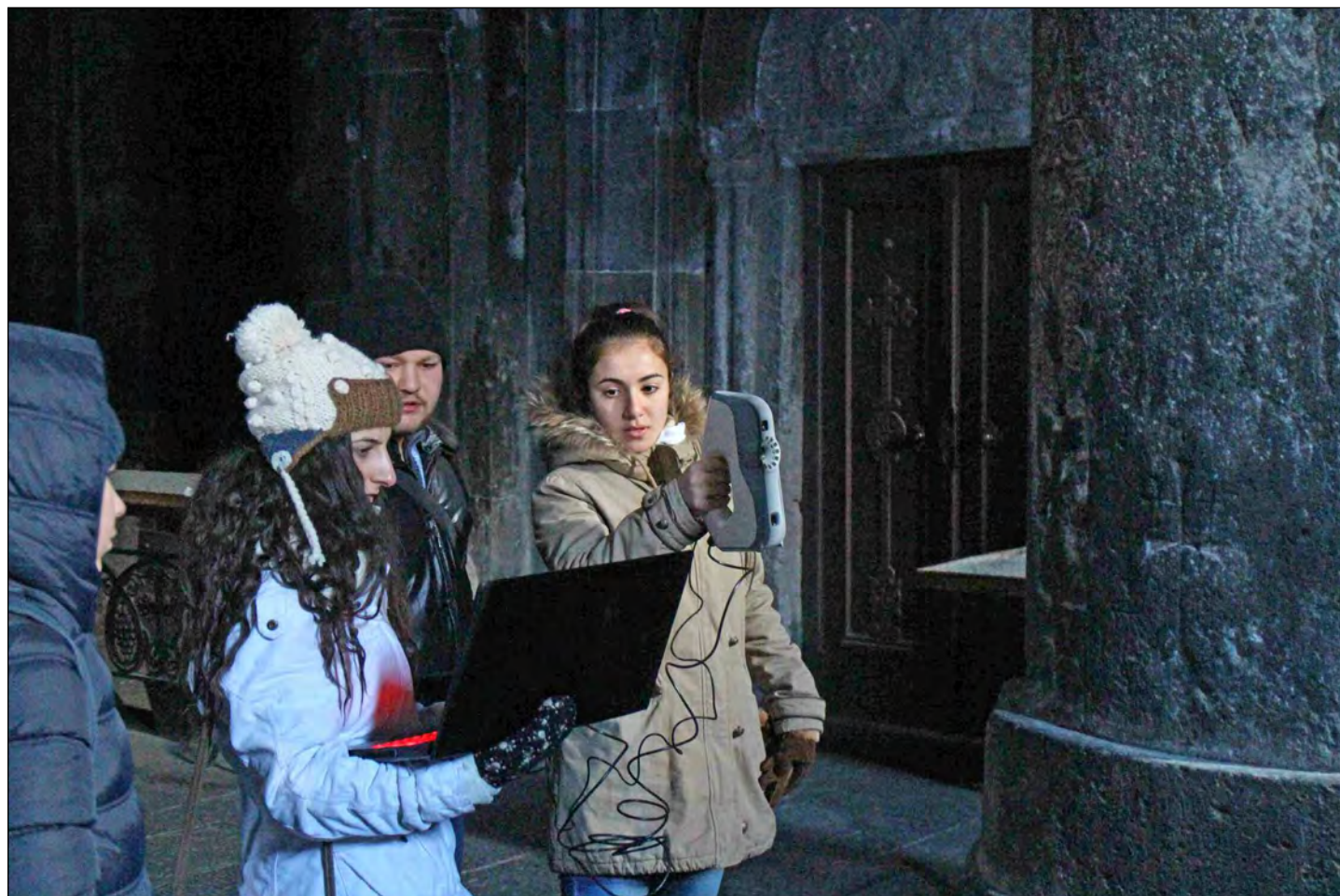
Development over Zoom to discuss the increasing salience of cultural heritage sites which have been digitally documented and are publicly accessible online during this time.

He emphasized that it was the passionate and hard-working TUMO students – the bright fruits of Armenia – who documented the different sites, problem-solved to technologically accommodate their varied environments, and acted as dedicated translators and mediators between the CyArk team and the local Armenian priests and archaeologists.

The young group of students completed the modeling with the assistance of the CyArk team through laser scanning in combination with photogrammetric documentation. The laser scanning contributes the base of these digital constructions by emitting countless pulses of light which travel through space until they hit a wall or object. When a pulse is reflected off of the surface back to the scanner, the scanner registers the location of the surface it hit, generating “this really dense cloud of points,” in a 3-D blueprint of the space. Then, photogrammetry is used, taking large amounts of photos of the space and overlapping them at common points while contributing color and texture to the model. Through using these two technologies in tandem, “in the same way that a tablecloth is draped over a table,” the quilt of photogrammetry photos are bent and draped over the shape of a space, generating a realistic 3-D model of a monument or structure.

These digital models are not only a window into the physical realities of the sites, but the living stories, traditions, and oral histories of those who frequent and upkeep them. Hadick explains, “These 3-D visualizations provide a medium for storytelling, just like the way a photo or a video can be used, like how a documentary film can provide a really powerful view and give a voice to the people who have a connection to that place... who populate it. I think virtual reconstructions of places can also serve that same purpose of providing a medium or a canvas,” through which one can tell the stories of the people who have formed relationships with the sites “who remember that place and can put it in context in the long history of times,” breathing life into them.

The power in these digital reconstructions is their ability to connect people during this time of such disconnection to the art historians, archaeologists, and priests who upkeep and use the structures, to the timeless culture and contested history the sites speak of, and to the landscape of Armenia. They have the capacity to connect us to a piece of our heritage when



Laser scanning Geghard

rich cultural experiences are so desired. Though “Virtual reality or 3-D models will never replace the feeling that you get when you go to these places,” due to their presence, smell, size, spiritual invocation, and place amidst Armenia’s geography, they are glimpses of Armenian beauty and wonder.

These cultural heritage sites are waiting in CyArk’s digital database to welcome us with open arms. Especially now when travel is less accessible, they exist at our fingertips to be seen, enjoyed and celebrated wherever we may be – a taste of Armenia from the safety of our homes.

The digital models of Ani, the Geghard Monastery, the Areni-1 cave complex, and the Noravank Monastery can be accessed on the CyArk website at <https://www.cyark.org/explore/>, and virtual tours of the Areni-1 cave complex and the Noravank Monastery with information from local archaeologists and priests can be accessed through the My Virtual Armenia application which can be found on Google Play or the App



Photogrammetry by a TUMO student at Geghard

## Syrian Olive Trees Put Down Roots in Kurdistan Region

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region (AFP) – Tucked away in the rolling hills of Iraqi Kurdistan is a hidden treasure: tens of thousands of olive trees, thriving in a new homeland after being smuggled from neighboring Syria.

Their branches are heaving with bright purple-black olives ready to be picked.

Their caretaker, Syrian Kurdish businessman Suleiman Sheikho, is proud to have brought the olive oil business to Iraq’s autonomous north.

“This year was a good year,” said 58-year-old Sheikho, who has been transporting trees from his native Afrin in northwest Syria into the Kurdistan Region since 2007.

“On this farm I have 42,000 olive trees, all of which I brought from Afrin when they were three years old,” he told AFP, gesturing to neat rows reaching the horizon.

In early 2018, his mission took on a new urgency.

Turkey, which saw the semi-autonomous Kurdish zone of Afrin on its border as a threat,

backed an offensive by Syrian rebel groups to take control of the canton.

The operation, dubbed “Olive Branch,” displaced tens of thousands, many of whom had made their living for decades by producing olive oil in the area’s mild climate.

Sheikho himself is a fourth-generation olive farmer and had 4,000 trees in Afrin that are older than a century.

The slender businessman, who once served as the head of Afrin Union for Olive Production, sprung into action.

He transported some of his trees legally, but smuggled others across the border, managed on both sides by autonomous Kurdish authorities.

Some of the new transplants joined his orchard, located among luxurious summer villas near the regional capital Erbil. He sold others to farmers across the Kurdistan Region.

Raw olives are a staple on Levantine lunch tables, while their oil is both used in cooking and drizzled on top of favorite appetizers like

hummus.

The oil can also be used to make soap, while the dark, sawdust-like residue from olives pressed in the autumn is often burned to heat houses in winter.

Fertile ground ahead

Olive trees struggle in the blistering heat and desert landscapes of Iraq, so the yellowish-green oil was long imported at great expense from Lebanon, Syria or Turkey.

A domestic oil industry could change all that.

Sheikho was relieved to find the soil near Erbil as rich as in his hometown, but the warmer temperatures meant his trees required more robust irrigation networks.

There are two harvests a year, in February and November.

He built a press, where the olives are separated from twigs and leaves, pitted, then squeezed to produce thick, aromatic oil.

Dressed in a charcoal grey blazer during AFP’s visit, Sheikho tested the quality by drinking it raw from the press, before the viscous

fluid was poured into plastic jugs.

“For every 100 kilos of olives, I produced 23 kilos of olive oil,” he told AFP.

Olive oil production had not taken root when Sheikho began working there, but has thrived since Syrians displaced by their country’s nearly decade-long war began moving there.

According to the Kurdistan Regional Government’s (KRG) agriculture ministry, there were just over 169,000 olive trees in the Kurdistan Region in 2008.

Since then, the ministry invested some \$23 million in planting and importing the trees, which now number around four million, it estimates.

There are around a half-dozen olive presses, employing many Syrian Kurds from Afrin.

Sheikho sees more fertile ground ahead. “The farmers here have great ideas and they are extremely ambitious,” he told AFP.

“With the hard work and experience of Afrin’s farmers, they are going to create a very bright future for olive business.



# Community News

## USA Gymnastics Places Restrictions on Azarian Coaches amid Abuse Allegations

By Scott M. Reid

ALISO VIEJO, Calif. (*Orange County Register*) – USA Gymnastics has placed interim basis restrictions on three coaches at Azarian Gymnastics, an Orange County club owned and operated by former Olympic champion Eduard Azarian, after the national governing body received multiple allegations of physical, verbal and emotional abuse against the coaches, according to a USA Gymnastics letter obtained by the Southern California News Group.

USA Gymnastics was scheduled to announce the measures Tuesday, September 8, according to the letter written by Mark Busby, the organization's general counsel.

One of the coaches, Perry Davies, said USA Gymnastics informed him he was suspended Friday, September 4.

According to seven confidential formal complaints filed with USA Gymnastics, emails, letters obtained by SCNG and interviews with 12 Azarian gymnasts and parents, USA Gymnastics has received multiple formal complaints against:

- Vanessa Gonzalez, Azarian's excel program director and a girls team coach, alleging physical, verbal, and emotional abuse, bullying and pressuring athletes to train and compete while injured.
- Davies, a former Azarian head girls coach, alleging physical and verbal abuse and pressuring gymnasts to train and compete while injured.
- Amanda Hensley, an Azarian girls coach, alleging verbal and emotional abuse.

"USA Gymnastics is issuing interim measures related to reports received regarding coaches Davies, Gonzalez and Hensley," Busby wrote in a Friday letter to potential witnesses against the coaches. "These measures will be published on Tuesday, September 8 in accordance with our publication protocol."

Davies said he is unaware of the allegations against him.

"They told me I was suspended," Davies said. "That's all I've received. I don't know what I've been accused of. (USA Gymnastics) didn't even talk to me."

"Really right now I'm in complete shock," Davies added. "I've always tried my very best to take care of the kids, to make sure they were in a safe environment."

"I would never do anything to hurt a kid. So I'm flabbergasted. I categorically deny doing anything harmful to a kid."

Davies said he retired from coaching 3 1/2 months ago. He coached nearly 200 state champions during a 20-year career.

Gonzalez and Hensley did not respond to requests for comment. Azarian management also did not respond to a request for comment.

"We anticipate at least one of the restricted coaches will file a request for a hearing panel, and are scheduling a panel for Tuesday, September 15," Busby wrote in the letter. "Please email me directly ... if you wish to remain anonymous and/or do not want to speak to the hearing panel regarding your experiences."

"We will be reaching out to all witnesses in this matter to gauge willingness to participate in the safe sport hearing panel process. This panel will be used exclusively for the interim measure assessment, if requested, but we will need to begin sharing the information we have gathered prior to any requested hearing."

"Any person who has filed a report in this matter will be given an opportunity to address the panel, if they so choose. We will honor our commitment to protect your anonymity should you wish to withdraw from the process, or ask that we withhold your information."

Davies said he was also unaware of the September 15 hearing.

Busby added in the letter: "In addition to the see ABUSE, page 9



Anush Gharibyan O'Connor at Ginifest

## Ginifest

### Armenian Wine Festival Going Online Before the Wine Is Poured

By Ani Duzdabanyan-Manoukian  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GLENDALE, Calif. – For the first time in my life I won a raffle: two tickets to Ginifest, the Armenian wine and spirits festival on May 31 held annually in Los Angeles, California! However, the tickets stayed in their envelope and the festival was postponed until August 16, then October 18....The novel coronavirus pandemic didn't allow public gatherings. Last year the festival hosted 700 visitors, more than 15 wineries, brandy, vodka, wine, and cheese producers from Armenia, Artsakh, Argentina, Paso Robles and Chile. The festival was held at the Chevy Chase Country Club in Glendale. This year the third annual Ginifest anticipated around 1000 guests and was scheduled to be held at the Castaway restaurant in Burbank, Calif.

see WINE, page 7



Anush Gharibyan O'Connor and Stepan Partamian

## New Advisory Board Created by ANSEF

NEW YORK – Twenty years ago, a group of luminaries in the Armenian diaspora led by Prof. Yervant Terzian joined forces to create the Armenian National Science and Education Fund (ANSEF). Its mission was to help Armenian scientists and scholars who were struggling to continue their work in the newly independent Republic.

ANSEF was modeled on Western science funding agencies, such as the National Science Foundation, and adapted to Armenia's circumstances. Under the auspices of the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) and thanks to the generosity of many individuals, ANSEF has provided more than \$3 million in research grants to more than 2,500 scientists and scholars in Armenia. The grants enabled cutting-edge research in the physical sciences, engineering, the natural sciences, the humanities, and the social sciences that resulted in thousands of publications in Western journals.

In the 20 years of ANSEF's existence we saw our young Republic transform from a struggling state to an emerging modern, knowledge-based economy. The needs of scholars and educators have evolved accordingly, and ANSEF is committed to meet these new challenges.

In this vein, and in order to preserve the legacy of ANSEF founders including Terzian, a powerful driving force behind ANSEF for the last 20 years who passed away last year, the organization has established an Advisory Board. It will be composed of prominent individuals, scholars and benefactors who will serve as advisors to ANSEF's Executive Board. This will allow ANSEF to be more agile and able to dynamically incorporate input from scholars and leading figures from Armenia proper and the Armenian diaspora.

The new Advisory Board consists of FAR Board members Armen Avanesians and Lynn Dadourian Barsamian, Esq. and ANSEF founders Aram Chobanian, MD; Vartan Gregorian, PhD; Garabed Eknayan, MD; Tavit Najarian, ScD; and Yervant Zorian, PhD. Further, at the unanimous decision of the ANSEF founders, this organization will from now on carry its founding Chairman's name: The Yervant Terzian Armenian National Science and Education Fund.

ANSEF is one of the most prestigious funding programs in Armenian academia, especially amongst young scientists. According to Areg Mickaelian, PhD, director of the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory, "ANSEF has been around for Armenian science, especially Armenian young scientists for already 20 years and, today, we can hardly find a group, R&D institution or university in Armenia that did not benefit from it. I can say with confidence that ANSEF has developed a unique scientific culture in Armenia, which gave hope to many researchers and created an opportunity for the development of scientific teamwork. We were really concerned about ANSEF's future when our beloved Yervant Terzian passed away, since ANSEF has been much more for Armenia than just a monetary grant. Now, seeing these great founders of ANSEF, outstanding luminaries and leaders on its Advisory Board, we are assured that its future is secured. Together with its extraordinary Research Council, the Advisory Board will make ANSEF, I am sure, even stronger and more efficient."

Members of the new Advisory Board work to ensure its long-term success. Their knowledge, expertise and social visibility are invaluable in support of ANSEF's mission and in promoting ANSEF throughout academic and R&D communities in the US and globally. The Advisory Board will grow, and new members will be announced as they join. The ANSEF Executive Board (formerly the Research Council) will continue to handle the day-to-day operations and chart new programmatic directions to meet the evolving needs of Armenian science.

Currently, the new ANSEF Executive Board consists of co-chairs Ashot Papoyan, PhD and Prof. Vatche Sahakian; Prof. Lerna Ekmekcioglu, Prof. Ruben Minasian, Prof. Anna Ohanyan, Prof. Lilit Yeghiazarian, and Eduard Karapetyan, ANSEF Coordinator at FAR Armenia.





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Armenian Wine Festival Going Online Before the Wine Is Poured

WINE, from page 6

"If the [California state] government allows us to do 3 sets of time with 300 people in each, then we can do it, but if they allow us to have only 50 people at a time, then it's not possible. Since we are doing it in the restaurant, we have to comply with all the rules and regulations during the public gatherings," Anush Gharibyan O'Connor, the director of GiniFest shares the inconvenience of making the festival happen during this pandemic. During all three GiniFests, she and Stepan Partamian, the founder of the festival, helped bring the spotlight to Armenian winemakers in the USA. They could not just let the

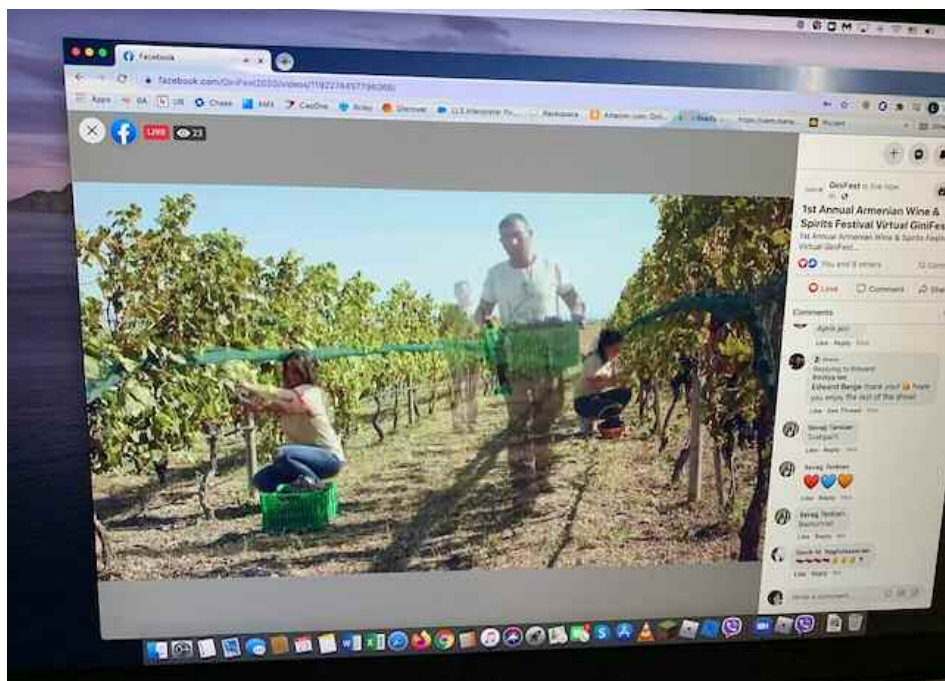


current circumstances hinder all the hard work. So they came up with the unprecedented idea of holding the festival virtually, with the slogan "Before the actual enjoy the virtual." On August 23, Ginifest went online on Horizon TV and social media platforms with 14 wineries joining live, representing 20 wines and engaging more than 20,000 viewers/guests.

Three years ago Anush was preparing her

podcast for "ArmeniaProud—A Toast to Armenia Show," looking for Armenian productions and businesses to interview and share their stories. She learned that Stepan was organizing an Armenian wine festival. Anush reached out to Stepan to interview him for her podcast. But Stepan had a better idea. Even though he told her that it was just an idea, two weeks later Stepan called Anush and they started to work in realizing the first-ever Armenian wine festival. "I was reaching the winemakers in Armenia, since I already knew almost all of them through my podcasts. Stepan was working on logistics, talking to the local distributors," remembers Anush. The first GiniFest took place in 2018 at the Chevy Chase Country Club in Glendale, California. The festival hosted 10 wineries from Armenia and South America. With 350 guests, cognac (brandy) educational classes, and a dinner with a pairing wine at the end, the festival became a significant event not only for the Armenian community, but also introduced the rapidly developing wine business to local wine enthusiasts and professionals.

During our interview Anush was sipping Apris, a wine from Artsakh, and giving me a real masterclass about the specifics of Armenian wine. "There are several reasons which make Armenian wine special. First, the majority of it is being produced from the indigenous varietals. Those are the varietals that originated in Armenia. For red wine, the most popular variety is Areni,



Scenes from Ginifest online

which grows in Yeghegnadzor. From the whites, it's Voskehat. The second reason is the terroir: the climate, the soil and the topography. Armenia is at such a high elevation, and grapes that are grown at such elevations are different: the grapes ripen slowly and preserve their fruit quality, their acidity and [they] mature elegantly. The third reason is the usage of an ancient vessel or *karas*. Clay gives different qualities characteristic to the wine. It gives a little microoxygenation

that helps with the very slowly maturing of the wine. It's a very tricky and a risky thing to do. Not everybody can work with *karas*'s. After the wine maker makes the wine in the concrete or stainless-steel tank, he puts it in the *karas* to age. Zorah was the first winemaker who reintroduced the technique to the other Armenian winemakers and soon, other wineries, like Voskevaz and Kars, started to use *karas*'s in their production."

Next is the usage of the Caucasian oak. "Almost all the expensive wines in the world have been aged in oak at some point, or fermented in it. Oak is very important for both red and white wine. In Artsakh we have our own species of oak that adds its native qualities to the native varieties in the wine." Anush is sharing all her knowledge as a sommelier. "The volcanic soil is another advantage of the Armenian wine. And let's not forget the history of being the oldest wine producers in the world." Anush concludes the masterclass.

The newly developing wine industry in Armenian is heavily influenced by the Diasporan Armenian expatriates from the Diaspora who return to the motherland with their education, knowledge, and experience. However, wine making is mostly a passion, not a profitable business.

"If you're deciding to establish a winery with the prospect of earning money, you are losing something in between. Even the small wineries are making profits, but they are not billionaires. If you are going there to make a fortune, you should find some other way." Anush is giving her realistic assessment of the Armenian wine industry.

Anush thinks that the success of all the Armenian winemakers lies in being united. She remembers the rather recent unpleasant events when the Karas company trademarked the name Karas and later sued Zorah (whose 2010 Karasi Areni Noir made it to Bloomberg Businessweek's top ten of the world's best wines) for using the word on its labels.

"Basically, they trademarked the national heritage. It is not at all within [the bounds of] healthy competition. Armenian wineries are not producing too much to be suffocating by the competition. They don't have that much capacity. Each of them will eventually sell out if we promote Armenian wine the way it's supposed to be promoted," Anush states with much certainty. Armenian wine is a little pricey than the average wine in the market. "Most of the time it's an experience rather than just a wine."

Anush herself owns a small vineyard (about 100 vines) with her friend in Santa Ana, California, growing mostly Cabernet and Merlot. "It's our seventh year already. Actually this weekend I need to go there for the harvest," says Anush.

For now, they are producing wine only for home consumption, "just for fun." But it's time to consider the labeling: Anush Gharibyan-O'Connor means business.

## 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





OBITUARY

# Pioneering University of Minnesota Transplant Surgeon Dr. John S. Najarian Dies at 92

By Joe Carlson

MINNEAPOLIS (*Star Tribune*) – Dr. John S. Najarian, a pioneering transplant surgeon who served for decades as head of surgery at the University of Minnesota and whose career was marked by achievement and controversy, has died.

Najarian died of natural causes on August 31 at a memory care center where he lived in Stillwater, his sons Dave and Pete said on September 1. He was 92.

Najarian leaves a complex legacy. He spear-headed experimental lifesaving transplants for adults and children, and he used his immersive knowledge of immunology and surgery to create a drug called ALG that prevented organ rejection in many people.

Yet the Food and Drug Administration shut down the ALG program at the U in 1992, citing dozens of violations of federal drug-testing rules. For two decades, the university received millions of dollars from improper sales of the drug, according to *Star Tribune* reporting using public records.

Najarian was later indicted on charges of illegally distributing ALG, costing him his job as chairman of the U's surgery department. A judge dismissed six of the 21 charges against him and jurors acquitted him of the remaining charges in 1996.

After the courtroom ordeal, Najarian chose to keep operating on patients.

"I think any one of us, going through something like that, would have been extremely bitter," said Pete Najarian, an options trader who appears frequently on CNBC. "He didn't ever think about it. Even though he was approached to sue back the university, and others, he just said, 'Look, I want to get back and start transplanting again. It's

what I do; it's what I'm good at.'"

John Najarian was born in Oakland, Calif., in 1927, the son of Armenian immigrants. After growing up in the Bay Area, he played college football as an offensive tackle for the University of California, Berkeley, joining the team in its 1949 Rose Bowl loss to Northwestern.

"The two weeks leading up to the Rose Bowl were when my med school classmates spent their time studying for finals, which were very important and very difficult in the first year," Najarian was quoted as saying in *Cal Sports Quarterly*. "So I went to the Rose Bowl with a suitcase full of books, which I never opened, needless to say."

He quickly became a successful organ-transplant surgeon and was recruited by many colleges, ultimately choosing the University of Minnesota Department of Surgery, where then-chief of surgery Dr. Owen Wangensteen was building an academic medicine program known internationally for surgical innovation and a tolerance for unconventional approaches.

Najarian took over as head of surgery there in 1967, after Wangensteen retired. He was 39 at the time.

"Already widely known as the founder of one of the nation's first kidney transplantation services (at the University of California, San Francisco), Najarian had been attracted by the basic science research base at Minnesota," reported a 2005 article in the *Archives of Surgery*.

He was known for his dual rigor in both immunological science and surgery, which is what allowed him to innovate.

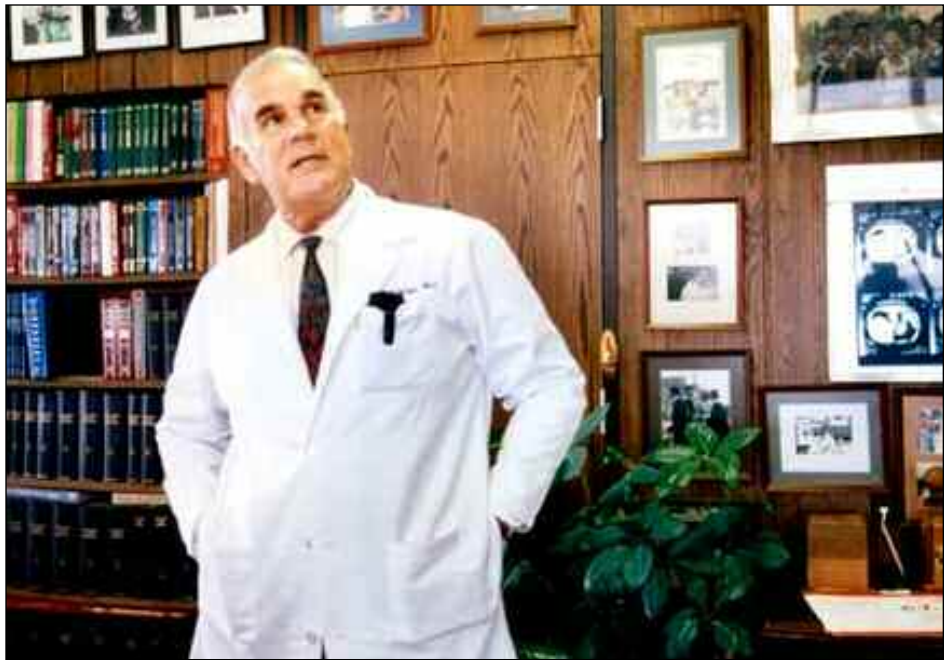
"John – Dr. Najarian – was equally proficient as a surgeon and as an immunologist. And that was incredibly important. Because he was the one who pushed the boundaries in what you could do with transplant," said Dr. Jakub Tolar, a bone-marrow transplant doctor who is dean

of the U's Medical School today.

Dr. Sayeed Ikramuddin, the current chair of surgery at the U, said Najarian was known for pioneering islet cell transplants and kidney transplants for diabetes, and pediatric trans-

federal government.

Though no longer head of surgery, Najarian went back to work doing transplants. Dave Najarian said the experience didn't seem to change his father's personality.



University of Minnesota transplant surgeon Dr. John Najarian, shown in 1993.

plants, among many other things.

In 1995, following a series of investigative reports in the *Star Tribune*, Najarian was indicted on charges of fraud, theft and tax evasion related to allegations that under his watch, the Medical School had taken in millions in illegal profits from sales of ALG, which was uncensored.

After Najarian was acquitted, the university eventually paid a \$32-million settlement to the

"He knew he was right," Dave Najarian said. "He was never yelling about it or making a fuss about it. He was just happy that the drug he developed saved so many lives."

John Najarian was preceded in death by his wife of 67 years, Mignette, who died last year, and his son Paul, who died in 2014. He's survived by sons Jon, Dave and Pete, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. No services have yet been announced.

## Charles F. Debono Engineer, Businessman, Lifelong Learner

NEW YORK – Charles F. Debono, lifelong citizen of New York City, born on July 17, 1940, passed away, unexpectedly, on March 14, 2020.

He was the son the late Charles Debono, whose father and mother had immigrated to New York, from Valletta, Malta, and Cadiz, Spain, respectively, and the late Arax (Assadourian) Debono, both of whose parents were of Armenian origin, and had immigrated to New York from Bandirma, Turkey.

Charles was born and raised in Murray Hill, Mid-Town Manhattan. He attended Manhattan's public

Blue Shield, and completed his professional trajectory after 25 years as a manager of IT systems, for the Advertising Checking Bureau. It was at this point that Charles decided to become a small business owner, so, he and his business partner opened Image Makers, on 38th Street, in Manhattan, which proved to be a successful business, printing specialized T-shirts for both New York based and international clients, until its close, in 2018.

Charles met the love of his life, wife to be, and cherished friend until the end, Nili, while visiting his college friend (Nili's brother), overseas. Charles and Nili enjoyed married life in Manhattan, and, later, a continued friendship, through the years, along with Nili's beloved daughter, Lara, in Northport, NY.

Charles was a highly intelligent, well read, seeker of knowledge, a man who retained information on a limitless number of topics, a man who was always up for a mental challenge – sudoku, crossword puzzles, conversational banter, etc. Charles was also a social creature, appreciative of and connected to his clients, local friends, neighbors, doormen, and news stand owner. The *New York Times* and educational television were his steadfast sources of news and information. His cousins referred to Charles as "Dave, the answer man" due to his particular gift for knowledge on any random topic. Later, deciding that a more cosmopolitan, fun pet name would be fitting for Charles, they dubbed him "Carlos," a name that stuck and that Charles was amused by.

Charles loved the city, his daily routine, his neighborhood, and his life as a New Yorker. He also particularly felt grateful for NYU Medical Center, located a block from his home, as five years prior, he had become critically ill and was blessed to receive excellent ongoing care from NYU doctors and nurses. In the end, it just so happened that it was two lovely NYU nurses who found Charles on the corner of 34th street, near his home, and with heart and humanity saw to it that he was brought to NYU Medical Center, and even checked up on him while he

remained in the intensive care unit, in the aftermath of his having suffered what was to be a fatal medical event. Charles' family will forever be grateful for the love and care that these two nurses extended to their Charles.

Charles leaves behind his cousins Brian Assadourian, wife Lisa Kashish, and their son, Aram Assadourian, of Hoboken, NJ, Gary Assadourian and his wife, Ana Von Hoffman, of

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, Charles' ex-wife and cherished friend, Nili Seren, and her daughter, Lara Seren, of Northport, NY, and his business partner and dear friend for over 50 years, Ed Abrevaya, as well and many valued neighborhood friends and business associates.

Due to the Pandemic and the related lockdown regulations, in place during this time, no funeral service could be held.



schools, and, throughout his childhood, was an active member of the Boy Scouts of America.

During his youth, he also enjoyed the experience of the Fresh Air Fund's summers in the countryside of New York State.

Charles graduated from Stuyvesant High School, then, went on to graduate from New York University, with a BS in engineering physics, and an MS in operations research.

He began his professional career as an engineer for AT&T, later, worked for Blue Cross

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## 2021 Creative Armenia-AGBU Fellowships for Cutting-Edge Artists to Forefront of Armenia's Cultural future

NEW YORK – Creative Armenia and the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) are now accepting applications for the 2021 Creative Armenia-AGBU Fellowships. Open to filmmakers, musicians, writers, and artists across all creative fields, the Fellowships are a package of funding, mentorship, promotion, and strategic support. Applications will be accepted until October 31.

"In times of crisis, visionary thinking becomes impossible to ignore," said Alec Mouhibian, Vice President of Creative Armenia. "The next class of Creative Armenia-AGBU Fellows will have a singular opportunity to shape Armenia's artistic landscape for years to come."

The current 2020 Fellows are: composer and musician Armen Bazarian; visual artist and curator Nvard Yerkanian; theatre director and dancer Tsolak Milke-Galstyan; composer and conductor Alexandr Iradyan; composer and pianist Zela Margossian, and filmmaker Vahagn Khachatryan.

"Our Fellows have shown diversity in their creativity and expression over the past few years putting Armenian culture on the map in their unique ways," said AGBU Central Board Member Ani Manoukian. "We are proud of the achievements of this partnership and of the talents supported. We look forward to the third cohorts setting the bar even higher."

For more information on the Fellowships and to submit your application by October 31, please visit [creativearmenia.org/fellowships](http://creativearmenia.org/fellowships) and [agbu.org/creativearmenia](http://agbu.org/creativearmenia).

Now in its third term, the Fellowships are a collaboration of Creative Armenia and AGBU, which entered into a strategic partnership in May 2018.

Creative Armenia, a global arts foundation for the Armenian people, pursues a mandate to discover, develop, produce, and promote innovative talent. AGBU, a trusted name across the diaspora for over a century, has opened many doors for talented Armenians through such offerings as university-level performing arts scholarships, summer internships, and professional programs such as Musical Armenia and Sayat Nova International Composition Competition—all under the aegis of the AGBU Performing Arts Department, established in the United States in 2012 and in Europe in 2016.

## Dr. Tamar M. Boyadjian to Speak on 'The City Lament: Jerusalem Across the Medieval Mediterranean'

FRESNO – Dr. Tamar M. Boyadjian will give a virtual presentation on "The City Lament: Jerusalem Across the Medieval Mediterranean" on Thursday, September 24, at 7 p.m. The presentation is part of the Fall 2020 Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program and is supported by the Clarie Bousian Bedrosian Fund. All Lecture Series events will take place online, and not face-to-face, through the Fall 2020 semester.

In "The City Lament: Jerusalem Across the Medieval Mediterranean," Boyadjian examines how various ethno-religious cultures across the medieval Mediterranean world lamented the loss of the city of Jerusalem, and in what ways these lamentations are informed by reinscribing models from the ancient world.

The critical objective of Boyadjian's work is to expose cross-cultural exchange and interaction across the medieval Mediterranean through an examination of the lament tradition across Arabo-Islamic, Cilician Armenian, and Western European literary sources. She demonstrates how each of these cultures share similar modes of lamenting cities, all of which also coming from ancient prototypes. By understanding the loss of the city, each tradition further its political objectives of reconquering Jerusalem by simultaneously envisaging their own Jerusalem through a textually surrogate geography of the city, also informed by the theolog-

ical and spiritual tradition of the significance of the city for that particular faith. It is through these city laments that these cultures allow for their own Jerusalems to live anew, through this very paradoxical mourning of its loss and destruction.

Boyadjian is an associate professor of medieval literature and teaches creative writing (poetry) and translation courses in the Department of English at Michigan State University. Her academic research and publications primarily focus on the intersections between Europe and the Middle East across the Medieval Mediterranean, with a focus also on the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia. Further research interests include: representation of women across medieval Mediterranean literature; women and lamentation; Jerusalem and representations of space in literature; and queer studies and the medieval Mediterranean. She is the author of the award-winning book, *The City Lament: Jerusalem Across the Medieval Mediterranean* (Cornell UP, 2018), and her current book project is *Eastern Princesses: Complaynt, Conquest, & Conversion in Late Medieval English Literature*.

The lecture will be on Zoom Conference, and registration is required. Use this link to register: [bit.ly/armenianstudiesboyadjian](https://bit.ly/armenianstudiesboyadjian). The lecture will also be streamed on the Armenian Studies Program YouTube channel.

For more information about the lecture visit [www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies](http://www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies).

## USA Gymnastics Places Restrictions on Azarian Coaches amid Abuse Allegations

ABUSE, from page 6  
measures addressing the conduct of the specific coaches, we will be working with Azarian Gymnastics to fortify their current policies to bring them into alignment with the updated USA Gymnastics Safe Sport Policy – this includes open viewing sessions for parents of all athletes, educational requirements and gathering additional information from families currently enrolled at the club. As Azarian Gymnastics is not presently a member, member club status will be contingent on meeting these standards."

Eduard Azarian, 62, is not named in the formal complaints. The Armenia-born Azarian has long been considered gymnastics royalty. His father, Albert, won a gold medal for the Soviet Union in the team competition at the 1956 Olympic Games and also claimed the 1956 and 1960 Olympic rings titles.

Azarian followed his father's footsteps, helping the Soviet Union win the team gold medal at the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow. After coaching the Soviet boys and girls national teams for more than a decade, Azarian immigrated to the U.S. in 1992.

## Bishop Daniel Findikyan Elected to Appeal of Conscience Foundation Board of Directors

AWARD, from page 1  
and be viewed by leaders in the religious, civic, business, and diplomatic fields.

That event will be the occasion to present the 2020 "Appeal of Conscience Award" to Dr. Noubar Afeyan and Robert F. Smith. Both are being honored for their leadership "in helping to heal our wounded world at the time of the pandemic," according to the award citation.

Afeyan – a longtime friend and supporter of the Eastern Diocese, and chair of 2015's National Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide Centennial – is co-founder and chair of the biotech research company Moderna, which has been a leading innovator in research into a COVID-19 vaccine.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

# The Coded Message from the Orphans In Second Corinthians, 1:8-11

By Charles N. Mazadoorian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The photograph above of a scriptural message formation which was taken in the Greek City of Corinth in 1923 has always fascinated me. The words “Second Corinthians” and the numerical reference “1:8:11” were formed by the Armenian children who were being cared for by the Near East Relief Foundation at an orphanage site in Corinth. My mother remembers being in the formation for the photograph although she does not remember of which letter or numeral she was a part. It appears that the children were arranged at the foot of a steep hill or mountain so that the photographer was able to look down upon them and get far enough away to take in the whole formation. Perhaps he even had a wide-angle lens.

This photograph of course was not the only such photo taken at Near East Relief orphanages throughout the region. These photographs were likely used for many purposes, including fundraising, brochures and acknowledgement and letters of thanks to those in America who so generously contributed and raised money for the orphans and Genocide survivors. One such photograph simply displayed a very straightforward message from the orphans spelling out the words “America We Thank You.”

The picture shown here was also likely intended to express the appreciation of everyone who worked on behalf of the Near East Foundation in the Middle East, as well as and especially of the children to themselves, to their benefactors in the western world. Significantly, it also sought to express a spirit of gratitude and hope and to seek further prayers for the orphans and thanks to God. It was believed, perhaps somewhat naively, that those receiving the message on the card were mostly Christian and familiar with the *New Testament*. Hence the use of a scriptural reference as a message from the Armenian orphans to those people in the western world, and in particular America, who had contributed to the financial and spiritual support of the Near East Relief.

It was a unique and appropriate — indeed brilliant — idea for the Near East Relief Foundation leaders to have these orphans and survivors form the letters and numerals of this particular scriptural reference. It was a photograph intended to send a message in code, so to speak; a code not in the sense of being a secret but, in the sense of using that scriptural reference as a shorthand method of saying something as powerful and as moving as only the great Apostle Paul himself could say it. What follows is my favorite version of Paul’s words. It is based for the most part upon a translation found in the *New Testament in Modern English* by J.B. Phillips. However, I have also added some words here and there to paraphrase the translation. Although this particular combination of paraphrase and translation was not available in 1923 ( The King James version was and still is the most universally read English translation), it does nonetheless accurately and powerfully convey the spir-

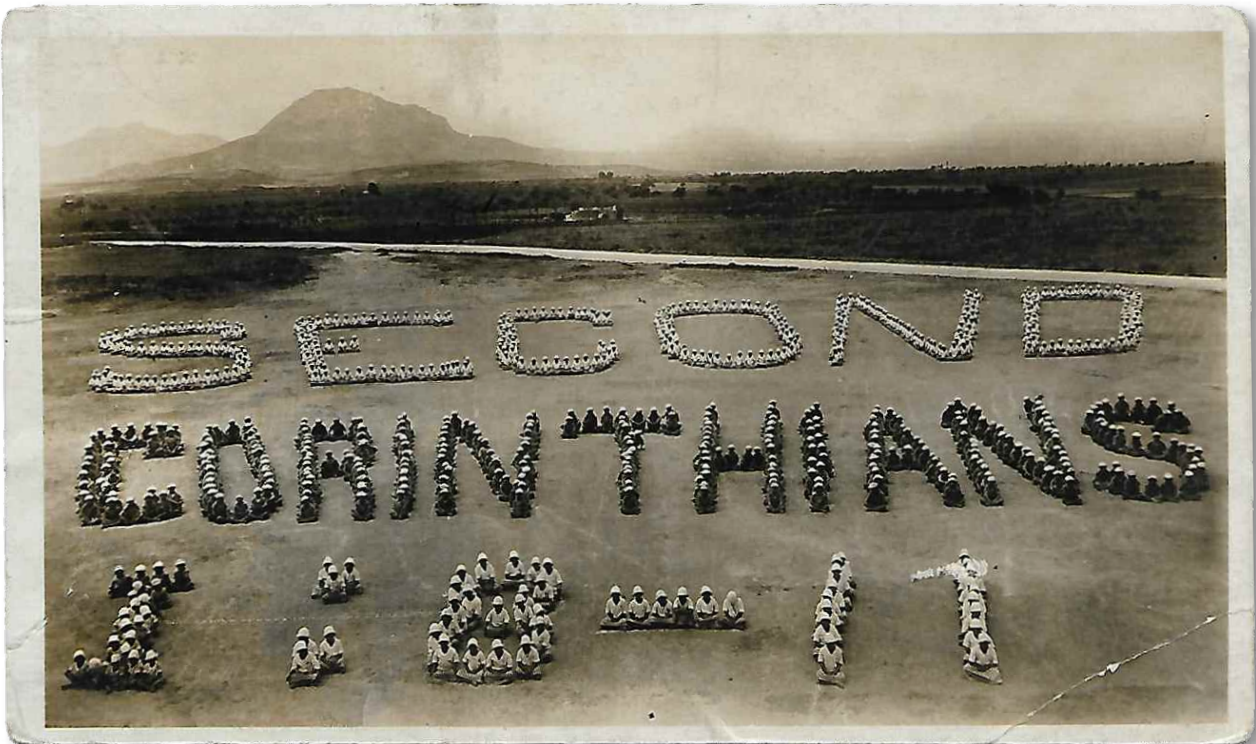
the end for us. Yet, in looking back now, we believe that we had this experience of coming to the end of our rope that we might learn to trust not in ourselves but in God who can raise the dead. For indeed we were as good as dead. It was God who delivered us from imminent death and it is he who still protects us. Further we trust him to keep us safe in the future. And here, you can join in and help by praying for us so that the good that is done to us in answer to many prayers will mean ultimately that many will thank God for our preservation.”

These words from Paul’s second letter to the young church in Corinth give a remarkably accurate account of what the whole Armenian nation went through in 1915. I don’t believe

even the United States was willing to make a serious effort to stop them? Even the dedication and courage of those gallant men and women who served the Near East Relief should not have been enough to save as many orphans as were saved if it had not been for the grace of God. It was indeed by the sheer grace of God that any Armenians at all survived.

It was in 1925 that my mother was officially discharged from the care of the Near East Relief and entrusted to the care of her father’s sister, Yester Aharonian in Beirut. It was the last of several orphanages in which she had stayed after experiencing the horrific depravities of the Genocide.

My mother described her years in the orphanages of the



The photo of the formation spelling out Second Corinthians 1:8-11

it could have been expressed in any better way. And what more appropriate place from which to send this message than from the Greek port city of Corinth itself. Could it have been more than a touching coincidence that Corinth was one of the stops on the evacuation route of Armenian orphans from Turkey to Europe and Armenia?

In a larger sense, it was a message from all Armenians who survived the Genocide. By all the laws of man and nature, no Armenian should have survived that brutal slaughter. If they were not directly killed by Turkish guns or knives or beaten to death or drowned or perished from starvation or disease, they should surely have died of despair and hopelessness. One could almost say that the Armenians had no business surviving at all: that they had no possibility of surviving. The odds against the Armenians surviving, including European political rivalry, expediency and moral acquiescence in the actions of the Ottoman government and the powerful forces against them were simply too overwhelming. First the government rounded up all the adult males in a village and disposed of them and then returned to finish off the defenseless women and children. The Turks were too determined, too efficient, and too ruthless in their mass annihilation for any Armenian to have survived by accident or chance. The government did what it was good at — destruction.

If the unspeakable brutality of the Turks left any vestige of physical life in the body of the Armenian nation, it should surely have completely destroyed whatever spirit remained in the Armenian soul. Against such vicious malevolence, the spirit of the Armenian soul should have given up any will to survive. Why struggle or even want to survive when the powers intent upon your destruction were so overwhelming and no government in England, France or

Near East Relief Foundation as among the happiest of her life. She and her companions were sheltered from the events following the end of the War; they led a regimented life and were provided a keen sense of purpose and direction. The education they received laid down a solid spiritual and moral foundation. The children developed a strong sense of belonging, self-sufficiency and a deep commitment and loyalty to each other and to their teachers and caregivers, who were incredibly loving, thoughtful, dedicated and skilled — all representative of the heroic humanitarian efforts of the Near East Relief effort itself.

My mother’s miraculous return to what was left of her family in the village of Yegheki in Kharpert after years of complete loss of identity ( none of relatives even knew that she was still alive) was representative of the miracle of the survival of the Armenian identity despite the enormous scope and scale of the destructions and killings.

It was miraculous that the Turkish plan to completely destroy and eliminate every vestige of Armenian identity did not succeed. Despite the widespread scale of the atrocities planned and executed by the Ottoman government, the complete defenselessness of the Armenian population and the failure of the international community to intervene when the government’s plan were laid bare (even after urgent pleas, warnings and graphic description of the brutality and destruction of the Armenian people from respected and credible eye witnesses such as US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau), the Armenian identity not only survived the attempted eradication but grew stronger and flourished.

The spirit of the young orphans pictured in the photograph and the message they subtly but powerfully conveyed to the world says all that needs to be said about the courage and resilience and strength of the Armenian identity.

(Charles N. Mazadoorian ( 1934-1996) was born in Whitinsville, MA to Yegsa Aharonian Mazadoorian ( 1912-2007) and Nigoghos Mazadoorian ( 1904-1997), both Genocide survivors who lived in various Near East Relief and other orphanages before coming to America. Charles lived most of his life in New Britain CT, where he attended local schools before earning a BA in English literature from Yale University. He was an ordained deacon in the Armenian Church and served at The Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection in New Britain. He was a committed student of the Bible and of the Armenian Genocide and used his knowledge of both to write this article. Minor edits and some minor additions of materials have been made to this article by Charles’ younger brother Attorney Harry Mazadoorian.)



Near East Relief card for Yeghsapet Aharonian, the author’s mother

it of the message in the photograph.

“We should like you our brothers and sisters to know something of what happened to us in Asia, something of what we went through. At that time we were completely overwhelmed by the terrible course of events which befell us. The burden of our hopelessness was more than we could bear. We even despaired of life itself. We told ourselves that this was surely





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Istanbul Pogroms of 1955 Not Forgotten: Sirapian Publishes French-Language Book

POGROMS, from page 1

The book relies on three major sources, the massive academic study by Speros Vryonis, Jr., *The Mechanism of Catastrophe* (New York: Greekworks.com, 2005), Güven Dilek's analysis in *6-7 Eylül Olayları* (Tarih Vakfı, 2005), and the collection of photographs and documents of the Fahri Çöker archive (*6-7 Eylül Olayları: Fotoğraflar-Belgeler*, Tarih Vakfı, 2005), as well as a variety of articles and authors. More than half of the 176-page book consists of photographs of the violence and its aftermath, along with reproductions of articles in newspapers and some of the documents from Çöker's archives.

Sirapian said he had been planning his publication for some 10 years. Among the causes for this long delay was the need to obtain permission from Turkish publisher Tarih Vakfı to reproduce materials from the two aforementioned key books.

This is a work of outline and summation, not of original research, intended for a broad audience, but it does add several personal anecdotes as new source material. One such example concerns the author himself, who as an almost-10-year-old boy was jolted into realizing that the sto-

the long history of ethno-religious homogenization in Turkey and cites several incidents which occurred decades after them to indicate that this is still an ongoing process. These include the massacre of Alevis in Sivas in 1993 and the assassination of Hrant Dink in Istanbul in January 2007.

In addition to being motivated to commemorate an event which in a few decades will no longer have any living witnesses, Sirapian writes that he wishes this book to be a call to vigilance against the racism and xenophobia that are inculcated in children from a young age in Turkey and exported from Turkey to Europe. He cites Turkish writers and intellectuals like Hasan Cemal, Taner Akçam and Baskın Oran who point to the inability to confront skeletons in Turkey's closet like the Armenian and Kurdish questions as a factor in allowing the continuance of ultranationalist behavior.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the 1955 pogroms, an exhibition of photographs of the violence was protested and egged by ultranationalists yelling slogans like "Traitors to the country!" A similar mentality, Sirapian points out, is seen in the recent conversion of Hagia Sophia to a mosque.

Now, Sirapian fears, the same mentality is being promulgated in Europe among people of Turkish descent with support by the Turkish government. It certainly poses a threat to European Armenians. Sirapian cites the example of the declarations of an ultranationalist Turk in Décines, France, which were disseminated this summer on YouTube, calling for Turkey's leaders to provide Turks in France arms and monthly money to "do what is necessary throughout France" and counter the actions of the Armenians. The Committee for the Defense of the Armenian

Cause (CDCA) has initiated a lawsuit against the latter.

Ultimately, Sirapian concludes, this Turkish ultranationalism in alliance with Islamism is not just dangerous for Armenians, but threatens the foundations of the French republic and European values.

## The Author

Author Sirapian has had an interesting and variegated career. He studied at the Mekhitarist School in Istanbul as a youth and graduated Robert College, an American institution. He studied Byzantine history at Istanbul Edebiyat Universitesi [Literature University] from 1966 to 1970. Sirapian also performed as a guitarist in a band and recorded several records.

Emigrating to Paris in 1970, for the first five years he worked as a translator in an automo-



A group of assailants, probably guides for the mob, celebrating at a restaurant in Beyoglu, Parmakkapi, while the rioters continue their work outside (photo copyright Fahri Çöker)

ries about what happened in 1915 and earlier to the Armenians were not just ancient history, but events that could recur. It made him realize that he had to leave his native country, but it took him 10 more years to become an adult and find the means to do so, and settle in France.

This story is similar to that of many other Armenians of varying ages. I can attest that my own father, already an adult at the time, after witnessing the destruction of the pogroms and pillaging, like the author, decided that Turkey was not a country in which one could form a family and raise a new generation of children safely.

Sirapian, based on his sources, reports that the events of September 6-7 were organized and deliberate. A manufactured incident, a false flag attack on the revered Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's home in Thessaloniki, Greece, served as a spark for protests in non-Muslim neighborhoods of Istanbul which then turned into looting, rioting and violence. There were similar incidents in Izmir, and smaller events in a few other parts of Turkey. Sirapian enumerates facts establishing that the riots were planned beforehand.

Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and his Democratic Party were complicit, and tried to counter the declining popularity of his government by recourse to extreme nationalism. It also allowed Turkey to play a stronger role in the London Tripartite Conference on Cyprus which was taking place at this same time. Internationally, Great Britain benefited from this Turkish nationalism, which weakened the Greek hold on Cyprus, prevented the unification of Cyprus with Greece, and allowed the British to keep military bases in Cyprus.

Sirapian places the pogroms in the context of



The Illustrated London News coverage of the pogrom reproduced by Sirapian

bile factory (Simca). He then opened a photography store in 1975 or 1976 which lasted till the mid-1990s. He took an interest in personal computers early in their development, in the 1980s, and began selling both software and hardware. When the photography business started to decline, he switched his business focus to the latter, and also did accounting work. Eventually he sold his store and began to work from home. He also taught political communication and geopolitics at the École internationale d'audiovisuel (EICAR) in Paris.

He has been involved in French and Armenian politics. He was elected municipal council member of Alfortville, a suburb of Paris, from 1995 to 2001. He was president of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party in France from 1999 to 2001 and vice president of the Conseil de Coordination des organisations Arméniennes à France (CCAF) from November 2001 to November 2002.

He founded and serves as president of the Institut Tchobanian in 2004, which is an independent center for geopolitical research on Turkey, the South Caucasus and the Middle East. It helps Armenia through various projects. He established the publishing house

Sigest too, and edits the periodical Europe and Orient, which appears twice a year. Les pogroms de 6-7 septembre 1955 is a special issue of this book-size series (see <https://edsigest.blogspot.com/>).

## Further Work on the 1955 Events and Turkish Ultrnationalism

In an interview, Sirapian considered his book only a first step to call attention to the 1955 events, and hoped that other younger writers might prepare more detailed works in French.

As far as the dangers of Turkish ultranationalism spreading its influence, Sirapian exclaimed that France is the soft underbelly of Europe where extremist Turks can strike more easily than elsewhere. Armenians only recently have started treating this situation seriously, according to Sirapian.

Most recently, at the end of August, a monument to the composer Gomidas in Paris which commemorates the Armenian Genocide was defaced with the words "It is false." Sirapian said, "Armenians have woken up finally. We have to follow events closely." He pointed out that it is a positive development that Armenian Genocide denier Maxime Gauin for the ninth time lost a lawsuit for defamation against the director of the French-Armenian publication Les Nouvelles d'Arménie and one of his writers, Sam Tilbian.

Sirapian concluded, "Other incidents are going to take place, and we must give an answer to every step they take." At the same time, he emphasized that what is most important is to attempt to keep Armenia and Artsakh safe.



İstiklal Caddesi (Street): Even the second floors of stores were not spared. Here baby carriages are being thrown down





# Arts & Living

## The Artifa[ctuals]

New Online Publication Examines Contemporary Culture and Politics in America

By Christopher Atamian  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK — In early August, the Fresno-based writer and thinker Aris Janigian founded The Artifa[ctuals].com, a new and welcome addition to the sometimes paralyzingly simplistic discussions on culture in contemporary America. Race, class, politics and free speech are some of the topics that have already graced its pages and which promise to challenge, encourage debate and often provoke. Janigian is best-known as the author of five novels, including Riverbig (2009), This Angelic Land (2012) and most recently, Waiting for Sophia at Shutters on the Beach (2019). The latter may be seen as a prelude to his current undertaking, as it wittily deconstructs the world of politically correct academia.



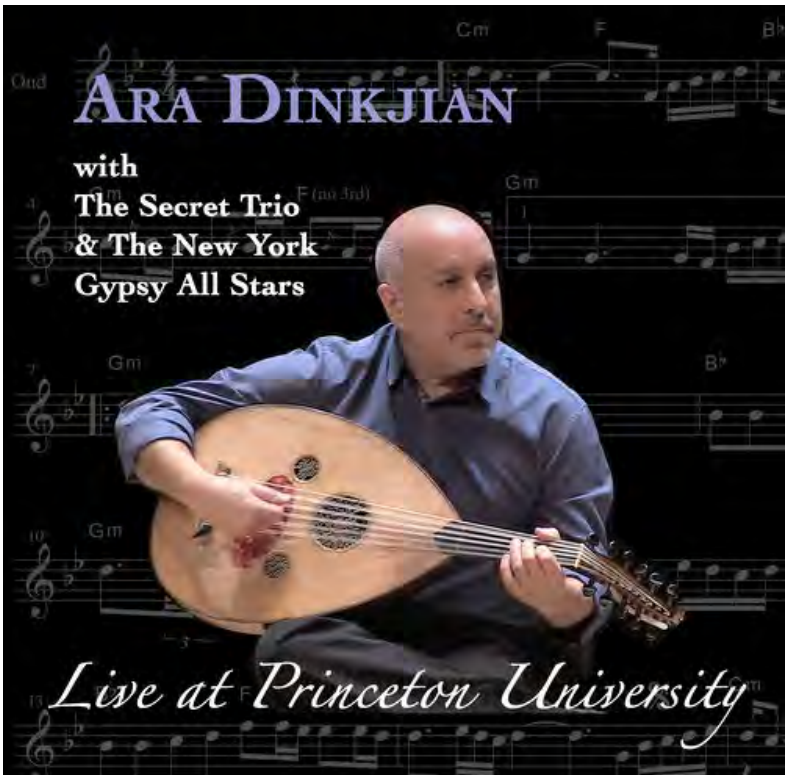
Aris Janigian

Janigian's most recent essay in the Los Angeles Review of Books, *A History of My White Privilege*, looks at the term "white privilege" through the lens of his own Armenian immigrant family history. The piece garnered kudos in many circles and also angered some who see it as a concession to the right. Also to be found currently at The Artifa[ctuals].com: a wonderful drawing titled Policing Free Speech by cartoonist Lucine Kasbarian, some fun, raw poetry by California Beat Poet Laureate Rich Ferguson and a Jenny Zhang recap from eater.com that looks at some of the remarkable reasons behind the cancellation of this year's James Beard Awards. I sat down with Janigian recently to discuss his new publication, the aforementioned essay and his desire to move the conversation in America past the present status quo.

**Atamian: Your mission statement partly reads "The Artifa[ctuals] is a group of writers and artists who believe that illiberality and hive mentality menace our democracy and Western Civilization itself. In the spirit of the Large Hadron Collider our aim is to create a "collision space" (as opposed to a "safe space") for critical thought and artistic expression." Can you comment on this?**

Janigian: I think the mission statement is pretty self-explanatory, but I would encourage people to read our Manifesto in order to get a richer sense of our project.

**Atamian: Artifacts — artifacts — are defined as "denoting or relating to an object made by a human being, typically one of cultural or historical interest," as in items found**  
see JANIGIAN, page 15



## Ara Dinkjian Outdoes Himself With 'Live At Princeton University'

When I was living in Chicago I went to a restaurant one evening where a local Armenian band was playing. It was a typical *kef* lineup: *oud*, guitar, *dumbeg*, and clarinet. As the boys started to tune up, they were asked what number they would begin with. One of the musicians suggested something, and the *oud*-ist played the first few notes of the melody to confirm the tune they were speaking about. They nodded at each other and then, instead of

By Harry Kezelian III  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

going into one of the typical Armenian or Turkish songs one would hear in such a venue...they launched into a heartfelt rendition of Ara Dinkjian's composition, *Picture*.

At what point does an artist become a phenomenon? At what point, a legend? At what point do we stop discussing who influenced that artist, and start to discuss whom he himself has influenced? Although I am certainly not the first to realize or write about this fact, I want to note that in the case of composer and oudist Ara Dinkjian, it is certainly a *fait accompli*: Ara Dinkjian is a legend in Armenian music and has been for many years now.

His compositions, almost all instrumentals when done by him, have become international hits. (We might also ask, at what point does a song become a "classic"? They have then been given lyrics in Turkish and Greek, and the resulting songs have also become international hits. Why in Turkish and Greek? In his early career (1980s) it seemed Ara's music was gaining the most popularity in those countries, though he himself was born and raised in New Jersey, where he still lives. Perhaps the Armenian community was not ready for him in those days. He was ahead of his time. When it came to listening music, concert music, our community still could not think past Gomidas Vartabed and the classical school. The oud was proper in dance music where it had to battle for dinner-dance and wedding reception supremacy with the keyboards and modern pop styles that became popular in the 1970s and 1980s. The primary artist who did play the oud in a concert setting, George Mgrdichian, essentially made his fame by using that instrument to play the works of Komitas Vartabed.

I will not attempt to explain here the somewhat circuitous route by which Ara Dinkjian eventually became acclaimed by the Armenian public, but acclaimed he is, and in addition to the Turkish, Greek and Hebrew lyrics, his songs are now being given Armenian lyrics by the likes of Istanbul-Armenian singer Maral Ayvaz.

What is it that speaks to the hearts of all three peoples? Very simply, Ara grew up in the atmosphere of Armenian-American *kef* music, based as it is on the Anatolian folk music of Western Armenian regions like Sepastia, Kharpert, Dikranagerd and Cilicia, where Armenian, Assyrian, Kurdish and Turkish traditions came together and on the other hand, the urban café music of Istanbul and Izmir, a style that was composed, performed, and propagated by generations of Greek, Armenian, Sephardic Jewish, Bulgarian, Gypsy and Turkish artists, in the mostly Greek-owned tavernas and gazinos (cabarets) of the city.

The same music was transported to these shores and performed at New England Armenian picnics and Manhattan's Greektown nightclubs alike, and engendered generations of Armenian-American performers in what came to be known as the *kef* style. In the atmosphere of giants of the music like his father, vocalist Onnik Dinkjian, and Onnik's often-time bandmates, oud master Johnny Berberian and clarinet virtuoso Hachig Kazarian, Ara grew up and absorbed sounds that

see DINKJIAN, page 13

## Les Marsden

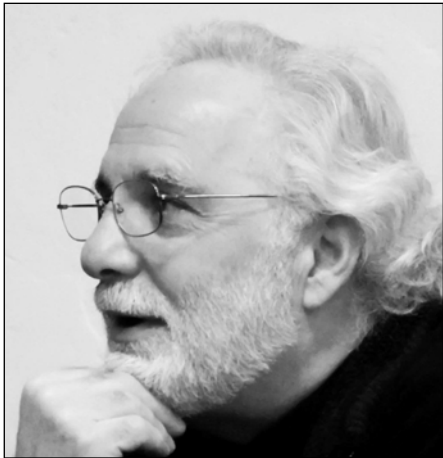
'Veracity and Passion Are Strong In Most Armenians'

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/MARIPOSA, Calif. — Actor, director, playwright and musician Les Marsden was born on February 26, 1957, in Fresno. He began piano lessons at age 4 and was an accredited piano teacher by age 11 and composed his first symphony at 13. As a teen, he played principal trumpet in several ensembles including the California Honor Orchestra and the Fresno Junior Philharmonic (FJP) and under Maestro Guy Taylor's tutelage, he conducted the FJP in performances of his own works. As a teen he acted in local theatre; upon entering college (CSU Fresno) Marsden settled on a theatre career.

As a college student he wrote, produced and starred in his one-man show, "A Night at Harpo's," with the cooperation of Harpo Marx's, widow, Susan, and their children. Well acquainted with the elderly Groucho Marx, he performed as that Marx Brother for years in various theatrical presentations. Groucho's son Arthur Marx wrote the play "Groucho: A Life in Revue" and in it created the dual role of Harpo and Chico Marx specifically for Marsden who in addition to playing both brothers in and out of their well-known film personae also stunned audiences by actually playing lengthy piano and harp solos in each brother's distinctive style.

The show had successful runs in New York and London; Marsden was nominated in the U.K. for London's prestigious Laurence Olivier Award for "Comedy Performance of the Year" — the equivalent of Broadway's Tony Awards. He also received the London Critics



Les Marsden

Award and many others for his work on the London stage.

Marsden was seen nationally and internationally in innumerable dramas, comedies and musicals, with countless appearances on film, TV and in commercials. While starring in a play at the famed Arena Stage in Washington, DC in 1999, Marsden had an onstage accident which resulted in a career-ending permanent injury to his left leg. Disabled, he retired at age 42. With no further need to maintain an East Coast professional base, Marsden, his wife Diane and son Maxfield moved back to their native California to live near their beloved Yosemite National Park.

In 2001 he established the Mariposa Symphony Orchestra, offering his Acting in Mariposa (AIM) program.

see MARSDEN, page 14





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Ara Dinkjian Outdoes Himself With ‘Live at Princeton University’

DINKJIAN, from page 12

he would recreate in his own compositions – compositions that spoke to hearts of Greeks, Turks, Kurds, Israelis, Arabs, and Armenians alike. In that sense, Ara has followed in the footsteps of the famed Armenian composers of Middle Eastern music in the Ottoman era, like Tateos Ekserjian, known as Kemani Tateos Effendi (1858-1913) and who was interestingly born exactly one hundred years before Ara Dinkjian and who also composed essentially listening music. When someone like Richard Hagopian, or even a Turkish or Arab *oud* player, opens a concert of Middle Eastern music, he often begins by playing Tateos Effendi's famous *Rast Peshrev*. The younger Armenian musicians in Chicago chose Ara Dinkjian's *Picture*.

To hear the *oud* as concert instrument is also not new to Ara or even his predecessor George Mgrdichian. To find a famous Armenian composer who wrote his own pieces and performed them on the *oud*, we need go back only as far as Oudi Hrant Kenkulian (1901-1978), who gained great fame in the United States during his many trips here in the 1950s and 1960s. In fact, we can take the thread back even farther to the Armenian *ashughs* like Sayat Nova who both composed and performed – though, to their credit, they also wrote lyrics in a highly complex poetic form and sang them. Ara is not a singer, but his performances are complex in another way, as well as ground-breaking – they represent the fusion of Middle Eastern music with jazz and avant garde musical concepts. Although Souren Baronian and to an extent Chick Ganimian were the first to venture into that territory years ago, Ara (and his bandmates) break entirely new ground. But to see why that is so, let's review his most recent release, “Live at Princeton University.”

The set opens with the now-classic *Picture*. Like all the songs on this album, it is a Dinkjian composition. Ara, playing *oud*, performs the first half of this live 2017 concert with his group, The Secret Trio. The other members of the trio are Tamer Pinarbasi, a Turkish *kanun* player, and Ismail Lumanovski, a Macedonian Roma (Gypsy) clarinetist. The trio are based out of the New York area. All three musicians comport themselves well on this moving piece, which includes solos by Lumanovski.

*Slide Dance* opens with Pinarbasi's innovative *kanun* playing imitating (to this critic's ear) waterfalls or waves in the ocean. Amazingly, the effect is not just an auditory gimmick but harmonizes with the overall piece and is somehow at the same time executed in the 10/8 meter. (The song is a composition by Dinkjian in the style of an Anatolian Armenian line dance). Lumanovski executes a number of glides and gypsy-like techniques, however his technique is used to create more of a jazz “sound” than a gypsy one. Both instrumentalists take solo turns, play off each other; Lumanovski plays a jazz-inflected variation on the melody while Pinarbasi harmonizes (or rather, creates counter-melodies) to amazing effect, and they attempt a unison riff at one point. Dinkjian plays the melody at times and participates in some unison runs, but spends much of the piece seemingly sitting back and letting the other two musicians take the spotlight, but in reality he is playing the equivalent of rhythm guitar – something rather difficult to do on the *oud*, which does not lend itself to playing chords (it is traditionally a melodic instrument only). And then, all of sudden, he will punctuate the piece with a totally untraditional rapid attack on a few strings, between playing rhythmic chords on the *oud*. It is hard to put into words what Ara does here, but it is certainly far outside the box when it comes to *oud* playing.

Ara's playing also recalls the fact that he has been a guitar player for many years as well, often playing rhythm guitar for his father Onnik's or John Berberian's albums in the 1970s. It is also obvious that none of this is written down, so the amount of virtuosity, as well as the amount of time they must spend playing together, is evident.

*The Last Sultan* is a new composition by

Dinkjian. This impressionistic piece seems to paint a picture of the last days of the Ottoman Empire just after WWI. The melancholy tone of the song seems to recall Mehmet VI who was facing the end of his once powerful empire, while he himself was merely a pawn of the Young Turks, until the Damat Ferit Pasha government took over after the war and he became a pawn of the British. The piece, which is reminiscent of the compositions of Tateos Effendi, is played masterfully and delicately by the three musicians together.

*The Invisible Lover*, a well known Dinkjian composition, begins with Ara playing an exquisite, dark, introductory *taksim* in the

main theme of the song and closing out, this number gets an audible huge round of applause from the live audience, captured on the recording.

The second half of the half features Dinkjian together with a group known as the New York Gypsy All Stars. Pablo Vergara (keyboard), Panagiotis Andreou (bass) and Engin Kaan Gunaydin (percussion) play in this band along with Pinarbasi and Lumanovski.

The first song in this part of the album, a new composition entitled *American Gypsy*, is dedicated to Ara's good friend, the late Haig Hagopian. Hagopian was a clarinet player in Armenian-American *kef* music for many years

dedicated to the togetherness and peace between the world's ethnicities and religions. The heartfelt melody gets the message across in something that sounds like it could be a pop ballad, a patriotic song, or a hymn. Dinkjian takes several great, brief *oud* solos in this one that have all the marks of his style but quickly return to a unified “common” expression with the other musicians. The melody seems to cry out for lyrics, but it would take a truly great lyricist to do it justice.

*For Alexis*, written for one of Dinkjian's students, is an instrumental workout in a fast version of the 9/8 meter common in Anatolia and the Balkans. Lumanovski takes a clarinet solo



Ara Dinkjian and The Secret Trio

*Hijaz* mode on the *oud*. The mostly straightforward interpretation of the pieces is however played by the three musicians with incredible unity and some interesting *kanun* effects from Pinarbasi. Lumanovski's clarinet really shines in this piece, especially when he gets to take a solo. The interplay of the musicians here to create a piece that is more than the sum of its parts is incredible.

*Sinanay*, better known as the Greek popular song *Hoppa Nina Nina Nai* (*Siko Khorepse Koukli Mou*), is given its Turkish name here. This folk song, which is native to the Pontic Greek community of Niksar (just north of the once-heavily Armenian Tokat) was made popular in a Greek translation in the 1950s by Stelios Kazantzidis, whose father was Pontic Greek born in the nearby port city of Ordu. The musicians approach this song lightly, first led by Dinkjian on the *oud*, and then by Lumanovski on the clarinet with Dinkjian and Pinarbasi playing harmony, again, not typical for their instruments. After about a minute and a half of a slow, non-traditional, yet pleasant interpretation of the melody, the musicians break into a dance-like recreation of the popular Greek song, complete with imitation of bouzouki by Pinarbasi and jazz-type techniques from Dinkjian. Many of the pieces on this album could be described as Middle Eastern Balkan music that uses jazz style techniques rather than strictly a Middle East/jazz fusion, as the blues-inflected tonalities of American jazz are not usually heard here. But, midway through *Sinanay*, the band completely takes us by surprise, as Dinkjian and Pinarbasi start to create an aural effect of whirling on their instruments and Lumanovski goes into a solo on the clarinet with a mixture of klezmer, New Orleans jazz, Gypsy-influence, which sounds like it came out of one of the more trip-hop albums by the Beatles. Returning to the

and was indeed known for a “Turkish gypsy” influenced style. The heartfelt melody and interpretation creates a nostalgic impression to memorialize days gone by in the Armenian-American *kef* scene where Haig Hagopian was a major figure. The playing on this song is more *kef* inflected than others, and yet also more American-influenced, showing who Haig was. Even when Dinkjian takes an *oud* solo, it is reminiscent of the *oud* style of Charles “Chick” Ganimian, with whom Hagopian played for many years. Throughout this whole album of his own compositions, Dinkjian rarely takes a straight *oud* solo. This one is played with deep feeling and soul, attributes that Hagopian highly valued, and which stand as a testament to Dinkjian's friendship with the late clarinetist. Anyone who knew Haig Hagopian musically and personally would recognize the elements of this song that make it stand out as a tribute to him.

*Pilaf* is another new Dinkjian composition. The American inflection is strong here (with bluegrass or country-western influences), and the overall impression is that of Armenian-American life, exemplified by things like shared meals of pilaf. There is humor of course in that idea as well as in the musical ideas of the song. The “popping” of the the drums, the plucking of the *oud* and *kanun* strings and the way the clarinet is played, themselves give an impression of the bubbling of the boiling water for the preparation of pilaf. Listening to this, I could literally see family members dancing out the back door of their house, hands full of plates of delicious Armenian food and a bowl of steaming hot pilaf, for an outdoor family meal. Dinkjian, Pinarbasi and Lumanovski all get to take nice jazz- or bluegrass-like breaks.

*Common Spirit* is a Dinkjian composition

which is backed by strange, echoing, moody, perhaps rock-influenced background sounds from the rhythm section, ending with a bass solo. While the melody is relatively not complex, it is difficult to perform because of the meter and the mode (Karjighar) in which it is written.

The final cut, *Anna Tol' Ya / Homecoming* is a medley of two great Dinkjian compositions. The first is obviously a play on words for Anatolia, while the second is a popular tune known often by its Greek title *Dinata, Dinata*. The band goes into full *kef* mode for this track. I would be surprised if people weren't dancing in the aisles. Ara takes a nice *oud* solo, but as always gives a lot of room to his bandmates. Pinarbasi's *kanun taksim* is excellent on this track, with some unorthodox melodic progressions and jazz influences. Following that, the band goes into Homecoming, causing the audience to clap along. The contrast between loud and boisterous dance music alternating with a soft, almost chamber music interpretation is again seen with this tune. Lumanovski is given a solo where he shows off his Gypsy-style clarinet chops. The dance beat returns, again the audience claps along, and bursts into applause at the finish.

Ara Dinkjian, who has played these compositions of his countless times, manages to create something new with this album. His interpretations, along with those of his bandmates – especially Pinarbasi and Lumanovski – show an impeccable musicianship, and a driving, passionate, ingenious gift for improvisation. These songs have become such classics that even their composer now approaches them in a different light. This album could have been titled “Dinkjian Plays Dinkjian” – and this time, Dinkjian has outdone himself.

(For more information visit [www.aradinkjian.com](http://www.aradinkjian.com).)





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Les Marsden: 'Veracity and Passion Are Strong in Most Armenians'

MARSDEN, from page 12

**Dear Les, I have read about you in the 4th volume of Contemporary Television and Film Actors anthology at Yerevan Public Library when I was a student. I was impressed by your theater and TV roles and comical face. At that pre-Internet epoch it was unimaginable that one day I could see your videos and make an interview with you, so I am very glad to introduce you to Armenian readers.**

I'm humbled that I'm known – even slightly at all – in Armenia. And I'm honored to be exposed to our people through your interview. I've always had a sense of ethnic pride in my Armenian heritage and was fortunate to be raised in Fresno, with its large Armenian population.

**You have acted in plays of eminent playwrights – Shakespeare, Chekhov, Ibsen, Hellman, Durrenmatt, Neil Simon. Who are your favorite authors and what were your preferred roles?**

That's a great question! Now, as the music director/conductor of a symphony orchestra I'm asked a similar question: who are your favorite composers? And the answer is easy: whose ever music I'm performing or rehearsing at the moment, and the same answer applies to playwrights and roles: you always have to be captivated by whatever role you're playing, even if the character isn't necessarily a likable one. Even the greatest villain doesn't see himself as a villain: he's only doing what he thinks is the best thing.

But I do think Chekhov is among my favorite authors. He had that remarkable ability to juxtapose the often-bitter condition of human existence with comedy simultaneously. That dichotomy has always appealed to me: the dark with the light, the tragic with the ironic. And Chekhov's characters are all so richly drawn. Even the smallest role has great dimension. One of my favorite Chekhov roles is Lopakhin in "The Cherry Orchard." Nouveau riche – with many rough edges, but Chekhov gives him humanity so he doesn't come off as a coarse, insulting antagonist, and that was great to play. I would have loved to have portrayed Trigorin in "The Seagull" and Astrov or the title role in "Uncle Vanya."

I love Shakespeare. He wrote with extraordinary facility across the spectrum of comedy, tragedy, drama, history – utilizing the magnificent poetry of the English language brilliantly. But he also demonstrated profound knowledge of that huge world beyond his Elizabethan England: his Italy of "Two Gentlemen of Verona," "Romeo and Juliet," of "Othello" depict those worlds with veracity though he never visited them to our knowledge. Though he lived more than 400 years ago he captured the human spirit, mind and emotions in a way which speaks to us universally today, across time, across international borders, across socioeconomic boundaries. He lives and breathes within us as though he wrote his plays only yesterday. I had a great time in whatever Shakespearean roles I performed, but had to turn down playing Falstaff in a production of "Merry Wives of Windsor," as I was offered another show at the same time. And I've always regretted that choice.

Another of my great favorites is the American George S. Kaufman. His works are nearly all comedies and his 95-year-old daughter Anne has been a dear friend of mine for 40 years. Among his great comedies are "You Can't Take It With You," "Of Thee I Sing," "Dinner at Eight," "Once in a Lifetime" and of course, the Marx Brothers' great 1920s stage hits "The Cocoanuts" and "Animal Crackers," as well as their 1935 film "A Night At The Opera." I first came to know Anne through the many revivals of the Marx shows in which I starred. The one terrific role I would have LOVED to have done: is that of the caustic Sheridan Whiteside in Kaufman's greatest play: "The Man Who Came to Dinner."

**Can we say that your Marx brothers' performance is the most unique work that will remain in the history of American theater?**

I think so. Though I played all the brothers in various shows, it was that unique role of both Harpo and Chico written specifically for me by Arthur (son of Groucho) Marx and Robert Fisher in "Groucho: A Life in Revue," which

became the standout in my career. Arthur and Bob saw me in Los Angeles in another of their shows, written about Arthur's grandmother and his father and uncles: the musical comedy Minnie's Boys. I starred in that show as Arthur's father Groucho, and was flattered when he said I was the best Groucho they had ever seen! At that point, I was already known to Groucho and Chico's offspring and knew Groucho himself due to my one-man show "A Night At Harpo's." I wrote that show with the trust of Harpo's widow Susan and four children while I was still a college student in Fresno, and performed it extensively from the age of 22 everywhere from Fresno to Las Vegas to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland. Knowing I played the harp and piano in my own

floated ethereally and you couldn't take your eyes off her. And those magical words came from that magical mouth, suspending time, matter, everything. She concluded and the audience erupted in stunned applause. I was holding her hand as the curtain slowly fell. And as soon as it hit the ground, she immediately began to excitedly tell me a story about having lunch with Groucho in Beverly Hills years before! In a split-second, from that extraordinarily super-human, captivating performance during which you could have heard a pin drop in the massive Lyceum Theatre on London's West End – to become the earthy real person Vanessa Redgrave is: well, that's the best example I can think of to define that special "something."



Les Marsden conducting the Mariposa Symphony Orchestra

show, Arthur wanted me to play Chico in "Groucho: A Life in Revue" but also wanted Harpo in it. But – Harpo's widow Susan only gave her consent if I'd write Harpo into that show AND play him as well! That's how that dual role came about. A tremendously enjoyable thing for me – with remarkably quick changes. Some people refused to believe it was the same actor playing both brothers! And it was difficult for them to believe an actor could play both brothers from the ages of 15 to 70 AND play solos in both brothers' styles on harp and piano. But after some 2000 or so performances in theatres across North America and England, enough was enough! I also did play the title role, too.

**They say it is easier to make spectators cry or get angry than make them laugh. How did you manage make the audience laugh?**

The secret is – or at least it was for me the same whether an audience cries or laughs. The audience must become emotionally invested in a character. They must suspend disbelief and really care – you can't play just the surface. What's happening must be real and believable, and character-driven. And the same is true of getting them to laugh. With few exceptions – specifically farce or presentational comedy: it's far easier for an audience to laugh if they believe in the humanity of your character. It's absolutely true: "tragedy is when something terrible happens to you; comedy is when something terrible happens to someone else" – but in either case, it must be believable. And if the audience laughs or cries? Well – it's nice to know they care.

**You worked with Albert Finney, Robert Redford, Vanessa Redgrave, Burt Reynolds, Jeremy Irons, etc. Was there something particular with such celebrities?**

It's indefinable – a spark or magic; a quality which means you cannot take your eyes off them. One of the most electric moments I've ever experienced on stage was with Vanessa Redgrave: I was standing next to her onstage during a fundraising performance in London for the Royal Leukemia Fund honoring the actor Colin Blakely, who had recently died. Just after I finished, Vanessa performed Rosalind's closing speech from Shakespeare's "As You Like It" – the role which had launched her career 25 years earlier, making her an overnight star. She was in a diaphanous costume; she

**Music is another art form that you were in even before entering the acting world. Your biography says that you were already a piano teacher at the age 11.**

There was always a piano in our home and my parents later told me that when I was only 3 or so, I'd go over to the piano and plunk out a tune I had just heard on the TV, even though I could barely reach the keyboard! I first started piano lessons at the age of 4, and by age 11, I received a teaching credential from the California Music Teachers' Association. I then took on a few beginning piano students who were even younger than me. By then I had also played the trumpet for a few years, and had my own trumpet students.

**So after suffering an onstage accident, because of which you forced to retire at age 42, you went back to your starting point - music...**

Yes. My wife and I realized that if we managed our money carefully, we could retire at that time. I had had a very hectic, physically-draining career by then – with about 3,000-4,000 stage performances alone. And people who aren't in the theatre may not realize that acting, performing eight shows a week with only one day off, with perhaps television commercials and even film and TV work juggled into that work-week is a highly demanding thing. And an actor works on holidays: if Christmas falls on a matinee day, well: you perform one or two shows that day, too because many people go to the theatre on Christmas. Or on New Years Eve, or New Years Day or on your own birthday or anniversary. Theatre requires great mental concentration as well as physical work. And though it may sound like a very easy decision to retire as I was physically exhausted and permanently disabled, it really wasn't easy. After all, I had decided at the age of four that I wanted to grow up to be an actor, and I had focused my entire life and education on attaining that goal. It's one of the most difficult fields in which to attain success, and that success isn't based solely on talent, but also upon a great deal of hard work. And most of all: upon luck. And I had been very lucky. I had made it. I was Les Marsden, the Actor.

But now, suddenly while in the middle of a successful career, it all ended. It was a tough choice, but it was the only one. After being based in Manhattan for many years, in 2001 we

sold our home on the East Coast and moved home to California, to the West Coast to be near our families. My father had died in 1980 when I was 23 but my mother, my wife's parents and many other family members were still in Fresno. Diane, our son Max and I settled in the mountains just outside Yosemite National Park, where we were married in the 1980s. Close enough to Fresno, but in an environment we preferred, just like Yosemite Valley, in a deep forest at the 4,000 foot elevation.

**In 2002, you established the Mariposa Symphony Orchestra. Is it common for small American towns to have their own symphonic orchestra?**

No! As a matter of fact, Mariposa is now recognized as the smallest town in all of America with its own symphony orchestra! Orchestral music has always been my passion and even during all those years as an actor, my musical training frequently turned up. Besides my performances as the Marx Brothers, I would surprise audiences by playing other instruments onstage when some roles presented that possibility. I also composed incidental music for plays in which I starred at times, or made instrumental or vocal arrangements which were needed for stage shows in which I was acting – and always enjoyed discussing music with the professional Broadway musicians who played the musicals in which I also starred. Who always accepted me as a peer in the field of music. I feel that education should never end; I'm always – every day – trying to learn more, more about everything that interests me. And so it's been with classical music – from the age of five or so until now – 58 years later – I HAVE to learn everything I can, every day about things I never knew. And my thirst for orchestral symphonic music is just that: compulsive. I have a massive collection of recordings – probably over 8,000 CDs including rare musical works. The most obscure compositions by every known composer, plus as much music as I can find of the works of obscure composers, too. During my many years in the theatre, I'd try to attend symphonic concerts wherever I was performing – New York, London, Los Angeles, Boston, Atlanta, Dallas, all over – when an orchestra's concert didn't conflict with my own performance time. And I'd try to meet an orchestra's conductor who was usually pretty easy because there'd be a little press about me in that city's paper due to my performances. And I got to spend casual time with many conductors and musicians due to mutual friends and the like.

And so it was an easy thing to decide to create an orchestra here, in retirement. After all, I already had the training and experience as a conductor, and could compose and arrange to boot. And though I didn't know many people here, I picked up the phone and called my first musician and he was gungho to give it a try. And I asked if he knew any other local classically-trained musicians, and would get another name. And so it went, and by our first rehearsal I had lined up 17 musicians, far exceeding my original goal of a small salon orchestra. But by the time we were ready for our first performance in December of 2002, word had spread and I had 31 musicians and we were on our way to becoming not a salon or chamber orchestra, but a full-fledged symphony orchestra! By our second performance we had 45 musicians and were already too large for our tiny High School stage so I had a large stage extension built to extend the stage into the audience. And now with 55 to 60 musicians in the MSO, I have a waiting list but can't add any more musicians as we're now too big even for that expanded stage.

**What percentage of Mariposa's inhabitants is part of the orchestra?**

About one-third. The town of Mariposa has only about 1,500 residents and from the beginning, I've had dedicated musicians from about five or six counties who drive great distances to rehearse and perform in the MSO. It's become a real pride of the entire area. We're now known as Yosemite's symphony orchestra too – we perform in Yosemite National Park three times a year, the only symphony orchestra ever allowed to perform there in that park's 130 year history. Unfortunately, the entire orchestra is now on hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic and I've cancelled all performances indefinitely.

*continued on next page*





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## 'Veracity and Passion Are Strong in Most Armenians'

from previous page

**You are native of Fresno. Among the Armenians this city's name associates with that of William Saroyan's. Have you ever met Uncle Bill?**

No, and I so wish I had! My aunt knew him, and apparently he knew about me. He had a modest home not far from my family's home but he died about the time I began performing my one-man show. I was told he wasn't in very good health in his later years, and always trying to be a polite young man, I didn't want to disturb him.

**Your both parents are Armenians. Do you know where their families are from?**

A bit. I tried many times to have my mother, Helen Boornazian, write down the family history, but she'd start to tell me fractured details instead of writing it down, then she'd forget who came from where and give up. One of Boornazian family members created a family tree which goes back many generations. All four of my grandparents came to the US around 1900. My mother's father was a post-master in Pawtucket, RI but decided he wanted to farm and so in the early 1900s he moved the young family across the country to California and eventually bought 160 acres in the tiny town of Fowler, which is just south of Fresno, where my mother was born. By the way, I registered her parents' emigration officially at Ellis Island for her birthday, and received an official document proving it. Their names are now on a wall at Ellis Island, in the shadow of Liberty Island, where the Statue of Liberty stands in New York Harbor. That meant a great deal to my mother. My father's name was Karnig Marderosian, his parents first settled in Detroit, but later moved to Fresno. My father's father

also wanted to farm, but became disillusioned with it quickly and traded his farm for a beautiful (then-new) Craftsman-style house in Fresno. He eventually opened the Liberty Market in downtown Fresno, near the Fresno County Courthouse. My father and uncles worked with my grandfather in his market until the boys all went off to serve in the military during World War II and my grandfather sold the store and retired about that time. My mother's father died a few years before I was born, and her mother died when I was about eight. My grandmother lived in America for about 65 years, but never learned to speak English; it just wasn't important to her! And I only learned a very few words of Armenian, most of which I've forgotten so we really couldn't communicate well. My father's mother died when I was about 5, and his father died when I was about 10. I only wish they had lived a little longer so I could have appreciated them more and learned more about their early lives.

**Who changed your family name Marderosian into Marsden?**

Me! "Marderosian" was always misspelled by critics, and even just by the press in feature articles. It's also difficult for odars to remember or pronounce and I found that if you had an Armenian name, casting directors only considered you for Armenian roles only and there aren't many! And so I changed my name, but only after making sure my mother wouldn't be upset! And it worked. Casting people considered me for any sort of role, and "Marsden" was nearly never misspelled in the newspapers.

**What was typical Armenian in your family and in your personality?**

When I think of "typically Armenian" things, my mind immediately goes to family gatherings when I was young. And the greatest thing about being Armenian? The food! Spending holidays with all the Armenian family gathered – that's what I think of as "typically Armenian" and it's somewhat sad now because with only one exception, the older generations are all gone. My

father's sister Victoria is still with us, in her late 90s, but that's all. My mother was next-to-youngest of eight children, and she was 38 and my father 40 when I was born. By the time I was born, much of the family was already elderly or gone. My generation is mostly scattered. And so that sense of extended family, of multiple generations coming together particularly at holidays and eating wonderful foods that always contained some terrific Armenian dishes – and my mother was a very good cook – that's what I most think of as being Armenian. And that sense of family that's probably one of the most "Armenian" aspects of my own personality. Being raised on so many great Armenian foods, well, I love to cook those things myself. My son, who's 22 and only half-Hye, is proud of his Armenian heritage and loves my Armenian cooking.

And my parents were very proud of this: you'll remember I wrote my one-man show on Harpo Marx while still in college in Fresno? Well, I persuaded Harpo's widow Susan to fly to Fresno from her home in Palm Springs to attend my opening night; now THAT'S the audacity of youth! Writing this show and then performing as her husband with her sitting in the front row is something only a 20-year-old would do! But – Susan stayed with us at our modest family home and my parents cooked up a delicious Armenian feast for her. This lovely worldly woman who had been a Ziegfeld star in the 1920s, and a movie starlet in her own right in the 1930s, in movies as the daughter of W.C. Fields and the love interest of John Wayne, this well-traveled woman: loved that special Armenian meal and evening!

**And is there something typical in your art?**

Perhaps strangely enough, I've only played an Armenian once in a play called "Nine Armenians" by Leslie Ayzavazian in New York decades ago. But the aspects of my personal art that I think are most typical of being Armenian are honesty. Veracity. And passion. Those are qualities I think are redolent in most Armenians: directness, total pride in being hon-

est and truthful – and being passionate about what they do. And I feel that's because they're confident they're doing what they do for the best and highest of reasons.

**Are you acquainted with Armenian music and have you ever performed it?**

I'm familiar with quite a bit of Armenian folk music, but only as a listener. I do have a great love of Armenian concert composers, chief among them being the great Aram Khachaturian, of course. I've loved his music, his modal writing, his very soul in every note he ever wrote since hearing the Sabre Dance from the "Gayaneh" ballet as a very small child and have come to know (and collect) everything I've ever been able to find of his music, of course. I identify with his music, with his sound though my own compositional style rarely hints at that sense of "Armenianism" or ethnic sound. Mansurian, Hovhaness, Arutiunian, too. I don't think there's an Armenian composer whose music hasn't resonated with me. It's in my soul.

Our MSO audiences prefer to hear music they already know, though I usually give them a very healthy dose of great unfamiliar music which they should know, too. I've wanted to perform some of the more-familiar Khachaturian with the MSO, but – in the States, his music is enormously expensive to rent. That's the case with most composers from the (former) Soviet Union, whose music isn't yet in the public domain.

**It will be great to welcome you in Armenia – if not with all your orchestra, but with your family...**

And if, some day this pandemic ever makes it safe to travel, I'd certainly love to come for a visit. It would be wonderful to walk in the land of my ancestors, to feel that Armenian earth, to breathe the Armenian air it's already a part of me. And it's an honor and pleasure to have met you, Artsvi and to be able to call you my friend. Thank you for all you've done for Armenia and will continue to do to help bring her people together...

## New Online Publication Examines Contemporary Culture and Politics in America

JANJIGIAN, from page 12

**perhaps in a time capsule by our descendants far down the road in time or conversely cultural artifacts that may have belonged to our ancestors, such as the famous 5,500 year-old shoe found in an Armenian cave a few years back. The term has an anthropological and everyday meaning to it, am I right?**

Janigian: "Artifa[ctuals]. The first part of that word is supposed to be an ironic twist on the word "Antifa." Aside from that, an artifact has multiple meanings, it can move in several directions at once. In our Manifesto, it alludes to the "trace" left behind after the collision of particles in the Large Hadron Collider. That artifact of the collision, physicists hope, will provide a window onto the fundamental nature of the physical universe; we hope to get a glimpse into the fundamental nature of the human universe.

**Atamian: Aris, aren't there other publications that have similar concern to yours? Did you see a vacuum to be filled?**

Janigian: There is nothing that I know of like The Artifa[ctuals] today. Every literary/arts magazine in America must pass some ideologically-correct litmus test to survive the twitter terrorists. I've discovered that there is more ideological conformity among poets, novelists and visual artists than there is even among, say, engineers, to show how monotone and herd-like the artistic community has become. Such a shame. Of course, many of them are part of the same academic club or begging to get into it, where one risks getting fired or not hired for suggesting, for example, that a white novelist has every right to create a black protagonist for a story. There are excellent places like Quillette or Areo, and increasingly The Atlantic, where you can find essays that push back against identity politics and political correctness, but they are mostly written in an academic tone and you won't find any poets in their pages. We write as artists, and so our tone is more ironic, playful, willing to confront. To give you a sense, we have a regular post that we call "Auto-Da-Fe of the Day," where we feature the most obscene instance of self-humiliation and public penance in the name of so-called "Social Justice" that we can find in the news that day.

**Atamian: For the record, does The Artifa[ctuals] lean left, right or center?**

Janigian: The only things the founders have in common is our commitment to building a venue where artists can do their thing without fear. The five founding members are hardly in unanimity politically. The Trump-Biden divide does not divide us, because we all believe that the longer term threat to our country is the willingness of many intellectuals and artists to side with identity politics activists in limiting freedom of expression and thought. We all live in Fresno and one of us, Mark Arax, would be familiar to readers of this newspaper.

**Atamian: Who is on your roster of contributors and do you welcome outside contributions? Who would you like to see contributing and whom would you like to reach out to in this sense?**

Janigian: We welcome everyone to our community, and we believe that many people share our values and our cause, though they are afraid to say so in public. I've had a handful of writers already tell me that they would love to write for us except they believe they'd jeopardize their jobs. One of our regular contributors is using a pseudonym. With that said, if you have something provocative to say in an artistically compelling way, we are here to take a look.

**Atamian: One of the sections on your site is called "Hostis Publicus," which of course is Latin for "public enemy." In it you list a surprising number of prominent professors and executives of all stripes who have been cancelled or fired for making supposedly racist or sexist comments and the like. Every right-thinking person agrees that rape, harassment and racism are terrible things. How did we get from the very fine intentions of BLM and people who justifiably want to see a diverse workforce to what looks like an outright witch hunt at times?**

Janigian: These things don't happen overnight. The foundation was laid in academia, but there are many factors that accelerated this catastrophically anti-American state of affairs. Some naïve observers believe that life will magically go back to normal when, for instance, Trump gets booted out of office, but I don't

think so. The movement that we are watching unfold today has little to do with liberal values just because it ostensibly sides with the oppressed.

Here is one factor that might help answer your question: censoriousness and cruelty is what happens when you cede power to children. Up until the present, children were in the background, nearly voiceless. In the public realm debate and exchange, within the bounds of certain rules, occurred among adults. Today children – both literally and figuratively – the impulsive, impatient, punitive, insecure and strangely imperious, those needing affirmation day and night, in a word, the neurotic-are increasingly running the show; what I like to call, Lord of the Fleas. When you are neurotic, feelings take on the gravity of truth, even received wisdom. There are predatory economic reasons for this novel reality, as well: mere children are now "taste makers" and "influencers," on Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and all the rest. They make other people, and sometimes themselves, lots of money.

**Atamian: In your essay A History of My White Privilege, reprinted on The Artifa[ctuals].com from the liberal Los Angeles Review of Books, you take issue with the blanket term "white privilege." This can be misconstrued I think, as not empathizing with the cause of other groups who, like Armenians, have been discriminated against and continue to face difficult times. Would you like to address this?**

Janigian: How empathy has become a political concept is an interesting discussion, but let's take it in the simplest terms for the time being: in that essay, I'm asking people to empathize with me, or rather my history. To not assume things about me just because I am white, if there is such a thing as "white" at all. Dig deep enough into anyone's personal history, especially in America, a country of immigrants, and you will find some agonizing family story right below the surface.

I am trained as a social scientist, and I can tell you for certain that "white privilege," is not a scientific concept; it is completely unavailable to empirical testing. Rather, "white privilege"

evokes a reality, a reality that is an assemblage of religion, history, politics, geography, and economics. In this way it is less a concept than a story, or a scene that has been produced and that we've been compelled, even educated to see: a scene where the white person is located somewhere special, doing something special, owning something more, and the POC is located elsewhere, barred from doing things, owning less, deserving more. All I'm doing in that essay is complicating the scene. Ideology exploits the scene, art complicates it. The fact that the essay was mainly condemned by fellow "artists" goes a long way in telling how infantile and anti-art the art world has become, another reason for founding The Artifa[ctuals].

**Atamian: Voltaire once wrote – and here I may be slightly paraphrasing a famous quote: "I may disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." Shouldn't that be the spirit that reigns in America – or any democracy? I think that by challenging people on contemporary commonplaces you are doing American society a good turn. So Aris, thank you for your service.**

Janigian: Thank you, and I might add one other thing. Armenians are in a special position to see life from multiple points of view. That is the aim of The Artifa[ctuals] and what art's ultimate aim should be. Armenians are an in-between people, neither white nor colored, neither Catholic nor Protestant, neither European nor Middle Eastern; we hold on to our culture and yet are assimilated wherever we land; we have a deep cultural memory yet possess an intense drive to transcend the past. As we've weaved our way forward we've added our own extraordinary patterns onto the fabric of history. This is a long way of saying: it's no accident that The Artifa[ctuals] has two Armenian founding members and that it's located in William Saroyan's home town of Fresno, in between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Visit [www.theartifactuals.com](http://www.theartifactuals.com) to read Janigian's essay as well as those by other leading writers.





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian

## Ultracreamy Hummus with Baharat-Spiced Beef Topping

"This hummus is velvety-smooth and creamy, with a satisfyingly rich, balanced flavor," says senior editor Andrew Janjigian. "To achieve a perfectly smooth texture, we simmered canned chickpeas with water and baking soda for 20 minutes, and then quickly removed their grainy skins by gently swishing them under a few changes of water. Baharat is a warm, savory Middle Eastern spice blend. Our favorite tahini, Ziyad Tahini Sesame Paste, is made with gently roasted sesame seeds, which give it a light color and a mild flavor. If Ziyad is unavailable, please look for a similarly light tahini such as Roland Tahini Pure Sesame Paste or Kevala Organic Sesame Tahini. This hummus will thicken slightly over time; add warm water, 1 tablespoon at a time, as needed to restore its creamy consistency. Serve with crudité and pita bread or crackers."

### INGREDIENTS:

2 (15-ounce) cans chickpeas, rinsed  
1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
4 garlic cloves, peeled  
1/3 cup lemon juice (2 lemons), plus extra for seasoning  
1 teaspoon table salt  
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin  
1/2 cup tahini, stirred well  
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling

### BAHARAT-SPICED BEEF TOPPING INGREDIENTS:

2 teaspoons water  
1/2 teaspoon table salt  
1/4 teaspoon baking soda  
8 ounces 85-percent lean ground beef  
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil  
1/4 cup finely chopped onion  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
1 teaspoon hot smoked paprika  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
1/4 teaspoon pepper  
1/4 teaspoon ground coriander  
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves  
1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1/3 cup pine nuts, toasted, divided  
2 teaspoons lemon juice  
1 teaspoon chopped fresh parsley

### PREPARATION FOR HUMMUS:

Combine chickpeas, baking soda, and 6 cups water in medium saucepan and bring to boil over high heat. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, until chickpea skins begin to float to surface and chickpeas are creamy and very soft, 20 to 25 minutes.

While chickpeas cook, mince garlic using garlic press or rasp-style grater. Measure out 1 tablespoon garlic and set aside; discard remaining garlic. Whisk lemon juice, salt, and reserved garlic together in small bowl and let sit for 10 minutes. Strain garlic-lemon mixture through fine-mesh strainer set over bowl, pressing on solids to extract as much liquid as possible; discard solids.

Drain chickpeas in colander and return to saucepan. Fill saucepan with cold water and gently swish chickpeas with your fingers to release skins. Pour off most of water into colander to collect skins, leaving chickpeas behind in saucepan. Repeat filling, swishing, and draining 3 or 4 times until most skins have been removed (this should yield about 3/4 cup skins); discard skins. Transfer chickpeas to colander to drain.

Process chickpeas, garlic-lemon mixture, 1/4 cup water, and cumin in food processor until smooth, about 1 minute, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. Add tahini and oil and process until hummus is smooth, creamy, and light, about 1 minute, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. (Hummus should have pourable consistency similar to yogurt. If too thick, loosen with water, adding 1 teaspoon at a time.) Season with salt and extra lemon juice to taste. (Hummus can be refrigerated for up to 5 days. Let sit, covered, at room temperature for 30 minutes before serving.) Transfer to wide, shallow serving bowl. Using back of spoon, make a 1-inch-deep well in center of hummus, leaving 1-inch border.

### PREPARATION FOR THE TOPPING:

Combine water, salt, and baking soda in large bowl. Add beef and toss to combine ingredients. Let sit for 5 minutes.

Heat oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until onion is softened, 3 to 4 minutes. Add paprika, cumin, pepper, coriander, cloves, and cinnamon and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add beef and cook, breaking up meat with wooden spoon, until beef is no longer pink, about 5 minutes. Add 1/4 cup pine nuts and lemon juice and toss to combine. Spoon topping into well in hummus. Sprinkle with parsley and remaining pine nuts, and serve.

Serves 12 to 14.

Total Time: 45 minutes.

For these recipes, go to:

<https://www.cooksillustrated.com/articles/1958-hummus-elevated>

[https://www.cooksillustrated.com/recipes/12230-ultracreamy-hummus-with-baharat-spiced-beef-topping?incode=MCSCD00L0&ref=new\\_search\\_experience\\_20](https://www.cooksillustrated.com/recipes/12230-ultracreamy-hummus-with-baharat-spiced-beef-topping?incode=MCSCD00L0&ref=new_search_experience_20)



## 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 diligently to ensure a memorable experience while adhering to COVID-19 guidelines. Register to play and become a sponsor at <https://www.armenianopen.com/register>. To learn more visit our Facebook page : <https://facebook.com/events/s/armenian-open-2020/326043275095372/?ti=icl> or <https://www.armenianopen.com/>.

### MASSACHUSETTS

**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 curbside 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@sthogop.com](mailto:info@sthogop.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

**SEPTEMBER 11 — Friday, September 11 at 7:30 pm an exceptional, as we must bring to your attention the "Berlin Liturgy" of Komitas**. For some it may come as a surprise, but I must say that many people do not know that the great Komitas wrote many Badarak. Yes, those liturgies were written on different occasions, for example, on the occasion of the death of Catholicos of All Armenians Khrimlian Hayrik, and other. On upcoming Friday we have a premier presentation to the Armenians of the world, the Komitas Berlin Liturgy, which he wrote in the 1899 year as a diploma thesis of the Berlin Conservatory. The piece is written in German; the material presented in Friday's evening contains hymns that should be performed during various church's holidays. At my request the Artistic Director and Conductor of the Yerevan State Chamber Choir Harutyun Topikyan, will tell you about it beginning of program. Livestream on the facebook page of the Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church of Providence.





COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

# Living with an Ottomanist Erdogan

By Edmond Y. Azadian

In a recent outburst in Ankara, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said: "They're either going to understand the language of politics and diplomacy, or [learn] in the field with painful experiences."

He continued, "Turkey possesses sufficient political, economic and military power to tear up the immoral maps and documents imposed" on it.

This was a threat to fellow NATO member Greece, whose international territorial waters are being overrun by Turkey.

Indeed, Turkey has sent gas exploration ships within the continental shelf of Greece, escorted by its warships. Efforts to mediate the escalating crisis have failed because Greece is refusing to sit at the negotiation table before Turkey ceases its illegal drilling operations in the former's territorial waters.

Turkey has also claimed the Cypriot exclusive economic zone, citing the "legal rights" of the illegally-occupied northern Cyprus, which Turkey calls the Republic of Northern Cyprus and whose sovereignty it alone recognizes.

NATO and its European members are divided over this stand-off, creating a perfect confusing scenario for Mr. Erdogan to exploit.

President Emmanuel Macron of France is pushing for sanctions against Turkey because he believes Turkey will not heed a command but only respond to actions. Earlier, he had described NATO as "brain dead," which is being proven now with the current dithering by the pact's leadership.

Some quarters argue that NATO was founded to defend its member states from foreign threats and does not have the proper mechanism in place to mediate internal disputes. Although a European Council meeting is planned to take place in Berlin on September 24-25, with this dispute serving as its main agenda, a definitive outcome may be in doubt, given the division among the member states.

The United States has assumed a hands-off position, having delegated the mediation to Germany. France is almost alone in its steadfast support for Greece. Italy and Spain have been leaning towards Turkey while Germany is keeping a neutral position to enhance its role as mediator.

International law is definitely on the side of Greece, counterbalanced by Turkey's aggressive bullying, leading mediators to seek a position between law and intransigence. In the adjudication, Greece is the underdog.

The politicians in Armenia who are cheerleaders for joining the NATO structure must draw their own conclusions from Greece's predicament.

Judy Dempsey of Carnegie Europe states: "What we are witnessing is a regional example of what happens in a multipolar world in the absence of firm U.S. leadership. Nor is this merely a passing moment linked to the caprice of U.S. President Donald Trump: former U.S. president Barack Obama's refusal to abide by his own red lines in Syria in August 2013 was arguably the defining moment."

President Erdogan is taking advantage of the stalemate by imposing a fait accompli on the group, which will be impossible to undo. One of those initiatives is an agreement signed with Hafiz El-Sarraj, the head of the National Accord government in Libya, while the international community is trying to achieve a peace agreement between that faction (which has international recognition) and that of General Haftar. That agreement has angered Egypt, which was ready to resort to military action.

To its credit, the Trump administration has also refused to recognize the agreement, which gives unilateral rights to Turkey and to the Libyan side.

As Libya was part of the Ottoman Empire, there are some groups there who claim Turkish heritage; Turkey has been offering citizenship to those Libyans. Mr. Sarraj is among them and he is grateful to his patron, who helped him militarily to consolidate his rule.

Turkey has been transplanting its communities in different countries, like it did recently in Lebanon. Those communities are time bombs and will be deployed against any country that encounters a problem with Turkey. We have to remember that Turkey once threatened to use its huge communities in Germany and Holland against those countries.

Some in Armenia are suggesting that since Armenians are scattered in countries all over the world, they can emulate this action. However, that policy can be implemented and activated to mobilize and politicize satellite communities only when the

home base is strong.

To intimidate Greece and Cyprus, Turkey has been holding war games in the Eastern Mediterranean with the joint forces of Turkey and Northern Cyprus. Simultaneously, Turkey is organizing military drills in Nakhichevan, which for all practical purposes has become a Turkish military base. Ankara just completed war games in August with the joint forces of Turkey and Azerbaijan in the latter country.

To counter Turkey's move, Armenian and Russian forces are currently engaged in military drills.

As Erdogan's administration is using a heavy-handed policy in Azerbaijan, the ruling Aliyev clan is confused whether it is losing its sovereignty and has become handicapped in its balancing act between Ankara and Moscow.

Even in Karabakh negotiations, Baku has lost top billing to Turkey. Armenia has also recognized that fact and enunciated its position that our adversary in the Karabakh conflict has become Turkey, rather than Azerbaijan.

That shift in the Caucasus has created a new configuration of powers. The Armenian armed forces had inflicted a devastating blow to Azerbaijan during the last border war in Tavush. Turkey's new role, however, rules out that kind of victory again. Should another round of fighting erupt. Armenia would be no match for Turkey.

That is why Armenia is sobering up and in that process, it has reevaluated its military partnership with Russia.

Thus, speaking on September 4 in Moscow at a joint session of defense ministers of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Collective Treaty Organization, Armenia's Defense Minister David Tonoyan made some significant political statements.

First, by a direct allusion to Turkey, he said, "Instabilities emerge when a country tries to impose its regional geopolitical



ambitions by using a full range of destructive approach fueled by an expansionist ideology."

To counter Turkey's dangerous moves in the region, Tonoyan added, "The Russian presence in the region, as well as the deepening of military-political cooperation between Armenia and Russia are the most important deterrents contributing to the preservation of regional stability and security."

It was politically expedient in that forum for Armenia's minister of defense to say that. However, back home, this policy does not enjoy much support in the pro-government press, which has become vociferously anti-Russian, and many analysts gleefully foretell the collapse of the Russian Federation.

Hopefully, Mr. Tonoyan will return home with a more realistic message for that segment of the press to ponder.

Turkey is on Armenia's border, threatening its very existence through its Ottomanist designs, which entail the occupation of neighboring territories.

Prof. Alan Mikhail of Yale University, describing Erdogan's ambitions, states that the Turkish president has been trying to emulate Sultan Selim, who after conquering the Mamluks of Egypt, doubled the territories of the Ottoman Empire, also taking over Mecca and Medina to assume the title of Caliph in 1520.

This professor also warns: "We should be wary of Erdogan's embrace of Selim's exclusionary vision of Turkish political power. It represents a historical example of a strongman politics that led to regional wars, he attempted annihilation of religious minorities and the monopolization of global economic resources."

The Ottoman Empire was built on the blood of conquered nations. Erdogan cannot rebuild it without resorting to bloodbaths. Will the world community be alarmed or stand by as neutral observers?

# Mirror Spectator

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## COMMENTARY

# Remembering Garo

By Doug Swift

“You want the greatest immigrant story? For my money, it’s the little Armenian guy in my locker room. If you love America, you gotta love Garo Yepremian.”

— Don Shula, Head Coach, Miami Dolphins

He looked good. His bald bean glowed, his little hands were folded neatly over his chest, a snappy tie was attached to his neck. Making snappy ties was among the many Yepremian family businesses, and leave it to Garo to give the tie business one last plug. Garo was at peace with the angels, but right away I could see something was missing. Why wasn’t he wearing his Super Bowl VII and VIII rings? Could he have sold them? Garo was always looking for ways to make a buck.

Garo was my best pal among the Dolphin family. We met at the first Dolphin training camp under the new head coach, Don Shula. As a rookie prospect, I’d already been in camp for two weeks of practices when the Players’ Association strike against the NFL collapsed and the veterans reported. Garo came in with the veterans. I knew nothing of Garo Yepremian and it seemed nobody else did either. We thought maybe Garo was a neighbor of one of the coaching staff and had been invited to join in the first day activities for a lark. When the veterans reported, the rookies, as was expected, were all moved to the bottom tier of the depth chart while the coaches started working with the veterans. Garo, as a place kicker, had little to do so he too hung around on the periphery of the practice sessions. That hanging around gave us a chance to become acquainted.

Garo was entertaining. He spoke a hybrid language of accented English, Armenian, Greek and French. He did a credible imitation of Ray Charles. After his brief stint with the Detroit Lions in ’66 and ’67, Garo enlisted in the National Guard to improve his chances for citizenship. During his training with the Guard, Garo picked up an interesting speech mannerism from his drill instructor. Before bellowing any orders to his recruits, the D.I. would announce, “I want to thank you!” then order fifty pushups; or, “I want to thank you - what’s the population of Michigan? Wrong! Give me fifty more pushups!” Subsequently, Garo made use of the expression before and after many of his comments. For example, he might say- “I want to thank you! - Miami is a very hot place to hold a training camp;” or when a linebacker from Ole Miss named Jimmy ‘Cadillac’ Keyes asked in a southern drawl, “Say, Gayro, you’re Armenian, right?” Garo answered, “No, I’m from Transylvania - I want to thank you!”

There are a lot of stories about Garo. An early one tells of his debut with the Detroit Lions. Harry Gilmer, the coach of the Lions who chanced to hire Garo as the place-kicker, first had to steer Garo on to the field for the opening kick-off. “We lost the coin-toss!” Gilmer exclaimed, “Yepremian, get out



“Just kick the ball!” Farfetched? Maybe not.

I had some sympathy for Garo. When it was announced that Garo was becoming a Lion, Alex Karras reluctantly allowed that it was okay for Garo to be on the team as long as he didn’t have to shower next to him. So much for a warm welcome from his new teammates. Garo had been signed on a Thursday afternoon just before the Lions third game of the season and after kicking that ball around without pads for a couple of days at practice, he was issued his first football uniform ever just before the game on Sunday. Garo must have been struggling just to get into his uniform with no teammates willing to help him. I can remember my introduction to organized football when I was ten and trying to figure out the equipment: shoulder pads, hip pads, thigh and knee pads that had to be shoved into floppy pants that made my arms and legs seem disconnected from my head. However, once suited-up, all I had to do was take the field in front of an idle crowd of parents and neighborhood well-wishers. Garo, took the field accompanied by his skeptical teammates in front of a lusty, big league crowd of 60,000. As he said, “I was a stranger in a strange land - I want to thank you!”

Wanting a clear view of the ball and being just a kicker, Garo decided there was no need for him to wear a facemask. That was a big mistake. At 5’7” and 165 lbs., Garo had no idea that once he walked onto the field he was fair game for anyone who wanted to take a shot at him. Ray Nitschke, the notorious linebacker for the Green Bay Packers, was the first to oblige. Nitschke nearly took Garo’s head off, and he was just one of many players who felt foreigners had no place on a professional football field and went out of their way to let Garo know it. After watching Garo on TV, even President Lyndon Johnson chimed in. He told the press, “I don’t like the fact that a little foreigner who’d never made a block or a tackle in his life could decide the outcome of a game hard fought by American boys in the trenches.”

Realizing he’d become a marked man, Garo made some adjustments. After the Nitschke hit, he had a single-bar mounted onto his helmet, and Harry Gilmer, not wanting to lose his new kicker, told him that after every kick he should run as fast as he could to the sidelines. Unfortunately, this strategy on several occasions put Garo on the wrong side of the field in the midst of a gleefully jeering opponent’s bench. Despite being a constant target, during that year Garo became one of the League’s most reliable kickers and set two NFL records. The first was in the Lions last game of the season when he hit six consecutive field goals against the Minnesota Vikings, but that wasn’t the record Garo was most proud of. The one he really liked was that he was the last player in the NFL ever to play a game without a facemask.

When Garo died in the spring of 2015, I was the only Dolphin at his funeral. It was my honor to be there, and a greater honor to have been his friend of 40 years and a part of his extended family. Still, from a statistical point of view, Garo deserved a bigger, more portentous send-off. He was after all, one of the greatest Dolphins ever. Not only was he the leading scorer for the Dolphins in 1971, but that year he also was the leading scorer for the entire NFL. One of those scores occurred on a cold, muddy Christmas day in Kansas City when Garo hit a 37-yard field goal in double overtime to end what still counts as the longest game in the history of the NFL. Plus, it was that kick that sent the Dolphins to the AFC Championship game, and subsequently to its first Super Bowl. Then in ’72, Garo once again the leading scorer for the Dolphins and there is no question that without his right foot, ‘The Perfect Season’ never would have happened.

Since Garo and I definitely didn’t reach the appearance-

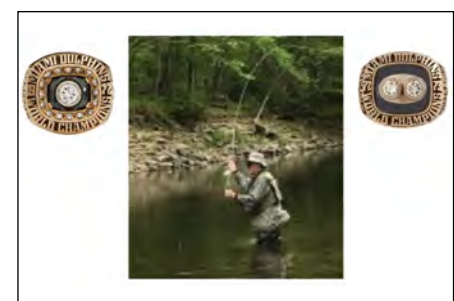
threshold of what a professional football player should be, many of our teammates good-naturedly had cast us as a pair of oddballs. I represented a longhaired hippy from a Division III college somewhere up north and Garo was the diminutive foreigner who didn’t know much about football. Unlike traditional American place kickers such as Pat Summerall, Lou ‘The Toe’ Groza, George Blanda, Don Chandler, Paul Hornung, even Tom Dempsey with a bad foot was occasionally stuck in the defensive line, Garo had never played a down of football before he signed with the Lions. He’d never served in the trenches. He’d never been part of the fight. In fact, the team never had to wash his uniform. Why bother, there was never a speck of dirt on it.

As I pondered Garo at rest, I couldn’t help think if that were me posed in the casket, I also wouldn’t be looking up at any



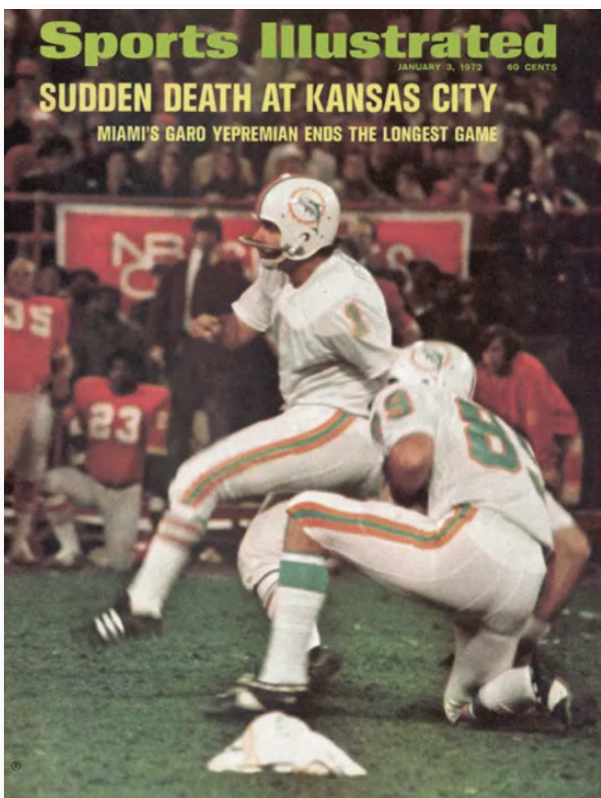
Garo Yepremian in later years with President Barack Obama

of my old teammates, but for the viewing I would hope to have my rings on. So where were Garo’s? When I asked Maritza, his wife, what happened to them, I learned that the resourceful Yepremian had done a brilliant thing. He had repurposed both rings into a necklace for Maritza that she could wear as an amulet during her battle with breast cancer, a fight that she eventually won. We cherish the rings; they have mojo. To earn them we had done what we were supposed to do, and we’d done it as well as anybody who has ever played the game. We might have been a pair of oddballs, but we were Dolphins, World Champion Dolphins.



From 1970-75, Doug Swift was the starting strong side linebacker for the Miami Dolphins. During that time, the Dolphins

went to three Super Bowls, won two rings, and in ’72 produced the only undefeated season in the history of the NFL, a record that remains intact until this day. This article is excerpted from a book that Doug is writing about those teams and the growth of the NFL.

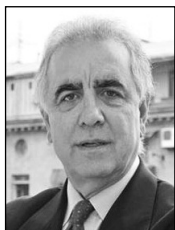


there!!” Whereupon, Garo went onto the field and proceeded to scan in the midfield turf for a ‘lost coin’. When the referee asked Garo, “Why the hold-up?” Garo replied, “lost coin?” The referee sighed, “No-no...no lost coin,” and did a pantomime of a kick and a football lofting in an arc toward the other team,





## COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## President of European Court Receives Honorary Doctorate from Istanbul University

Robert Spano, president of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), visited Turkey last week at the invitation of the Turkish Justice Minister. Spano also met with President Erdogan and give a lecture at the Turkish Justice Academy.

While the President of ECHR has the right to visit any country he wishes, it is highly inappropriate that he accepts an Honorary Doctorate in law from Istanbul University. Several prominent Turkish human rights activists wrote lengthy columns criticizing Spano for his visit and his acceptance of the Honorary Doctorate.

Former Turkish diplomat Aydin Selcen stated that Spano “is not fit to preside [over] the ECHR.” Cenkiz Aktar, a political scientist and academic, called Spano’s visit “scandalous” and urged him to resign. Exiled Turkish journalist Can Dundar wrote that Spano “destroyed the 30-year reputation of the ECHR in three days.” Ahval News quoted several other critical comments from prominent Turks regarding the unfortunate Spano’s visit to Turkey.

Mehmet Altan, one of those critics, is among the 192 professors of Istanbul University who was fired at the instigation of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Altan, jailed for his non-existent membership in the banned Gulen religious group, filed a lawsuit against Istanbul University to reverse his firing. Erdogan also dismissed over 150,000 civil servants from state jobs and investigated close to 600,000 Turkish citizens, arresting 100,000 of them under the false pretext of belonging to the Islamist Gulen movement which was

accused of orchestrating the coup attempt against Erdogan in 2016.

The Turkish Ahval News website posted on August 31, 2020, an article titled, “ECHR chief may receive controversial honorary doctorate from Istanbul University.”

Ahval reported that Altan, in an open letter addressed to Spano and published on the website of Turkish journalism platform P24, urged him not to accept the Turkish invitation. “I do not know how much pride there is to be an honorary member of a university that condemns hundreds of lecturers to unemployment and poverty by unjustly expelling them from school,” Altan wrote.

Altan told Spano: “The University from which you will receive a doctorate is included as the ‘defendant institution’ in the lawsuit of academics, like me, who were dismissed by decree.... These cases are still ongoing and it is likely that they will come before the ECHR, which you preside over.”

Altan continued: “On March 2018, the second section of ECHR, presided over by you, set a precedent in universal law and ruled that my right to personal liberty and security and my freedom of expression had been violated. Turkey was convicted.... Ergin Ergul, who was appointed on behalf of Turkey to that case and was the only judge dissenting, put forward such arguments that you wrote ‘a dissenting vote’ against a dissenting vote, for the first time in the history of ECHR, if I am not mistaken. And the other members followed you.”

Ahval reported that there were over 60,000 individual complaints at the ECHR for violations of rights and freedoms in Turkey.

Yavuz Aydin, who was also dismissed from his profession along with 4,500 judges and prosecutors, wrote an article titled, “ECHR president faces a test of honor in Turkey,” which was published in Ahval on Sept. 2, 2020. Aydin wrote: “President Spano is certainly aware of the deterioration of rule of law in Turkey. As a man of honor who has been adjudicating on Turkey-related files at the ECHR for years, the purpose of his visit cannot be thought of as anything other than openly and courageously shouting out facts in the faces of government authorities.”

Aydin continued: “The ECHR president knows very well that the government in Turkey translated to one-man rule by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan since the constitutional amendment of 2017. As openly criticized by the Venice

Commission, Spano knows that the separation of powers and judicial independence no longer exist in Turkey. Besides this, he cannot be unaware of Resolution 2156(2017) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which downgraded Turkey to the league of countries under monitoring status for the first time in European history. This decision implies that Turkey no longer meets the famous Copenhagen Criteria, and thus cannot be regarded as eligible for accession negotiations with the EU [European Union].”

Aydin then made a series of suggestions that he hoped Spano would follow during his visit to Turkey:

– Call on Erdogan to return to democracy and restore the rule of law in the country.

– Remind the Turkish leaders of the decision to remove from the Turkish Council of Judges and Prosecutors their observer status in the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary. He should also remind the candidate judges at the Turkish Judiciary Academy [TJA] why the European Judicial Training Network expelled the TJA from observer membership status in 2016.

– Tell them that the existing judges as well as the 10,000 new judges appointed after the coup attempt are often politically biased in applying the law, and call on them to ignore political pressure from the Palace, Constitutional Court and other high courts.

– Remind them that for the first time in history Turkey was found in breach of Article 18 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

– Tell the leaders in Turkey that they should immediately release the hundreds of judges still in solitary confinement and reinstate all 4,000 of their purged colleagues.

Aydin urged Spano “to decline the honorary doctorate even before stepping onto Turkish soil, conveying a very strong message to all parties before meeting with them in person. Otherwise, the good will exerted through Spano’s visit would not only be wasted, but serve as a trump card for the government and Erdogan, who will use the gesture as a sign of appraisal and legitimization of the illegalities taking place in the country under his rule.”

Regrettably, Spano ignored all the good advice provided by Turkish human rights activists and thus undermined his own reputation as well as that of the European Court of Human Rights.

## Why Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Love Affair with the Ottoman Empire Should Worry The World

By Alan Mikhail

At the end of August, Turkey’s president Recep Tayyip Erdogan celebrated the Islamic New Year with aplomb. Fresh off his conversion of the monumental Hagia Sophia to a mosque, he converted another former Byzantine church, the fourth-century Chora church, one of Istanbul’s oldest Byzantine structures. The day after that he announced the largest ever natural gas depository in the Black Sea. This followed another recent discovery of natural gas fields in the eastern Mediterranean. Both of these areas are hotly contested zones of international competition between the powers around these seas. Later that week he welcomed a delegation of Hamas to Ankara, where he expressed support for Palestinians in the wake of the recent announcement of an agreement between Israel and the UAE.

All of these moves project Erdogan’s vision of Islamist strength into the world. Standing up for Islam at home goes hand in hand with securing natural resources and imposing Turkey’s power abroad. It also goes hand in hand with domestic repression. The Islamic New Year saw Erdogan further tighten his grip on social media freedom and consider pulling Turkey out of what is known, now farcically, as the 2011 Istanbul Convention, a treaty of the Council of Europe that commits countries to protecting women from domestic violence. Democratic peoples in Turkey, the Middle East, and around the world should worry.

Much has been written about Erdogan’s attempts to “resurrect” the Ottoman Empire or to style himself a sultan. There is truth here. But to understand Erdogan’s political agenda and horizon we must be specific about which Ottoman sultan Erdogan strives to be. It is the empire’s ninth sultan, Selim I.

Selim died 500 years ago in 1520. It was during his lifetime that the Ottoman Empire grew from a strong regional power to a gargantuan global empire. For Erdogan, this sultan from half a millennium ago serves his contemporary needs. Selim in many ways functions as Erdogan’s Andrew Jackson, a figure from the past of symbolic use in the present. Selim offers a template for Turkey to become a global political and economic power, with influence from Washington to Beijing, crushing foreign and domestic challenges alike. He helps Erdogan too to make his case for

Islam as a cultural and political reservoir of strength, a vital component of the glories of the Ottoman past, which he seeks to emulate in contemporary Turkey against the dominant elite secularism that has reigned since its founding.

We should be wary of Erdogan’s embrace of Selim’s exclusionary vision of Turkish political power. It represents a historical example of strongman politics that led to regional wars, the attempted annihilation of religious minorities, and the monopolization of global economic resources. In addition to his attempts to monopolize natural gas reserves around Turkey, today this takes the form of Erdogan’s foreign military ventures in Libya, Syria, and Yemen. At home, he has gone after Turkey’s Shiite community, Kurds, intellectuals, Christians, journalists, women, and leftists. Erdogan cultivates his own Sunni religiosity to position Islam at the center of Turkey’s domestic agenda, with the church conversions the most potent recent symbols of this. Erdogan’s represents a political logic of zero-sum competition that pits Turkey against Saudi Arabia and Iran for control of the region and over claims of global Islamic leadership.

Erdogan likes Selim because he made Turkish global political power possible. From 1517 through the end of World War I, the Ottoman Empire maintained the geographic shape Selim won for it, dominating the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean. In 1517, the Ottomans defeated their major rival in the region, the Mamluk Empire based in Cairo, capturing all of its territory in the Middle East and North Africa. This more than doubled the empire’s size. This explosion of the Ottoman Empire into the Middle East turned it into the region’s foremost military and political power and one of the world’s largest states. The Ottomans now controlled the entire eastern half of the Mediterranean and thus dominated the globe’s most important trade routes overland between Europe and Asia and by sea through the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. The Turkish Republic inherited much of that power after the empire’s demise and the republic’s rise in 1923.

While every modern Turkish ruler has distanced himself from the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, and Islam, to attempt to project a more “western,” “secular,” and “modern” face for the republic, Erdogan is the first who has actively embraced the Ottoman past and the empire’s Islamic heritage. Here too Selim proves key to Erdogan’s image of his rule. Selim’s defeat of the Mamluks made the Ottoman Empire a majority Muslim state for the first time

see ERDOGAN, page 20

## LETTERS

## Nuclear Option May Scare off Armenia’s Neighborhood Bully

To the editor:

I read with great interest the recent article by Edmond Y. Azadian about Armenia developing Nuclear Weapons (“The Nuclear Option,” July 30, 2020) that you now favor this.

I wanted to respond to you about your article, so I did an internet search and voila, here I am.

You are absolutely correct. Until Armenia has nuclear muscle, it will remain the puny kid in the neighborhood. Armenia will receive nice lip service from the International community, but the decisions of the International’s will always be at Armenia’s expense.

In the event of heavy, or annihilating, attacks by Azerbaijan/Turkey, Armenia is on it’s own, except maybe for 50/50 Russia. Not the US, not Europe, not NATO, not any country will come to the aid of Armenia. They will only urge both sides to “play nice.”

As you stated, Armenia had and has the brains to produce its own Nuclear weapons. Inter-Continental delivery is not needed. Armenia either has or can easily acquire, the local delivery means to its territorial enemies, to equalize their overwhelming military power. Even if they then acquire the same, Mutually Assured Destruction will cause Armenia’s enemies to think a thousand times. MAD has worked with the USSR/Russia, from the early 1950’s when they developed deliverable weapons systems.

The question is whether or not the leadership has the gumption to proceed with this production. Sure, the International community will be in an uproar, as they have for the others outside of the US, UK, France. Nothing has been done about the “others.” Notably, for Israel, all have remained silent.

When I was 7 years old my dad taught me how to deal with a neighbor bully, a bigger and 2-3 year older kid, from what he learned in Sepastia during and after 1915/WW-1. My dad would not step in. My dad said: “He’s a bully, he is more afraid of you, than you are of him. Never look for a fight. But always defend yourself.” The next time that kid bullied me, I tore into him. Terrified, he ran off, never to bully or bother me again! My dad’s teaching has served me well since 7 years on!

Have any in Armenia’s leadership ever experienced a similar forging? I seriously wonder. There are good people, no doubt. But, it requires more than “good.”

There is much more I could say. You being an experienced journalist of decades I am confident that you get my point.

Richard M. Vartanian  
Retired, US Air Force  
Altadena, CA





## Erdogan's Love Affair with The Ottoman Empire Should Worry the World

ERDOGAN, from page 19

in its history, after over two hundred years of being a state whose population was mostly Greek Orthodox. With this victory, Selim became the first Ottoman sultan to rule Mecca and Medina, Islam's holiest cities, thus earning the title of caliph and cementing the empire's global Islamic credentials. If Selim was the first Ottoman to be both sultan and caliph, Erdogan is the first republican leader to profess to possessing both titles.

Like President Donald Trump's purposeful deployment of the symbols of Andrew Jackson — prominently displaying his portrait in the Oval Office and defending his statues — Erdogan has trafficked publicly and specifically in the symbolic politics of Selim in Turkey. His most striking act was to name the recently constructed third bridge over the famous Bosphorus Strait after Selim. Erdogan has also lavished enormous resources on Selim's tomb and other memorials to his rule. After winning a 2017 constitutional referendum that greatly expanded his powers — a process marred by irregularities — Erdogan made his first public appearance at Selim's tomb. Staged as a kind of pilgrimage, there Erdogan returned to the long-dead sovereign his kaftan and turban that had been stolen years before. This far-from-subtle first act after winning a referendum that gave him near-limitless power made clear who Erdogan's role model is.

Erdogan and his Islamist party colleagues regularly describe themselves as the "grandchildren" of the Ottomans. In this very pointed genealogy, Erdogan purposefully skips a generation — that of Turkey's republican fathers since 1923 — to leapfrog back in time to when the Ottomans ruled the globe with their particular brand of Turkish Sunni politics, to Selim's day when wars and domestic repression led to wealth and territorial power. Recreating a political program akin to Selim's is a dangerous prospect for Turkey and the Middle East and indeed the world. To make Turkey Ottoman again requires the kind of violence, censorship, and vitriol that Erdogan has indeed shown himself ready to use. The universal lesson here is that calls for returns to perceived greatness, whether in Turkey or in United States, selectively embrace controversial historical figures, mangle their history, and elevate hatred and division.

*(Mikhail is Professor of History and Chair of the Department of History at Yale University. His new book is GOD'S SHADOW: Sultan Selim, His Ottoman Empire, and the Making of the Modern World (Liveright/W.W. Norton & Co.) This commentary originally appeared in Time magazine online on September 3.)*

## Dr. Ohannes Kiliçdagı to speak on Conscription Of Armenians into Ottoman Army

FRESNO — Dr. Ohannes Kiliçdagı, Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at Fresno State, will give a Zoom presentation on "Living Together Requires Dying Together": Conscription of Armenians into the Ottoman Army after the 1908 Revolution" at 7 p.m. on Friday, September 18. The presentation is part of the Fall 2020 Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program and is supported by the Leon S. Peters Foundation. All Lecture Series events will take place online, and not face-to-face, through the Fall 2020 semester.

After three decades of Hamidian despotism, the July 1908 revolution that restored the constitution and parliament was greeted with joy and hope as people, especially Armenians, regarded it as the end of oppression and the beginning of a new era where different ethno-religious groups would live freely as equal citizens. One of the most essential indicators and necessities of the equal citizenship was the conscription of Christians and Jews who had been exempted from military service in exchange for paying a special tax until that date. As a matter of fact, after the revolution conscription of Christians and Jews became one of the hot debates in the newly formed parliament as well as in the press.

Eventually, in July 1909 the Ottoman parliament abolished all exemptions and military service became compulsory for all males. This talk focuses on these debates and how different Armenian circles, including Armenian MPs, reacted to this idea, what they said and did before and after the promulgation of the conscription law. Armenian opinion leaders, both civil and clergy, were quite enthusiastic about the conscription of Armenian youth. They were encouraging the youth to perform their military duties wholeheartedly as Ottomans. However, there were also some worries, apprehensions, and reservations among Armenians. The talk will elaborate on these issues. The main sources for the talk are the articles, news pieces in the Armenian press, speech-



Dr. Ohannes Kiliçdagı

es of Armenian deputies in the parliament as well as official Ottoman documents.

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

Zoom Registration Link: [bit.ly/armenianstudieskiliçdagı](https://bit.ly/armenianstudieskiliçdagı)

For information about Dr. Kiliçdagı's lectures please follow Armenian Studies on its Facebook page, @ArmenianStudiesFresnoState or at the Program website, [www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies](http://www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies).



## The Tekeyan School of Beirut

The Vahan Tekeyan School, founded in 1951, was damaged by the August 4 explosion in Beirut. It primarily 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 it is trying to reopen for the fall semester.



The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada is sending aid and asks your assistance too. Make your donations by credit card at <https://givebutter.com/bXn8Lm> or as checks mailed 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.