

# Artsakh Toun Proposes Housing Solution For 2020 Artsakh War Refugees

BRUSSELS — One of the major results of the Artsakh War of 2020, along with the loss of territory in Artsakh, is the dislocation of tens of thousands of Armenians who have lost their homes. Their ability to remain in Artsakh is in question and the time remaining to solve this problem is limited. Artsakh Toun is a project which offers a solution. The approach was developed by four people, architects and urban planners Movses Der Kevorkian and Sevag Asryan, project manager and coordinator Gregory Guerguerian, and businessman and philanthropist James Tufenkian. Der Kevorkian and Guerguerian are based in Brussels, Belgium, Asryan in Stepanakert, Artsakh and Tufenkian in the United States.

Der Kevorkian, born in Lebanon, is the founder of Sill and Sound architects in Belgium and has over 15 years of experience in urban planning, architecture, renovation and construction site management in Armenia, Belgium and Lebanon.



“WE ARE FACING A HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE. WE ARE NOT SURE THAT PEOPLE REALIZE THIS.”

MOVSES DER KEVORKIAN



He exclaimed, “We should realize that we are facing a humanitarian catastrophe. We are not sure that people realize this.” He observed that recently, when going to the office of Hayk Khanumyan, Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of the Republic of Artsakh for a meeting, the building was empty early in the morning. However, when he opened the door to leave sometime before noon, the corridor was full of people from Shushi, Hadrut, Kashatagh, Karvajar and all over Artsakh, all desperate for houses or places to stay. Their needs are immediate. Khanumyan estimated that there are

around 40,000 displaced people willing to come back, which means roughly 7,000 families needing 7,000 homes.

**The Project**

Guerguerian, born and raised in Paris, moved to Belgium four years ago. He worked for many years in the field of information technology before going to Indonesia in 2012 and opening a series of French bakery/cafes, for which he continues to work as sales and marketing manager. The 42-year-old also has been volunteering for various Armenian projects since the age of 19.

see HOUSING, page 5

## Rep. Kazarian Is Passionate about Public Service

By Harry Kezelian  
*Mirror-Spectator Staff*

EAST PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Katherine Kazarian was elected Majority Whip of the Rhode Island State House in January, but she’s no stranger to politics. The 30-year-old Rhode Island native was first elected to the legislative body 8 years ago straight out of college at age 22.

Kazarian is a fighter for her hometown of East Providence and her Armenian community in Rhode Island and around the world. And despite the partisan rancor of the last several years, she still loves politics.

“It’s awesome, it’s a lot of work, but I do love the job. And we have a great new leadership team at the State House.”

Kazarian was unanimously elected Majority Whip, the third highest



position in the legislature, this year when there was a change in leadership. The Rhode Island House Speaker lost his election and a new speaker needed to be chosen from within the body’s membership. K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Warwick) was elected Speaker on a bill that included Christopher Blazejewski (D-Providence) as Majority Leader and Katherine Kazarian (D-East Providence) as Majority Whip.

“I was in a sweet spot where I have been in the House for eight years, and we’ve seen young people run for office, and they wanted someone young and more women in the leadership team,” she said.

Kazarian fit the bill: not only is she young and female, but since she has been a member of the legislature for eight years, she has valued experience that other young lawmakers may lack.

“They liked my style of working with others,” Kazarian said. “I was unanimously elected by the Democrat members — the Whip is a party position — and it felt good.”

see KAZARIAN, page 20



Nora Azadian with her portrait of a poetess from Armenia (1968)



## Nora Azadian: Celebrating an Artist’s Purposeful Life

DETROIT — Nora Azadian always wondered why nature did not fashion the life of humans as it did that of trees, which lose their foliage in the fall and are revived in the spring.

This year, once again, the trees are in full bloom, but now without Nora, who passed away on April 29.

Nora was one of the rare types who was fully content with her life. She was full of a creative spirit and expressed that creativity in many ways. Even her ordinary daily life brimmed with nobility and grace.

She always claimed that in life she had received everything she had wished for and never envied others for status or material goods and never asked for more than she had. That is why she thought she lived her life the way she wanted, full of enthusiasm and vivacity.

She looked upon death stoically and philosophically. She courageously faced the finality of human life and peacefully made the transition.

see AZADIAN, page 10

### Nora Azadian Laid to Rest

DETROIT — Nora Ipekian Azadian passed away in her sleep on April 29.

She is survived by her husband Edmond Y. Azadian and son Gerald Papasian.

Visitation was on Tuesday, May 4, with a Dan Gark Service at St. John Armenian Church.

The funeral was on Wednesday, May 5. In lieu of flower donations are designated to: Tekeyan Cultural Association, “Sponsor a Teacher Program” 755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472.

<https://givebutter.com/DrFm0n>

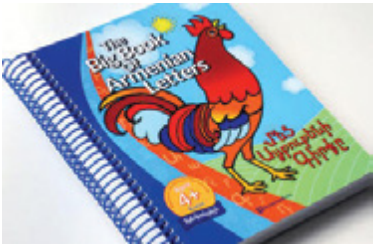
### YEREVAN

Armenians Forward Together Forum



### DETROIT

Sisters Publish Preschool Armenian Alphabet Book



### BOSTON

Peace of Art Responds to President Biden







## NEWS from ARMENIA

### Two More Russian Military Sites Set up in Armenia's South

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Russian military has set up two new military sites in the south of Armenia near the border with Azerbaijan as an “additional security guarantee” both for the province of Syunik and the country as a whole, acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told lawmakers on Monday, May 3.

“It’s no secret that two strongholds of the 102nd Russian military base were established in the Syunik province,” Pashinyan said.

“This is an additional security guarantee not only for the Syunik region but for Armenia.” France-Group 5-8

### Karabakh's Secure Existence within Azerbaijan Impossible, Says Mirzoyan

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The secure existence of the Armenians of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) within Azerbaijan is impossible, and the world should recognize their right to self-determination, speaker of the Armenian National Assembly Ararat Mirzoyan said on Tuesday, May 4.

According to Mirzoyan, barbarity towards Armenian captives being held in Azerbaijan, as well as the opening of the “disgraceful” trophy park in Baku are evidence of Azerbaijan’s position.

The speaker said fighting for the recognition of Artsakh’s right to self-determination is the policy that the Republic of Armenia will continue to pursue. “We shall work closely in this direction with our international colleagues,” he added.

### President Receives French Parliamentary Delegation

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian received a French parliamentary delegation led by Guy Teissier, vice-president of the French National Assembly’s Armenia-France Friendship Group and Chairman of the France-Artsakh Friendship Caucus, on April 28.

The delegation consisted of Senator, Vice-President of the French Senate’s Armenia-France Friendship Group and Founding Member of the France-Artsakh Friendship Caucus Valérie Boyer, MPs Jacqueline Dubois, Francois Pupponi and Xavier Breton.

“I am glad for your visit to Armenia and Artsakh, and I am doubly happy and know that you are the good friends of Armenia,” the Armenian President said while welcoming the guests at the Presidential Palace.

Teissier, in turn, stated that he and his colleagues have long been the friends of Armenia and Artsakh, and noted that their number could be much more because Armenia has many friends in France.

# 2021 Aurora Humanitarians Announced

YEREVAN — The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative on April 24 revealed the names of five 2021 Aurora Humanitarians, chosen by the Aurora Prize Selection Committee for their courage, commitment and impact. The announcement was made at the Matenadaran, the national repository of ancient manuscripts located in Yerevan, Armenia. During this special event, the attendees also paid tribute to the great scholar and philanthropist Vartan Gregorian, Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative and member of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee, who [earlier](#). In accordance with the tradition, the names of the 2021 Aurora Humanitarians have been inscribed in the *Chronicles of Aurora*, a [unique 21st century manuscript](#) containing the depictions of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative activities.

One of the Humanitarians will become the 2021 Aurora Prize Laureate and will receive an opportunity to continue the cycle of giving by sharing a \$1,000,000 award with the organizations that help people in need. The 2021 Aurora Humanitarians are:

[Grégoire Ahongbonon](#) (Côte d’Ivoire), founder of the St Camille Association, which helps people in West Africa suffering from mental illness and seeks to end the inhumane local practice of keeping them in chains. Mr. Ahongbonon has nominated three organizations that promote international solidarity and support people with intellectual disabilities and mental illnesses: CRÉDIL (Lanaudière’s Regional Committee on Education for International Development), L’Arche Canada Foundation, and St Camille Association.

[Ruby Alba Castaño](#) (Colombia), a human rights activist and founder of ASO-CATDAME (Meta Association for Peasants, Rural Workers and Defenders of the Environment) who works to protect the rights of thousands of Colombian peasants that are subjected to persecution, forced disappearances and displacement. Ms. Castaño has nominated three organizations that advocate for the rights of the peasant and impoverished communities in Colombia: ASOCATDAME, Claretian Corporation Norman Pérez Bello (CCNPB), and National Federation of Agricultural Unions (FENSUAGRO).

[Paul Farmer](#) (USA), a medical anthropologist, professor at Harvard Medical School, co-founder and chief strategist of Partners In Health (PIH), an international non-profit organization that brings the benefits of modern medical science to those who need it the most. Dr. Farmer has nominated two organizations that deliver healthcare to the world’s poorest communities and build a global movement of social medicine educators and practitioners: Partners In Health and Equal Health.

[Julienne Lusenge](#) (Democratic Republic of the Congo), a human rights defender, co-founder of Women’s Solidarity for Inclusive Peace and Development (SOFEPADI) and Fund for Congolese Women (FFC), who has been helping the victims of wartime sexual violence for years. Ms. Lusenge has nominated three organizations that support grassroots women’s organiza-

tions, empower survivors of gender-based violence and reintegrate internally displaced persons: Fund for Congolese Women, League for Congolese Solidarity and Association of Mothers for Development and Peace.

[Ashwaq Moharram](#) (Yemen), a physician who provides life-saving support to the starving population of Hodeida, facing a humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of conflict and blockade. Dr. Moharram has nominated two organizations that protect the future of children and provide free healthcare services to the people affected by the ongoing conflict in Yemen: Save the Children and Doctors Without Borders.

“It is a great honor to have the opportunity to recognize these distinguished men and

will be added to the manuscript as well.

A special ceremony took place at the Matenadaran, the national repository of ancient manuscripts, located in Yerevan, Armenia. Among around 23,000 ancient manuscripts preserved, studied and restored in Matenadaran, the *Chronicles of Aurora* is the only one that was created in the 21st century and crafted according to the ancient Armenian traditions by using only natural materials, as it has been done for centuries.

“This is like creating a new history. When we just presented the manuscript, it seemed to be about modern days, but time passes, and with every year, this becomes history. There is no doubt that the value of this manuscript will only increase with



Lord Ara Darzi, left, and Ruben Vardanyan at the Matenadaran

women from all over the world. The 2021 Aurora Humanitarians are individuals who truly believe in the basic human rights and have dedicated their lives to helping people in areas of adversity. They are also recognized for the huge impact that even one individual can have by helping thousands and, most importantly, inspiring millions at the same time,” said Lord Ara Darzi, Chair of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee.

“The outstanding accomplishments of the 2021 Aurora Humanitarians show their unyielding willingness to act in response to the needs of people around them. Aurora believes deeply in the power of humanity to improve and save lives and has come up with the concept of “Gratitude in Action” that describes the human spirit that can motivate humanitarian activism. The heroes we are honoring today are the role models the world needs now more than ever before,” noted Marguerite Barankitse, founder of Maison Shalom and REMA Hospital and the inaugural Aurora Prize Laureate.

At the event, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative also officially announced the opening of the [nomination period for the 2022 Aurora Prize](#) and encouraged everyone to put forward inspiring modern-day heroes. Earlier that day, Aurora representatives had commemorated the Armenian Genocide by attending a flower-laying ceremony at the Tsitsernakaberd memorial in Yerevan, Armenia, dedicated to the victims of the first genocide of the 20th century.

#### Chronicles of Aurora: Inscription Ceremony at Matenadaran

The names of the Aurora Humanitarians of the year were inscribed in the *Chronicles of Aurora*, a unique 21st century manuscript containing the depictions of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative activities, featuring the stories of the Aurora Humanitarians and Laureates, and reflecting the Aurora Prize impact. Later this year, the name of the 2021 Aurora Prize Laureate

time,” said Vahan Ter-Ghevondyan, director of the Matenadaran.

“The generational change is symbolic of this unique manuscript and the whole ceremony. And this should remain continuous, manifesting as proof of a prosperous life and not just survival of a nation or a family. Once the connection between generations is interrupted, anything can happen to us,” noted Marine Ales, Chair of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative Creative Council.

The *Chronicles of Aurora* was first presented on April 24, 2018, opening a new page in the written story of universal human values. Three years later, the Matenadaran ceremony was held without Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative and Aurora Prize Selection Committee member Vartan Gregorian for the first time, as he has recently passed away.

“I was honored to be part of the Aurora Humanitarians’ selection process together with Vartan Gregorian. He studied every nomination very carefully and would always repeat, that everyone deserves to be called an Aurora Humanitarian and deserves the Prize,” recalled Lord Ara Darzi, Chair of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee.

“Today is a historic day for all of us, as the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative transforms the tragic experience with its mission and vision of Gratitude in Action, honoring those who save lives today, like all the humanitarians that saved Armenians a century ago. Today, for the first time, Vartan Gregorian, a friend of ours and Co-Founder of the Aurora, is not present with us. Unfortunately, we have to inscribe this loss in the *Chronicles of Aurora*, too,” said Ruben Vardanyan, lamenting the loss of the great scholar and philanthropist and an outstanding Armenian-American humanitarian Vartan Gregorian.

The *Chronicles of Aurora* will be on display and accessible to the public only for a month, till May 24, at the Old Printed Books’ Hall at the Matenadaran.

#### CORRECTION

Because of an editing error the name of the publication that originally carried the commentary by Peter Balakian in last week’s paper, “To Armenians, Biden’s Recognition of the Genocide Means the World,” was left out. The piece originally appeared in the *Washington Post*.





## ARMENIA

# 19 Armenian Prisoners of War, Civilians, Tortured and Killed

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net, RFE/RL) — At least 19 of the hundreds of Armenian civilians and servicemen who were taken captive by Azerbaijan during military hostilities in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), have been tortured and killed, which amounts to a war crime, according to the defenders of the rights of Armenian captives in the European Court of Human Rights, Artak Zeynalyan and Siranush Sahakyan. Four of them were women.

Civilians captured and killed by Azerbaijan are: Eduard Shahgeldyan, Arsen Gharakhanyan, Benik Hakobyan, Elena Hakobyan, Serzhik Vardanyan, Ella Vardanyan, Genadi Petrosyan, Yurik Asryan, Misha Movsisyan, Anahit Movsisyan, Nina Davtyan and Misha Melkumyan.

The servicemen captured and killed by Azerbaijan are: Erik Mkhitarian, Gagik Mkrtchyan, Arayik Poghosyan, Vardges Ghazaryan, Yuri Adamyan, Arthur Manvelyan and Narek Babayan.

The lawyers said they have applied to the European Court of Human Rights in connection with the torture and murder of prisoners of war and detained persons. According to them, Armenian civilians and prisoners of war were being captured both during and after the war, unleashed by Azerbaijan in September 2020.

The European Union said on April 28 that all remaining Armenian captives must be set free “as soon as possible” and “regardless of the circumstances of their arrest.”

France has joined international efforts to secure the release of Armenian soldiers and civilians remaining in Azerbaijani captivity, the French ambassador to Armenia, Jonathan Lacote, said on April 30.

Lacote said the issue was on the agenda of French President Emmanuel Macron’s April 26 phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“There is an intensification of processes,

which on the one hand is connected with the April 24 [anniversary of the Armenian genocide] and on the other the fact that there is no progress on Armenian prisoners and other issues,” he said.

Russia, France and the United States have long been spearheading international efforts to end the Karabakh conflict in their capacity as co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group. Moscow single-handedly stopped the autumn war over the disputed territory with an Armenian-Azerbaijani ceasefire deal brokered by Putin on November 9.

“The objective is to step up the work of the OSCE Minsk Group,” said Lacote. “Russia is obviously part of this process because Moscow is present in Karabakh, and the objective is the resumption of a political process so that issues that were not settled by the November 9 document are discussed.”

“We have a ceasefire, which is an important achievement, but there are also many unresolved issues that need to be addressed in the Minsk Group format,” the envoy stressed, adding that the unconditional release of the Armenian prisoners is one of them.

The Kremlin reported earlier this week that Putin and Macron “reviewed the developments around Nagorno-Karabakh.”

“The parties expressed mutual readiness for coordination on various aspects of the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement, including through the OSCE Minsk Group,” it said in a statement.

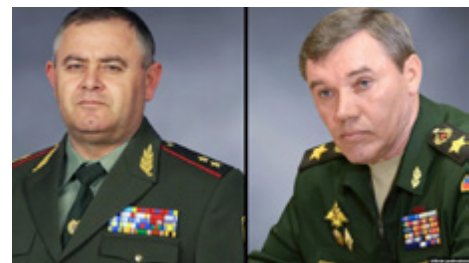
The truce agreement calls for the release of all prisoners held by the conflicting sides. A total of 69 Armenian prisoners of war (POWs) and civilians have been freed to date. More than 100 others are believed to remain in Azerbaijani captivity. Baku is reluctant to repatriate them, having branded them as “terrorists.”

## Armenian Army Chief Visits Moscow

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) — Armenia’s and Russia’s top army generals have met in Moscow for talks highlighting high-level military contacts between the two states that have intensified after last year’s war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Armenian Defense Ministry said on Friday, April 30, that Lieutenant-General Artak Davtyan discussed with his Russian counterpart, General Valery Gerasimov, “a number of issues of bilateral mil-

itary cooperation” during the meeting held on Thursday.



Lieutenant-General Artak Davtyan (L), chief of the Armenian army’s General Staff, and his Russian counterpart General Valery Gerasimov

A short ministry statement gave no details of Davtyan’s trip to Moscow. The Russian Defense Ministry issued no press releases on the talks.

The chief of the Armenian army’s General Staff flew to the Russian capital five days after Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and his Armenian counterpart Vagharshak Harutyunyan spoke by phone

for a second time in as many weeks.

According to the Defense Ministry in Yerevan, Shoigu and Davtyan discussed Russia’s ongoing peacekeeping operation in Karabakh, activities of a joint Russian-Armenian military contingent and “the main directions of large-scale reforms” of the Armenian army launched after the war.

Harutyunyan also discussed the reforms with Gerasimov in a March 23 phone call. The minister’s press office said they agreed that a high-ranking Russian delegation will visit Armenia soon for more detailed talks on the subject.

A delegation led by one of Gerasimov’s deputies already held weeklong negotiations with the Armenian army’s top brass in Yerevan in January. Harutyunyan said afterwards that the talks were aimed at “assisting us in the reform and modernization of Armenia’s armed forces.”

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said the Russian military is already providing such assistance when he spoke after meeting with Russian President in Moscow on April 7. Pashinyan told Armenian lawmakers afterwards that the two sides are holding “quite productive discussions” on a possible deployment of more Russian troops to Armenia and its southeastern Syunik province in particular.

Syunik borders Iran as well as districts southwest of Nagorno-Karabakh which were retaken by Azerbaijan during and after a six-week war stopped by a Russian-brokered ceasefire on November 10.



Poster for a youth education related forum by Armenians Forward Together

## Armenians Forward Together Forum

By Tamara Babaian

YEREVAN — [Armenians Forward Together](#) is a Forum that will take place in Yerevan, Armenia this year on August 12-14 in the Ibis Hotel located in the center of the capital. Barring COVID-related emergencies, and with full commitment to health and safety, the forum will take place in-person with some virtual participation. The purpose of the forum is to facilitate all-Armenian collaboration in strengthening and development of our Motherland.

The idea of the Armenians Forward Together Forum originated in the immediate aftermath of the Artsakh war of 2020, when it became obvious that many people in the diaspora are looking for ways to get involved in the rebuilding and development of Armenia and Artsakh. For our generation, the challenges facing our nation have never been greater. Financial contributions notwithstanding, many Armenians living abroad wish to put their knowledge and skills towards some worthy cause, working together with our compatriots in Armenia and Artsakh. Yet, for many of us there is no clear way to go about it. While there are a great number of organizations and individuals selflessly and quietly doing amazing work in Armenia and from abroad, it is, however, far from obvious how an individual can learn about their pri-

orities and needs, and how to partner with these organizations. This is the need that the forum is aiming to address.

To give participants the opportunity to find a project in which they choose to be involved, the forum will include a day of short presentations by organizations, describing their work and outlining their plans for involving new

members. Presenting organizations that have already committed their participation come from a variety of domains: healthcare, education, community development, and others.

The second type of event that will be held at the forum is a thematic workshop, which is an opportunity for the workshop organizers and participants to define their own goals and plans together. For example, one of the currently proposed workshops is aiming to define new ways of providing educational and mentorship opportunities to the youth living in Armenian regions. This workshop, titled “Delivering Online and Offline Classes for Youth in Armenian Regions” is proposed by the MEM Social-Educational Community Organization of Armenia. Another workshop will address the problem of matching the needs of Armenian healthcare system with the resources that can be provided by the professional medical associations and individuals from the diaspora. Our website has a list of workshops proposed so far, and it is being updated with new proposals regularly.

The forum organizing committee includes people with strong ties in Armenia and diaspora, experienced in volunteering in, creating and leading collaborative projects in different domains in science, technology, art, and education, within professional and philanthropic organizations. We are committed to helping each workshop reach and find people interested in advancing their goals.

The philosophy behind the Forum is for it to be open and free, to activate the full potential of the expertise and good will in the diaspora and in Armenia. Only together we can conquer the many existential challenges faced by our nation today and in the nearest future.

All interested individuals and organizations are invited to submit proposals for workshops or presentations, or to join one of the proposed workshops. The details and deadlines are described at our website ([armeniansforward.org](#)). To contact the forum organizers, you can write an email to [armeniansforward@gmail.com](mailto:armeniansforward@gmail.com) or connect with us through the <https://armeniansforward.org/#contact>. Our Facebook and Twitter pages provide updates regarding new workshops and other developments.

(Tamara Babaian, on behalf of the Armenians Forward Together Forum Organizers [<https://armeniansforward.org/about#organizers>])





## INTERNATIONAL

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## Lithuanian Foreign Minister Says Country Supports Genocide Recognition During Azerbaijan Visit

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Foreign Minister of Lithuania Gabrielius Landsbergis announced in Baku on April 30 that his country recognizes the Armenian Genocide, answering the question of a reporter following his meeting with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Ceyhan Bayramov. “The lessons of history are very difficult, particularly for those who were not part of it. We learn to understand the positions of the other side, look at the history from their viewpoint and put ourselves in their shoes. This process is time-consuming. Some processes are much easier than others. We saw that the US President recognized a clear historical justice, like Lithuania has done,” the foreign minister of Lithuania said.

## 121 MEPs Sign Letter Demanding Release of Armenian POWs

STRASBOURG (PanARMENIAN.Net) — On May 4, 121 Members of the European Parliament signed a letter demanding the release of Armenian prisoners of war “illegally being held in Azerbaijan for months,” Member of European Parliament François-Xavier Bellamy said on Twitter. Bellamy joined forces with Vice-Chair of the EPP Group in the European Parliament Andrey Kovatchev and MEP Loucas Furlas to arrange for and send the letter to President of the European Council Charles Michel and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen. The 121 MEPs who have signed the letter represent the entire political spectrum, Bellamy wrote. “It is an obligation under international law. An urgency for so many families suffering from this terrible uncertainty. We must act to obtain the freedom of these soldiers kept as hostages,” the MEP added.

## Slovak Television Covers Armenian Genocide Commemoration

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Public TV of the Slovak Republic (RTVS) covered the honoring of Armenian Genocide victims by the Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Boris Kollár and Ambassador of Armenia to Slovakia Armen Papikyan near the khachkar in memory of the Armenian Genocide victims in Bratislava. “Slovakia is among the nearly 30 countries that have called the slaughter of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire a genocide. The Speaker of the National Council of Slovakia condemned the forceful keeping of hundreds of Armenians by Azerbaijan. According to the agreement reached in November, 2020, the sides had to exchange all war prisoners. Azerbaijan has failed to do it so far,” RTVS said.

## China Sends Largest Batch of Vaccines Yet to Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The Armenian government kept encouraging people to get vaccinated against COVID-19 after receiving at the weekend 100,000 doses of a vaccine donated by China.

The shipment of the CoronaVac jab manufactured by the Chinese company Sinovac marked the single largest batch of a coronavirus vaccine airlifted to Armenia so far.

“Hard times reveal true friends who join forces to fight against the pandemic,” the Chinese Embassy in Yerevan said, announcing the shipment on Friday, April 30.

Armenia received 24,000 doses of AstraZeneca’s COVID-19 vaccine on March 28 and 43,000 doses of Russia’s Sputnik V jab in the following weeks.

The government’s vaccination campaign launched on April 13 has attracted little public interest so far. According to Health Minister Anahit Avanesyan, only about 3,000 Armenians making up roughly 0.1 percent of the country’s population had received a first vaccine dose as of May 2.

“We are calling on our fellow citizens to actively apply to polyclinics and get vaccinated,” Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan wrote on Facebook after he and his wife were inoculated on Monday morning. He warned that countries around the world may ban unvaccinated foreigners from entering their territory later this year.

Pashinyan repeated the warning when he spoke in the Armenian parliament later in the day. He said vaccinations are also important for attracting more tourists to the country.

“In Yerevan and other popular parts of Armenia we can already see tourists, and if we properly organize the vaccination cycle we could regain the [tourism] volumes of 2019,” he said.

Answering a question from an oppo-

sition lawmaker, Pashinyan pointedly refused to reveal the type of the vaccine which was injected into him at a state-run

speed up their vaccination campaign despite a steady decrease in daily coronavirus cases reported by them over the past week.



Armenian and Chinese officials pose for a photograph at Yerevan’s Zvartnots airport after the delivery of 100,000 doses of a Chinese coronavirus vaccine, May 1, 2021

medical center in Yerevan. “I can only say that one of the deputy prime ministers was vaccinated with AstraZeneca while the other will get Sputnik V,” he said.

Many Armenians seem wary of getting AstraZeneca shots because of recent reports linking the vaccine to a rare blood clotting disorder. Both Pashinyan and Avanesyan insisted last week that the risk of such side-effects is minimal.

The vaccinations were initially limited to medical workers, seniors and chronically ill people aged 55 and older. They are eligible only for the AstraZeneca vaccine. For safety reasons, younger people deemed most at risk from the coronavirus are offered Sputnik V.

Later in April, Avanesyan allowed medical workers to administer AstraZeneca shots to all people willing to take them. According to the health minister, the use-by date of the first batch of the British-Swedish vaccine is May 31.

The Armenian authorities are trying to

The Ministry of Health said on Monday morning that only 145 people tested positive for the coronavirus in the past day.

## Paylan Files Criminal Complaint against Politician Issuing Threats

ANKARA (Armenpress) — Armenian HDP deputy Garo Paylan of the Turkish parliament filed a criminal complaint against Turkish politician Ümit Özdağ.

The Turkish lawmaker of Armenian descent representing the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) delivered his annual Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day statement on April 24. Shortly afterwards, Ümit Özdağ threatened him.

In his April 24 statement, Paylan criticized the naming of streets in Turkey after Talaat Pasha, a political leader of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century who was the architect of the Armenian Genocide.

“We are walking on streets 106 years later named after Talaat Pasha, the architect of the genocide. We send our kids to schools named Talaat Pasha. We are living in a Turkey like what Germany would have been if there had been streets and schools named after Hitler in Germany today,” tweeted Paylan.

This statement seemingly infuriated the nationalist MP Özdağ, who tweeted: “Shameless, provocative man. If you are not very pleased [about living here], go to hell...”

“When the time comes, you will and should also go through a Talaat Pasha experience,” Özdağ concluded.

Paylan filed the complaint under the penal code articles of “incitement of enmity,” “insults and threats” and “incitement to commit a crime.”

“Calls for violence against minorities open the way to hate crimes. Discrimination and hate speech should not go unpunished,” Paylan said in Ankara on Wednesday.

The Commission against Racism and Discrimination of the Human Rights Association, a Turkish organization, also filed a complaint against Özdağ.

## Majeel el-Shafie: Crimes against Humanity Do Not Expire

By Haykaram Nahapetyan  
*Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent*

TORONTO — In the beginning Rev. Majeel el-Shafie’s interest in Armenian issues was limited to Armenian Genocide recognition. His Canada-based organization, One Free World International, was trying to promote such recognition both in Canada and worldwide, as well as fighting against Turkish denialism in Turkey where its members travelled. But in 2016 when Azerbaijan attacked Artsakh a four-day war followed. The focus of his organization expanded to include Armenian Artsakh. “We took members of parliament with us and visited the president of Artsakh. We went to see the damage that had been done,” el-Shafie recalls.

Last year when Azerbaijan with the help of Turkey and mercenaries attacked Artsakh, el-Shafie traveled to Nagorno-Karabakh again. While the bombs were exploding outside and the missiles hitting Stepanakert’s houses and hospitals, el-Shafie and a deputy from Iceland who joined the trip were

meeting journalists in the bunker-based press-center of Artsakh.

He is highly dissatisfied with the current situation considering the existence of Armenian POWs and the continuing danger for Artsakh’s churches. “We saw horrible images. War crimes were being committed. It was the continuation of the Armenian Genocide,” Rev. el-Shafie said in the interview over Zoom. He blames the international community, both states and organizations, for not engaging enough to assist the people of Nagorno Karabakh.

El-Shafie is working on a film dedicated to Artsakh. Titled “We Are Our Mountains,” he gave it the name of the famous monument of the Artsakh native grandfather and grandmother in Stepanakert. “It is in the editing process. When we release the film it will reflect both the recent one and the one [film] that was [made] five years ago,” el-Shafie stated.

See the video of the interview with Rev. Majeel el-Shafie at the *Mirror-Spectator* website.





INTERNATIONAL

# Artsakh Toun Housing Solution for Artsakh Refugees

HOUSING, from page 1

Guerguerian, prior to the 2020 war, was working with Tufenkian on an agriculture project for the Kashatagh region of Artsakh, which of course had to be cancelled. Tufenkian and he then came up with the idea of finding the most adaptive solution for housing refugees from Artsakh.

Guerguerian began collecting information but it turned out to be too technical for him, he said, so he reached out for help from Der Kevorkian and Asryan, who have extensive relevant knowledge. By the end of December 2020,



Greg Guerguerian

the team was set up, and the members began to design six or seven options for housing construction, from cheap to more expensive, which could be built from the span of a few days to that of several months. After preparing a catalogue, they began presenting it to different organizations to do fundraising and start the project.

Der Kevorkian explained that the efforts to construct housing in Gyumri after the 1988 earthquake provided the group good lessons in potential problems to avoid. First and foremost, he pointed out, was to act quickly and not begin projects which might last forever, as it seemed happened in Gyumri. Secondly, container housing has a bad reputation now among Armenians because of what happened there. Although the technology for the construction of such housing has advanced and is better now, it will not be accepted.

Der Kevorkian said that they reoriented their research towards stable solutions. He said, "That is why we ended up choosing cement panels, which are very solid and at the same time very handy. We can build these houses very quickly. This approach is between two extreme solutions, one being the container panel housing, and the second, building something very solid, with basalt, stone and heavy materials." The latter is the traditional Armenian approach to homes. However, using prefabricated cement panels both allows for solidity and relative speed of construction, he said.

The prefab concrete panel construction system can be used in four types of layouts, from one bedroom to four per house, and the aim is to deliver housing before the first of September.

Guerguerian interjected that they did not want to choose a solution without any knowledge of how the people in Artsakh actually lived. They saw other proposed designs, including one from Boston, which would have forced the local people to change their lives to adapt to it. Asryan as part of the team was able to provide the knowledge of local life. Their design was able consequently to take into consideration the needs of people. For example, the lack of roads means it is always muddy outside and having places to store dirty boots or shoes is important.

Der Kevorkian related, "We went and visited so many sites around Stepanakert, Martuni, and other parts of Artsakh. The idea was to find a way to integrate our project as much as possibly socially and architecturally in the existing landscape."

Security is also considered in the urban planning design, Der Kevorkian noted, with a safe underground gathering site in case of complications a possible addition.

They also have been in close contact at

1 Bedrooms Private House



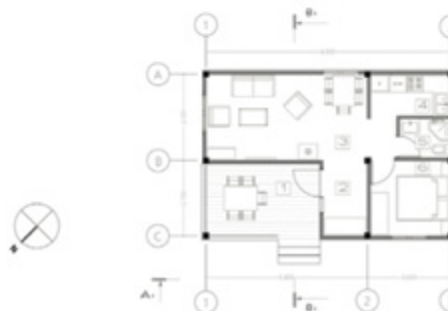
Elevation A1 A1



Elevation A2 A2



Floor Plan



3D Floor Plan

1. Entry	11.3 m <sup>2</sup>
2. Foyer	4.3 m <sup>2</sup>
3. Living room	18 m <sup>2</sup>
4. Kitchen	4.5 m <sup>2</sup>
5. Bathroom	2.0 m <sup>2</sup>
6. Bedroom	7.8 m <sup>2</sup>
7. Terrace	11.2 m <sup>2</sup>
Total living area 60 m <sup>2</sup>	



ARTSAKH TOUN  
Housing for Displaced Armenians

each stage in the project with Artsakh government officials like the aforementioned Khanumyan and Chief of the Presidential Staff Artak Beglaryan. Guerguerian said, "We are not reinventing the wheel. We just are making sure that the design is adapted to the final users."

Der Kevorkian summarized the value of their approach: rapidity, insulation which is a must in Artsakh where there are energy and water problems, and the initiation of new types of construction systems.

## The Next Stage

Guerguerian stated that he and Der Kevorkian are operating as a company, with salaries and expenses. He said, "I don't want people who work on this project to be volunteering. I think we need to switch to a more professional mode." The company itself will be a nonprofit, however. Its mission is to build houses and give them to the Artsakh government. The government then will make arrangements with future tenants or owners. The first stage is to do a pilot demonstration project, hopefully to build 15 houses.

Artsakh Toun has been working with the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund (HAAF). Guerguerian said, "They are interested in our solution. They just need to see some proof." A purely French organization called *Oeuvre d'Orient*, which helps Eastern Christian peoples, agreed to provide an initial grant to start work on a village and hopefully HAAF will order five more houses to add to this pilot project so it can

be 20-25 houses, he continued.

If the Artsakh Toun approach is accepted, the first full-scale project will be to settle 107 families displaced from the Hadrut region villages of Mokhrens, Taghot and Hakaku in a group of villages, including Dahrav, some 10 kilometers north of Stepanakert. Guerguerian said that the budget for this would be 3.5 million dollars just for the houses, not including other connected work that must be done.

Der Kevorkian said while it would be ideal to keep all families from specific villages as in the Hadrut area which are lost to Armenians together in new villages, it is very difficult to found a new village from scratch. It costs a lot because creating a new infrastructure, with roads and electricity and utilities is difficult, and will take a lot of time. The fear would be that money will run out before the new village is complete. Instead, he said, Artsakh Toun proposes adding a small number of new houses to existing villages, so that they can use the existing infrastructure, if necessary with some renovations and additions. The existing villages will be stabilized and made more viable.

The Artsakh government will decide which villages are suitable, and how many houses are needed, and Artsakh Toun will serve as the solution provider. Der Kevorkian said that discussions are ongoing with the government, with weekly online meetings to clarify this approach.

In the initial stages of the project, the

construction materials must be imported, Der Kevorkian said, due to the need to quickly prepare housing before next winter, but local contractors in Artsakh and Armenia have been identified. Asryan, he said, had built perhaps thirty percent of Stepanakert, so his local connections are invaluable in this regard.

In the future, Guerguerian said, the ideal would be to set up a manufacturing plant in Armenia, perhaps with a branch in Artsakh, which could produce the necessary concrete panels, and maybe even export them eventually. This would bring potential foreign investment and boost the local economy while breaking dependence on outside manufacturers.

The structures designed by Der Kevorkian and Asryan are suitable for adding solar and thermal panels. Guerguerian said that the French Armenia Fund has experience in this kind of work so it may be possible that they come with a specific brigade to install such panels. He said that China produces them at reasonable prices and pointed out that Artsakh lost a lot of its electrical production capacity due to the war so solar energy is helpful.

Finances of Artsakh Toun will be kept transparent, Guerguerian said, with a CFO and accountant hired, and information communicated to all donors and published.

## The Future

In the long-term, Guerguerian said, after housing is provided, and then energy, the next stage will be to provide the residents with a way to earn a living. Guerguerian was optimistic for the future, declaring: "There is a strong mobilization taking place. I can feel it. At the moment, in post-war Artsakh, there are a lot of experts that are joining in to help solve problems."

Guerguerian pointed out that ultimately, the choice of what approach to take concerning housing is in the hands of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund (Himnadram), because it has an estimated budget of some 200 million dollars collected during the recent war. The governments of Armenia and Artsakh have limited resources and other outside organizations at the most can probably donate several hundreds of thousands of dollars, while the scope of the housing need is much greater. Consequently, it is HAAF which must to choose the best solution and do the coordination.

There are other competitors to Artsakh Toun, Guerguerian admitted, such as a group doing cheap wooden houses, but he felt they were not resistant.

Guerguerian said that HAAF has a great deal of experience in construction, with a manager working in this field for 17 years. Its traditional approach in building is fine, he said, but slow. HAAF is a large organization and its decision-making process is also slow.

Guerguerian said, "I have been asking them for three months now. It is taking too long...If we wait too long, the refugees in the best scenario will move to Armenia. In the worst scenario, they will leave the country." His hope is that HAAF will take action soon.

In the meanwhile, he and Der Kevorkian want people to learn about their project and attract experts such as engineers and architects to join their efforts. If people also want to donate, they can send money to the Armenia Fund or HAAF, and type in Artsakh Toun as the desired destination.

For more information, see the Tekeyan Cultural Association video interview with Kevorkian and Guerguerian conducted by Arto Manoukian at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNvQRoNNWgc&feature=youtu.be>.



# Community News

## Rep. Levin Expresses Support for Armenian Community at Virtual Coffee Hour

By Harry Kezelian  
*Mirror-Spectator Staff*

WASHINGTON — Congressman Andy Levin has represented the 9th district of Michigan in the US House of Representatives since 2019. The son of previous 9th district Representative, Sander Levin, and nephew of longtime US Senator from Michigan, Carl Levin, he comes from a family with a long history in Michigan and national politics. All Democrats, the Levins have had a long and positive relationship with Michigan's and Metro Detroit's large Armenian community. Therefore, when Levin announced that he was conducting a virtual coffee hour to discuss issues with community members and open the floor to questions, the move was both welcome and anticipated.

It was especially crucial at this time, given the recent war in Artsakh, the incoming Biden presidency, and the prospect of the official US recognition of the Armenian Genocide. With these issues in the forefront, as well as a desire to speak to the Armenian community about the Covid pandemic, Levin held the "coffee hour" discussion with Armenian



Rep. Andy Levin

community members over Zoom on Saturday, April 17.

First of all, Levin shared that he found the situation in Artsakh this past year "troubling," and stated that he had personally focused on it in a "pretty bipartisan way". (Based on this discussion, bipartisanism without abandoning his progressive values seems to be a hallmark of Levin's pragmatic political approach.) A member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Levin has a large role in foreign policy issues discussed in Congress. He was one of the original co-sponsors of H.Res. 1165, "Condemning Azerbaijan's military operation in Nagorno-Karabakh and denouncing Turkish interference in the conflict," which was introduced by Representative Jackie Speier of California. Levin also stated that he has urged President Biden to support better relations with Armenia as well as to support Artsakh. Levin shared with community members the fact that Turkey and Azerbaijan are lobbying in a major way in Washington, and spreading false information.

see LEVIN, page 8



Lena Gasparian celebrating Armenian culture

## AIWA Thrive Celebrates Prospering Armenians All Over the World

By Sara Janjigian Trifiro

SAN FRANCISCO — How do we honor our Armenian history while celebrating the global resilience of the Armenian spirit that has thrived for 106 years? That is what Christine Soussa asked the Armenian International Women's Association San Francisco Chapter (AIWA-SF) four years ago. From there, AIWA Thrive was born, an April venture to share stories of individuals from around the world who are positively impacting our community as they lead with purpose.

"It's all about building, honoring and elevating community. We are incredibly inspired by the profound talent and wisdom of our International community. There are so many amazing individuals and teams who enrich their societies in endless ways; we wanted to share these stories" remarks Christine. "When I joined the international board, I shared this vision with the team and they were delighted to support taking Thrive to the next level."

Like seeds from a flower blowing in the wind, Armenians were scattered all over the world and found fertile ground to regrow and Thrive. Some incredible features include Alexandra Narine Kaprielian, head of US distribution for Takri Wines. Kaprielian is working with the team at Takri to rebuild after the loss of several employees and their vineyards as a result of the 2020 war.

Sadly, the story is all too familiar to her. "Our family had vineyards in 1915 which were also taken by the Turks during

see AIWA, page 7



Christine Soussa

## Diocese's Zohrab Information Center Begins New Collaboration with Fordham University

NEW YORK — The Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, under the auspices of Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan, has entered a new agreement with Fordham University, which will reconfigure the director's position of the Zohrab Information Center into a post-doctoral fellowship.

Under the new arrangement, the directorship of the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center has become a rotating position, of two to three years' duration, where each successive director will simultaneously hold a post-doctoral research fellowship at the Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University.

The position will now be officially designated the "Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Armenian Christian Studies, and Director at the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center." Applications are currently being solicited from qualified candidates, with a submission deadline of May 15, 2021.

Application submission details and a job description can be found on the Eastern Diocese's website, here: <https://armenianchurch.us/employment-opportunities/>

The arrangement with Fordham University was pioneered by Dr. Christopher Sheklian during his tenure as Zohrab Center director (2018-2020), with the active encouragement of Findikyan.

"I want to express my thanks to Dr. Sheklian for proposing this exciting new vision for the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center of the Eastern Diocese," said the Primate, himself a former director of the center. "I am fully convinced that this exciting plan will breathe new life into the center, bringing it into the Third Millennium—and thereby more effectively realizing the expectations of its founder, the late Mrs. Dolores Zohrab-Liebmman."

"The plan propels the Zohrab Center to the academic forefront of Armenian Studies globally; draws it more tangibly into Armenian Church Studies, specifically through St. Nersess Seminary; attracts and supports young scholars in Armenian Christianity; and establishes the Zohrab Center more securely into the Diocese's mission and efforts to Build Up the Body of Christ," the Primate said.

### A Rarity in the Academic World

The Zohrab Center's collaborator in this new undertaking, Fordham's Orthodox Christian Studies Center, is a rarity in the academic world: a center dedicated to the study of Orthodox Christianity, which is unaffiliated to a seminary. In recent years the two co-founding directors, George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou, have worked to include the Oriental Orthodox churches in

see ZOHRAB, page 9





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Peace of Art Responds: 'We thank President Biden for Recognizing the Armenian Genocide'

BOSTON – In March 2021, on the eve of the 106th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, Peace of Art, Inc., launched its annual education campaign by displaying electronic billboards in the state of Massachusetts, USA. The message on this year's billboards asks, "Mr. President, with honor, dignity and courage recognize the Armenian Genocide."

The media reacted quickly, as it was broadcast on Armenian public television. The result was noticeable. We received various letters and phone calls from both deniers and supporters. On March 17, Peace of Art, Inc., received an offer to support the installation of a similar static billboard in Cleveland. Then on March 19, the Philadelphia Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee praised our initiative and proposed to erect similar



electronic billboards in Philadelphia and sponsor them. During the month of April 2021, an additional electronic billboard was installed in Massachusetts spon-

sored by the Armenian National Committee of Merrimack Valley.

For the past twenty-five years, Peace of Art, Inc., has continuously called on

America to recognize the Armenian Genocide. On April 24, 2021, President Biden honored his promise and recognized the Armenian Genocide.

An electronic Peace of Art billboard erected on one of the busy highways in the state of Massachusetts presents two alternating screens. On the first screen, we thank President Biden for recognizing the Armenian Genocide, and on the second, we quote President Biden's statement on the occasion of Armenian Remembrance Day: "The American people honor the memory of all Armenians who fell victim to the genocide 106 years ago today." President Joe Biden, April 24, 2021."

Peace of Art, Inc., was formally founded in Massachusetts in 2003, but it has been active since 1996. Peace of Art, Inc., is a non-profit educational organization with no political nor religious affiliations. Peace of Art uses the universal language of art for the betterment of humanity, to promote peaceful solutions to conflict, and the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Peace of Art, Inc., is dedicated to the peacekeepers of the world, all those who risk their lives for the welfare of the people. Since its inception, Peace of Art, Inc., has not requested nor received funding from individuals, organizations or other sources.

## AIWA Thrive Celebrates Prospering Armenians All Over the World

AIWA, from page 6

the genocide so it was very painful to see history repeating itself. But we also decided that we would not allow that to stop us from producing Armenian wine and we have already secured new lands to continue."



Arevik Ashkharoyan, Literary Agent

On April 2, Thrive honored Lena Gasparyan, president of the Armenian Cultural Association, South Australia, who works for the Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia, the state's top organization for culturally and linguistically diverse communities. She states that the Armenian *fedayi* or freedom fighter Sose Mayrik was and is her superhero and she wanted to be just like her, "serving and saving my people." She is clearly following in her

footsteps!

"If you want to see the change, you must be the change," says Teny Avakian who was featured on April 9. She believes investing in children and youth is an obligation of every Armenian, which is why she transitioned to non-profit work as CEO of Girls Of Armenia Leadership Soccer (GOALS). Currently GOALS is working through the Assarian Relief Initiative which seeks to support children of war and those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), creating a safe space to develop skills and work on their physical and mental well-being.

In the past, Thrive has shared the remarkable stories of a wide range of individuals, including children, educators, community leaders, entrepreneurs, artists, and business leaders. They have featured Anahit Stelmashova, an international award winning pianist who was 11 at the time; Joel A. Martin, creator of the incredible Jazzical Komitas; Lucy Mirigian, the oldest Armenian who was featured at the age of 114; educators such as Mary Papazian, president of San Jose State University; business leaders such as Nina Achadjian, Partner at Index Ventures, and many more.

Most recently, AIWA Thrive recognized Arevik Ashkharoyan, a literary agent with ten years of experience in publishing. In 2016, she established ARI Literary and Talent Agency, representing a dozen writers of Armenian origin from all over the world. ARI Foundation is also supporting the Armenian community with Write in Armenia International Writing Camp, Zabel International Women Writers Forum, and Let's Read! (ARI Kardanq) book clubs to ensure there are inspired writers throughout the community.

Soussa's dream for Thrive is to continue building and bringing our global community together. Read and follow AIWA Thrive at <https://aiwainternational.org/Thrive/> and nominate an AIWA Thrive honoree at [info@AIWAinter-](mailto:info@AIWAinter-)



Narine Kaprielian, Head of US Distribution for Takri Wines  
[national.org](http://national.org).

AIWA connects, inspires and empowers Armenian women throughout the world to bring about positive change in their lives and in their communities. This year AIWA is celebrating its 30th anniversary.





COMMUNITY NEWS

Rep. Levin Expresses Support for Armenian Community at Virtual Coffee Hour

LEVIN, from page 6

Question and Answer Session

As the floor was opened to questions, Levin was asked “what’s your driving force behind your support of the Armenian community?” Though he seemed to find the question unexpected, his answer came quite naturally. “The Armenian community is not an abstraction to me,” Levin stated, and shared that growing up in Metro Detroit and being part of the Levin family in politics, there was always a relationship with the Armenian community. He recalled yearly attendance at the St. John’s food festival/bazaar in Southfield, as well as other Armenian affairs and interactions/relationships with the Armenian community.

Levin further shared his personal experiences. “Growing up Jewish in [the Detroit suburbs]...there was a ton of anti-Semitism,” even to the extent of other children asking why if he was a Jew he “didn’t have horns.” These early experiences led Levin to a place where he is “always for the underdog, and religious minorities around the world.” He mentioned that “National borders grow up because of random things and historical accident. Artsakh is an Armenian place but surrounded by Azerbaijan, so [the issue is] how do you protect people?”

He added that he is also an opponent of Islamophobia, while at the same time has always taken a stand for religious minorities in majority-Muslim countries. Notably, since Levin represents the Detroit suburb of Sterling Heights, “I represent the most Iraqi-born people of the whole House. And it’s mostly Chaldeans.” (Chaldeans are the Aramaic-speaking Catholic natives of Northern Iraq, who in the US primarily live in the state of Michigan.) “I’m out there fighting for them. When Trump became president they started to mass deport Iraqi nationals.” Levin shared that the deportations were done to anyone who had

committed a crime, and while these crimes might have been real, they could be minor infractions. Twenty years after a minor infraction, the individual is a contributing member of society who runs his own business and goes to church every week, yet the government is trying to deport him. This was a major issue in Michigan a few years ago and Levin stated that he has “spent a huge amount of time trying to help the Chaldean communities.”

Levin further stated that he stands up for religious minorities and the underdog everywhere, no matter who it is. He gave the example that as a young man he studied Tibetan Buddhism, and planned on a career as

“NATIONAL BORDERS GROW UP BECAUSE OF RANDOM THINGS AND HISTORICAL ACCIDENT. ARTSAKH IS AN ARMENIAN PLACE BUT SURROUNDED BY AZERBAIJAN, SO [THE ISSUE IS] HOW DO YOU PROTECT PEOPLE?”

a professor of Asian religions. Yet, he found that his zeal for Tibetan human rights led him more naturally to a career in politics. Levin stated, “I love Buddhism, but yet in Myanmar the Buddhist majority is oppressing the Muslim minority.” Levin passionately concluded in relation to the oppression of religious minorities and Armenians in particular, “We cannot let it happen. We must protect Artsakh, and I will not stop.”

POW and Foreign Aid Issues

Levin was asked whether he has been aware of or advocating for the release of Armenian POWs held by the Azerbaijan. He responded that he was aware of it and “We’re trying to raise it up with the Biden administration and say that we need to use the levers that we have in diplomatic relations to force Azerbaijan’s hand,” and that “we are trying to pressure Azerbaijan and Turkey.”

In relation to foreign aid from the US to Armenia, Levin stated that he was “pushing for increased aid in the new budget.” He added that he thought “we will achieve increased aid, but it’s part of the whole package.” Levin also shared that “there’s a new isolation in the Trump wing of the Republican party that is hostile to foreign aid.” He added that even Republican politicians who were not “Trump Republicans” fear the electoral backlash from the “Trump wing” of the party and have taken a more isolationist approach to foreign aid and other issues. For this reason, Levin stated “It’s hard to build bipartisan consensus. I think we will have more aid, but it is difficult.”

Levin was also asked about the little-known Trump memorandum with the Turkish government, which suggests that Turkey has the right to reclaim any historical artifacts held within the US that originated on Turkish soil. Because the memorandum was signed on the last day of Trump’s administration, and the issue has been overshadowed by the Armenian POW issue and other issues related to Artsakh, few are aware of it. Yet, the status of Armenian heritage artifacts originating in Anatolia and which are held by Armenian groups in America and even by such institutions as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, are in danger. Levin responded honestly that he was not aware of the issue but would look into it, and thanked the questioner for bringing it to his attention, because “it’s important” even if POWs and Artsakh are a priority right now. A few days later a communique from his office shared

that they were planning to bring the issue up with the State Department.

Armenian Genocide Recognition

In regard to a question about President Biden’s possible recognition of the Armenian Genocide this year, Levin stated “we won’t let him not” recognize is. Levin stated that “learning about these things, holding up their truth” is very important and that “no country should think they are immune.” Unfortunately, there are countries like Turkey that “try to deny the reality of history,” and that if we let that happen we might allow history to repeat itself, Levin said. [This report was written before April 24.]

In the same regard, Levin discussed his relationship with Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-NY), who is now chairman of the Foreign Affairs committee. In the past, Meeks had not necessarily been a supporter of Artsakh. Levin stated that “I realized Meeks was going to win and I’m going to help him. I am convinced it was the right thing to do. We have a more active foreign affairs committee than we have had in the past. I don’t know his history, but he wants to empower the membership of the committee as a whole, and be a chair that earns the loyalty of his membership.” Levin added that “I think chairman Meeks is going to be fine on this issue.”

Levin believes in regard to foreign policy and the US role in the world, “it’s not about being the big kid in the sandbox. It’s about playing a constructive role and leading.” He added “the truth is not negotiable – the truth of history...to have a healthy future we have to, not just admit it, but sit with it.”

Levin also discussed various subjects of general interest such as the pandemic, and trade agreements (which he believes have gutted American industry, an issue important to Michiganders).

OBITUARY

Alice Haidostian  
Concert Pianist and Fundraiser

BLOOMFIELD HILLS, Mich. — Alice Berberian Haidostian, born September 21, 1925 in Highland Park, MI, passed away peacefully at her home on March 24, 2021. As she was frequently known to say in her later years...“I have lived a great life.”

She was preceded in death by her parents, Siroun and Haroutune (Harry) Berberian. She was the oldest of four children, Hasmig Imirzian, Ara Berberian and Balig Stein. Her sister Balig survives.

Her marriage to Dr. Berj H. Haidostian on October 1, 1949 lasted until his death in March 1993. Theirs was a marriage of great love, respect and commitment to each other. They were the parents of Cynthia (Roy) Wilbanks, Ypsilanti; Christine (Michael) Garry, Barrington, Ill.; and Dicran (Aralynn) Haidostian, Bloomfield Hills.

In addition to her children, she is survived by five grandchildren: Lauren Garry (Brandt Brownlee), Armen (Erica) Garry, Kristen (Michael) Oziemkowski, Allison (David) Baron, and Lisa (Connor) Gants. She had five great-grandchildren, Kyleigh and Jay Oziemkowski, Maya Garry, Elina and Jack Baron, Mara Gants; and two more on the way.

She leaves behind nieces and nephews, cousins and many, many friends. A celebration of her full and impactful life will be held later this spring. When finalized, additional information will be available through the Edward Korkoian Funeral Home website - [www.ekfh.net](http://www.ekfh.net).



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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Diocese's Zohrab Center Begins New Collaboration with Fordham University

ZOHRAB, from page 6  
the center's orbit, and to advocate a broadly ecumenical approach to the study of Christian Orthodoxy.

"By working with the Orthodox Christian Studies Center, the Eastern Diocese, through its unique institution of the Zohrab Information Center, has the possibility to support and even transform the academic study of Armenian Christianity in America," said Sheklian in a description of the vision behind the new agreement.

"At this moment, there are only a handful of academic positions in Armenian Studies in the United States, and other than at St. Nersess Seminary, there is not a single position dedicated specifically to the study of Armenian Christianity," he said. "Through this joint venture, the Diocese will simultaneously ensure the dynamic future of the Zohrab Information Center while offering crucial support to the

study of Armenian Christianity in America."

As a practical matter, the director will be based at the Zohrab Center itself, which occupies a suite of offices, research library, and presentation facility at the Diocesan Center in New York. As an integral mem-

ber of the Diocesan staff, the director will be expected to contribute to Diocesan ministries projects, and the cultural and educational life of the community. The agreement makes provision for the director to spend some time in research and teaching at Fordham University (located in uptown

Manhattan), and stipulates that one day per week should be spent at St. Nersess Seminary's Armonk, NY, campus.

The position is open to candidates with a Ph.D. in a field related to Armenian Studies, and command of at least one dialect of Armenian. According to the terms of the agreement between the Diocese and Fordham, the selection committee assessing applicants will include a representative from the Diocesan Council and a member of St. Nersess Seminary's faculty; additionally the Diocesan Council must approve the committee's selection before any candidate is sent to Fordham University for its approval.

### About the Zohrab Center

The Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center was established by the Eastern Diocese three decades ago as a resource, research, and teaching facility to promote Armenian studies, and to assist students, scholars, the Armenian community and general public in deepening their appreciation for Armenian faith, history, civilization, and culture. It was established through the generous gift of Mrs. Dolores Zohrab Liebmann, in memory of her parents: Krikor and Clara Zohrab.

Krikor Zohrab was one of the towering Armenian intellectual leaders in Constantinople, who lost his life in the Genocide of 1915.

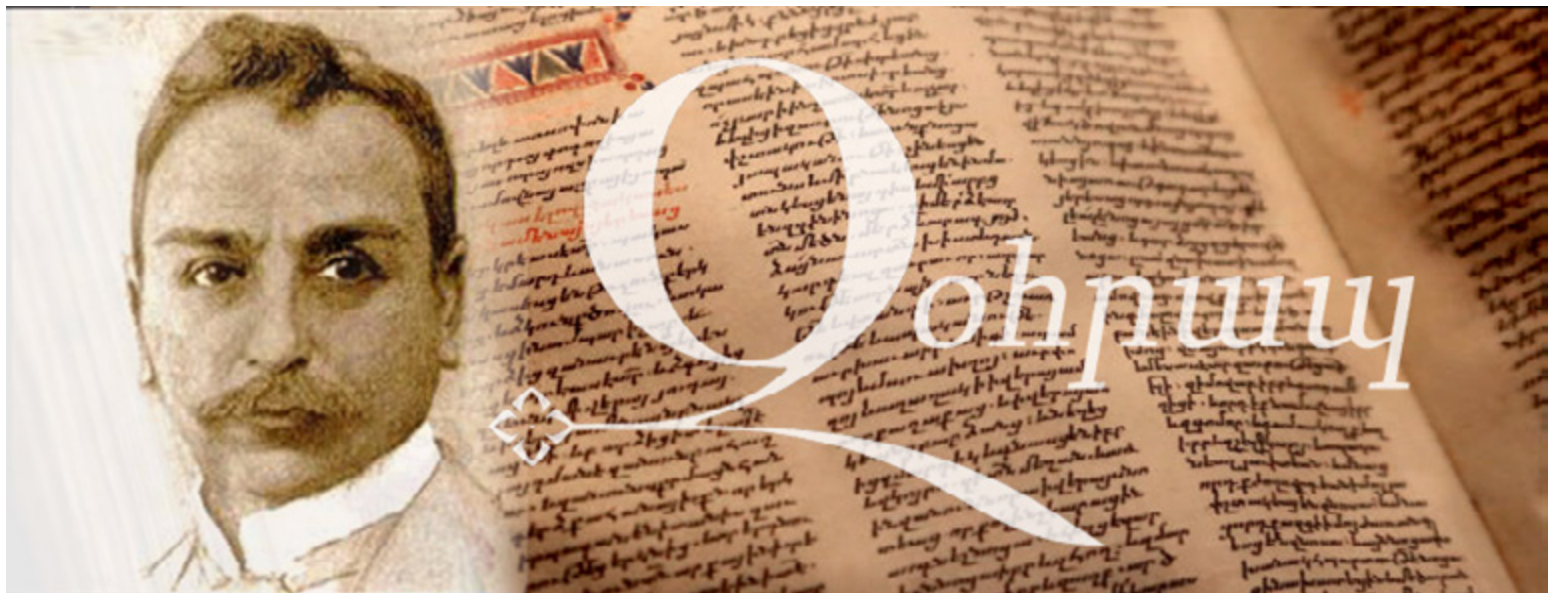
Vasken I, the late Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, presided over the Zohrab Center's dedication ceremony on November 8, 1987, during the primacy of the late Archbishop Torkom Manoogian.

Since its founding, the Zohrab Center has enjoyed a distinguished lineage of scholars serving as director and assistant director, including Fr. Krikor Maksoudian, Rachel Goshgarian, Aram Arkun, Fr. (now Bishop) Daniel Findikyan, and Christopher Sheklian. At present, its interim director is Jesse Arlen, a scholar in the field of Armenian theology and early Christian studies who is completing his doctorate at UCLA.

Under every administrator, the heart of the center has always been its research library, whose holdings exceed 40,000 books, periodicals, photographs, and assorted resources in all areas of Armenian Studies.

Of special note would be the center's collection of Armenian periodicals and newspapers from across the world; its vast collection of 19th/20th-century Armenian literature; and a precious treasury of rare books and manuscripts. A number of titles are found in no other library in the western hemisphere.

Learn more about the Eastern Diocese's Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center, and follow its activities on its website, [www.zohrabcenter.org](http://www.zohrabcenter.org), and its Facebook page. Click the link to find a job description for the Postdoctoral Research Fellow and Director position.



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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Nora Azadian

## Celebrating an Artist's Purposeful Life

AZADIAN, from page 1

### Early Childhood

Nora was born into a privileged family in Alexandria. Both sides of her family were involved in professional theater. Even her paternal grandfather, Kevork Ipekian, had been on the stage, although he was an entrepreneur who had moved from Samson to Alexandria to introduce cigarette manufacturing in Egypt, while two other brothers, Gaspard Ipekian and Armen Ipekian, acted professionally in the Armenian and European theater world.

Gaspard Ipekian's wife, Hripsig, had just finished reading Henrik Ibsen's play, "A Doll's House," when Nora was born. Therefore, she suggested naming her newborn great-niece after the protagonist in the play. Destiny had decided that Nora would grow up and assume the role of Nora in an Armenian translation of "A Doll's House."

Nora attended Armenian elementary school, and the rest of her schooling was in French at the Lycée Français of Cairo, from which she graduated with a baccalaureate. Her superb Armenian was learned in the family home and the community. In addition, she possessed a working command of English and Greek.



Nora Azadian with her former daughter-in-law Nora Armani



Nora Azadian and her son, Gerald Papasian

Nora's mother, Chake Damadian Ipekian, was an accomplished pianist and actress in the Armenian theater. For a long time, she served as president of the Armenian Artistic Union in Cairo. Her father, Aghassi, was the director of sales at the Ipekian Cigarette Company, while he volunteered as the administrator of the theater group of the Armenian Artistic Union.

Nora's training in the piano was under the rigorous guidance of her aunt, Nevart Damadian, a concert pianist and professional Cairo Conservatory of Music.

Nora's favorite composer was Chopin, whose waltzes comprised her main repertoire, although she also played Bach and Beethoven.

### Development in Arts

Nora studied art for four years at the studio of prominent Egyptian-Armenian Ashod Zorian, where her classmates included the ex-queen of Egypt Farida, Parisian caricaturist Edmond Kiraz, Yasmin, Joe and Shushan Egoyan (Atom Egoyan's parents), Arte Topalian and Rose Papasian.

Later on, she received an arts degree from the ABC Art School in Paris.

In the 1950s through 1970s, the majority of Egyptian artists were of Armenian extraction and even the local Egyptian talents were the students of the Armenian artists.

The artists who dominated the art market in Egypt included Ashod Zorian, Onnig Avedissian, Puzant (Gojmanian), Simon Samsonian, Alexander Saroukhan, Hagop Hagopian and Hrant Antranikian.

Nora developed her artistic talent early on to join that group of artists, among whom she held her own.

Nora participated regularly in Cairo's annual salon. She held individual art shows and participated in group shows in Egypt, Lebanon, Armenia, Europe and the United States, mostly to critical acclaim.

She was the first one to introduce in Egypt textile paintings and her exhibitions featured women's dresses, scarves, tablecloths and items in Mondrian's design or in abstractions of her imagination.

She had a mastery of watercolor, wherein she exhibited spontaneity, poetry and command of vivid colors. Her oil paintings were heavier, allocating dignity and grace to street vendors or veiled Egyptian female figures.

In later years, she realized she had been an astute portraitist, without giving too much thought to the genre.

Writing in *Journal D'Egypt*, art critic Antoine Gennaoui stated: "Four paintings by Nora Azadian emanate ravishing grace, a grace more beautiful than beauty itself. This master of portraits subtly deforms her 'Two Nubian Figures,' enveloping them in vivid light and rare colors of a sensuous art."

Armenian-American sculptor Ruben Nakian, after viewing her art show in Boston, wrote in the guest book, "There is nothing static in Nora Azadian's art, everything is moving in graceful patterns."

### Educator in Art

Nora was a passionate teacher of art. She always looked for young talents to train and guide in the fundamentals of art and to impart to them her philosophy.

This method of teaching art was derived from Herbert Reed's book *Education Through Art*. She taught art in the Lycée Français, the French nuns' school and the Kalousdian Armenian School.

After moving to Detroit, she taught Armenian history through art at the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Alex and Marie Manoogian School.

She never promoted her art as vigorously as those of her students. Her students in Egypt have won gold medals at international art competitions at UNESCO in Warsaw, and Shankar in India.

In addition to teaching art, she ran her art studio where advanced students took lessons. She would put her heart and soul into the students' development. She never isolated the visual arts from other artistic expressions, as she believed in overall development of the artist, who should also be well-versed in music, theater, opera, etc.

Many of her students chose professions in the artistic



Nora Azadian with Varteni Mosdichyan at left



field, but she molded two particular talents to attain international fame: Chant Avedissian and Varteni Mosdichyan.

Avedissian's life and destiny in particular were complicated. He was brought back from the brink by Nora Azadian. Chant came from a difficult background, directionless and undisciplined, a potential high-school dropout. The exasperated Kalousdian administration decided to expel the unruly student. Nora raised hell with them



Nora Azadian with her husband, Edmond, right, and son, Gerald Papasian behind her.

to retain Chant at school and challenged them by stating, "Tomorrow you will be as proud of Chant as you were with the famous French-Armenian artist Carzou," who also had graduated from the Kalousdian School.

Lo and behold, Chant Avedissian became an artist no less prominent than Carzou, with one painting in the permanent collection of the British Museum in London, and two pieces at the Smithsonian in Washington. Eventually he vindicated Nora's prophesy.

### Performing Arts

During her student years at the French Lycée, Nora was absorbed in studying the French classics. Later on, with a perfect command of the language, she joined a French-speaking drama group, assuming lead roles in plays by Moliere, Racine and Corneil. But most of her dramatic activity was confined to the Armenian theater.

She both directed and assumed major roles in Armenian plays. Cairo's Armenian Artistic Union sponsored a theater group under the guidance of a professional movie director, Vahe Boyadjian. Most of the actors were either professionals or semi-professionals. Because of the paucity of Armenian dramatic literature, the group ventured to translate plays from European playwrights. Nora played the lead role in the Armenian plays by Yervant Odian ("The French-Turkish War"), Shirvanzadeh

*continued on next page*





COMMUNITY NEWS



Nora and Edmond Azadian with Richard Manougian at left from previous page (“Armenuhin”) and Michael Gurjian (“Twenty Years later”). She also performed plays translated into Armenian, such as Marcel Pagnol (“Topaz”), Alejandro Cassona (“Trees Die Upright;” The Boat without the Fisherman”) and others.

Nora exercised a very strict discipline when it came to preparing to take the stage. As a result she dominated the stage with a tremendous stage presence.

Egyptian-Armenian playwright Baruyr Massikian had characterized Nora’s voice as “the oboe in a symphony orchestra.”

As part of her performing arts, she attained a reputation for her recitation of Armenian poetry. Her erudition in literature combined with her dramatic skills made her one of the prominent interpreters of Armenian poetry.

She specialized in reciting and interpreting the poetry of Vahan Tekeyan, and some works by Arshag Chobanian, which she did as close to perfection as possible.

Tekeyan was a friend of Mihran Damadian, Nora’s grandfather, and a frequent family guest.

The poet himself had taught Nora how to recite his poems.



Nora Azadian with the UCLA Vem Ensemble 2019



Hagop Alexanian with a sketch of Vahan Tekeyan by Nora Azadian

Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.



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May 1, 2021

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Edmond Y. Azadian  
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Dear Edmond,

The Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada learned with great sorrow of the loss of your life’s companion and great love, Nora Ipekian Azadian. We and the members of the Tekeyan Cultural Association in North America and throughout the world feel as if we too have lost a family member, one of great refinement who served as a shining example for several generations of true service to Armenian culture and the Armenian nation.

She passed down to us the spirit of her maternal grandfather Mihran Damadian, the great revolutionary and Armenian Democratic Liberal Party leader who strove all his life to fight for Armenia and our heritage. She transmitted to us what she learned at the hands of the great poet Vahan Tekeyan, and helped keep his legacy alive.

Nora Azadian was a talented artist who not only created her own art, but nurtured new generations of artists both in Egypt and in the United States. Chant Avedissian is but one example. She taught Armenian art and history for many years in Armenian schools. As a skilled pianist, her aesthetic skills extended to the realm of music, and even to her person, as she was a paradigm of elegance.

In short, she was someone unique who added much good to this world. Her optimism and passion coupled with an intellectual’s view of the world no doubt made life in the Armenian diaspora brighter and better, and we were lucky to benefit along with you. The great example of your mutual love and care stands as an inspiration to all couples.

Nora Azadian will be missed sorely. The Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association expresses its profound condolences to you on behalf of its members and supporters. We wish you the consolation of her everlasting memory and strength through your sorrow. Nora’s shining star remains in all our hearts and souls as an inspiration and guiding light.

Sincerely,

Hagop Vartivarian  
Secretary

Dr. Arshavir Gundjian  
Vice President

ems. Hagop Avedikian, the editor of Azg newspaper in Yerevan, wrote in his obituary about Nora Azadian, that Tekeyan’s poem, “The Armenian Spirit” (Hayoo Hokin), “was as if it were written for Nora Azadian.” Nora drew a dramatic portrait of Tekeyan.

Social and Family Life

Nora’s parents and grandparents had all been part of the political and artistic elite of Egypt. Their homes often served as salons for literary and artistic gatherings, where writers, musicians, members of the clergy and artists would mingle. Therefore, Nora could not imagine a different lifestyle. That is why she continued that tradition herself, at her homes in Cairo, Boston and finally Detroit.

Nora served as president of the Tekeyan Cultural Association in Detroit for 13 years, organizing art shows, staging plays, concerts and exuberant Christmas parties. She also served for 30 years on the Fine Arts Committee of St. John’s Armenian Church and together with Zabel Belian and the other committee members, brought to life the Armenian art world in Detroit.



Nora Azadian with Diana Alexanian



Nora Azadian, Edmond Azadian and Nora Armani

She had one son, actor Gerald Papasian, from her first marriage. Gerald is following in the footsteps of his mother and the rest of his family and is a professional actor and director based in Yerevan and Paris.

Nora married writer and editor Edmond Y. Azadian. They had much in common; their lifestyle and their philosophies were perfect matches. They had a harmonious and loving family. The one sore point was that Nora had been a graceful dancer of Viennese waltzes while Edmond was an awkward dancer and could not keep up with her. It was her only frustration in life that she and her husband could not manage a single decent dance together.

As the last chapter of her life is concluded, the reverberations of her lush recitations will remain in the memory of all who had met her. She had touched many lives with compassion, grace and dignity. They all remember her aristocratic and artistic personality as expressed through her humility.



# Arts & Culture

A CONVERSATION WITH...

## Shayne David Hyrapiet

*‘We Are More Indian Than Armenian’*

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/KOLKATA — Shayne David Hyrapiet, is an Indian singer and professional entertainer of Armenian descent who rose to fame as a vocalist after winning a series of competitions during his schooling years. The Indian mass media called him “a phenomenal versatile track performer the city of Kolkata has produced over the last decade.”

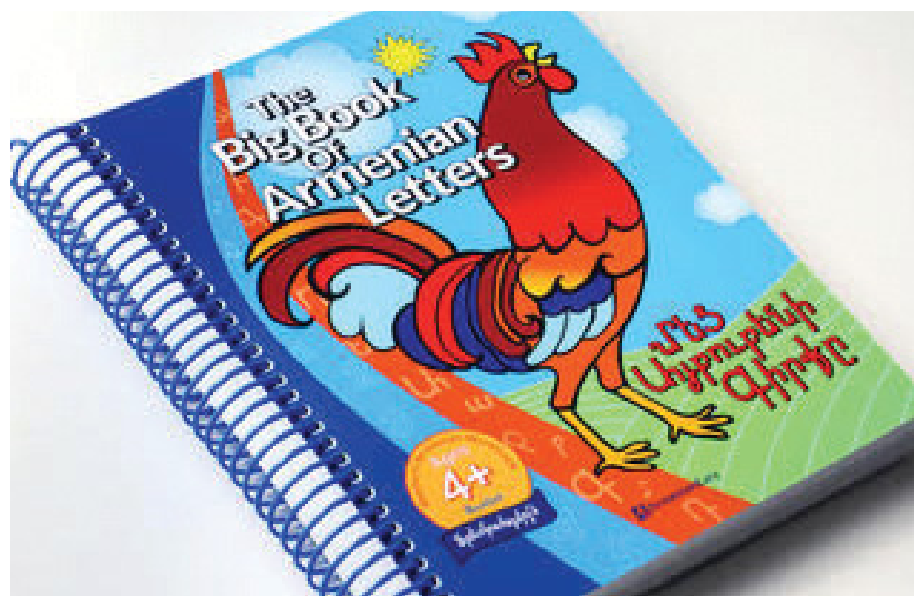
Born on May 21, 1980, he has been singing since 2001 and has now become one of the most recognized faces in the entertainment circuit in India with an equally large international market to compliment his growing popularity.

Shayne has covered over 400 events spanning solo concerts, corporate launches, private parties, weddings, sangeets and club nights. His list of music spans the very latest and best Bollywood hits, Punjabi Bhangra, the good old Hindi remixes and English hits covering the genres of rock and roll, ballads, disco and pop. Shayne has performed with Shaan, Bombay Viking, Atif Aslam, Stereo Nation, Shibani Kashyap, Jal, Sukhbir, Kunal Ganjawala, K.K. and has also performed for the President of India. Shayne has performed in Canada, the United States, and Middle East and has toured Switzerland, Australia, Bangladesh and India extensively.



Shayne, I first heard about you in the Indian documentary “My Armenian Neighborhood” by Samimitra Das about the Armenians in today’s India. Your name in Armenian is pronounced Hayrapet. How do the Indians and Westerns pronounce your name?

see HYRAPIET, page 15



## Sisters Publish Preschool Armenian Alphabet Book, Carrying on Mother’s Legacy of Teaching

By Harry Kezelian  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

DETROIT — Hourig Toukhanian Jacobs was one of those people who seem to singlehandedly keep the Armenian culture alive.

For some 50 years she was active in the Metro Detroit area as an Armenian language teacher with Armenian Relief Society-affiliated schools. She was translator, a cataloguer at the Armenian Research Center at University of Michigan — Dearborn, and an expert on Armenian history and culture who was often asked to speak at community affairs, meetings of the still-active Van-Vasbouragan society, and elsewhere. She was an active member of the Armenian Congregational Church of Greater Detroit where she headed up the Sunday School, served on the board of deacons, and spoke at parish events and women’s gatherings.

When Toukhanian Jacobs passed away in 2017, it was an immense loss not only to her family but to all Armenians in Metro Detroit. Yet from that loss, two of her daughters were propelled — by necessity if nothing else — to innovate in the field of Armenian-language education.

### Filling a Need

Jennifer (Jacobs) Mullen, a former high school math teacher, and daughter of Toukhanian Jacobs, had a problem. Having decided to home-school her children, she knew they wouldn’t have the benefit of the Armenian-language environment of Southfield’s AGBU Manoogian School, and the Detroit-area extracurricular Armenian schools were held far from where she lived. But having been taught fluent Armenian by her mother, Mullen said to herself “I can do it at home.”

Yet, Mullen had planned all along to rely on her mother to bolster her kids’ Armenian education. Toukhanian Jacobs, unsatisfied with the existing materials, had almost always created her own curriculum and was an expert educator. But with her mother gone and unable to devise handmade lessons, Mullen had to begin her own search for printed materials.

First, she went to another pillar of the Armenian community, Gyumri-born “Digin” Anahit Toumajan. (When Armenians from Detroit mention the word “Digin” by itself, they only mean one person — Toumajan, another long-time Armenian language educator.) Toumajan supplied her with useful materials — useful for kindergarten, Mullen says. It wasn’t what she was looking for.

Mullen felt there was a specific lack of books for pre-school age children. Mullen wanted a Western Armenian equivalent to the big workbooks produced for American preschoolers to learn the alphabet. Mullen didn’t find much, and what she did find, she felt to be out-of-date compared to what was available for learning American English.

Mullen reached out to her older sister, Cathy Jacobs Brito, an artist who had assisted their mother in her Armenian language classes growing up and had often designed/drawn the lesson materials. And so was born the project of creating an alphabet work book that would serve the practical needs of Armenian children in the Diaspora: The Big Book of Armenian Letters.



Hourig Toukhanian with her Kharpersi mother Eugenie, in Beirut, 1963

see ALPHABET, page 13

## ‘Celestial Music’ Comes Down to Earth During Eastern Diocese’s Sacred Music Festival

NEW YORK — The Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America held its third “Sacred Music Festival” on Friday and Saturday, April 16-17. Conceived by the Diocese’s Sacred Music Council at the instigation of Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan, the festival was a celebration of Armenian liturgical music, featuring educational presentations and recitals.

Like its immediate predecessor, the Spring 2021 Sacred Music Festival went forward as an online gathering this time with an international flavor — under the theme “The Holy Badarak: Our Musical Sacrament.”

The Sacred Music Council held its first festival in 2019, as a live event in Evanston, IL. A year later, under the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, the fall 2020 festival was held as an online event — and actually expanded its reach among the public, inspiring additional online workshops and gatherings for musicians in subsequent months.

“Naturally, the circumstances forced us to move to a virtual celebration of the festival last Fall,” explained Fr. Hovhan Khoja-Eynatyan, pastor of the St. James of Nisibis Church of Evanston, IL, chairman of the Sacred Music Council, and a deeply learned professional musician in his own right. “While we are missing the physical presence of each other and musical fellowship, the online format has allowed us to bring together people from all the parts of the United States and Europe.”

“It’s been a successful experiment,” he added, “and we plan to continue offering online events in the future even after the current crisis has passed.”

### A Sublime, Celestial Art

Following a Friday evening vespers service, Findikyan opened the festival with a welcome to the participants, before turning the program over to a special guest presentation.

That presentation, broadcast live from Europe, was a lecture-recital by the internationally-known conductor, musician, and scholar Dr. Haig Utidjian, titled “The Celestial Melodies of the Divine Liturgy.” Dr. Utidjian, who is also an ordained deacon, illuminated the rich history of Armenian sacred music, revealing the origin and evolution of its melodies, hymns, and chants.

The lecture expertly wove together examples of hymns written by our church fathers, ranging from 12th-century figures like Khachadour of Daron and St. Nersess Shnorhali, to such 19th and 20th-century eminences as Pietro Bianchini, Komitas Vartabed, and Amy Aparcar. Dr. Haig offered soulful renditions of these lesser-known melodies, granting

see FESTIVAL, page 16





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Sisters Carrying on Mother's Legacy of Teaching

ALPHABET, from page 12

## A Powerful Legacy

Born in Beirut, Lebanon and educated at the famed Nshan Palanjian Jemaran, the authors' mother, Hourig Toukhanian Jacobs, immigrated to Detroit in the late 1960s and attended Wayne State University. There, she obtained her education degree, focusing in foreign language teaching with a major in French and a minor in Spanish. An interesting piece of trivia is the fact that Toukhanian played for the Homenetmen basketball team in Lebanon during her Jemaran days, and tried out for basketball at Wayne State, where the coaches, observing her not-so-fluid movements, put her on the JV team. Then Toukhanian surprised them all. "They put her in for one game, and after seeing her play, immediately moved her up to Varsity. She didn't move in a fluid way but she could see the plays, she was that kind of player."

After completing her required student teaching at Mumford High School in Detroit, Toukhanian Jacobs devoted the rest of her life to the Armenian community. At first, she taught at the Armenian Relief Society day school in Dearborn. But Metro Detroit's mid-size Armenian community didn't have the population to support more than one day school. The ARS closed down their school and AGBU Manoogian in Southfield became the only choice for parents wishing to give their children an Armenian day school education.

But the ARS continued to fill an educational need. Those parents who wanted to enroll their children in the



Sisters (left to right) Jennifer (Jacobs) Mullen and Cathy Jacobs Brito

public schools to have a mainstream American educational experience, but also send them to "Saturday School" as had been typical since the 1920s, looked to the once-a-week classes that the ARS set up under the Zavarian name. Due to this state of affairs, depending on their educational preferences, Armenians from both sides of the political spectrum attended the ARS Zavarian school, and Armenians from both sides attended the AGBU Manoogian school — a fact that has contributed significantly to community cohesion in the Metro Detroit area.

Toukhanian Jacobs became one of the most-loved teachers in the ARS "Zavarian" one-day school program. Teaching primarily out of West Bloomfield, Toukhanian Jacobs, having the benefit of a American college education and a stellar Armenian education at Lebanon's Jemaran, was renowned for her ability to tailor her lessons for students who didn't necessarily speak Armenian with their parents. When she got to Detroit in the late 1960s, that was

almost all of them.

"My mom was an Armenian teacher and almost always created her own curriculum," says Mullen. "She had the special ability to teach kids that didn't speak Armenian in the home. In the beginning it was kids who spoke with grandparents. Then it was kids who heard Armenian spoken around them, but didn't really understand much of it. Then it was kids who were Armenian, went to church, but didn't know anything of the language. Finally, toward the end, she was teaching non-Armenian spouses how to speak Armenian."

## Armenian Easy

Toukhanian Jacobs' motto was to make Armenian easy. And so the sisters have branded their first product under the company name "Armenian Easy." The alphabet book is their first, but they plan to come out with more in the future.

Toukhanian Jacobs used to give it "piece by piece to the kids," Mullen says. The Big Book of Armenian Letters attempts to do the same. Multiple pages of assignments are geared toward the same set of three letters of the Armenian alphabet. Then the child moves on to the next three letters. The lessons are repetitive to a grown-up eye but are set up in a way that is fun and engaging for preschoolers and allows them to learn the alphabet by repetition in a way that they won't find boring. The authors are confident it will work, because rather than patterning the lessons after previous Armenian-language materials, they copied in a large part the format of some of the best-selling products on the market for American preschoolers.

The book has other features. The instructions such as "color in the square with the letter App," are written entirely in Armenian. Some parents who don't speak Armenian and saw a preview of the book were disappointed they couldn't read it themselves to help their child with the lessons. But there is a purpose behind that, and actually Mullen and Brito are aiming to reach out to that population. "There are a lot of people who don't speak Armenian, but they want their children to learn Armenian. We are trying to serve that population. But we wanted the book to be an immersive experience. If the child sees the English letters, their eyes will go to that and not focus on the less familiar Armenian letters. As for the parents who don't speak or who don't read Armenian, there are in depth descriptions and instructions of each lesson in video form on our website, which users can subscribe to for a minimal fee."

Indeed, the Armenian Easy website has extremely helpful videos by Mullen narrating in a simple way and with a gentle voice the instructions for each page of the book. The first few pages' corresponding videos are free to look at. "Another thing is that I wish they would show you what's in the book. When we were searching for materials, it just would say what the book was and how much it was, maybe show the cover. I thought, 'We need to show people what's in this book.'" The website allows consumers to take a peek inside the book and see if it looks like something they would find useful.

There are other reasons the book is entirely in Armenian. First of all, the authors made the instructions kid-centric rather than teacher centric. Instead of the old-fashioned Armenian format using the infinitive, which translates as, for example "to color the box red", because the child is to color the box red, Brito and Mullen's book has written in Armenian "color the box red" using the imperative form of the verb. This will also help the parent who has some Armenian language knowledge to remember the correct word to use with their child. Also, Brito and Mullen hope the book can be used throughout the Diaspora, so there is



Hourig Toukhanian Jacobs, Detroit-area Armenian language teacher

a minimum of English content and most of the book is in Armenian, "so it can be used, say in Argentina or in other countries of the Diaspora," says Mullen.

The book is 320 pages and is illustrated by Brito, including a colorful cover. Farm and zoo animals and other features of typical American children's learning materials are included, along with some ethnic Armenian references. An interesting feature of the book is that the reader is informed that certain letters, for example the second letter of the Armenian Alphabet, Pen, "sounds like the 'p' in pen," with a sidenote, "It should have a sound somewhere between 'p' and 'b'." This nuance is all but lost in modern Western Armenian speech." The sisters were led to include this valuable information by their mother's upbringing. "My grandmother was born in Kharpert, but raised in an orphanage, so she learned the Armenian they taught in the orphanage, how it's spoken today. But her older brother had grown up in Kharpert and he pronounced the letters a slightly different way, which is how they are really supposed to be. Unfortunately, that has been lost, but it was often a topic of discussion in our family." Given that various authorities have stated that the Kharpert dialect is among the closest of the regional dialects to the written Western Armenian language, this theory makes some sense.

The stated audience of the book is "children age 4" but it "can be used for children as young as 3 and up to age 6, depending on the child." The introduction also states that "the creators believe this workbook can be beneficial to: pre-kindergarten Armenian school students, children of families who are unable to attend an Armenian school, and young children whose parents desire them to continue practicing Armenian lessons over the summer or other breaks from school." The book further states that the goal is to "provide Western Armenian educational materials for young children in the diaspora" and "facilitate Armenian language learning for all, including those who may not have the benefit of hearing Armenian spoken in their homes."

## Armenian Pharmacists to Hold Online Auction on Mother's Day to Benefit Armenian Wounded Heroes

BOSTON — The Armenian American Pharmacists' Association ([AAPHA.org](http://AAPHA.org)) is a charitable non-profit organization of pharmacists of Armenian heritage dedicated to serving the Armenian community. With Mother's Day approaching the AAPHA fundraising committee, the Friends of AAPHA and Armenian businesses spanning from MA to CA together welcome the public to the first ever, on-line Mother's Day Auction fundraising event from April 25th to May 8th with proceeds to benefit the Armenian Wounded Heroes Fund ([armenianwoundedheroes.com](http://armenianwoundedheroes.com)).

Bidding for Mother's Day gifts couldn't be easier, sign up for a free account with [Biddingforgood.com/armenianampharm](http://Biddingforgood.com/armenianampharm) and explore the one-of-a-kind services offered by The Indoor Oasis a new relaxation Spa and Newton Chiropractic and Wellness Center, health and beauty gifts, yoga classes, fine jewelry, specialty Travel Service and gift-certificates to restaurants.

For fans of Netflix's smash hit documentary series, "This Is a Robbery," don't miss out on bidding for this lot. acclaimed, author of *Master Thieves*, Stephen Kurkjian, has donated a one-hour virtual private presenta-

tion on how his book played a major role in the success of the series! Included also original works of fine art and Armenian coffee lovers will enjoy freshly ground Armenian coffee from San Francisco's Henry's House of Coffee along with a gift set of Armenian coffee cup and dessert plates donated by CA-based Illustrator, Arpi Krikorian but there's more...our corporate sponsor, La Perla Home, [laperlahome.com](http://laperlahome.com) of Montrose, CA donated Noah's Ark centerpiece by Michael Aram and [ZatikNatural.com](http://ZatikNatural.com) donated exclusive gift sets of skin, body, hair, and health products!

No interest in bidding, contribute any amount in the designated area for secured donations at [Biddingforgood.com/armenianampharm](http://Biddingforgood.com/armenianampharm).

We are sincerely grateful to our "Armenia's Heroes" for their service and recognize the sacrifices the families they have left behind. It is with your help and support, together, we will impact the lives of others, be sure to Bid High and Bid Often, for all Mothers, Grandmothers, Aunts, Sisters and the special women in our lives who care for us and love us unconditionally! Good Luck to all, thank you and Happy Mother's Day!



# Books

## *The Armenian of Aintab: The Economics Of Genocide in an Ottoman Province* with Ümit Kurt and Dirk Moses

FAIR LAWN, N.J. — On Tuesday, May 11 at 7:30 p.m. (ET), join historians Ümit Kurt and Dirk Moses for a conversation on Kurt's new book, *The Armenians of Aintab: The Economics of Genocide in an Ottoman Province*.

"If genocide, as a practice that includes murder and plunder, is orchestrated by a central authority but implemented at the local level," Kurt asks, "what is the relationship between local and central authorities?" What are the incentives and motives that leads to mass participation?

In his new book, Kurt challenges the depiction that state-sponsored genocide in all its dimensions could be carried out by the central government by edict and, instead, examines how local actors and even ordinary Muslims are complicit.

To borrow from former House Speaker Tip O'Neill, Kurt shows how "all genocide is local" and invokes Donald Bloxham and Moses' observation that "location tells us much about the political calculus underpinning genocide."

Kurt and Moses will examine how primary sources from Armenian, Ottoman, Turkish, British, and French archives, as well as memoirs, personal papers, oral accounts, and newly discovered property-liquidation records together provide an invaluable account of genocide at ground level.

Kurt a historian of the modern Middle East, with a research focus on the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, specializes in the late Ottoman socio-economic history, Armenian genocide, mass violence and inter-ethnic conflicts. His broader training also includes the comparative empires, population movements, history of the Ottoman

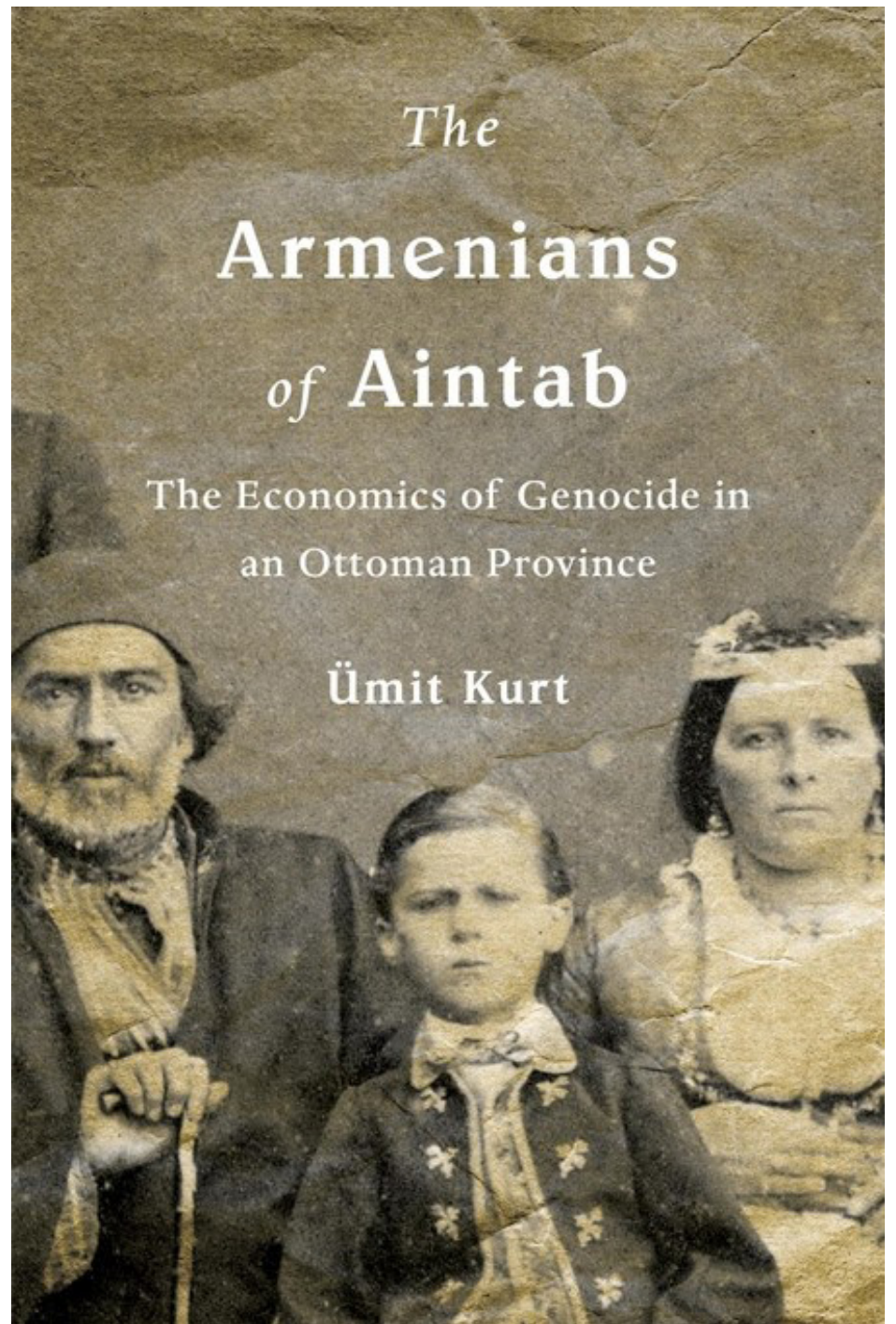
urban and local elites, wealth transfer and nationalism. He received his Ph.D. from the Department of History at Clark University. He is a former post-doctoral fellow at Harvard University, the current Polonsky Fellow at Jerusalem's Van Leer institute and teaches in the department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Moses is the Frank Porter Graham Distinguished Professor of Global Human Rights History. Raised in Australia of parents with professional interests in German history, Moses naturally gravitated to the study of the Australian and German pasts.

While completing his first book, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (2007), he edited three anthologies on genocide and colonialism: *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children* (2004), *Colonialism and Genocide* (2007), and *Empire, Colony Genocide: Conquest, Occupation and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (2008).

Since then, he has been researching postcolonial conflict in Africa and South Asia for his project on the "Diplomacy of Genocide." His investigation of the origins and function of the genocide concept appears in his second monograph, "The Problems of Genocide" (2021). Dirk is also working on "Genocide and the Terror of History" about traumatic memory and the constitution of genocidal subjectivities. In his spare time, he edits the "Journal of Genocide Research."

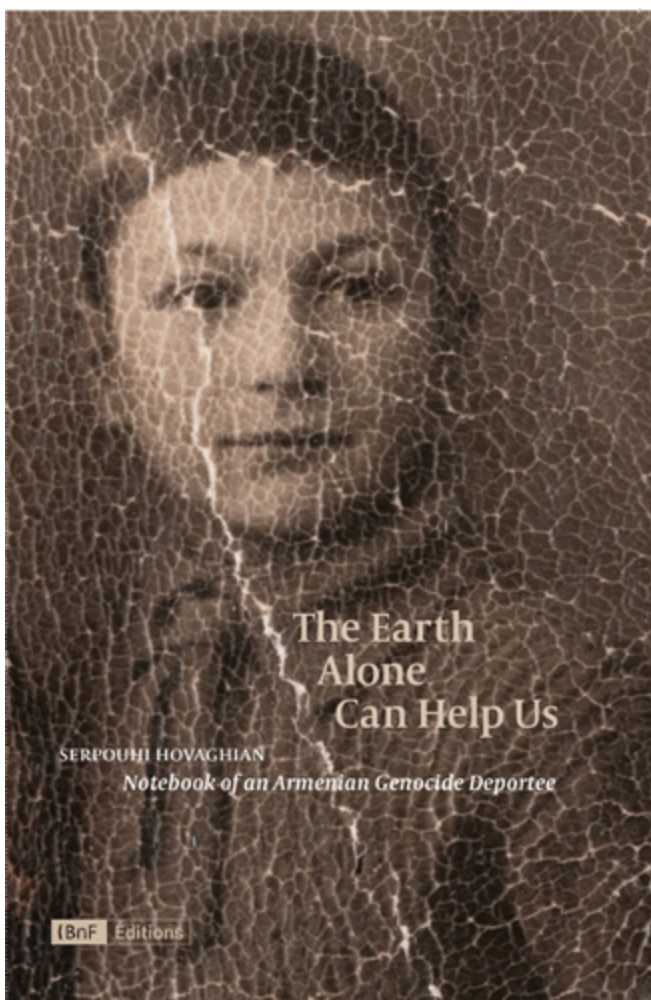
Register now to spend an evening in conversation with Kurt and Moses and discover why Raymond Kevorkian writes that Kurt's work is a "perfect illustration



of a local story yielding broad historical insights." Go to <http://bit.ly/Aintab> to register.

To watch on YouTube, go to <https://bit.ly/StLeonEvents> at 7:30 on Tuesday, May 11. To purchase the book, go to <https://naasr.org/>. For more information, call Ara Araz at 917.837.1297 or email [ara@edrcorp.net](mailto:ara@edrcorp.net).

The event is jointly sponsored by AGBU Ararat, Ararat-Eskijian Museum, Armenian Democratic Liberal Party-Ramgavars, Armenian Network of America—Greater NY, Daughters of Vartan-Sahaganoush Otyag, Knights of Vartan-Bakradouny Lodge, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and Saint Leon Armenian Church.



## Diary of Genocide Deportee Published In France

PARIS — *Serpouhi Hovaghian: The Earth Alone Can Help Us*, *Notebook of an Armenian Genocide Deportee* was published on April 29 by the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

This critical edition is by Raymond Kévorkian and Maximilien Girard.

Having gathered dust for decades in an attic before being added to the collections of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Serpouhi Hovaghian's notebook is one of the few known contemporary witness accounts of a victim of the Armenian genocide. This present critical edition of the narrative it contains plunges us into one of the darkest periods of the twentieth century.

"We walked haphazardly, six hours a day, without eating or drinking. Walk, walk down the road until you've put paid to your life [...]"

On October 25, 1915, a young 22-year-old Armenian woman escaped from a convoy of deportees that had reached the harbor of Giresun on the Black Sea. The genocide carried out by the Young Turks against the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire had been underway since April. Like so many of her unfortunate companions, Serpouhi Hovaghian had to give up her

4-year-old son along the way, and would stay in hiding for years, repeatedly changing residences. Over the course of her long time underground, she kept a notebook to more or less regularly set down her experience and the events she heard about in a personal diary of sorts, written in Armenian, then French, with some passages in Greek. In this fragmented narrative, she described her journey across Anatolia, subsequent to her deportation from Trebizond where she lived with her family in June 1915, and her reclusive life in Giresun.

To understand and elucidate this fragile, heart-rending document, the Éditions de la BnF worked with Raymond Kévorkian, a leading specialist in Armenian history, who present an indispensable critical edition.

On May 11, extracts from the notebook will be read by actress Anna Mougialis at the BnF. The reading will be preceded by an introduction to the book by Anny Romand, granddaughter of Serpouhi Hovaghian and a presentation by Raymond Kévorkian and Maximilien Girard.

The BnF preserves a unique heritage in the world: more than 40 million documents, including 15 million books and magazines, but also manuscripts, prints, photographs, maps and plans, music sheets, coins, medals, sound documents, videos...

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ARTS & CULTURE

# Shayne David Hyrapiet: ‘We Are More Indian than Armenian’

HYRAPIET, from page 12

The Westerners mostly get it right. Sometimes Indians who are not familiar with the name say Harpreet thinking that I am Punjabi.

**For my generation Indian pop singing is connected with the songs from the movie “Disco Dancer” and Mithun Chakraborty. Where is Indian pop music now?**

Unfortunately, it is in an advanced stage of degeneration. Any nonsensical lyrical rubbish can be turned into a hit once a beat is added to it.

**So do you divide your life between two professions or singing is your main occupation?**

It is my main occupation. I am terrible at math and accounting. I sing mostly Bollywood Punjabi and English songs at clubs, hotels and weddings around the country.

**At one time India was a home to a prosperous Armenian community. Now there are a handful Armenians in all over India. Less than 100 Indian Armenians live in Kolkata. Does your family keep some Armenian traditions? If yes, how?**

I do not think there is any Armenian public life in Kolkata.

**Please tell us about your family.**

My father Peter is half Armenian, half Anglo-Indian. My mother, Heather Hyrapiet is Anglo-Indian too. My father has been the president of the Armenian Club of Kolkata. My wife Nidhi is Punjabi Christian and my two girls are baptized Armenians.

**Have you ever cooperated with any Armenians worldwide?**

I was coordinating with some ex-Armenian college friends of mine to perform in Iran or Armenia, but it did not work out. Maybe we will try again sometime in the future.

**Ten years ago in a message to me you**

**expressed your hope to visit Armenia in near future, so it has not happened yet?**

Unfortunately, no. I have not been able to visit Armenia yet. Hopefully – one day!

**How did COVID-19 influence your activity?**

It brought my life as a singer to a complete halt. Work has dwindled but I believe in miracles and I am sure things will get better in the future.

**In our times it is hard to talk about upcoming projects. Do you have some?**

I have none at this time. I spend all my days with my two Beautiful daughters Skyla Serah, who is gonna be ten and Sierra Ann, who is going to be seven and my family for which I am most grateful.



Shayne David Hyrapiet with his family

**Indian pop singers particularly combine lots of dance and acting in their performances.**

I guess they do it to take away the audience’s attention from the bad lyrics. Not in all cases though, some songs do have good meaning.

**You have been singing since your school years, yet you studied in St. Xavier’s College for a bachelor’s degree in commerce.**

Apart from celebrating Christmas on January 6 we are mostly Indian Armenian in nature, blood and manne, meaning, we eat lots of Indian food and celebrate all the Indian festivals and also wear Indian clothes. Honestly speaking, we are more Indian in our ways, than Armenian. Armenian food and feasts are very rare in our lives, and I am not familiar with Armenian music either. However, we do go to church often. But and

## System of a Down Drummer Dolmayan, Staunch Trump Supporter, Thanks Biden for Recognizing Genocide

LOS ANGELES (Blabbermouth) — System of a Down Drummer John Dolmayan has publicly expressed his gratitude to President Joe Biden for officially recognizing the Armenian Genocide of 1915. “I would like to thank President @joebiden for recognizing officially that the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) happened and that this crime against humanity emboldened Hitler and many other genocidal dictators throughout the last century,” John wrote on Instagram on April 24. “I will forever be grateful to this administration as an Armenian and as a proud American. I would further like to comment on the genocide of native Americans throughout North, Central, and South America and how the indigenous people who lived here before us deserve not only our empathy but also our support. Ultimately we are all one people regardless of our beliefs or other differences, hopefully one day we as humans will accept that fact and live in peace.”

A few hours before Dolmayan’s post, System singer Serj Tankian, whose grandparents all fled the Armenian Genocide, also thanked Biden for his declaration, writing on social media: “Thank you to President Joe Biden for properly recognizing the #ArmenianGenocide today.

This is extremely important but only a milestone towards the long road of justice ahead with Turkey and its imminent need to do the same and make amends towards the descendants of 1.5 million Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians systematically slaughtered by its Ottoman Turkish ancestors. Today, I will say thank you to the US and all those who have fought hard for this statement over the years.”

Last year, Dolmayan praised former US President Donald Trump and accused Democrats of “demonizing” the real estate mogul and “blaming him for everything under the sun.” The drummer called Democrats “the true bigots” who “fought to maintain slavery” and were “directly responsible for 70 plus million abortions, a large majority of whom were black.”

Tankian discussed his relationship with Dolmayan, who is his brother-in-law, during a recent interview with Consequence Of Sound. He said: “We’re very good friends, we’re family, and he’s my drummer in my band, so, of course, we’ve talked about many, many different things, including political views. When you don’t agree with someone after a while about a certain topic ... look, it doesn’t mean that we don’t agree about other stuff. We agree a lot about Armenian stuff for example...”

# CALENDAR

## ON-LINE EVENTS & PROGRAMS

### MASSACHUSETTS

**MAY 13-AUGUST 15 —** The Armenian Heritage Park will hold a series of events during the spring and summer:

•Thursday, May 13 at 5pm **DISCOVER ARMENIA: Cultural Fabric, Cuisine & Wine**

**CELEBRATING WHAT UNITES US!** special virtual cooking & wine pairing program

RSVP [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

•Wednesday, May 20 **PARK’S GIVING DAY!** Support the Park’s Care and Maintenance at [ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Support](https://ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Support)

•Wednesday, May 26 at 10am **CELEBRATING WHAT UNITES US!** virtual series Mediterranean Cuisine

Oldways Instructor Register: [bit.ly/32FfCjp](https://bit.ly/32FfCjp)

•Wednesday, June 9 at 4pm **TEA & TRANQUILITY ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY**, Boston Meet & Greet at the Park. Walk the Labyrinth. View the Abstract Sculpture. Tie a Ribbon on the Wishing Tree. RSVP [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

•Sunday, June 13 at 2pm **LABYRINTH WALKING WELLNESS** program **ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY**, Boston Meet & Greet at the Park. Introduction to the many benefits. Walk the labyrinth. A part of The Greenway Fitness program. RSVP [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

•Sunday, July 11 at 2pm **LABYRINTH WALKING WELLNESS** program **ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY**, Boston Meet & Greet at the Park. Introduction to the many benefits. Walk the labyrinth. A part of The Greenway Fitness program. RSVP [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

•Wednesday, July 14 at 4pm **TEA & TRANQUILITY ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY**, Boston Meet & Greet the Boston Mayoral candidates at the Park. Walk the Labyrinth. View the Abstract Sculpture. Tie Ribbon on the Wishing Tree. RSVP [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

•Wednesday, August 11 at 4pm **TEA & TRANQUILITY ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY**, Boston Meet & Greet at the Park. Walk the Labyrinth. View the Abstract Sculpture. Tie a Ribbon on the Wishing Tree. RSVP [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

•Sunday, August 15 at 2pm **LABYRINTH WALKING WELLNESS** program. **ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY**, Boston Meet & Greet at the Park. Introduction to the many benefits. Walk the labyrinth. A part of The Greenway Fitness program. RSVP [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**JUNE 16 — SAVE THE DATE: BUILDING FOR ETERNITY~ NAASR’s Virtual Gala.**

Join us as we honor Edward Avedisian, NAASR Board member and philanthropist, during NAASR’s Building for Eternity Virtual Gala, on Wednesday, June 16, 2021, at 7:00m Eastern / 4:00pm Pacific. Edward Avedisian is the principal benefactor of NAASR’s Vartan Gregorian Building and will be recognized for his outstanding dedication and distinguished service in advancing education in the United States and Armenia. He is an extraordinary philanthropist and serves as a Director of NAASR, a Trustee of the American University of Armenia, and a Director of the Armenian Missionary Association of America. Special guest, New York Times bestselling author Chris Bohjalian will also join us in a unique conversation with Dr. Khatchig Mouradian, Armenian and Georgian Specialist at the Library of Congress.

### RHODE ISLAND

**MAY 14-28 —** Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church of Providence continues programming the Armenian Cultural Hour programs, every Friday at 7:30 p.m. The program can be livestreamed on the church’s Facebook page by everyone at <https://www.facebook.com/armenianchurchprovidence>

**May 14 - Armenian music and songs (Concert from Montreal, Canada)**

**May 21 - Our Youth Talents, issue two**

**May 28 - Celebration concert, dedicated to 100th Anniversary of the First Republic of Armenia**



# ‘Celestial Music’ Comes Down to Earth During Sacred Music Festival

FESTIVAL, from page 12

listeners a new perspective on the vast anthology of the Armenian sacred music tradition — no less than an appreciation for the scholarship required to interpret the cryptic neumes in which such melodies were recorded.

Dr. Utidjian’s personal anecdotes from his work as an historian — seeking ancient manuscripts in the Mkhitarist libraries of San Lazzaro and Venice, and gaining knowledge from great peers and teachers such as Archbishop Zareh Aznavourian or Krikor Pidejian — coupled with his experiences training non-Armenian choirs in Prague and Copenhagen, added a level of detail that raised the discourse from a dry academic exercise to an inspired, living journey.

“Remember that it has taken more than a thousand years to bring us to where we are,” said Dr. Utidjian by way of conclusion, “so let us cherish our sacred music tradition. The rules of this art have the power to render our chants sublime, celestial, and pleasing to both our ears and our hearts.”

### A Living Experience of Joy

Saturday began with a morning service and Findikyan’s keynote presentation on the festival theme: “The Holy Badarak: Our Musical Sacrament.”

Bishop Daniel’s talk emphasized the profundity of Armenian sacred music, and how its theological implications should guide our rendition of this glorious music. Srpazan emphasized the Badarak is not a

“The Badarak is absolutely filled with joy,” the Bishop concluded. “It is an experience of joy: to celebrate and realize our union with God; to celebrate that fact every time we enter our church. If our churches our empty, it is because we as a church do not exude joy.”

“Why?” he asked. “Because we have not captured that joy ourselves. We have not realized the joy that is in our hands. We as musicians have a big part in that: a responsibility and opportunity to bring the joy of the Gospel to our people.”

### Enlightening

In the afternoon sessions that followed, expert practitioners of the liturgical art shared their wisdom — their “musical pearls” — with the listeners.

Fr. Arshen Aivazian spoke about the melodies and odes — *megheti*, in Armenian — that are sung in specific celebrations of the badarak. Examples were illustrated through the vocal gifts of Fr. Voskan Hovhannisyan.

Fr. Avedis Kalayjian expounded on Mid-day Hymns (*jashoo sharagan*) and their biblical references, with vocalist Edita Dolunts-Kalayjian bringing the hymns to vivid life.

Finally, Dn. Rubik Mailian gave a riveting talk on the diverse settings of the Badarak written by various composers, and he encouraged choirs to incorporate unfamiliar versions into the traditional setting of Sunday worship. Judicious variety of musical expression, Dn. Rubik assert-

ing,” said Dn. Mark Krikorian, of St. Mary Church in Washington, DC. “Apart from the music itself, I especially appreciated the emphasis on choir members and altar servers learning the meaning of the words they’re singing.”

Dn. Ari Terjanian, who directs the choir at St. Gregory of Narek Church in Cleveland, OH, called the festival “truly inspiring and informative for myself and our choir mem-

bers. Dn. Haig’s lecture showed me how vast and rich our sacred music tradition is, and brought to light numerous melodies I had never heard before. Srpazan’s talk was extremely helpful in demonstrating how miraculous and transformative the Badarak is — and how this should guide our singing. Both experienced and new members of our choir found the talks extremely informative and inspiring.”



Speakers during the Eastern Diocese’s spring Sacred Music Festival included (l to r): Fr. Avedis Kalayjian, Fr. Voskan Hovhannisyan, Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Dr. Haig Utidjian, and Dn. Rubik Mailian. The festival was held as an online gathering on April 16-17, 2021.

performance; rather it is a mysterious “sacrament” in which we offer a love song to our Creator. Badarak was explained to be a transcendental experience in which the congregation draws together in unison and in communion with God — into Whose midst we enter.

Armenian sacred music in the church is the Armenian peoples’ age-old love song to God. The faithful sing love songs to our Savior every Sunday. Within the “family” of worshippers, related by faith and not merely genetics, the love song evolves and develops.

After expounding upon the profound nature of our sacred music and liturgical sacraments, Bishop Daniel proceeded to explain how this should influence the way choirs approach their singing. That singing should be a reflection of joy, he said, and should inspire joy in the congregation. Singing should be joyful and upbeat, and should be prayed, not performed. Organists should serve as a subtle aid in the background, barely perceptible.

ed, would give a new, vivid power to the ancient prayers, arresting the attention of worshippers, and allowing them to experience the words in a fresh way.

Geeragamdeets vespers (“Entering the Lord’s Day”) concluded the virtual celebration of Armenian Church music and musicians. In addition, three worship services were conducted in three parishes of the Diocese: St. James of Nisibis in Evanston IL; St. Sarkis in Dallas, TX; and St. Stepanos in Elberon, NJ.

“As always, hearing *Srpazan* Daniel speak was enlightening,” said participant Raffi Bandazian, of St. James Church in Richmond, VA. “I learn something new every time. The lecture about *sharagan*, *tagh* and *megheti* enhanced my understanding of the Sourp Badarak and gave me a deeper appreciation of the service and my participation in this Holy Sacrament.”

“The Sacred Music Festival was a great experience. The introduction to the many different renderings of the Badarak, and the stories behind them, was eye-open-

## Recipe Corner



## Birds Nest Baklava

Original recipe courtesy of Salpy’s International Kitchen

### FILLING:

- 1 cup shelled walnuts
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- A pinch ground nutmeg

In a small food processor, grind the walnuts, just until broken down into small bits; mix in the sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg, set aside.

### BAKLAVA:

- 1 (1 lb.) package filo dough, thawed overnight in the refrigerator
- 1 cup clarified butter, melted

### SIMPLE SYRUP:

- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon orange blossom water

### PREPARATION:

To prepare the syrup topping, dissolve sugar in water over medium heat, add the lemon juice and orange blossom water and bring to a boil.

Let it boil for 5-7 minutes or until thickened, then allow to cool completely. Place one sheet of filo dough on the table, cut in half widthwise, fold each one into two, brush with butter.

Place a wooden dowel about a half-inch in diameter above the bottom of the sheet, and roll the dough loosely leaving one-inch drape at the end.

Place your fingers at the ends of the dough and gently push towards the center, crimping the dough as you go, push the dough off the dowel. Bring both ends close together, using the drape as the bottom to form the nest. Use all remaining filo the same way. Arrange nests on a buttered baking pan.

Brush with butter. Place a tablespoon of the filling in the nest of each round.

Bake in a 350°F preheated oven for 20 minutes, or until golden brown. Remove from the oven and let it cool down completely. Drizzle cold simple syrup on each individual piece of baklava.

For this recipe, go to: <https://www.facebook.com/Salpy'sInternationalKitchen/photos/a.193156930836425/1720065451478891/?type=3&theater>

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## COMMENTARY

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# Reactions to Biden in Turkey

By Raffi Bedrosyan

It has been a week now since US President Biden's April 24, 2021 statement recognizing the Armenian Genocide. This was a long overdue acknowledgment by the US of an event that took place 106 years ago, about which there is already general worldwide acceptance of the historic facts. The only issue left was the reluctance of a few states to define the 1915 event as genocide, in deference to Turkey. The symbolic genocide recognition by the US is a political non-event, except for the traumatized Armenians and paranoid Turks.

This obsession with properly naming it as genocide has caused many generations of Armenians to be traumatized, not able to move past 1915, spending enormous amounts of energy, academic, historic, political talent and resources at the expense of more productive activities for the growth of Armenia, Artsakh and diaspora. The Armenians' trauma is directly caused by a similar and more obstinate obsession by the Turkish state in denying the true facts of 1915, spending not only enormous amounts of energy, academic, historic resources in Turkey but also hundreds of millions of dollars in lobbying activities in the US, as well as buying out a few foreign academics to advance their denialist version of history. The Turkish denial is caused by paranoia and fear of the 3R's – recognition, to be followed by retribution (compensation), to be followed by restitution (of land).

This vicious cycle of genocide denial versus forced genocide recognition, fueled by paranoia and trauma, could only be reversed by starting dialogue between Turks and Armenians, based on the historic realities of 1915, as advocated by the late Hrant Dink. And the vicious cycle could only come to an end by having the Turkish Parliament acknowledge the historic realities of 1915, instead of parliaments of third states.

For a few years in the mid-2010s, there was a glimpse of hope that there could be some baby steps in Turkey toward facing history, at least allowing discussion. The genocide word was not punishable anymore and many books acknowledging the genocide were published or translated. There were conferences, and talk shows where pro- and anti-genocide viewpoints were freely discussed. April 24 commemorations were allowed in many cities, including Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Diyarbakir. Ittihadist leaders, the perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide, were condemned. Messages of condolences for "losses suffered by the Armenians during the First World War" were proclaimed by the government leaders.

Some minority-owned properties illegally expropriated in the past were returned. Reconstruction of a few Armenian churches was permitted, including the largest one in Diyarbakir – Surp Giragos Church. Restoration of the ruins of Ani were started with the cooperation of historic restoration experts from Armenia. Along with these positive steps of democratization, peaceful reconciliation initiatives toward the only remaining sizable minority, the Kurds, were advanced.

But then what happened? All these initiatives were thrown away starting in 2016. Islamic ideology merged with nationalist fascist ideology, creating a viciously intolerant and dictatorial regime where only Sunni Turks, or rather, Sunni Turks loyal to the ruling party are allowed to live and all others have become barely tolerated second class citizens. Journalists, academics, hundreds of thousands of citizens, Kurdish political leaders – in short, anyone questioning the authority of the ruling party, were dismissed and jailed. Even before Biden's statement, April 24 commemorations were banned.

The Turkish President's Office arranged for a three-day history conference about the 1915 events starting April 20, where more than 25 Turkish academicians presented papers "proving" that there was no genocide, not even a massacre. It was just a humane relocation of the Armenian rebels from the war zone to a safer location in Syria within the country, in order to prevent them from backstabbing the Turkish army. And I kept screaming at my computer screen: "How about my pregnant grandmother deported from Bursa to Damascus? Was she a rebel? Was she in the war zone?"

I listened to all nine hours of the conference, with the papers at the level and quality of high school compositions, each presenter competing to outdo the lies of the others, parroting their "research facts from the archives." It seems that all past denial-

ist versions of history have now merged into one grand lie, irrationally contradicting one another. The so-called experts argued that nothing happened, that Armenians massacred millions of Moslems, Turks just defended themselves, there were massacres on both sides, worse massacres happened by Germans and Russians on other fronts, deportations were only for rebels in war zones, all of the Armenian intellectuals arrested on April 24, 1915 returned safe and sound after the war, the state protected the Armenians but Kurds attacked the deportation convoys, deportations were militarily necessary and if needed, the state should do it again, etc., etc.

One of the main conclusions was that "evidence shows only 150,000 Armenians died, of whom 50,000 were volunteers who had died after joining the Russian army. But since Armenian historians always add a zero to their numbers of the dead, that is how Armenians keep claiming 1.5 million dead." Compared to past frivolously published papers which at least admitted some massacres during the deportations, this conference produced completely laughable lies.

After Biden's statement, the floodgates opened, and every politician in the ruling party as well as in opposition (except the pro-Kurdish HDP), every journalist, every academician, every talk show host attacked Biden, the Americans, the EU, the West, and of course all the Armenians past and present. The only Armenian MP in the Parliament, Garo Paylan, was threatened with the same fate as what Talat Pasha did to the treasonous Armenians. Almost every talk show started with grateful commemoration and prayers for the heroic leader Talat Pasha. There is no longer any shred of empathy for the millions of civilian Armenians, Pontic Greeks, Assyrians or Yezidis who perished during a few short years during the First World War.

President Erdogan, after staying silent for three days while his cabinet members and presidential spokespersons fiercely attacked Biden, announced Biden's statement to be baseless, and added: "I am speaking based on evidence, unlike Biden. We have over 1 million documents related to the 1915 events in our archives. I am wondering how many documents the United States has. They have none. Armenian gangs, who were at least 150,000 to 300,000 people, carried out massacres in Turkish territory. Furthermore, they partnered with Russian forces to fight against us. Ottoman authorities only took precautions. Biden's biased statement on 1915 events will be destructive to US-Turkey relations and the recently established stability in the Caucasus. We believe that Mr. Biden's statement was due to pressure from radical Armenian figures."

The opposition politicians were much more vocal in their protests against Biden, and in fact, egged on Erdogan for not protesting more forcefully, "meowing like a cat instead of roaring like a lion."

It seems that the Turkish denial is now even more intensified and reaching new heights. What is even worse is the attitude of the Kurds. In recent years, Kurdish intellectuals and political leaders had readily acknowledged their role in the Armenian Genocide, and their violent treatment of the Armenians before the genocide. There was even a memorial sculpture installed in Diyarbakir for the Armenian and Assyrian victims of 1915. Unfortunately, most of these progressive Kurdish political leaders are now jailed and there is a new ominous reality.

Historian Prof. Dr. Taner Akçam just published a new book in Turkish, called *An Abbreviated History of the Armenian Genocide*. One historical fact he points out is related to Kurdish tribal chiefs who ruled over Armenian villages in Eastern Anatolia (Western Armenia), called "the right of the first night." It is documented that in many provinces, Kurdish tribal chiefs claimed the right to rape Armenian brides on the wedding night, before the marriage took place. This is a known reality: in fact, I know of Armenian families who hastily escaped from their village to Istanbul during the wedding night in order to avoid the rape of the Armenian bride girl. However, some Kurdish intellectuals have now started a protest campaign against Akçam, denying that Kurds have ever done such a thing in the past.

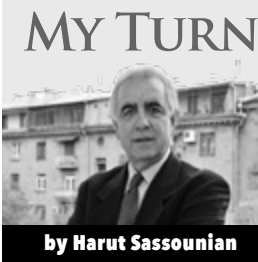
It is utterly disappointing and one more step backward to see the Kurds joining the Turks in their denials against historic facts. But truth always comes out in the end, sooner or later, no matter how hard someone tries to hide it or stop it.

THIS VICIOUS CYCLE  
OF GENOCIDE DENIAL  
VERSUS FORCED GENOCIDE  
RECOGNITION, FUELED BY  
PARANOIA AND TRAUMA, COULD  
ONLY BE REVERSED BY STARTING  
DIALOGUE BETWEEN TURKS AND  
ARMENIANS, BASED ON THE  
HISTORIC REALITIES OF 1915





COMMENTARY



# How Can the Armenian Patriarch Be as Pro-Turkish as Erdogan?

The Armenian Patriarch of Turkey, Sahak Mashalian, once again issued a pro-Turkish statement, this time on the eve of the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, trying to please his Turkish masters and undermine President Joe Biden’s April 24 acknowledgment.

We all understand that the Armenian community and the Patriarch in Turkey are hostages in the hands of the Turkish government. As such, they are under pressure to make pro-Turkish statements. However, there are red lines that no Armenian should cross, regardless of the circumstances or reasons. Our ancestors sacrificed their lives during the genocide, not succumbing to Turkish pressures and physical threats. The Patriarch, who is supposed to be a man of God, is obligated to tell the truth even if his life is in danger.

As I have suggested before, if the Patriarch does not want to get in trouble with the Turkish authorities, he should simply keep his mouth shut. He should not volunteer to issue statements on non-religious issues and not desecrate the memories of 1.5 million perished Armenians. We should not jump to the conclusion that every time the Patriarch issues a pro-Turkish statement he is necessarily doing it under duress. Furthermore, the Patriarch should ask himself if the Armenian community has received any benefits in return for his multiple pro-Turkish statements.

Certainly, the Turkish government has repeatedly exploited the Patriarch’s words to disseminate pro-Turkish propaganda worldwide. For example, on April 23, 2021, when it became known that President Biden would issue his much anticipated acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide, the Anadolu Agency (AA), the official Turkish government’s news service, reported Patriarch Mashalian’s condemnation of President Biden’s upcoming statement. The AA headlined its “news” with the Patriarch’s words: “Using 1915 incidents for politics saddens Armenians.”

How could President Biden’s acknowledgment of the genocide, welcomed by Armenians worldwide, “sadden Armenians?” On the contrary it saddened the denialist Turks and thrilled Armenians. Patriarch Mashalian should just stick to religious subjects and not pronounce judgements on other matters. Regardless of whether he is pressured by the Turkish government to make political statements or does it voluntarily, the Patriarch should refrain from taking such positions, saying that as a clergyman he only deals with religious subjects.

Here are excerpts from the pro-Turkish statement made by Patriarch Mashalian on April 23, 2021, to the Anadolu Agency which was publicized widely in the Turkish media: “It saddens us to see that the suffering of our people and the suffering of our ancestors are instrumentalized by some countries

for everyday political purposes. The tension caused by the usage of the issue in parliamentary agendas for decades has not served the rapprochement of the two nations. On the contrary, it provokes hostile feelings and delays peace. We, just like our predecessors and late Patriarchs, will continue to wish for peace, friendship and well-being between Turks and Armenians. We will encourage the rebuilding of relations based on neighborhood and common grounds speedily. We prefer to be one of those who hopefully expect the revival of neighborly relations, which are unique to these lands and exist in the traditions of the two communities, between Turkey and Armenia’s authorities. Dear Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during his time as both Prime Minister and President, has been the only top state official in the history of the Turkish Republic to give messages on this occasion. These messages show a spirit, sharing our pain and a certain respect for the children of our nation that lost their lives in exile. In our opinion, it would be appropriate to take these as positive steps towards rapprochement in the future. If only the joint history commission they [Turkey] proposed could have been established, then at least 15 years of progress would have been made. If only the [Armenia-Turkey] protocols could have been implemented, borders could have been opened. Then the resolution of the Karabakh [issue] could have resulted differently. We still do not think it is late. The project to build a six-country basin, proposed by our Dear President for Caucasasia, can bring the peace of the century to the communities in the region.”

Leaving no doubt as to the pro-Turkish position of the Patriarch, Turkey’s Communications Director Fahrettin Altun endorsed his statement: “Sahak Mashalian, the Armenian Patriarch of Turkey, aptly noted that past sufferings must not be exploited for short-term political gains. [The Patriarch said]: ‘We will continue to live together, peacefully and as brothers and sisters, in this land.’”

Turkey’s presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin also expressed support for Mashalian’s remarks: “Abusing history for a narrow political agenda helps neither the past nor the present.”

Interestingly, President Erdogan sent a letter to the Armenian Patriarch on April 24, denying the Armenian Genocide and agreeing with the Patriarch’s words. It is not surprising that the Turkish government supported Archbishop Mashalian’s candidacy for the Patriarchal elections over other less subservient candidates.

The Patriarch must realize that by making propaganda statements on behalf of Turkey, he is losing the respect of Armenians both inside and outside Turkey. His anti-Armenian words are viewed as those of a sold out Turkish agent. The Armenian Church and Armenians in Turkey should pressure the Patriarch to resign since he has lost the support of the Armenian community and can no longer function as their religious leader.

The only countries around the world that criticized President Biden’s April 24 statement were: Turkey, Azerbaijan, Pakistan and the unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. This places the Armenian Patriarch in the shameful company of the enemies of the Armenian nation!

distinguished Turkish historian Taner Akcam faced such threats. The prominent Turkish Armenian journalist Hrant Dink was assassinated. Even here in North America, denialist pressure exists. In my case as a professor at the Royal Military College in an earlier decade, the Turkish government attempted to silence me and threatened both the Canadian government and military, if I did not stop writing about the Armenian Genocide. The Canadian government and my university refused to be intimidated. My personal response was to pen the book *Just Poems: Reflections on the Armenian Genocide*. I also continued to teach and speak on the subject. It was what I needed to do.

The magnitude of 1,500,000 dead is so vast that most of us have enormous difficulty comprehending. When teaching about genocide, I would often show a book with a million dots. Students were always shocked at how many pages it took. To overcome this statistical and emotional challenge of scale, I usually also talked at a more personal level. I would tell of my own painful family odyssey.

My grandmother — my metzmama — was an orphan of the 1915 genocide. She suffered so much. She did not know her real name or age. She lived in orphanages and refugee camps for over ten years. She endured as a young child, then teenager, mother, grandmother, and finally ever so briefly as a great grandmother. On a special day, her elderly weathered hand held the tiny newborn. In the end, life and love prevailed over death, but the dark shadows of the genocide haunted us all. Even today, we hear and see the Turkish government’s animosity and hate speech towards Armenians during the recent war of 2020 in the South Caucasus. Turkish-made deadly military equipment was used by Azerbaijan against Armenian civilians in Karabakh. The crimes against humanity continue.

And so as a grandson of an orphan of genocide, I need to speak out for all the orphans of genocide, whether they be from yesterday, today or even tomorrow.

We remember.  
We speak out.  
And we stand up against such injustice.  
So that the candle of freedom and hope can remain as a guide to those still in the darkness.  
Merci. Thank you.

(This speech was the keynote address at the Armenian Genocide Memorial event, Toronto, April 25, 2021. Alan Whitehorn is Professor emeritus at the Royal Military College of Canada. He is the editor of *The Armenian Genocide: The Essential Reference Guide* and author of *Just Poems: Reflections on the Armenian Genocide*.)

# Remembering the Armenian Genocide

By Alan Whitehorn

Amidst the memorials to other genocides in this chilly and rainy month, we pause on April 24 to remember the 1915 genocide of a million and half Armenians. We are also historical witnesses to the hundreds of thousands of other ethnic and religious minorities killed in the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, we remember the Greek, Assyrian and other victims. The state-sponsored Young Turk mass deportations and killings were part of a long historical pattern of inequality, injustice, prejudice, discrimination, repression and massacres by an authoritarian regime. It should be noted that the Turkish leadership’s ethnic and religious persecution predated and post-dated 1915. For example, in the 1890s, Sultan Hamid II had directed the Hamidian Massacres that led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Armenians. In 1909, tens of thousands of Armenians were also massacred by the Ottoman Turk regime. Amidst the increased secrecy and concentrated state power during World War One, the revolutionary Young Turk government’s slaughter of its Christian civilian population reached a deadly crescendo in 1915. The magnitude of the horror was such that the allied Entente powers of England, France and Tsarist Russia issued on May 24, 1915 an international warning to the Turkish government that it was committing “new crimes.... against humanity and civilization” and its leaders would be held “personally responsible” after the war.

Even after the killing stops, genocide often continues in a number of ways. More than a century later, the contemporary Turkish government maintains its aggressive policy of official state denial. But denial is an inadequate term to describe the magnitude of the ongoing malevolent acts. They can, of course, include denying the historical documentation, but also involve arbitrary restricting access to official state archives, destroying historical records, penning false histories, renaming places of mass atrocities, further discrimination and violence against the victims, and even threatening academics, journalists and human rights activists who dare to speak up for their fellow citizens. The

THE MAGNITUDE OF 1,500,000 DEAD IS SO VAST THAT MOST OF US HAVE ENORMOUS DIFFICULTY COMPREHENDING. WHEN TEACHING ABOUT GENOCIDE, I WOULD OFTEN SHOW A BOOK WITH A MILLION DOTS. STUDENTS WERE ALWAYS SHOCKED AT HOW MANY PAGES IT TOOK.





## COMMENTARY

# Belichick's Spotlight on Armenian Genocide Pays off

By Peter Lucas

Forget Annapolis.

If any town wanted to honor New England Patriots Coach Bill Belichick with the key to the city it should be Yerevan.

Yerevan, population 1.1 million, is the capitol of Armenia. Although quite modern, it is one of the oldest, continuously inhabited cities in the world.

And while it has nothing to do with Thursday night's NFL draft, Armenia owes Belichick.

Belichick, who grew up in Annapolis, and who played lacrosse at Annapolis High School, was honored last week at an Army-Navy lacrosse game. He was presented the award by Annapolis Mayor Gavin Buckley.

In accepting the key, Belichick, who earlier turned down former President Donald Trump's offer to grant him the Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award, said it was "an incredible honor. There's nothing bigger than that."

Well, there might be something bigger. And that is the normally reticent Belichick's outspoken support of the decades-long campaign to get the United States to officially recognize the genocide committed against the Armenian people by Turkey during World War I.

That was when some 1.5 million Armenian men, women and children were systematically and horrifically murdered in a campaign of ethnic extermination by the Ottoman Empire, at the time an ally of Germany.

Hitler was reportedly inspired by the Armenian Genocide in launching the Holocaust that took the lives of six million Jews and others during World War II. "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" Hitler asked upon invading the Soviet Union.

Many of those who survived the Armenian Genocide fled to the United States, and for years sought recognition, as well as accountability, for the atrocity.

The Turkish government, despite the historical record, has consistently denied the genocide, arguing that the Armenians revolted and sided with the invading Russians during the chaos of the war.

Many Armenian Americans, ranging from the late playwright William Saroyan to Cher, have long campaigned for such official recognition.

And while president after president has promised to officially recognize the genocide, even at the risk of alienating Turkey, a NATO ally, President Biden is the first president to come through.

Last week, on Armenian Remembrance Day, Biden fulfilled a campaign promise by officially declaring the Armenian massacres to be genocide.

"Over the decades Armenian immigrants have enriched the United States in countless ways, but they have never forgotten the tragic history that brought so many of their ancestors to our shores. We honor their story. We see their pain. We affirm the history. We do not cast blame but ensure that what happened is never repeated," he said.

Turkey, whose relations with the U.S. has declined over the years, rejected Biden's statement. Biden is expected to meet with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan in June at the

NATO summit in the U.K.

What does this have to do with Belichick?

Last year the normally wordless Belichick raised the issue of Turkish actions against Armenia, not only for the Armenian Genocide but for Turkish support of the attack on Armenia by neighboring Azerbaijan.

"I hope that our country will take action against Turkey and Azerbaijan for their unprovoked and deadly attacks on Armenians," Belichick said.

He added, "We've seen when humanitarian crises and things like ethnic cleansing go unpunished, they just continue to happen. I hope we can put a stop to that."

Belichick's remarks were not widely reported. After all, while he is a great football coach, he is not a diplomat or a politician.

So, why would anyone pay attention to Belichick outside of football? Probably because Belichick knows something about ethnic cleansing.

Belichick is of Croatian descent and has visited Croatia, where he has relatives, many times.

If you are from Croatia, you know about ethnic cleansing. It was there where countless thousands of innocent Serbs and Croats fell victim to the ethnic cleansing madness that swept over the region upon the fractious breakup of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

Belichick knows football all right. He also knows about ethnic cleansing. Somebody listened.

*(Peter Lucas is a veteran Boston political reporter and columnist for the Boston Herald. This column appeared in*

## Blinken's Cynicism Post-Genocide Recognition Emboldens Further Aggression

By Michael Rubin

ARMENIANS and the Armenian diaspora in the United States celebrated President Joe Biden's formal recognition of the Ottoman-era genocide against Anatolia's Armenian population. For Armenians, the move was important not only for historical justice but also because Turkish and Azerbaijani actions and rhetoric suggested a desire to continue the genocide. Their celebration was short-lived. Just two days later, Armenians and the U.S. Congress learned not from the State Department but rather from Azeri media that Secretary of State Antony Blinken had quietly waived Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act to enable continued military aid to Azerbaijan despite in contravention of both the letter and spirit of the law. The move represents State Department cynicism at its worst and, rather than assuage both sides, will hemorrhage trust, further reduce American influence across the region, and could actually increase the likelihood for renewed conflict.

First, some scholars question whether the Young Turk leaders in the Ottoman Empire planned and coordinated the genocide. Recent archival work, however, suggests beyond any reasonable doubt that they did.

Second, some suggest contemporary diplomats from World War I-era Allied Powers exaggerated atrocity reports to sully the Ottoman Empire. The Armenian Genocide museum in Yerevan, however, has chronicled numerous instances in which German diplomats and officials—allied with the Ottomans during the war—reported the Turks' deliberate slaughter of Armenians. This is similar to what Armenia's American and French counterparts did.

Third, while it is true that some Armenians had risen up against Ottoman Empire, there were frequent national liberation movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; none justified genocide.

Finally, some scholars and foreign policy specialists put the debate aside and simply argue that the United States needs Turkey and Azerbaijan as a bulwark against Russia. Armenia, they allege, is under Russia's influence. This is lazy, however. Under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey has repeatedly compromised American interests to Russia (and Iran). Meanwhile, Azerbaijani dictator Ilham Aliyev has in recent years increased trade with Russia by several orders of magnitude.

Certainly, by any reasonable standard — historical accuracy, morality, or self-interested realism — Armenia genocide recognition was justified but what about the Section 907 waiver?

Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act determined that U.S. aid "may not be provided to the Government of Azerbaijan until the President determines, and so reports to the Congress, that the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh." The origin of such language lies in the fighting and ethnic cleansing that occurred against the backdrop of the Soviet Union's collapse and fighting between Azerbaijan and Armenia sparked by the petition and then plebiscite of residents of Nagorno-Karabakh seeking

either unity with Armenia or independence.

In the wake of the terror attacks on September 11, 2001, Congress amended the Freedom Support Act to enable a waiver to Section 907. The amendment called for a designated State Department official to waive the prohibitions on Azerbaijan if it "is necessary to support United States efforts to counter international terrorism; is necessary to support the operational readiness of United States Armed Forces or coalition partners to counter international terrorism; is important to Azerbaijan's border security; and will not undermine or hamper ongoing efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan or be used for offensive purposes against Armenia."

Azerbaijan and Turkey's surprise September invasion of Armenian-held portion of Nagorno-Karabakh certainly hampered "ongoing efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan." Aliyev dismissed the idea of further negotiations after his territorial re-conquest and then belittled on Azeri television the American co-chair of the Minsk Group, the organization charged with negotiating a diplomatic resolution to the problem. There could be no more clear violation. Nor does the realist desire to embrace Azerbaijan as a counter-terror hub make sense given Aliyev's acceptance and utilization of Syrian mercenaries, some of whom fought for Al Qaeda-affiliated groups or the Islamic State.

Blinken knew he was wrong. If he thought he could easily defend his actions, then he would not have surprised Congress but made his case openly. Perhaps within the State Department, diplomats argued that waiving Section 907 and continuing foreign aid and military assistance was necessary to keep Azerbaijan at the bargaining table. Put aside the violation of U.S. law and the insult to Congress. In reality, what Blinken's waiver does is undercut future diplomacy for it sets a new standard that Azerbaijan can expect to act without consequence so long as they kill fewer than seven thousand men and only displace a few hundred thousand.

Further, Blinken signals to Azerbaijan that it will face no consequence — and, indeed, reap a reward — for holding a couple hundred prisoners-of-war long after the date on which they were to be released. In effect, what Blinken and his Caucasus team have done is undercut the possibility of meaningful diplomacy and rewarded terror and hostage-taking. Nor will the ramifications be limited to the South Caucasus. Blinken, with one fell swoop, has not only undercut the moral clarity and emphasis on human rights tied to the Armenian genocide resolution, but he has also signaled not only to Azerbaijan but also to Turkey, Russia, Iran, and other aggressors that the State Department stands for nothing and U.S. law without meaning.

Moral equivalency is not sophisticated. For the United States' position in the world, it can be disastrous.

*Michael Rubin is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). You can follow him on Twitter: @mrubin1971.*



# Kazarian Is Passionate about Public Service

KAZARIAN, from page 1

“I’ve always been passionate about being a young Armenian woman in the State House in Rhode Island. I like helping young people get elected and helped Armenians get involved in politics. And I think we really saw that with Joe Biden. In order for [Genocide recognition] to happen we need Armenians in politics on all levels to make our voices louder. [In Rhode Island] we passed a resolution so everyone in that chamber knows about it.”

Kazarian’s other passion is something that all politicians should strive for: “What I think about is, how can I help my neighborhood, my state, and my colleagues.” Help her colleagues? “To work with others in the State House, help them with what they are trying to accomplish. Basically, to help good bills pass. That I really enjoy. And I feel a bill is like a puzzle, and I work on them every day. And I enjoy it.”

“I graduated from Barnard in 2012 and President Obama was the commencement speaker. And he was so cool and inspirational. And his message to us was getting involved in our communities. And he urged us to run for office. After that I was determined to work on a campaign. And I came home

and saw the house seat was open. I mulled it over with my mom and sister,” she recalled.

With her degree in urban studies, Kazarian felt she was qualified for the role. So she ran — and won.

Kazarian experienced the frustration of hearing older generations vent about millennials. During the Great Recession, there was a major brain drain from the state, she said, and young people were going elsewhere for career opportunities. But some of the old guard were skeptical of young people’s motives. One day on the floor of the house, a member of the legislature commented that “Millennials don’t want to work hard.” Kazarian was shocked. She rose to the floor and responded: “Millennials are drowning in student loan, trying to find the best-paying job, and trying to find a place to live that’s affordable,” Kazarian argued, as to the reasons her generation was leaving the state. “I felt I could bring a young voice,” she recalls, because some of the older members didn’t understand the problems of her generation in regard to the recession.

Kazarian is passionate about getting young people more involved in politics. “I go and speak to students, even the local elementary school, and I always talk to them about running for office. If you get them thinking about public service, the more likely they are to say yes. I never envisioned it, and then I ran.”

The Rhode Island Armenian community holds a combined youth day every year with representation from the Diocese, Prelacy and Armenian Protestant churches. “Before the pandemic, I used to speak at Youth Day about running for office. Talking about the Genocide resolution and the Genocide mandatory education which we passed. And the importance of voting. My hope is that the kids will think ‘if she’s doing it, I can do it one day too,’” she said.

**Political Divisiveness**

Like President Biden whom she supports, Kazarian wants to focus on a message of unity.

“This is something I learned from knocking on doors during the transition from Obama, to Trump and now to Biden — the things that differentiate us are very small.”

Kazarian feels that the problem of divisiveness over the last several years has been manufactured: “Especially because of the political rhetoric — especially from Trump — it made us hate each other and vilify each other for our differences, but we are really not that different. Most people want the same things, education for their children, city services like the fire department, to be able to feed their children, have health care, and so on.”

Rather, she feels that “the rhetoric out there that’s looking to divide us is the most

dangerous. ‘Divide and conquer’ is a strategy, and as we saw in the case of Trump, it’s a strategy that won the election, but it’s not what’s best for the American people.”

Kazarian continued, “What’s better is when we stop looking at each other for our differences. Our similarities are truly greater than our differences!”

**Legislative Accomplishments**

Kazarian said her proudest accomplishment was in 2016 when she helped get mandatory Holocaust and Armenian Genocide Education passed in Rhode Island.

“I’m the only Armenian in the legislature,” she said. “We were able to come together and work with the Jewish community and I thought about all the groups that had suffered atrocities. And we all came together on this bill to make sure our history wouldn’t be twisted or warped or forgotten.”

Kazarian is passionate about the remembrance aspect of Genocide recognition. “In a hundred or two hundred years,” she asks rhetorically, “when we are all gone, who is going to make sure that what happened to my great-grandparents is remembered? That’s why we had to make sure it was in the curriculum.”

Stemming from her Armenian background, she is passionate about civil rights. “This year we are working on a voting rights bill to make sure everyone eligible to vote is able to vote.” She also mentions “commonsense gun control” as a key issue for her, noting that banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines in Rhode Island is one of her priorities.

The covid pandemic, however, brought a new set of issues and challenges as a state legislator: “Covid really changed the game because so much of our politics [on the state level] is knocking on people’s doors. It also changed the issues people were facing. People who all of a sudden had no childcare, or people who lost jobs overnight because they worked in the service industry. Or people who had to choose between going to work and risking getting sick. I learned so much about what we need to do as a state. Making sure people have access to healthcare is one of the important things.”

**Armenian Roots**


Kazarian attends Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church in Providence. She was involved in the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) Juniors and Seniors as a youth, and she also attended the Diocese’s Camp Vartan.

“I was very fortunate to have a great, strong Armenian community around me in Providence. I was really instilled with Armenian culture at a young age and it’s a huge part of who I am,” she said.

Her fellow ACYOA members who knew Kazarian growing up recall her as a spirited, warm individual who loved “kef” music and was always on the dancefloor at community events. She laughed when this is brought up: “I love to dance! It’s Armenian music, how can you not dance? I grew up with the Armenian music and when I hear it, it brings back great memories. And I need to put the kef music on when making *cheoreg*!”

It is easy to see that the passion for music and dancing that her friends always noticed in her early years is matched by an equally exuberant passion for helping people through public service and advocacy.

“I want to add something,” she said in a serious tone. “Being Armenian really taught me how to advocate for change. We march for the Genocide every year, that kind of thing is familiar to us. When the Black Lives Matter movement started, my friends wanted to go to a march. But when it was time to go they said ‘I’ve never been to a march before.’ For us as Armenians, we are raised in that environment of advocating for our people, and now it’s time for me to advocate for others.”



## The Tekeyan Cultural Association Is Rolling Up Its Sleeves Again

Before the 44-day war, we supported the development of the strategic Berdzor corridor and made large investments in the region. Berdzor and its neighboring regions (Kashatagh) have now fallen into enemy hands. All of a sudden, its residents, students and teachers were forced to become refugees and are now helplessly scattered all around Artsakh and Armenia. They have lost everything and their living conditions are less than desirable.





The good news is that once more Tekeyan is engaged to make their lives better, so that they remain in Armenia and become part of the nation-building process.

This time though the help will be achieved through investments and not through donations. The creation of a sustainable economy is the aim of this appeal.

Through small contributions / mass funding we will create income-generating opportunities for the displaced families. Tekeyan of Armenia in association with a local reputable NGO (Shen or Syunik or Kashatagh) will make investments in agriculture and/or housing to create income or comforts for their beneficiaries. The recipients get these funds conditional that they give back on an annual basis the equivalent in produced goods of 5% of the amount of assistance they have received.

Contributors in this funding will be gratified to:


- a) Alleviate the hardship of these forcefully displaced families
- b) Receive a 5% annual return – goods which in turn will be redirected to schools or other needy institutions.



### THIS IS A MODEL OF SUSTAINABLE ASSISTANCE, YEAR AFTER YEAR

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CALL TCA HEADQUARTERS AT 617 924-4455

For example: Collected funds will buy Bee Colony +/- \$US 150, Bee hive +/- \$US 50, Calf +/- \$US 200, Fruit treesapling +/- \$US 5 ... etc.