

*Armenian Court
OKs Heavier
Fines For
Defamation*

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — In a ruling condemned by press freedom groups, Armenia’s Constitutional Court has upheld the constitutionality of a government-backed bill that will triple maximum legal fines set for defamation.

The bill involving amendments to the Armenian Civil Code was drafted by a close associate of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and passed by the National Assembly in March. It stipulates that media outlets and individuals convicted of “slander” could be fined as much as 6 million drams (\$ 12,450) while those making offensive claims will face a maximum fine of up to 2 million drams.

President Armen Sarkissian refused to sign the bill into law in April, saying he shares concerns that it could be exploited by government officials and politicians to stifle press freedom. Sarkissian also suggested that the bill is “contentious in terms of its constitutionality” and asked the Constitutional Court to pass judgment on that.

In its verdict publicized over the weekend, the court ruled that the amendments do not run counter to the Armenian constitution.

—FREEDOM HOUSE
WASHINGTON DC

see DEFAMATION, page 2

Kooyrigs Delivers Menstrual Products and Medication Amid Lebanon’s Recent Crisis

By Araxie Cass
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BEIRUT – A little over one year ago, in the aftermath of the 2020 Beirut Explosion, Kooyrigs, an Armenian feminist NGO, sprang into action with an initiative to distribute period kits to victims of the blast. With team members from and connected to Lebanon, the Kooyrigs team was eager to help both the Armenian community and other communities in Lebanon. Later that year, Kooyrigs cemented its commitment to direct aid work when the Artsakh War of 2020 broke out, becoming one of the leading organizations distributing aid to the front lines.

Around the one-year anniversary of the



The Howard Karagheusian Center clinic in Beirut offers medicine and healthcare for free (photo Milene van Arendonk)

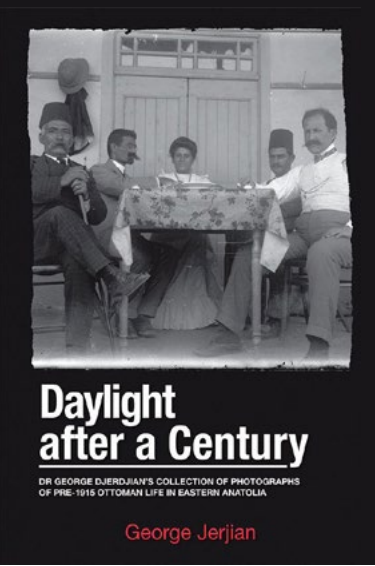
blast, Kooyrigs was once again working on aid for Lebanon. Over the past year, the situation has gone from bad to worse and aid is needed now more than ever. (See related editorial on page 18.) This year, Kooyrigs turned to team members from Lebanon to understand what was most needed.

The situation in Lebanon remains dire. Driving anywhere in the country, one can see the effects of the recent fuel crisis in closed down gas stations, and days-long

lines of cars waiting for fuel. As it has for many years, electricity remains sporadic, but with a lack of fuel, many are not able to power the diesel generators they usually use for power. Hyperinflation has drastically reduced salaries, and made many basic necessities like food unaffordable. The hyperinflation has also left the country without many medications, even basic ones like Ibuprofen and Panadol.

see KOOYRIGS, page 6

Jerjian Photos Shine Light on Lost Armenia



By Harry Kezelian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

LONDON — George Jerjian calls himself a “mindset mentor,” and writes self-help books for baby boomers about how to find purpose and passion in their retirement. He practices what he preaches. Jerjian has made it one of his own passion projects to bequeath to the Armenian community, the academy, and the world a priceless set of photographs which his grandfather took in pre-Genocide Western Armenia.

Jerjian was the featured speaker in an August 21 webinar where his documentary “Daylight After a Century: Dr. George Djerdjian’s Collection of Photographs of Pre-1915 Ottoman Life” was screened, see PHOTOS, page 10



George Jerjian



Pope Francis with Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, left, and Archbishop Sahak Mashalian

Pope Meets with Catholicos Karekin II at the Vatican

VATICAN — Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II traveled to Rome this week to take part in a conference and ecumenical gathering, organized by the Roman Catholic Community of Sant’Egidio: the international association of lay Roman Catholics dedicated to social service.

The conference, titled “Popoli Fratelli, Terra Futura” (“Peoples as Brothers, Earth’s Future”) and subtitled “Religions and Cultures in Dialogue,” brings together religious leaders from around the world from October 6 through 8. Among the participants are Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby.

As the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, His Holiness Karekin II will deliver the homily during the October 7 closing ceremony: an

see VATICAN, page 5

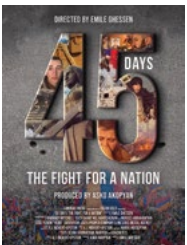
ARMENIA
Prosecutor General Of Iran Kicks off Armenia Visit



NORWAY
Armenian Greco Roman Wrestler Malkhas Amoyan Crowned World Champion



NEW YORK
Documentary on Artsakh War Focuses on Media Misinformation





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

India Foreign Minister Arrives in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar arrived in Armenia on October 12. The press service of the MFA Armenia reports Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan met his Indian counterpart at Zvartnots airport. “I am glad to have arrived in Armenia on my first foreign ministerial visit. I am very happy to see a historical connection with my home state,” the Indian Foreign Minister wrote in Armenian on his Twitter page.

Russian Forces Investigating Murder of Artsakh Farmer

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Russian Ministry of Defense confirmed that an Armenian farmer was killed by Azerbaijani gunfire on October 9 in Nagorno Karabakh. It added that an investigation is ongoing. In a statement, the Russian Ministry of Defense said the civilian was shot dead by the Azerbaijani military while conducting agricultural works and added: “The Russian peacekeeping contingent’s command is investigating the incident with the involvement of both sides.” Aram Tepnants, a 55-year-old farmer, was shot dead by Azerbaijani sniper fire in a field near Martakert.

Virtual Tour of Genocide Museum Launched

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Through a collaboration between the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute and On Point, it is now possible to take a virtual tour of the temporary exhibition hall of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, to get acquainted with the objects on display. Moreover, it is even possible to read the main texts of the exhibits. The authors of the virtual exhibition are Gayane Movsesyan and Erik Harutyunyan, who paid a special tribute to the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide through their work. They thus tried to make some episodes of the history of the Armenian Genocide available to people anywhere in the world.

Ombudsman Investigating Third Azerbaijani Incursion Into Armenia

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Human Rights Defender of Armenia Arman Tatoyan revealed a third case of Azerbaijani unlawful incursion, causing gross violations of civilians’ rights in Kapan. At the end of October 2020 Azerbaijani armed forces incurred the sovereign territory of Armenia on the border area near the village of Tsav, causing a real threat.

“With the current report, I also publish the incursions of the Azerbaijani armed forces on the Google map in yellow, with a description of at least 5 specific locations. ... The intrusions are located in the depths of the RA sovereign territory near the village of Tsav,” Tatoyan wrote.

Pashinyan, Putin Discuss Ways to Stabilize Situation in Region

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) — Russian President Vladimir Putin and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met in Moscow again on Tuesday, October 11, for talks that apparently focused on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

An Armenian government statement said they discussed “ongoing developments” in and around the conflict zone, efforts to shore up stability in the region and the implementation of Russian-brokered agreements to establish transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Russian-Armenian relations were also on the agenda, added the statement.

Neither the government nor the Kremlin announced any agreements reached by the two leaders.

“We will talk in a formal and informal setting - have lunch together, discuss current affairs, talk about prospects,” Putin told Pashinyan in his opening remarks at what was their fourth meeting in less than a year. He said they will talk about a short-term and long-term “settlement in the region.”

“Unfortunately, we still cannot speak of a full stabilization of the situation in our region,” Pashinyan said for his part. He stressed that Russia continues to play the “key role” in international efforts to resolve the Karabakh conflict.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and his Armenian counterpart Arshak Karapetyan also met in Moscow on Monday.

The Armenian Defense Ministry said they



Nikol Pashinyan, left, with Vladimir Putin

discussed Russian-Armenian military ties, the situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and “a number of issues relating to regional security.” It did not elaborate.

The Russian Defense Ministry issued no statements on Shoigu’s latest talks with Karapetyan.

Putin also said on Tuesday that he wants to “compare notes” with Pashinyan with

regard to next month’s summit of ex-Soviet states, including Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia. The leaders of all three countries are expected to attend it.

Both Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev expressed readiness earlier this month to meet with each other. Their most recent face-to-face meeting was hosted by Putin in Moscow in January.

Investigators Withhold Details After Former Defense Minister’s Arrest

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia’s National Security Service (NSS) has refused to shed more light on corruption charges brought by it against former Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan, two generals and an arms dealer arrested in recent weeks.

Tonoyan and businessman Davit Galstyan were remanded in pre-trial custody on September 30 after being charged with fraud and embezzlement that cost the state almost 2.3 billion drams (\$4.7 million). Both men reject the charges and asked Armenia’s Court of Appeals to set them free.

The two other suspects are a deputy chief of the Armenian army’s General Staff and the commander of its Air Force. The NSS claims that the generals abused their powers to arrange for personal gain a \$ 4.7 million contract for the supply of outdated rockets to the armed forces.

The security service said last month that

a private intermediary, presumably owned by Galstyan, delivered those rockets to Armenia in 2011 and that the Defense Ministry refused to buy them after discovering that they are unusable. It has yet to clarify just when the ministry changed its mind and decided to purchase the faulty ammunition.

Seyran Ohanyan, Armenia’s defense minister from 2008 to 2016, again insisted on Friday that the rockets were not accepted by the military during his tenure. Ohanyan, who is now a senior opposition lawmaker, said the rebuff forced their supplier to store them at a Defense Ministry arms depot.

“The supplier was obliged to obtain an [export] license and decide their fate over the next years,” he told a news conference. “But my guess is that the company failed to get the license because the rockets were faulty. You should ask them, not me, about

that.”

The NSS questioned Ohanyan as a witness in the case earlier this year. It refused on Friday, October 8, to clarify whether Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan will also be summoned for questioning.

Citing the secrecy of the ongoing probe, the NSS also declined to specify the date of the supply contract signed by the Defense Ministry or give other details.

Pashinyan appointed Tonoyan as defense minister days after coming to power in May 2018. Tonoyan was sacked in November 2020 less than two weeks after a Russian-brokered agreement stopped the Armenian-Azerbaijani war over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Some senior pro-Pashinyan parliamentarians blamed him for Armenia’s defeat in the six-week war. The prime minister faced angry opposition demonstrations at the time.

Armenian Court OKs Heavier Fines For Defamation

DEFAMATION, from page 1

Armenia’s leading media associations expressed outrage at that conclusion in a joint statement issued on Monday. They argued that it contradicts a Constitutional Court ruling on the issue handed down in 2011 and accused the court of ignoring Council of Europe recommendations and precedent-setting decisions of the European Court of Human Rights.

The statement signed by 11 organizations also says: “Application of the disproportionately strict measures would cause more damage than contribute to the struggle against vices. Especially given that both politicians and officials and representatives of various strata of the population often perceive criticism directed at them as a defamation or insult and go to court. This could create serious obstacles to unfettered activities of the media.”

The main author of the controversial bill, parliament speaker Alen Simonyan, earlier rejected such criticism echoed by Western watchdogs such as Freedom House and Reporters Without Borders.

The Armenian media groups linked the heavier fines for defamation to what they described as other curbs on news reporting imposed by the country’s current leadership. Their statement points to recently enacted bills that banned media outlets from citing social media accounts belonging to unknown individuals and made it a crime to gravely insult state officials.

The Armenian authorities’ decision to criminalize slander and defamation was strongly criticized by Freedom House late last month. The Washington-based group said it testifies to a “clear degradation of democratic norms in Armenia, including freedom of expression.”



ARMENIA

Karabakh Refugees Protest in Yerevan

By Nane Sahakian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) again rallied outside the main government building in Yerevan on Tuesday, October 12, to accuse the Armenian authorities of neglecting their grave socioeconomic problems.

The nearly 100 protesters are former residents of Karabakh's southern Hadrut district occupied by Azerbaijani forces during last year war.

More than 10,000 Armenians lived in the district before the outbreak of the six-war in September 2020. Virtually all of them fled their homes, taking refuge in Armenia

as well as other parts of Karabakh.

The Artsakh authorities have provided some Hadrut refugees with temporary accommodation and pledged to resettle others since a Russian-brokered ceasefire stopped the hostilities last November.

The majority of those refugees remain in Armenia where they rent cheap apartments, huddle in temporary shelters or live with their local relatives. The Armenian government for months supported them with monthly cash handouts meant to cover their accommodation expenses.

The mostly unemployed protests rallying outside Prime Minister Nikol Pashin-

yan's office said the government stopped providing the modest financial assistance in August.

"They promised to at least pay our rent," said one man. "But we haven't gotten anything for the last two months. How should we live?"

"We have no homes, no accommodation, and they are now depriving us of hope for the future," complained another protester. "They do not even take care of our daily needs."

The government is said to be planning to launch a new aid program whereby every underage refugee will receive 50,000

drams (\$ 104) a month for housing expenses. Adults will be eligible for half that amount. It is not yet clear when the government will approve the new scheme.

Citing security concerns, many former Hadrut residents are also reluctant to move to other rural areas in Karabakh close to the new Armenian-Azerbaijani "line of contact" around the disputed territory.

"We lost everything, from homes to handkerchiefs," said one woman. "Should I endanger the lives of my children? Of course not." Other refugees point to a lack of available housing in Karabakh.

Julienne Lusenge Named 2021 Aurora Prize Laureate

VENICE — The sixth annual Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity was awarded this week to Julienne Lusenge, 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. Her boundless courage and tireless activism have shone a light on the desperate plight of thousands of Congolese women subjected to horrific sexual abuse amidst the civil war in the country, exposing the perpetrators and bringing them to justice.

She was named the 2021 Aurora Prize Laureate at the Ceremony titled "Reviving Together" that was held in Venice, Italy.

The Aurora Prize is granted by the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors.

"Julienne Lusenge's exceptional achievements remind us of the impact one person can have, even when encountering the seemingly insurmountable pressure and risks. By recognizing her courage, commitment and selflessness, we are hopeful that she can also inspire each one of us to think about what we can do to stand up on behalf of those whose rights are abused and who are in dire need of our solidarity and support," noted Lord Ara Darzi, Chair of Aurora Prize Selection Committee and Co-Director of the Institute of Global Health Innovation at Imperial College London.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has powerfully demonstrated that what happens in one corner of the world, however remote, affects all of us. We cannot remain indifferent to the suffering of others; we cannot afford to not care. Today, more than ever, we need to let the universal values of gratitude and humanity unite and guide us, as they guide 2021 Aurora Prize Laureate Julienne Lusenge," said Noubar Afeyan, co-founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative and Founder and CEO of Flagship Pioneering.

As the 2021 Aurora Prize Laureate, Lusenge will receive a \$1,000,000 grant and a chance to continue the cycle of giving by supporting organizations that help people in need. This year, considering the acute needs of the people of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) affected by the 2020 war, Aurora will recommend she direct 25 percent of the award funds to addressing urgent humanitarian issues there. The aurora co-founders are committed to matching this contribution to bring the total amount to \$500,000. Besides this, Lusenge has nominated three organizations that support grassroots women's organizations, 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.

"The outstanding work carried out by Julienne Lusenge and her organizations that help women, as well as her courage and perseverance in going against powerful local forces to protect them, is an example of empathy, kindness and dedication. One of the most important goals of Aurora is empowering such heroes, and we are grateful for the opportunity to do just that," said Hina Jilani, Aurora Prize Selection Committee member and former United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders.

Part of SOFEPADI is a hospital and mobile clinics providing holistic medical and psychological care to survivors of sexual violence. In 2010–2020, the medical center received and treated 6,284 people, including 567 internally displaced people. SOFEPADI also encourages socio-economic reintegration with income-generating activities, apprenticeships, and school rein-

tegration, and provides the survivors with legal advice and representation in court.

"At the heart of Aurora is a global movement based on the idea of Gratitude in Action. With hundreds of people that have already joined us, the impact Aurora has managed to achieve is literally changing the world. It is an honor to be able to recognize such heroes as Julienne Lusenge and to be able to highlight and promote their work with the help of our donors and supporters from across the globe," noted Ruben Vardanyan, Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative and Noôdome.

Since its launch, the Aurora Prize has changed the lives of almost 1,000,000 people affected by war, conflict, persecution, and other humanitarian issues. This action-based philanthropy, focused on tangible results, is possible thanks to the supporters whose contribution allows the Prize to continue empowering modern-day heroes. Aurora appreciates any commitment to endorse its mission and encourages ev-



Julienne Lusenge

everyone to join the Initiative and support it. In the meantime, nominations are still open for the 2022 Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity. Until October 31, 2021, any person can submit a nomination for candidates they believe have overcome great personal challenges to help others.

Prosecutor General of Iran Kicks off Armenia Visit

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — At the invitation of the Prosecutor General of Armenia Artur Davtyan, Prosecutor General of Iran Mohammad Jafar Montazeri arrived in Armenia on a three-day working visit on October 12. Deputy Prosecutor General of Armenia Gevorg Baghdasaryan met the Iranian Prosecutor General at Zvartnots airport.

The Iranian Prosecutor General last visited Armenia eight years ago. The visit kicked off with expanded-format negotiations.

The press service of the Prosecutor General's Office welcomed the guest and his delegation. Davtyan first thanked his counterpart for accepting the invitation and visiting Armenia despite the difficulties caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

"Iran is a reliable friend of Armenia, a good neighbor, our relations have a history of hundreds of years. Iran is also a very important trade partner of Armenia, we also have a very active Armenian community in Iran. Iran is home to a considerable Armenian cultural heritage, which enjoys the caring attitude of the Iranian authorities, which I was convinced of during my visit to Tehran in November 2018. The high level of relations between Armenia and Iran is evidenced by the numerous meetings of the



Prosecutor General of Armenia Artur Davtyan greets Prosecutor General of Iran Mohammad Jafar Montazeri. leaders of our states and the multilayered nature of the issues discussed, while the cooperation between the General Prosecutor's Offices of our states is of continuous nature," Davtyan said.

Montazeri thanked his host for the warm reception and expressed confidence that mutual visits contribute to the further deepening of cooperation between the Prosecutor's Offices and law

enforcement agencies. He stressed the significant contribution of Iranian-Armenians in the social, political and cultural life of Iran, emphasizing that due to the existing mutual trust, no serious problems arise in bilateral relations.

During the meeting issues related to the cooperation between the Prosecutor's Offices of the two countries were discussed.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Top Armenian, Russian Clerics Talk Karabakh in Moscow

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' Kirill on October 12 discussed the process of achieving peace in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Russian Orthodox Church announced in a statement, declaring: "During the conversation, a number of topical issues were also discussed, including the peacekeeping mission in Nagorno-Karabakh." The Azerbaijani media has claimed that a trilateral meeting of Karekin II, Kirill and the head of the Caucasus Muslims Allahshukur Pashazade would be held in the Russian capital.

Baku-Nakhijevan Flight Entered Armenia's Airspace, Civil Aviation Committee Confirms

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenia's Civil Aviation Committee has confirmed that on October 6 a flight on the Baku-Nakhijevan route entered the airspace of the Republic of Armenia. The use of the airspace of both Armenia and Azerbaijan has never been restricted for civilian aircrafts, except during the 44-day war, the Committee said in a statement. Flights on the mentioned route were regularly carried out before November 8, 2014, after which the Azerbaijani side chose to stop using the airspace of the Republic of Armenia.

The Committee said flights from Zvartnots Airport to other countries and in the opposite direction have been carried out all this time. It added that the transit aviation permits are not issued by the Armenian aviation authorities, as according to the procedures, no permit is required for the implementation of transit flights by civil aircrafts. The right to choose the routes is reserved for the aircraft operators.

Armenia, Holy See Sign Agreement on Cultural Cooperation

VATICAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — On an official visit to the Holy See on October 11, President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian visited the Pontifical Council for Culture and met with its chairman, Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi. The two discussed cooperation between the Holy See and Armenia and the development of inter-church relations. Sarkissian stressed that there is great potential for deepening cooperation between the Holy See and Armenia in preserving the cultural, educational and historical heritage. Sarkissian and Ravasi noted that the memorandum of understanding on cultural cooperation signed during the visit will provide an opportunity to conduct joint research on issues of historical and cultural significance. "We hope that it will stimulate closer ties between the Holy See and Armenia in the fields of culture, science, archeology, theology, as well as cooperation between the Armenian Apostolic and the Roman Catholic Churches," said President Sarkissian.

Irish Soccer Pro's Move to Baku Turned Sinister

By Gavin Gummiskey

BAKU (*Irish Times*) — When investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova began reporting on the family wealth of Azerbaijan president Ilham Aliyev — including his daughter's control of the construction company that built a €115 million Eurovision auditorium where Jedward had a damp night in 2012 — someone broke into her apartment and installed hidden cameras.

Considering the state phone company came out to connect the line for the devices that recorded a sex tape of Ismayilova and her boyfriend, which was eventually released online when she refused to be blackmailed, the story of a Ballybrack boy stranded in Baku seems tame in comparison.

But in 2009 life at Neftçi PFK became so intimidating that Joe Kendrick's wife Laura called FIFA (International Soccer Federation). Seconds after lodging a complaint the phone rang in their apartment.

"It was someone in broken English saying 'you need to leave the country' and 'don't make phone calls like that again,'" said Kendrick.

Just two months into a two-year contract, the Dubliner had been repeatedly told to leave Baku by officials at Neftçi. Intimidation became the norm. A drive home from training cost \$300 for a broken tail light. When pointing out that the light was fine the policeman smashed it before their eyes. Pay the bribe or see what happens.

"We couldn't go out at night as people would be following us." The former Ireland under-21 left-back cannot prove he was being followed. He was told it was probable. So they stayed in as a precaution.

"It was horrendous," said Kendrick from his home near Newcastle where he currently manages Prudhoe FC. "Just horrendous."

Openly unwanted by the club from the moment German manager Hans-Jürgen Gede was sacked not long after his arrival, the 26-year-old had nowhere else to go, having uprooted his young family from Drogheda to Azerbaijan.

Kendrick claims that the new manager, Boyukaga Aghayev, who remains a prominent figure on the local club scene, strongly suggested he leave without pay before making clear his displeasure to the Azeri players when Kendrick refused.

Zaur Tagizade, the current Qarabag assistant coach, also attacked him.

"I was attacked by him at training. He was basically told to attack me and injure me."

Even after the alleged assault it became an impossible situation as to leave mid-season would render his contract null and void. So he dug in, trained with the youth team and initiated legal proceedings with FIFA via a German lawyer.

To understand how Kendrick ended up with the Neftçiler ("the oil workers") we go down a dusty road familiar to most Irish teenagers who join English clubs. Four years at Newcastle United ended with a move to 1860 Munich only for a foot injury to spoil any chance of a Bundesliga career. So began his descent into the lower leagues in England before Drogheda United offered him a fleeting taste of Champions League football against Dynamo Kiev.

"At the same time the club went into examinership, so I was scrapping around," Kendrick explained. "We had just had our baby girl, Lana. I loved Drogheda. We had a very good team, loved the fans, we were playing good football under Paul Doolin, who was the manager who got the best out of me.

Enter Dutch agent Rob Groener with a

bizarre yet lucrative opportunity. "Baku? I had to look it up on the map. They had watched the Kiev game and seen a few Drogheda players, so some of us went over to have a look around the place, see if we like it. We went over — John Tombouras, Adam Hughes and Eamon Zayed as well — for a week of training."

Kendrick and Tombouras decided to stay. "The coach was German (Gede) and I speak German as I spent a year playing over there so we got on really well. And former Dutch international Rob Reekers was the assistant manager. Two really good guys.

"It is hard to explain what happened after that first week. I signed a two-year contract and went back to Ireland to pack up the house, say me goodbyes but when we went back to Azerbaijan it was a different story.

"I did have three or four offers on the table from English clubs but financially it was a good offer. That was the main thing."

When Gede left the walls began to close in. "They go through coaches every year. There was a massive change straight away — you need to leave the club, they said, you need to leave the country, we do not want you anymore."

"When you go to collect your salary they would take money out of it. They would fine me for missing training after giving me the wrong venue. 'I've done nothing wrong!' Well, we are fining you."

"An Azeri coach [Aghayev] took over and he basically said — obviously you are a good player, we like you, but because of the contract you are on we want to get rid of you. By the way, we are going to make life horrible for you for the foreseeable future." He said Azerbaijani players were encouraged to injure him and other foreign players.

When contacted by the Irish Times John Tambouras confirmed that the duo experienced a "shambolic time" at Neftçi. Neftçi shipped on six foreign players before the 2009/10 season, including Kendrick and Tambouras, but they signed five new foreigners, including Uruguayan striker Walter Guglielmone — who is Edinson Cavani's brother and current agent — but he too was gone by the next summer.

After nine months they simply termi-

nated Kendrick's contract. "I had already started legal proceedings with FIFA's resolution chamber. FIFA decided that the club were in breach of contract so me and John got paid in the end but it was horrendous."

The presence of Reekers, capped by the Netherlands just after Euro 88, ensured that some professional contacts were close to hand.

"Luckily, the manager got sacked but the assistant manager didn't. (Reekers) got banished to the youth team with me and John. He wasn't coaching, it was the same situation, they didn't want to pay him. They do it every year when the manager leaves, they tend to say 'well, let's get rid of his players now.' They have had lots of cases against them. When I spoke to the guys in FIFA they said 'we know them very well.'"

Even his departure was fraught with problems.

"I feared for my safety. When we went through the airport on the way out they went through our bags and tried to charge us thousands of pounds to leave the country.

"You wouldn't believe it. At the time you are young and a bit daft but now, thinking about it, it was absolute hell."

Aliyev has ruled Azerbaijan since 1993, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, while his father Heydar Aliyev was head of the KGB branch in the region and in 1982 became the first Azerbaijani promoted to the Soviet Politburo. "It's an absolute dictatorship," said Kendrick. "There are no human rights. They might pretend there is, but there is none. It is a dictatorship of the worst kind."

Amnesty International and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists lend weight to his opinion. In 2013 CNBC reported that the Central Election Committee accidentally announced that President Aliyev had received 73 per cent of the vote before the polls had opened.

"The people are afraid to say anything. There are pictures everywhere of the guy who runs the country."

Come 2019 Aliyev gave Boyukagha Aghayev the title of Honoured Master of Sports.

"Through the international community, the oil workers, we met some really good friends," said Kendrick. "But it was very, very corrupt. A really unsafe place. Everything is bribes, which is a shame because there was some really good Azeri people that we met but they are always taking because they got nothing."



Armenian Greco-Roman Wrestler Malkhas Amoyan Crowned World Champion

OSLO (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenian Greco-Roman wrestler Malkhas Amoyan (72 kg) won a gold medal at the World Wrestling Championship in Oslo. He defeated Sergey Kutuzov of Russia 3: 1 in the final bout and was declared the world champion for the first time. This is the first medal for the Armenian Greco-Roman wrestling team in Oslo.



INTERNATIONAL

Is Armenia a Geopolitical Football?

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — As the tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia escalated in Summer 2020, it became clear to some thinktanks and specialists in Germany that this was a kind of proxy conflict. Behind the historical conflict between the two countries, they saw a clash of interests between regional powers. Azerbaijan's active military engagement role led to a questioning of defined borders and a shift in the balance of power, reigniting a long-term conflict.

On October 4 area specialists convened at the Sozialinstitut Kommende Dortmund, in the Ruhr region, for a seminar on the political situation in Armenia in the wake of the war. The Social Institute is linked to the Archbishopric of Paderborn, also in the Ruhr region, and deals with issues of Christian social ethics. The sponsors of the gathering included the Auslands-gesellschaft, a foreign policy association promoting understanding among peoples in the spirit of peace and humanitarianism, and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. The latter is a prominent thinktank associated with but independent of the Christian Democratic Party (CDU), founded after World War II to promote European unity, civic education and development cooperation.

The title of the seminar can be roughly translated to “Armenia: Geopolitical Football of the Region's Powers.” The participants examined the interests pursued by regional powers, their impact of the Armenian people and the implications for the autonomy of the Christian nation. They sought to identify the challenges Armenia faces and the course of its future social development.

Robert Gläser of the Kommende Dortmund greeted speakers and guests, after which Azat Ordukhanyan delivered the keynote address. Born in Yerevan, Ordukhanyan studied history, pedagogy and theology, and, after moving to Germany in 1993, studied eastern European history at the Ruhr University in Bochum. A journalist, he has been president of the Armenian Academic Society 1860 for two decades and has also served as chairman of the Central Council of Armenians in Germany. He presented an overview of the historical and political development of Armenia, a tour d'horizon covering centuries, or rather millennia. It was a thorough introduction to Armenia, its geography and population, its language and church; from the legendary Hayk, Ordukhanyan took his audience through 5,000 years of history, the dynasties and their cultural achievements, Mesrob and the alphabet. He reviewed the highpoints in Ani, and the arrival of the Seljuks and Mongols; from there to the modern era, the genocide and all-too-brief interlude of the republic, to Soviet Armenia, and to the present. For the past 150 years, he said, Armenia has been “between the Turkish anvil and the Russian hammer,” and concluded that he believed neither was ready to relinquish the position it holds, globally or regionally.

The political challenges facing Armenia were the subject of a talk by Rami-Georg Johann, a political scientist whose doctoral thesis at the Vechta University was on

“Theories of Empire-Building in the 21st Century.” Johann began with reference to World War I, citing the Sykes-Picot treaty between Great Britain and France which established the “new world order” that was to reign according to Britain's divide and rule policy. Henry Kissinger's definitions laid out the rules and definitions of power that were accepted as “orders,” be it for one area in the world which affects the global balance of power, or a regional order, limited to the specific area. He then reviewed the history of the Caucasus region, from ancient times in the Persian empire to the modern era, before narrowing the focus to the relationship between Azerbaijan and Armenia, once both part of the Russian empire. Karabagh changed hands in 1921 and again in 1988, followed by the outbreak of violence and ultimately war, as the broader picture changed dramatically at the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the USA as presumed world policeman. Moving then to the recent war, Johann examined the role of Russia, as arms supplier to Turkey and Azerbaijan, and ultimately as mediator, facilitated in this by Europe's lamentable passivity. The diaspora, he said, rallied significant support but did not ultimately impact the policies of Armenia or the outcome of the conflict. As for Turkey, he emphasized the “neo Ottoman war” for raw materials, and Ankara's political/military interventions throughout the region. His judgment is that “the European Union cannot ignore Erdogan's imperialism any longer.”

Heide Rieck, author and co-founder with Ordukhanyan of an Armenian cultural project in the region, introduced a literary interlude. Reading from a new anthology she co-edited with Ordukhanyan, she presented the views and experiences of descendants of survivors—a poignant reminder of the long-lasting effects of trauma, whether from the 1915 genocide or the more recent Artsakh conflict.

The role of Christianity in the South Caucasus was the subject of remarks by Ninve Ermagan, a young author who has studied persecution of Christians, protection of minority groups, extremism and the role of women in patriarchal cultural



Azat Ordukhanyan

settings. She is a member of a group called Save our Souls 1915, which engages in spreading knowledge and understanding about the genocide against Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks. Following her talk on the role of Christianity as a state religion, the speakers entered a lively exchange with participants on the many questions raised in the course of the day.

Such seminars may not provide the final answers to the crisis, or crises, generated by the recent conflict; but the fact that leading thinktanks, like the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, for example, and prominent church affiliated institutions raise the issues in such a forum, itself speaks volumes regarding the perceived need for European actors to awaken from their uneasy slumber and actively take up the challenge posed by the continuing, indeed escalating, aggressivity emanating from Turkey and Azerbaijan. “Erdogan's imperialism” — a fitting description.

Pope Francis Meets with Catholicos Karekin II at the Vatican

VATICAN, from page 1

ecumenical prayer service at the Roman Colosseum. Catholicos Karekin II will also be part of a panel discussion earlier that same day, titled “Widening the Horizon, Rediscovering the Others.” Speaking on the same panel will be Noubar Afeyan, co-founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative and chairman of the biotech company Moderna.

In a special gathering at the Vatican, Catholicos Karekin II met with Pope Francis to express thanks for the Pope's support of the Armenian people and Armenia during last year's Artsakh war. The Catholicos had started a pontifical visit to Rome last year, when news of the Azeri surprise attack broke. He cut short his meeting with

Pope Francis on that occasion to return to Armenia to be among his people.

During this week's meeting, the Catholicos described the terrible consequences of the 44-day war, the painful challenges facing Armenia and Artsakh in the war's aftermath, and the ongoing issue of Azerbaijan's unrelenting detention of Armenian prisoners of war and other captives.

Later, the Armenian Church delegation met with Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin. In discussing the urgent need to ensure the preservation of Armenian spiritual and cultural monuments in territories currently under Azeri control, the Catholicos emphasized the critical need for international support of Armenia's

rights.

Archbishop Sahak II Mashalian, the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, is also in Rome to attend the conference and ecumenical prayer service, and has taken part in the Vatican meetings with Catholicos Karekin II.

Accompanying Catholicos Karekin II as members of his delegation are Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Pontifical Legate of Western Europe; Bishop Tatev Hakobyan, Primate of the Romania; Bishop Moushegh Babayan, Grand Sacristan of the Mother See; Armenia's Human Rights Ombudsman Arman Tatoyan; Fr. Karekin Hambarzumyan, of Etchmiadzin's Committee to Preserve the Spiritual-Cultural Heritage of Artsakh; and Fr. Anania Tsaturyan, staff-bearer to the catholicos.



INTERNATIONAL

Kooyrigs Delivers Medication Amid Lebanon's Recent Crisis

KOOYRIGS, from page 1

After learning about the situation and hearing reports from team member Maria Kjdrjan, who traveled to her home in Anjar village over the summer, Kooyrigs decided to start another immediate aid campaign for Lebanon. The organization fundraised through their first birthday celebration, marking one year as an official NGO and 501(c)3, as well as through their social media platform. As in the aftermath of the first war period, products have once again been left off the list of basic necessities subsidized by the government, and thus have become unaffordable for many.

Kooyrigs teamed up with Jeyetik and Joumana Haddad's Freedoms Center, two local feminist organizations, to distribute pads and ibuprofen to some of the most vulnerable groups of women. Joumana Haddad's Freedoms Center has been working to organize Lebanese youth and advocate for human rights, secularism, equality, and inclusion since 2019. Although their in-person activities have been interrupted by the current crisis, they worked to help connect Kooyrigs with other organizations, and donated their space for aid distribution.

The Trip

Two members of the team, I and Maria Kjdrjan, traveled to Lebanon to assess the situation, and personally distribute our aid. We met with Maryam Skaf, the founder of Jeyetik, and with her help traveled to three shelters for victims of domestic violence. Skaf talked to us about her founding of Jeyetik in 2020, when the government decided to leave pads and other period products off the list of essential items that they subsidized after the explosion. This reflects a lack of consideration for women's basic



At the Howard Karagheusian Center (photo Milene van Arendonk)

needs by a system run by men, and a disregard of the effects of period poverty. These can include infections due to poor period hygiene, which, in a country with a crisis of medication availability, can become even more serious. In response, Skaf launched Jeyetik as an initiative to make period products accessible to all.

Kooyrigs distributed aid to three different shelters,



At the Howard Karagheusian Center of Beirut (photo Milene van Arendonk)

which we chose specifically because of the shelter and support they provide to survivors in critical condition, and their policies of serving everyone without discrimination by ethnicity, religion, sect, or political party, which can be an issue in some organizations. Kooyrigs sourced pads and medications from Armenia, ordering from a family-owned pharmacy in Jrvezh in order to support the local economy. Due to the difficulty of bringing medications from Armenia to Lebanon, the organization focused on non-prescription shelf medications.

The first shelter we delivered to was the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) of Lebanon. Although this shelter began as a Christian organization, their board comprises members of multiple groups and religions, and they serve any women regardless of their background. This shelter is kept private, and serves women in the most critical condition of domestic violence, generally those who have been severely physically abused, and have run away from their partners. We spent very little time at the shelter itself to protect the safety and privacy of the beneficiaries, and the shelter's staff distributed the period products and medication to their beneficiaries.

The second organization we visited was the Lebanese Women's

Democratic Gathering (RDFL). This organization combines political advocacy and direct aid. As part of their advocacy work, RDFL is currently working on a campaign to advocate for a law that would make the legal age of marriage 18 for all people in Lebanon, regardless of sect or religion. In addition, they operate three shelters in different areas of Lebanon for survivors of domestic violence. We distributed our period products to their main center in Beirut, and the organization workers distributed them to the three shelters.

Finally, we distributed aid to the Maryam and Marta shelter. This shelter is also kept private, as it serves victims in critical condition. The shelter hosts women and their children, as well as teenagers who escape home because of domestic abuse. Beneficiaries can stay at the shelter for a maximum of three years, during which time the organization works with women to help them develop

goals such as obtaining a degree or starting a business, and gives them the skills and resources that they need in order to accomplish those goals. The shelter also serves as a community, with activities and tasks that encourage inhabitants to be active and empowered.

In addition to menstrual products, Kooyrigs provided medications to the Karagheusian As-

sociation in Beirut, which provides healthcare for free or at extremely reduced prices to anyone in need. The center was started by an Armenian family who lost its son to the influenza pandemic of 1918, and now serves a number of communities in Lebanon. Like most other facilities in the country, the center is facing a shortage of medication. Many of the patients at the clinic are refugees from Palestine or Syria, whose situation has been made even more dire by the economic crisis in Lebanon.

Our deliveries to the Karagheusian center took us to Bourj Hammoud, the center of the Armenian community in Beirut. Due to its proximity to the port, the area was hit especially hard by the 2020 explosion. The Karagheusian center and many other local buildings were destroyed, and although some have been able to rebuild and continue business, the area is still feeling the effects of the explosion, on top of the other crises the country is facing.

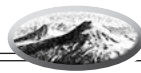
As the situation in Lebanon continues to develop, Kooyrigs will continue to monitor it, and work on future sustainable phases of our aid campaign.



Medical supplies at Joumana Haddad's Freedoms Center (photo Milene van Arendonk)



The Howard Karagheusian Center in Beirut (photo Milene van Arendonk)



Community News

Dean Shahinian Donates \$25,000 To Society for Armenian Studies

FRESNO — The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) has received a \$25,000 donation from Dean Vahan Shahinian.

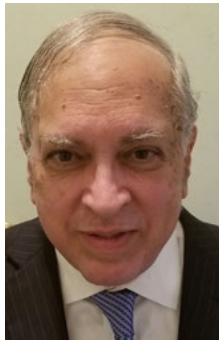
The donation will be used to create the position of SAS executive secretary. As the activities of the society have multiplied in the past three years, the Executive Council has decided to establish a part-time position to enhance the efficiency of the Society and its activities, both on the national and international levels.

Dean Shahinian, Esq. worked for the chairmen of the United States Senate Banking Committee as senior counsel and chief securities policy advisor to staff over one hundred hearings and negotiate and draft numerous bills and laws.

He has contributed to the Armenian community by serving on the National Ecclesiastical Assembly (to elect the Catholicos) in 1995 and 1999, on the Diocesan Council and the Diocesan Auditing Committee, on the Boards of St. Nersess Seminary and the Armenian Students Association, by emceeding the annual Alexandria Armenian Festival, by giving talks on Armenian manuscript illuminations, and in many other activities.

Shahinian expressed his gratitude to the work done by SAS saying: “We

rely on Armenian scholars to learn and to inform others about Armenian culture and history. We appreciate the scholarship of Professors Kevork Bardakjian, Richard Hovannisian,



Dean Shahinian

Dickran Kouymjian, Christina Maranci, Bedross Der Matossian, Barlow Der Mugrdachian, Helen Evans, Sylvie Merian and others and revere the work and enthusiasm of the late Lucy Der Manuelian and George Bournoutian.”

He praised the mission of the Society saying “SAS promotes a community for our scholars to enhance the quality and scope of Armenian Studies. I am pleased to contribute towards its mission.”

“We are deeply touched by Mr. Shahinian’s generous donation,” said SAS President Prof. Bedross Der Matossian. “We are very appreciative of his unconditional support which comes at a time in which SAS is embarking on additional projects and will need a part-time staff person more than ever. I hope other individuals who appreciate the work carried out by the Society will help us financially to implement our various projects. The aim of these projects is to elevate the profile and standards of Armenian Studies throughout the world.

see GRANT, page 11



Keynote speaker Nadia Owusu (photo Karine Armen)

AIWA’s 30th Anniversary Symposium: *Pure Inspiration*

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. — Keynote speaker Nadia Owusu’s words, “I am a person who has a home in a community, a beautiful place to be. It took a long time to get here,” resonate with the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA)’s mission of “connecting, inspiring and empowering Armenian women to bring about positive change in their lives and their communities.” Owusu carries “the trauma of two struggling histories in my body.” “Multiplicity is at the core of who I am,” says the half-Armenian, half-Ghanaian author of the award-winning memoir, *Aftershocks*, where she grapples with her own family history and the larger forces that shape our private lives, “to come out of the darkness of my life.” The title of the memoir refers to the 1988 earthquake in Armenia, but it also evokes the “aftershocks” of Owusu’s own life which was shaped by the absence of her Armenian mother.

AIWA’s 30th anniversary “Uniting Women Globally” symposium at the Balboa Bay Resort on October 2, a hybrid of in-person and online sessions, was a day of celebration. A lineup of highly educated, intelligent and articulate women, organized into three panels — “Women in Technology,” “Armenian Women Influencers” and “Women Affecting Change” — were determined to change the world, and they genuinely believed they could do it. Nothing would hinder their determination to make a difference in the lives of Armenian women; more specifically, in the lives of young Armenian women. They were all eager to create opportunities and to provide guidance. Their passion and joy for their self-assigned task was palpable. Their advice to young Armenian women preparing to start a career was clear and simple: “Be passionate about what you do. Surround yourselves with people you enjoy working with.”

Positivity was in the air. Machines and robots, perceived by many as a threat to a vulnerable population, will “simply take the boring stuff out of the way,” they joked. Nothing could replace human connectivity. Even Covid was given a positive twist. The panelists argued that the pandemic helped erase the work/home boundary and shifted the focus from “schedule” to “output,” thereby giving women the flexibility they needed to balance their careers with their domestic responsibilities. Having known the blessings of moving away from the meetings and the pennies, these women are now fighting to continue to work from home. Many have been successful.

The appeal to “the human side of things” coincided with the focus on the so-called “feminine” qualities of leading through compassion, empathy and encouragement, concepts that are becoming more and more alien in our machine-controlled age. Indeed, the panelists had much praise for one another and made no attempt to showcase

see SYMPOSIUM, page 8

Society for Armenian Studies Launches International Association of Armenian Librarians And Archivists

FRESNO — The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) announced recently the creation of the International Association of Armenian Librarians and Archivists (IAALA), a new organization operating under the umbrella of the SAS, with the goal to provide an international forum for information specialists working broadly with Armenian topics and materials. IAALA plans to host online events and to create standing committees to address acquisitions, cataloging, research and reference, preservation, and digitization issues. It also intends to be an advocate for the need of Armenian expertise in the libraries of public institutions throughout the world.

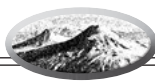
IAALA was born through discussions that followed the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the United States Congress, when Nora Avetyan of UCLA and Ani Boyadjian of the Los Angeles Public Library spearheaded a successful effort to change the official subject heading of the Library of Congress from “Armenian Massacres” to “Armenian Genocide.” Two other members of that committee, Levon Avdoyan (Library of Congress, retired) and Seda Aykarian Matevosian (Vahan and Anoush Chamlian Armenian School) joined Avetyan and Boyadjian in the efforts to realize an association of Armenian librarians and archivists. In conversation with the Executive Committee of the Society for Armenian Studies, they established IAALA under the aegis of SAS as an organization that would support librarians and archivists of Armenian material and to bridge the divide between the librarian and scholarly worlds.

The mission statement of the International Association of Armenian Librarians and Archivists affirms: “The last few decades have witnessed the enrichment of existing libraries and archives that hold Armenian materials of all types as well as the creation of new private and public facilities both in the United States and around the globe. The primary purpose of the International Association of Armenian Librarians and Archivists is to provide a forum for the information specialists and those associated with these institutions to discuss topics of mutual interest, to seek solutions to problems and questions as they develop, and to establish a much-needed connection between scholars and researchers who either may need their services or who may not know where needed materials exist. As a group associated with the Society for Armenian Studies, the Association follows the rules and regulations of that body.”

The executive committee of IAALA is made up of an international group of librarians and archivists, chaired by scholar Levon Avdoyan (Library of Congress, retired). The other members of the executive

see SAS, page 11





COMMUNITY NEWS

AIWA's 30th Anniversary Symposium

SYMPOSIUM, from page 7 themselves. The concept of “It takes a village” was very much alive. Most encouraging was their willingness to explore that other, that less tangible instinctual realm, while remaining firmly rooted in their outer contexts. Providing an alternative to the “facts” of the workplace could very well be the key to transforming the world, their ultimate goal.

The expectations of the symposium are not naive or quixotic. Even as they fight it, these women are ready to take advantage of modern technology. They recognize, with the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu, that “to lead you have to follow.” Because they know that “one cannot fight social media,” for example, they inspire their children to “adapt while being yourself.” The goal is to boost the children’s self-confidence, not do what’s popular on social media.

Armenia was very much part of the conversation. Whatever their expertise, the panelists always drew awareness to Armenia. They sincerely believed in “the potential of Artsakh and of Armenia.” “There are amazing talents in Armenia,” they never ceased to remind us. The “Women in Technology” panel proclaimed Armenia “a major technological hub.” The beautifully attired and made up “Armenian Women Influencers,” on the other hand, were determined to make Armenia dominant in the fashion industry by promoting luxury and contemporary Armenian designers. Their excitement for the three words “Made in Armenia” was all too visible. All were in agreement. Armenia was “beautiful,” “fulfilling.” “It gives me so much purpose.”

The stories the panelists shared of their career journeys are too many to tell. They are all inspiring. One woman told of moving from the United States to Armenia to

launch the “Teach for Armenia” organization, which aims to expand educational opportunities for all children in Armenia. All agreed that remote teaching made education more accessible to women and to other minorities. “All doors are open for Armenia,” reassured the “Women Affecting Change” panelists.

AIWA’s mission is clear — to create a community of strong Armenian women. Happily, “strong” for them carries none of the widely shared current connotations of the word. These powerful women are strong not because they reject their tradi-

may not be a fashionable stance. Yet, one sensed no ambivalence or hesitation in these women’s statements, such as, “I’m a happily married mother of two.”

At an AIWA meeting a couple of years ago, I remember not being too happy about the direction the association was taking. For one who does things the old-fashioned way (I still prefer to use my voice to communicate, rather than text my messages, and have no social media account), the more structured and digitized approach of the younger generation of AIWA leaders was not particularly inviting. The 30th anni-

promise themselves.

There are many reasons to be angry. The issues of women being undervalued at birth, violence against women, the gap of women in technology, and others, were in full view at the symposium. Also present, however, was the confidence that we shall “come out of the darkness.” As Owusu averred, the key is to choose to tell the right stories. Rather than focus on the fear of not belonging in an uncomplicated way, we could “write towards love and solidarity,” noted the acclaimed author. AIWA gives us that opportunity. It is a great place



Armenian Women Influencers

tional roles, but because they recognize that the good and the useful transcend labels. In other words, while fully immersed in the contemporary — that is, while taking full advantage of what modern technology and the social media have to offer — they have the audacity, indeed the common sense, to remain anchored in their personal core values and in their identities as Armenians. The desire to leave the family unit intact

versary celebration showed I was woefully mistaken. These women are savvy, aware, innovative and committed. Indeed, they use modern technology and their professional business skills to further their own goals, as evidenced in their incredible accomplishments and ongoing involvement with their communities. The AIWA community of women have established beyond any doubt that they can do it without having to com-

to come together. Owusu herself has reconnected to the Armenian side of her family. We all look forward to reconnecting and to celebrating at AIWA’s next get-together in 2024, in Armenia.

The journey ahead is tough, but we can trust these extraordinary women, all experts in their fields, all effective leaders, to mentor our young Armenian girls — something they are more than willing to do.

Noubar Afeyan Debuts on Forbes' List of 400 Richest Americans

CAMBRIDGE, Ma. — Moderna co-founder and chairman Noubar Afeyan — an American entrepreneur of Armenian descent — has made to this year’s *Forbes* list of the 400 richest people in the United States.

Landing the 212th with an estimated net worth of \$3.7 billion, Afeyan is among the 44 new names on the list, which now re-

quires a minimum net worth of \$2.9 billion, up \$800 million from a year ago.

Afeyan is the founder and CEO of Cambridge, Mass. life sciences innovation firm Flagship Pioneering. He is also the chairman and cofounder of biotech firm Moderna, known for its Covid-19 vaccine which was authorized by the Food and Drug Administration in December 2020.

The entrepreneur has helped start more than 70 public and private healthcare and life sciences companies over the course of his career.

Born in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1962 to Armenian parents, he and his family fled the Lebanese Civil War to move to Montreal in 1975.

Beyond his stake in Moderna, he also owns shares in more than a dozen publicly traded biotech companies in the U.S.

Afeyan is a lecturer at Harvard Business School and also taught at MIT’s Sloan School of Management from 2000 to 2016. In 2014 he helped launch UWC Dilijan, an international boarding school in the town of Dilijan in the mountains of northern Armenia. He is also co-founder of Aurora Humanitarian Initiative.



Giragosian

FUNERAL HOME

James “Jack” Giragosian, CPC
Mark J. Giragosian
Funeral Counselors

576 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472, TEL: 617-924-0606
www.giragosianfuneralhome.com

Telephone (617) 924-7400

Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN
PAUL BEDROSIAN
LARRY BEDROSIAN

Nardolillo Funeral Home

Est. 1906

John K. Najarian, Jr.
Rhode Island’s Only Licensed Armenian Funeral Director

1278 Park Ave. Cranston, RI 02910 **(401) 942-1220**
1111 Boston Neck Rd. Narragansett, RI 02882 (401) 789-6300

www.nardolillo.com



COMMUNITY NEWS

Assembly's Fall 2021 Advocacy Week Panels Inform, Educate and Motivate

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) organized its Fall 2021 Advocacy Week in a virtual manner during the week of September 27, 2021 in remembrance of the first anniversary of the 44-day war on Artsakh.

The inaugural panel, moderated by David L. Phillips, focused on the adversity that the people of Artsakh are currently facing, including “security and human welfare challenges.” Phillips, Director of the Program on Peace-building and Rights at Columbia University’s Institute for the Study of Human Rights, who established the Artsakh Atrocities project, noted that the armed drones and jihadist mercenaries provided by Turkey “shaped the battlefield” and “changed the outcome of the war.”

Arman Tatoyan, the Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) of Armenia, discussed the implementation of the November 9 ceasefire statement, the ongoing problems of the Armenian prisoners of war unjustly held hostage by the Aliyev regime, the roots of the conflict, and Azerbaijan’s incursions into Armenia’s borders in Syunik and Gegharkunik provinces.

“This cruel war by Azerbaijani military forces is the result of years of state-supported hatred towards Armenians in Artsakh and Armenia,” said Tatoyan, who studied over 300 videos of beheadings, killings, and mutilations of soldiers and civilians by Azerbaijani forces.

“Armenians returned [Azerbaijani] POWs but Azerbaijan has politicized the whole process and is using the existing POWs for bargaining purposes and to acquire control over the territories,” said Tatoyan.

Dr. Michael Rubin, Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, who is an analyst of developments in Iran and the South Caucasus region and a critic of Turkey’s genocidal policies, elaborated that the war on Artsakh was a “test case” and has larger implications for the region. “If Turkey and Azerbaijan can get away with using jihadist mercenaries, then they are simply going to use them more,” said Dr. Rubin. “It creates a plausible deniability for not only Turkey and Azerbaijan, but for a host of other countries.”

Rubin explained that there have been a number of attacks across the Armenian border, and that Azerbaijan’s leader Ilham Aliyev is putting his “rhetoric into the realm of reality” by testing the Armenian border. He reminded the audience that the November 9 ceasefire statement was “not a peace agreement,” and that the U.S. has been “absent, ineffective, and relatively passive by treating the two sides with moral and policy equivalence.”

Rubin pointed out that although President Biden and his Administration “rightly acknowledged the Armenian Genocide,” U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, only two days later, “illegally by the letter and spirit of law” waived Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act.”

“We’re giving countries like Azerbaijan a free pass, which doesn’t end well for stability in the South Caucasus, and it’s time for the U.S. to wake up,” Rubin concluded.

Awareness, Assistance and Advocacy

“Cultural Desecration and Christians in Peril” was moderated by Reverend Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, executive director of Churches for Middle East Peace, and featured Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Ecumenical Director and Diocesan Legate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) and Board Member of Churches for Middle East Peace, and Andrew Crane, advocacy associate at International Christian Concern (ICC).

“To increase awareness, ICC went to work covering the war itself to highlight the broader narratives, including the erasing of Christianity and war crimes perpetrated by Azerbaijan and Turkey,” said Crane.

Following the war, ICC released three reports and hired two staff members to work full-time on the ground in Artsakh to assess humanitarian needs. The ICC has also joined the Armenian community’s advocacy efforts in Washington, D.C.

Crane focused on the importance of education, studying the history, and staying up to date on the news because “Turkey and Azerbaijan don’t want you to see this pattern of cultural genocide that they’re doing.”

During his remarks, Aykazian stressed the importance

of being “aggressive in advocacy,” and highlighted Azerbaijan and Turkey’s purpose to “erase everything that is Christian in that part of the world. By destroying the church, they destroy the spirit of every Christian in the world.”

He noted that the destruction of Armenian churches in Artsakh is occurring secretly and there are “very few churches left.”

“There is a fear that the churches will be destroyed if Western governments do not interfere.”

Revitalizing Communities Through Greenery

Jeanmarie Papelian, executive director of Armenia Tree Project (ATP), and Amasia Zargarian, deputy head of government affairs of The HALO Trust USA, were featured in the “Working to Make Artsakh Safe and Green” panel, moderated by the Assembly’s Congressional Relations Director Mariam Khaloyan.

Founded by Carolyn Mugar in 1994, ATP has planted almost 7 million trees and has greened over 1,300 communities in Armenia and Artsakh while employing thousands of people to date, including local villagers who are often seasonal workers.

ATP is “revitalizing and engaging communities” as a result of its work, despite the fact that it lost 14 Community Tree Planting sites in Artsakh during the war. Papelian noted, however, that they have new plans for the future.

In Artsakh today, ATP is focusing on providing rural villagers in Martuni and Askeran with small greenhouses as “many villagers lost farmland during the 44-day war.” ATP is also partnering with Green Lane NGO, which trains farmers in growing, packaging, and marketing vegetables for sale in local marketplaces.

The HALO Trust USA’s Amasia Zargarian acknowledged the importance of their donors, whose support has aided in the removing of cluster munitions and unexploded ordnances. Zargarian estimates it will take another four years to clear most of the unexploded ordnances remaining in Artsakh, though “a good number of cluster munitions have already been cleared around the towns of Martuni, Martakert, and Askeran.”

“It is important to point out how different the cleanup challenge is now, after the 44-day war, versus the cleanup after the first Artsakh war in the early 1990s,” said Zargarian. “So much of the explosive threat this time is inside civilian-populated centers in Artsakh, and not just in the outskirts of towns and villages, as was the case in the immediate aftermath of the first war.”

Zargarian reported that the clearing of cluster munitions and unexploded ordnances in Stepanakert will be completed in October 2021. He emphasized that 99 percent of the Trust’s staff in Artsakh are locals and 150 are employed full time, while more than 20 percent of the current staff are displaced Armenians.

Fueling Advocacy Positively Impacts Legislation

The “Fuel Advocacy” panel, featuring New England Patriots Director of Football/Head Coach Administration, Berj Najarian, Assembly’s Western Region Director Mihran Toumajan, Director of Congressional Relations Mariam Khaloyan and Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, highlighted the importance of activism and advocacy efforts.

Najarian said it is a “great honor and duty” to use his platform. His activism increased in 2015 when he became an advocate for US reaffirmation of the Armenian Genocide during the centennial commemoration. He noted that within the Patriots organization, there are “players, coaches, and owners who use their voice” to create change.

“I’m going to continue stepping up and doing it in a respectful but firm way,” said Najarian. “There has been receptiveness, not only in the organization, but different organizations and people outside of it, so we’re going to keep going.”

Najarian stressed the importance of inclusivity in advocacy efforts and to approach causes “thoughtfully, strategically, and creatively.” He said that he informs non-Armenians about Armenia and Artsakh, and that the large Armenian flag in his office that greets Patriots players every day “has become a conversation sparker.”

Toumajan remarked on the Assembly’s activities on the

West Coast, where he has been engaged with California state officials and testified before a State Senate Committee earlier this year regarding local agencies divesting from Turkey and Turkish government-controlled bonds, under State Senator Anthony J. Portantino’s leadership and upon the wise counsel of Assembly intern alum, Ardashes Kassakhian, who is a Glendale City Councilmember. Toumajan also works closely with California State Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian, who recently secured \$9 million in state funding for the first Tumo Center to be established in the U.S. in the Los Angeles area.

Ardouny expressed the Assembly’s appreciation to its network of State Chairs and activists across the country and highlighted the importance of the successful passage of five decisive amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act in late September 2021. Ardouny also talked about the importance of affirmation of the Armenian Genocide and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s (SFRC) confirmation hearing of U.S. Ambassador to Turkey nominee and former U.S. Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ), as well as SFRC Chairman Bob Menendez’s strong and appreciated inquiries during the hearing relative to the importance of Armenian Genocide reaffirmation.

Highlights from an interview with Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) were also shared, including on aid to Armenia and Artsakh, the importance of growing the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, as well as lessons observed from the decades-long effort to secure passage of legislation affirming the U.S. record on the Armenian Genocide.

Pallone noted that through the work of the Armenian Caucus and with the support of the Armenian Assembly and other organizations, \$50 million in humanitarian and economic development assistance was secured for Armenia, and \$2 million for demining in Artsakh during the current Congressional session.

“This is all very positive,” said Pallone, who also remarked on the significance of the bipartisan Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues. “I would continue to encourage Assembly members to reach out and make sure your members join the Caucus,” said Pallone.

Finally, Pallone commented on the importance of advocacy and reflected on the overwhelming passage of the Armenian Genocide resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives.

“I want to use that as an example to tell everyone in the Armenian diaspora that you can never give up and to stay active.”

The final panel focused on “Media Matters,” which endeavored to evaluate the mainstream media’s coverage of the war. Panelists included Peter Mirijanian, founder of Peter Mirijanian Public Affairs, Arda Haratunian, a strategic communications advisor, and Lilit Markosian, a journalist based in Yerevan and New York. Assembly Communications Director Taleen Babayan served as moderator.

One challenge in terms of coverage has been the decline of foreign news bureaus and correspondents, according to Haratunian. “Armenians are fighting a media war largely punching at ghosts, with fewer people paying attention to it,” she said.

It’s also incumbent upon the Armenian-American community to provide proper context to journalists and publications to “move the ball forward here in the US,” said Mirijanian.

Haratunian said it’s important for Armenians to “maintain the staying power” after a crisis, and to focus on more universal stories that humanize the Armenian people.

“We have the truth on our side,” said Haratunian. “And that truth has to be shared patiently and methodically.”

Markosian said that currently there are few journalists going to Artsakh, as it is bureaucratically difficult to gain access.

All three panelists honed in on the importance of framing a clear narrative moving forward.

Western media played a major role in exposing and explaining the Armenian Genocide, while seemingly being manipulated by Turkey and Azerbaijan last year, even as a genocidal situation threatened the Armenian people of Artsakh.



Jerjian Photos Shine Light On Lost Armenia

PHOTOS, from page 1 followed by discussion. The webinar was hosted by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, the Armenian Institute (London), and Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives.

Marc Mamigonian, the director of academic affairs at NAASR, introduced the speaker and representatives from the sponsoring organizations. The discussants stressed the vast importance of saving archival materials, and issued a call to the Armenian community, that anyone with written or printed documents, photographs, and artifacts, which shed light on Armenian life and history, must preserve these at all costs. Jerjian went further, calling on Armenians to “not be selfish” and to share their what has been passed down to them with the broader community, as he has done.

The documentary, which was made in 2014 along with a companion book (both titled “Daylight After A Century”), depicts the restoration of approximately 100 photographs taken by Jerjian’s grandfather, Dr. George Djerdjian of Arabkir. Djerdjian attended the Sanasarian Academy in Erzurum and medical school in Zurich, settling in Egypt and later in the Sudan. The photographs were taken between 1900 and 1907, on an old style camera that used glass plates. These glass plates have been preserved by the Jerjian family for approximately 100 years before being brought out of storage



George Jerjian

in Arabkir and Erzurum and locations in between the two where Djerdjian travelled. Djerdjian had an eye for the interesting; the photos include everything from waterfalls, rivers and mountainous landscapes to town street scenes and Armenian folk musicians; to Armenian churches and schools; to an ominous gathering of Ottoman officials on the eve of the 1908 Revolution. The documentary depicts the story of the slides as well as Jerjian commenting on several of them; the post-viewing dis-



Armenian family in Arabkir before 1915 (Photo: Dr. George Djerdjian)

by the younger George Jerjian and developed by the specialty firm Chicago Albumen Works in Housatonic, Mass. (The speaker, George Jerjian, spells his name without the “d” of his ancestors.)

The photographs depict an astonishing array of figures and locations in Ottoman Armenia, predominantly

cussion found Jerjian quickly going through a larger number of slides and giving more interesting commentary.

The documentary also had commentary from Dr. Rouben Adalian, the executive director of the Armenian National Institute, who expressed the great importance of Jerjian’s find, and its value to Armenian history and Armenian studies. The emphasis Adalian places on this collection of 100 photos is telling. A similar discovery in an American or European context would not have the same effect — 100 photos of buildings in London that were subsequently destroyed in the Nazi blitz, for example, would certainly not excite the same amount of curiosity. The fact that such a collection does so in an Armenian context is testament to the destruction wrought during the Genocide of 1915; that such photos are rare and that so many pieces of the puzzle are missing from Armenian life before the Genocide — even to the grandchildren of those who lived in that world — is a sobering reminder of how much has been lost and how vital it is to preserve what is left, as the discussants encouraged.

The webinar can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzSasMUR-LU8> and Jerjian’s book can be purchased at the NAASR website here: https://naasr.org/products/daylight-after-a-century?_pos=2&_sid=4d301875d&_ss=r

Related, Jerjian also produced an abridged translation of Antranik Poladian’s *History of the Armenians of Arabkir*, which was a valuable source of research in contextualizing these photographs, and can be found on the NAASR site here: https://naasr.org/products/arabkir-homage-to-an-armenian-community?_pos=3&_sid=4d301875d&_ss=r



Hillside in Arabkir before 1915 (Photo: Dr. George Djerdjian)



COMMUNITY NEWS

Society for Armenian Studies Launches International Association of Armenian Librarians and Archivists

SAS, from page 7

committee include Boris Adjemian (Nubarian Library, Paris), Nora Avetyan (UCLA), Ani Boyadjian (Los Angeles Public Library), Anna Chulyan (National Library of Armenia and Armenian Library Association, Yerevan), Nerses Hayrapetyan (U.S. Embassy, Yerevan), Seda Aykanian Matvosian (Vahan & Anoush Chamlian Armenian School), Khatchig Mouradian (Library of Congress), and Tigran Zargaryan (National Library of Armenia, retired, and Armenian Digital Library). Christopher Sheklian (Radboud University) serves as the liaison from the SAS and Emilio Bonfiglio (University of Tübingen) serves as the liaison from the Association Internationale des Etudes Arméniennes (AIEA).

Avdoyan said, “As we expand the executive committee to include an international membership of superbly qualified colleagues, Ani, Nora, Seda, and I want to thank Bedross Der Matossian and the SAS for their patience and guidance during the months we laid the foundation of IAALA. Our purpose was both to give a voice to and to provide a much-needed forum for librarians and archivists around the world who deal with all Armenian materials. Librarians and archivists are usually quiet about their work, so it is no surprise that they have not advertised the importance of the discipline. Much of the retention, preservation, processing, and dissemination and interpretation of Armenian material culture is due to their efforts. We hope that IAALA will unite the library and archives communities around the world to meet the modern challenges facing the profession and lead bright young talent to join with us to guarantee a bright future for our institutions.”

“We are truly excited about this major initiative,” said SAS President Bedross Der Matossian (University of Nebraska, Lincoln). “While we have organizations and societies dedicated to Armenian Studies, this is the first time in history that an international association of Armenian librarians and archivists has been established with a global presence under the leadership of Dr. Levon Avdoyan, a leading expert in the field. From Washington D.C. to Paris and from Yerevan to Tübingen, the Association will play a major role in advancing the field of Armenian Studies on the national and international levels. The commitment of the executive committee of the International Association of Armenian Librarians

and Archivists (IAALA) and their mission inspire hope of strengthening the field of Armenian Studies and to raise its academic standards.”

Members of IAALA must also be members of the Society for Armenian Studies. To inquire about membership, please contact SAS President Bedross Der Matossian at bdermatossian2@unl.edu and complete the membership form <https://societyforarmenianstudies.com/apply-for-membership/>. Under the “Field of Interest” category, please indicate “IAALA.” General inquiries about the International Association of Armenian Librarians and Archivists may be directed to iaala.saslibrarian@gmail.com. Current members of SAS may join IAALA by emailing iaala.saslibrarian@gmail.com. More information about the inaugural event will be forthcoming.

The SAS, founded in 1974, is the international professional association representing scholars and teachers in the field of Armenian Studies. The aim of the SAS is to promote the study of Armenian culture and society, including history, language, literature, and social, political, and economic questions.

Information about the SAS can be found on its website at societyforarmenianstudies.com or by following the SAS on its Facebook page, [@societyforarmenianstudies](https://www.facebook.com/societyforarmenianstudies).

Shahinian Donates to Society For Armenian Studies

GRANT, from page 7

Since 2018, SAS has embarked on major projects which include but are not limited to the SAS Podcast Series which are available on platforms like Apple Podcast, Spotify, and Google Play; SAS Graduate Research and Travel Grants; The Society for Armenian Studies Publication Series published through the Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno, e-SAS (Entries of the Society for Armenian Studies), and the Journal Society for Armenian Studies (JSAS) published by Brill. Recently the Society began expanding its activities in Armenia and Artsakh by implementing agreements academic institutions in both republics.

If you would like to support SAS’s various activities, contact Bedross Der Matossian @ bdermatossian2@unl.edu.



Anoush Ter Taulian, left, at the Redhawk Indigenous Peoples Day Celebration

Artsakh Visibility at NY Indigenous Day

By Anoush Ter Taulian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK — The Redhawk Indigenous Peoples Day Celebration was held on Lenape land on Randall’s Island in New York City on October 10 and 11. Today while over 130 cities acknowledge Indigenous Peoples Day, NYC still promotes Columbus Day, despite its tragic history of genocide and violence.

Cliff Matias, founder of Redrum Motorcycle Club, and others helped create this celebration to honor indigenous peoples surviving despite genocides. Elders, medicine people and cultural performers convene to share their traditions.

This year’s celebration began with a sunrise ceremony of prayers and offerings. Then there was a water ceremony where people had brought water from their various homelands which were blessed and poured together. The dazzling array of performers ranged from the Aztec Dancers, Taino Music and Dance Ensemble, to Immortal Technique a Peruvian hip hop artist.

I was allowed to speak about the invasion of Artsakh and it was challenging to talk about Azerbaijani war crimes in a few minutes. I had asked one of my friends in Artsakh what she was going to do if the Azerbaijanis invaded again and she said “Baikar, Baikar meenchev verch,” (Fight, fight to the end) which I had the crowd repeat and videotaped to show her a moment of Artsakh visibility at Indigenous Day in NYC.



St. Nersess Seminary’s Deacons’ Training Held in Western Diocese for First Time

DUNLAP, Calif. — St. Nersess Seminary’s Deacons’ Training Program was held in the Western Diocese for the first time this year. It took place from August 8-14 at Hye Camp and was organized and led by Fr. Gomidas Zohrabian. Ten participants took part in the training from various parishes. There were daily morning and evening prayer services, deacons’ training classes, Bible studies, Armenian language classes, and lectures. Deacon Barlow Der Mugardehian, Ph.D., taught Armenian language and history classes. Fr. Zaven Markosyan, Fr. Mashdots Keshishian, Rev. Fr. Vazgen Movsesian, Fr. Haroutioun Tachejian, Fr. Yessai Bedros, and Dn. Aris Sevak instructed Bible studies and some deacons’ training classes, as well as participated in the prayer services. On Friday morning, Fr. Yessai celebrated the Divine Liturgy.

Janice Hendrix, Yn. Roberta Hairabedian, and Salpy Adams volunteered as the kitchen crew for the duration of the program. Thanks to them, the participants had traditional Armenian food, along with other delicious meals.

Overall, the program was a great learning experience for both the participants and their mentors, who bonded over faith, heritage, and tradition. Most importantly, they shared the same love in serving God. The St. Nersses Deacons’ Training Program in the Western Diocese was a success, and the participants are eager to return next year.

Arts & Culture

New Grant Takes ‘Gorky’s Dream Garden’ Closer To Reality

By Pellegrino D’Acerno

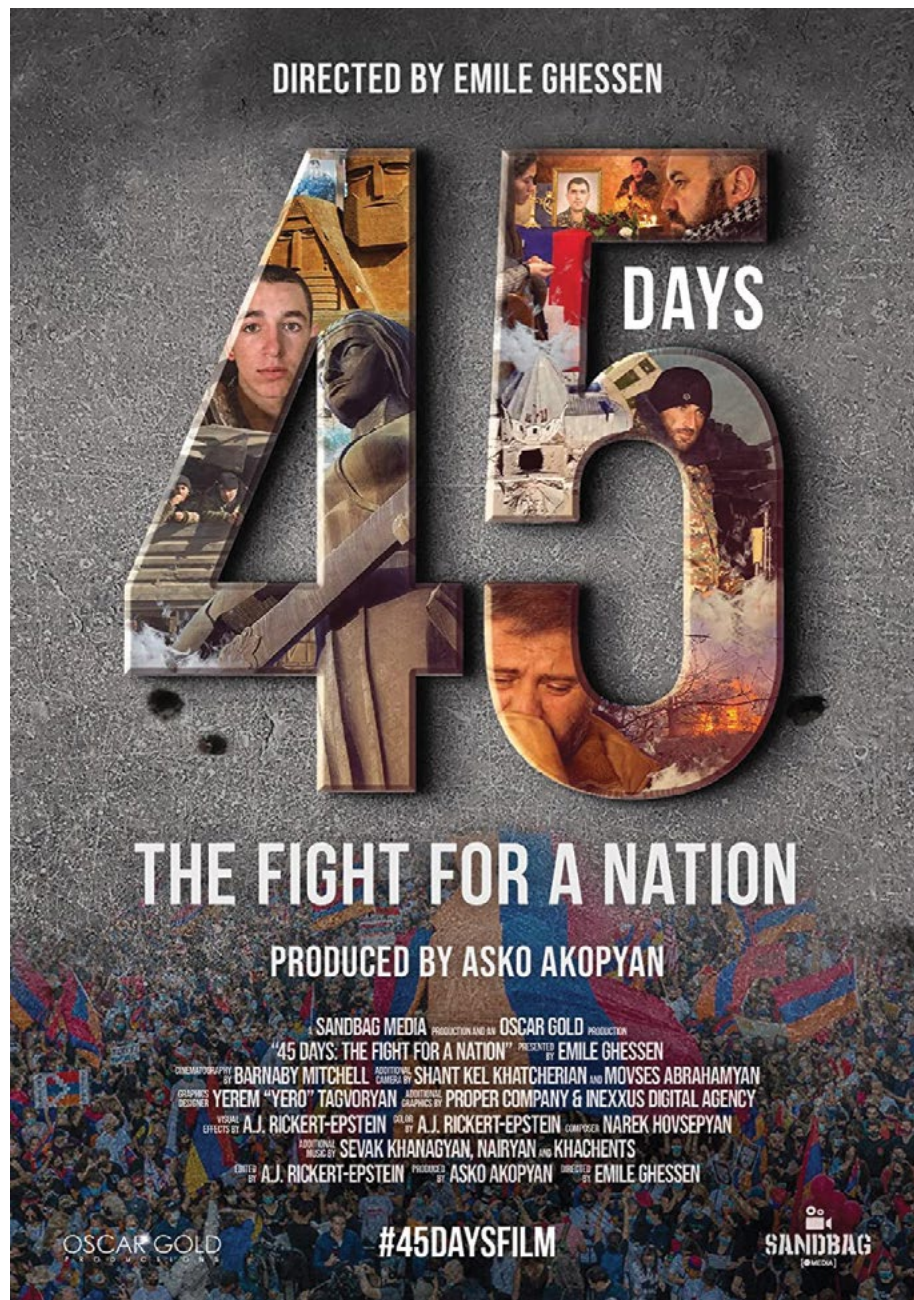
NEW YORK — Composer Michelle Ekizian received a grant from the RJE Foundation awarded this summer for her musical theater opera project “Gorky’s Dream Garden” (an opera of love, courage and ...modern art). RJE’s grant is helping Dr. Ekizian with the preparation of the epic score’s massive performance/publication materials. A funding campaign for its production costs on a mainstream venue featuring a star studded cast from classical, Broadway and popular performing arenas with large orchestra and chorus will be up next. Other events are anticipated, including film screenings, panel discussions with critics and arts and entertainment world experts, a women’s celebratory fashion show, Dream Garden Bellini Cocktail Parties and an unveiling of some recently discovered 35-lost early Arshile Gorky artworks.

Ekizian’s creation of “Gorky’s Dream Garden” comes after her longtime engagement as composer for the Interfaith Committee of Remembrance with the Brooklyn Philharmonic at New York City’s Cathedral of St. John the Divine. It was also inspired by an early commission from the Armenian Diocese (Eastern). The 2001 commission was for the 1700th anniversary of Armenia as the first Christian Nation for celebration on the Great Lawn of NYC’s Central Park during the summer before the disaster of 9/11. From the celebration of an enduring faith throughout the ages in the face of the history of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, magnificent orchestral music performed in SJTD’s Great Space and on Central Park’s Great Lawn, the dream of a “dream garden” in New York was initiated.

From those beginnings, Ekizian set out to feature the iconic feminine spirit informing the “dream garden’s” protagonist, the artist Arshile Gorky — a survivor of the 1915 Armenian Genocide who would come to America, create masterworks immortalizing his martyred mother Shushan (including portraits now in the permanent collections of National Gallery of Art and the Whitney Museum) and become a founding father of abstract-expressionism. Thus, was born “The Shushanner”—“The Slender Lilies”—a fantasy ghost quartet of mezzo voices (including a possible counter-tenor) in honor of women and mothers of all times. Of a timeless, spiritual and eternal realm of floating elegance, grace and transcendence, The Shushanner Quartet eventually became defining characters of Ekizian’s opera.

Enduring Women’s Words

The Shushanner not only share throughout the opera their passion for a world without boundaries, they have the last word in its grand finale. And so as Ekizian plows through see GORKY, page 13



New Documentary on Artsakh War Focuses on Media Misinformation

NEW YORK — The Cultural Impact Foundation recently announced its partnership with the film “45 Days: The Fight For A Nation,” a new feature documentary directed by Emile Ghessen and produced by Asko Akopyan. The movie is about the unprovoked Azerbaijani and Turkish assault on the Autonomous Republic of Artsakh in September of 2020. The film shows how the news media used misinformation or avoided coverage of these events and thereby affected the public’s awareness and perception of this invasion and war.

Ghessen, a former Royal British commando, traveled to the region and told the story of the people who took up arms to fight, documenting the pain and suffering of those involved in the war. “45 Days: The Fight For A Nation” is Ghessen’s third feature war documentary. His other projects showcase volunteers who traveled to Iraq and Syria to fight against Islamic State and others who fought to defend Ukraine in their war with Russian. Akopyan is also the producer of “Songs of Solomon,” Armenia’s official selection for the 93rd Academy Awards for Best International Feature Film.



Director Emile Ghessen

“45 Days: The Fight For A Nation” held its first US private screening and red-carpet reception at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood on September 16, 2021, to a capacity audience and rave reviews. Following its Hollywood screening, the film has toured with private screenings across the US in Fresno, Glendale, Las Vegas, San Diego and San Francisco, and soon in Sacramento.

The US East Coast private screenings will take place on October 14 in New York City, October 19 in Washington, D.C. and October 21 in Boston.

For information and tickets, log onto 45daysfilm.net/tickets.

CIF would like to help ensure the success of this film as it continues its screening tour to Canada and Europe, and as it competes in upcoming film festivals. As customary in the industry, the greater the buzz and marketing of a film, the greater the reach for impactful distribution in the long run.

To donate toward the tour and to see clips of the film, visit <https://emileghessen.com/documentaries/45-days-the-fight-for-a-nation-2021/>

A CONVERSATION WITH...

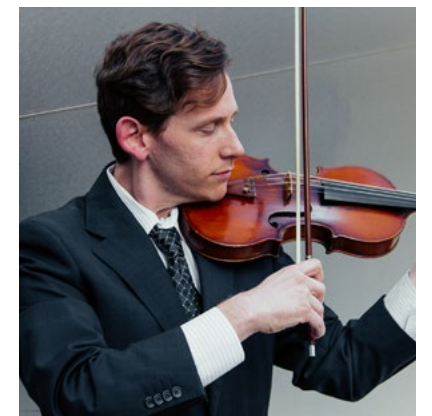
Kristapor Najarian

‘I love everything that is good and sincere’

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / PARIS – American composer and violinist Kristapor Allen Najarian was born in 1991 in Orange County, Calif. He studied music composition and violin at the University of California, Los Angeles (Bachelor of Arts degree in Music) and since 2019 he has studied at the École Normale de Musique de Paris (2020) with Prof. Éric Tanguy. He had performances of works across the United States and internationally in prestigious arenas which include the Juilliard School, Dilijan Chamber Music Series (Los Angeles), Music from Angel Fire (New Mexico), Chamber Music Northwest (Portland), Newport String Festival (Rhode Island), Yerevan Perspectives International Music Festival and Khachaturian Opera House (Armenia), Salle Cortot (Paris), and the Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO. Najarian’s compositions have been performed by world class artists and ensembles, including Movses Pogossian, Antonio Lysy, and the Asylum Quartet. He performed internationally in a variety of



idioms including classical, folk, rock, pop, blues, jazz, and country western; collaborated with world-renowned artists including Movses Pogossian, Guillaume Sutre, Ali Jihad Racy and Ambroise Aubrun; concertized in prestigious venues including Zipper and Walt Disney Concert Halls (Los Angeles), Sydney Opera House (Australia), and Aram Khachaturian Opera House (Armenia). He recorded in studios (EastWest and others) as performer and arranger, collaborating with artists in various genres to produce work ranging from full-length albums to film scores.

And just some reviews: “... driving rhythm, a wild dance, a soft wail, a dizzying melody over constant running notes that have quirky rhythmic accents laid into them” (Laurie Niles, Founder/Editor, Violinist.com, 30 May 2015 [on ‘A Tale for Two Violins’]), “...a compelling 21-minute piece for unaccompanied violins, structured in six episodes ripe with folk-inflected melodies, bent pitches, animated rhythms and a nod early on see NAJARIAN, page 16



ARTS & CULTURE

New Grant Takes ‘Gorky’s Dream Garden’ Closer to Reality

GORKY, from page 12
the monumental tasks of engraving, proofing, editing and printing of the opera’s thousands of sheets of music pages, a song line encapsulating the closing Women’s Vision comes especially to mind. Now, amidst COVID and post-20th year of the passing of 9/11, and connecting the beats between celebration and disaster, their seminal song line Time Has No Choice But to Pass is suggestive of a larger unfolding.

Currently there are possible ties toward premiere programming. Ekizian’s longtime colleague and friend, Constantine Orbelian, has just been appointed as music director and principal conductor of the New York City Opera. Aside from their shared passions for keeping alive the history and culture of the Armenians, there are uncanny synchronicities with the background of New York’s intrepid opera company. “Gorky’s Dream Garden” draws upon a slice of New York City history that impacted its protagonist’s real life. The opera’s opening 1939 World’s Fair scene recalls LaGuardia’s WPA program which assisted Gorky and many other artists of the day who would go on to become icons of modern art.

The strange loops of celebration and premonitory clouds of “Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia” (to quote a title from a telling series of Gorky’s paintings) are in sync with the world beat of today. What was to be a celebration of Armenia’s 30th anniversary as an independent republic the other week, was overshadowed by dark clouds of the country’s political unrest from 2020’s Nagorno-Karabakh War upon Armenian territories by Azerbaijan which recall the disasters of the Armenian Genocide all over again. Just as in Gorky’s time, situations of darkness (sorrowful memories of the Genocide, the challenges of the Depression, the threat of World War II) as well as hopeful outlooks (the pre and post-World War II era’s developments toward modern industry and science), a worldly perspec-



From left, Michelle Ekizian, Bishop Daniel Findikian, Lynn Needle and Mark Needle (Albin Lohr-Jones photo)

tive unfolds. With “Gorky’s Dream Garden” as part of an overarching arc of time and thoughts of the premiere’s conductor with his baton before the orchestra musicians, another song line comes to mind. This one is from Cher, Ekizian’s beloved musician hero who shares the Armenian heritage and the survivalist spirit and is another one of the composer’s envisioned “Gorky” cast stars—for the role of... “The Black Monk.” The unfolding of the Dream Garden’s arc continues.

To see clips of the work, with opera singers Hasmik Mekanejian and Karen Lubeck, see <https://youtu.be/iiV0oQ8pcRY>



From left, Vicki Shoghag Hovanessian, composer Michelle Ekizian, Conductor Constantine Orbelian, Impresario & NYCO General Director Michael Capasso (Albin Lohr-Jones photo)

Tekeyan Cultural Association

SPONSOR



20th



ANNIVERSARY

a TEACHER

IN ARMENIA AND ARTSAKH



**SINCE ITS INCEPTION
IN 2001, THE TCA
SPONSOR A TEACHER
PROGRAM HAS
RAISED \$734,590
AND REACHED OUT
TO 6,829 TEACHERS
AND SCHOOL STAFF
IN ARMENIA AND
ARTSAKH**








✂

☐ Yes, I want to sponsor teachers in Armenia and Karabagh to continue helping them educate the children, our future leaders. I would like to have the teacher's name and address.

☐ \$200 ☐ \$400 ☐ \$600 ☐ Other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Make check payable to:
Tekeyan Cultural Association—Memo: Sponsor a Teacher

Mail your check to:
TCA Sponsor a Teacher
5326 Val Verde, Houston, TX 77056
Your donation is Tax Deductable

**ADVERTISE
IN THE
MIRROR**



ARTS & CULTURE

Books

War: Shahe Mankерian’s *History of Forgetfulness*

By Christopher Atamian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Caveat Lector: Reader Beware! Shahe Mankерian new book, *History of Forgetfulness*, is no walk in the park. The poet takes an honest and often devastating look at events from his childhood when the 1975 Civil War broke out in Beirut. Death is omnipresent as is human cruelty, presented on a platter for all to see and taste. Want some dressing for your pain? Some salt for your wounds?

Some more pepper perhaps for your suffering? Written in elegant and spare verse, the poems here are particularly effective because they bring home the terrifying stupidity and harm that war unleashes on its victims.

The lead poem “Educating the Son” sets the mood for what follows: “I got my schooling at the morgue:/a summer job, my mother thought,/would keep the streets out of her son.*/It was a booming business, death.” As he does elsewhere throughout these poems, Mankерian describes the topic at hand — here dressing murdered boys his own age for burial, the precision of it and also the horror — but brings it back to his own unique perspective. The poet somehow remains alive and reminds the reader that he is still his mother’s son, one who needs her love, especially given the wartime conditions:

“Would she remember that I was
her only son and that I cleaned
boys my own age? I witnessed death

before I could live. Mother, stay awake.
Don’t look for him among
the dead. He lives. He lives. He lives.”

What of these other wonderful strong poems? The poet’s father plays a strong role in his life, a demanding persona who likes precision in all things. The young Mankерian does everything he can to please him, to put a sense of normalcy in a daily routine gone haywire for everyone. He assiduously cleans his slippers until they shine. The identification with the father is such that the two merge in a powerful if unexpected image:

My fingers
have collected dirt,
20 years of panic,
and his footsteps.
I feel
Uncircumcised:
yellowish
unclean.

When I smell
burnt bread,
my stomach heaves.
This is your father
in you coming
out yellowish
unclean.

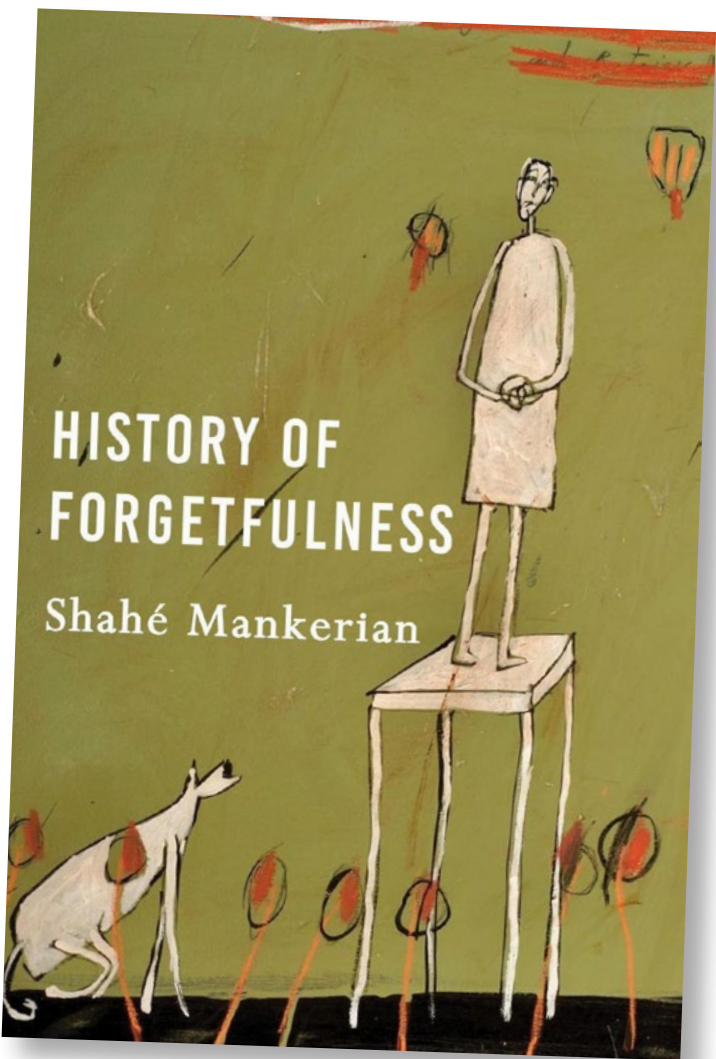
Given the poet’s age at the time of the Lebanese Civil War, school also plays a central role. And as elsewhere in these poems, from cruelty comes goodness or at least the beginnings of it. In “Moses,”

the boys make fun
of an elderly nun of
until whom the poet
follows one day: “...
to the basement of
the chapel. There,
she lay on a bed of
thorns and cried all
night. We stopped...
throwing things at
her and never stole
her shoes again.”

In “The Last Mosque” the poet plays again on the theme forgetting, here a classmate who is killed in an explosion:

No one moved.
The explosions
set off sirens and
car alarms.
Allah is with us.
Allah is with us.
The mosque was
our hiding place
even though I was a good
Christian boy. The final explosion
silenced everything—even Avo’s voice.
* * *

In her recent essay “Shushi Sugar Bowl,” writer Nancy Agabian grapples with the destruction of her homeland in Artsakh during the 44-Day War of 2020, which happens in real time as she is moving into a beautiful old Victorian house near her parents, for whom she is caring as they age. The images of destruction are jarring for Agabian in part because she has — or to be precise her eyes have — become accustomed of the beauty and the shapes of the Armenian churches now being bombed daily by Azerbaijani and Turkish forces. This in spite of the fact that as a feminist queer identified



progressive, she has little affinity for the institution of the Armenian Church itself. The author muses: “If destruction underlies the story of beauty, then the reverse must also be true, that loss is not an end nor an absolute — beauty must be on the other side. My mother is a trauma survivor who has always used beauty to survive. When I was a child we visited art museums every week, fleeing to them immediately after she fought with my father.”

Like her mother, Agabian also finds refuge in beauty, in Mikasa sugar bowls and Victorian turrets, as it were. Mankерian’s Lebanon then and Agabian’s Armenia parallel each other, as does the succor that beauty brings the poet as well. Behind the scenes of domestic violence and war, *History of Forgetfulness* is by its very existence a story of triumph, here the poet’s — and of the ability of two nations, Lebanese and Armenia — to survive through some of the most difficult circumstances known to man.

History of Forgetfulness is Mankерian’s second book of poetry; a good 20 years have elapsed since his *Children of Honey* came out in 2000. He has been composing ever since and the wait has been well worth it, all told. (He has also started a family and currently serves as the principal of the Hovsepian School in Pasadena and on the Board of the International Armenian Literary Alliance.) *History of Forgetfulness* represents a particularly noteworthy achievement, especially given the fact that English must be Mankерian’s third or fourth language. From rhyme scheme to metaphor and imagery, Mankерian holds his own. History should be read by anyone with an interest in Lebanon and the 1975 Civil War, in part because it presents the view of a child and a member of the Armenian-Lebanese community, two voices that have not been heard from enough to date. It belongs alongside other poetic efforts such as Mahmoud Darwish’s *Memory for Forgetfulness* (2013), and Nicholas El Hage’s *Lebanese Hymns to Love and War*, and two wonderful novels, *Yalo* by Elias Khoury and Rawy Hage De Niro’s *Game* (2006). Let’s hope it gets the play it deserves, as much for the quality of its verse as for the important message it delivers.

Purchase *History of Forgetfulness*: www.amazon.com/gp/product/B09FG2VQ7F/ref=dbs_a_def_rwt_hsch_vapi_tkin_p1_i1

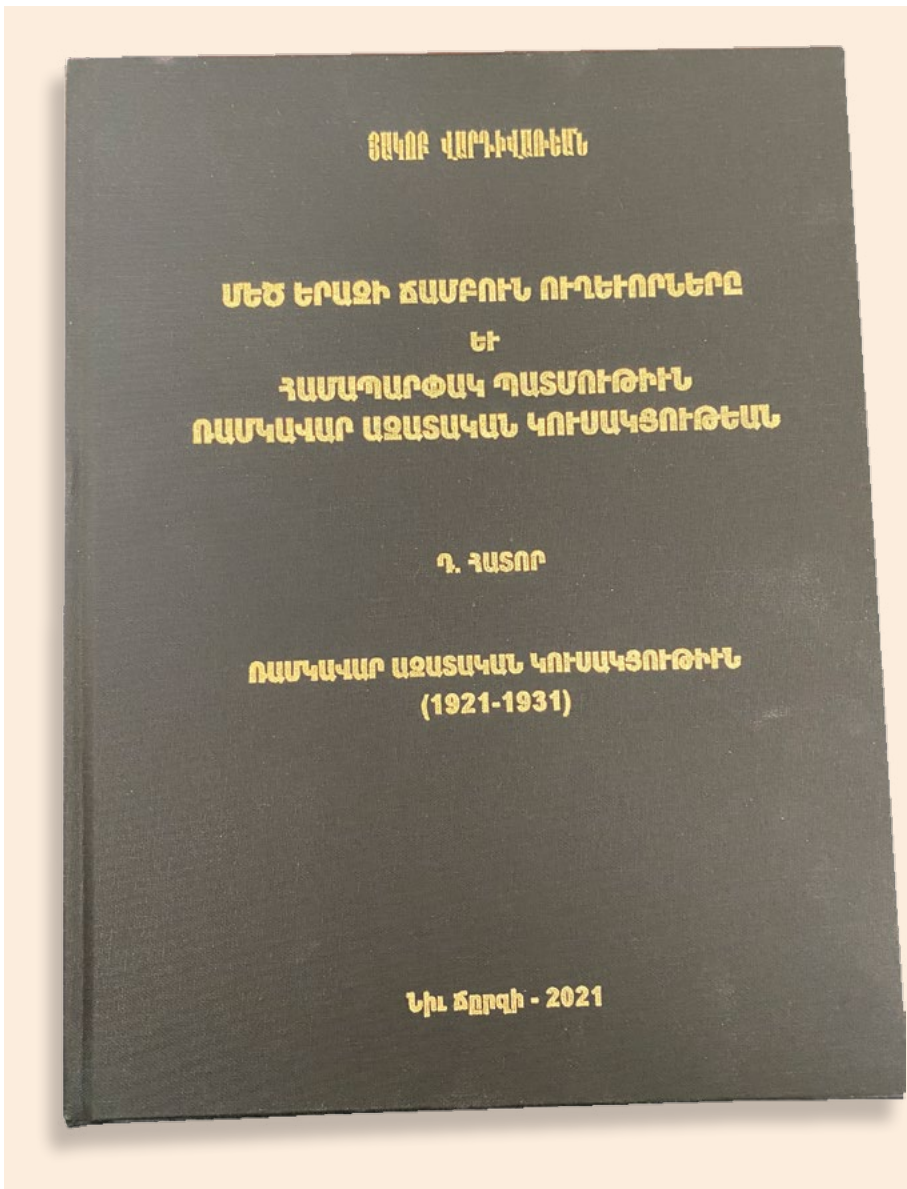
Hot off the Press

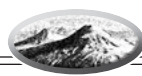
The [Armenian] Democratic Liberal Party (1921-1931)
Vol. IV of Travelers on the Path of the Great Dream and a Comprehensive History of the [Armenian] Democratic Liberal Party

By Hagop Vartivarian

An Armenian-language 425-page hardcover volume.

To order this or previously published volumes, please write to: Tekeyan Cultural Association, 572 Glasmere Rd., Mahwah, NJ, 07430, or contact the author at (201) 406-9771 or hhvartivarian@gmail.com





ARTS & CULTURE

Vartan Matiossian's New Book, *The Politics of Naming The Armenian Genocide*, Just Published by I. B. Tauris

LONDON/NY — I. B. Tauris, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing, has announced the publication of the inaugural book in the Armenians in the Modern and Early Modern World series by Dr. Vartan Matiossian titled *The Politics of Naming the Armenian Genocide: Language, History and 'Medz Yeghern'*.

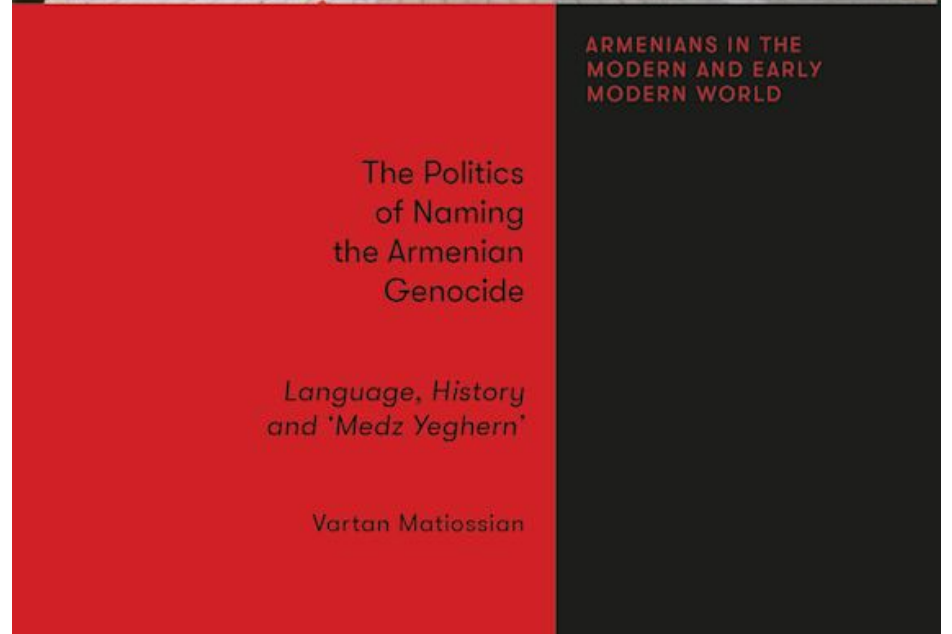
Vartan Matiossian is executive director of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Church in New York City. A historian and literary scholar, over the past thirty-five years he has published eight books on Armenian history, literature, and language in Armenian, English, and Spanish, along with twenty-two books in Spanish and English translation, and several edited volumes. He has also published scores of articles, translations, and essays in the Armenian and non-Armenian press.

This book, the result of ten years of painstaking research, explores the genealogy of the concept of "Medz Yeghern" [Great Crime], the widely used Armenian term for the annihilation of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire between the years 1915-1923. Ascribing the right definition to the crime, widely accepted by historians as one of the classical cases of genocide in the 20th century, has been a source of contention and controversy in international politics. Matiossian has tackled a subject both omitted and misinterpreted in the historiography, taking a combined historical, linguistic, literary, and political perspective. He has drawn upon an impressive collection of Armenian literary and periodical sources, as well as other European languages in order to trace the development of the concepts pertaining to mass killing and genocide of Armenians from the ancient to the modern periods. Beginning with an analysis of the term *yeghern* itself, he shows how its use evolved along with the emergence of the term genocide in 1944 and the Armenian struggle for international recognition of the crime in the face of Turkish protest. The book is an insightful exploration of the politics of naming a catastrophic

historical event, with a careful analysis of the use and abuse of *Medz Yeghern*, by the Vatican, Turkey, and the United States over the past two decades and its repercussions in the Armenian realm.

"I was not particularly interested in the genocide of the Armenians as a central subject of my scholarship until the name *Medz Yeghern* came onto the international stage at the beginning of this century and became a tool of denial by actors who lacked either the authority or the necessary knowledge to establish its meaning," Dr. Matiossian said. "Enter the Armenian language as an overlooked essential source to understand what the name meant for the speakers of the language, who were and are the only ones with such authority and knowledge. I worked towards establishing the different meanings of *yeghern* throughout history, with a parallel reconstruction of the use of genocide in the Armenian milieu after 1945, and reconcile those meanings with the current trends of politics of naming the genocide," he continued. "I do believe that I have made a contribution towards a better understanding of the need for a multifaceted approach to the issues of genocide, while bringing on the table an amount of information and analysis that was not readily available to scholars."

Prof. Bedross Der Matossian (University of Nebraska, Lincoln), series editor of the Armenians in the Modern and Early Modern World series, noted: "We are truly excited to publish Matiossian's excellent book which comes at a crucial time in which denialists, whether the Turkish state and its apparatus and/or individuals, use and abuse the concept of *yeghern* in order to omit using genocide to describe the crimes perpetrated against the indigenous Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Matiossian's interdisciplinary approach and meticulous research illuminates for scholars and general readers the genealogy of the concept and traces its journey in the 20th and the 21st century."



For more information about the series visit: [https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/series/armenians-in-the-modern-and-ear-](https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/series/armenians-in-the-modern-and-ear-ly-modern-world/)

[ly-modern-world/](https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/series/armenians-in-the-modern-and-ear-ly-modern-world/) and contact Bedross Der Matossian @ bdermatossian2@unl.ed about submissions.

Meghu 2021 Armenian for Everyone Contest Open to Children

YEREVAN — The registration process of Meghu 2021 — Armenian for Everyone has launched. It is open to all students of grades 3-12 from the Republic of Armenia, the diaspora and Artsakh.

The Ayb Educational Foundation is the initiator of the contest. One of the primary goals of Ayb is to make the Armenian language engaging among the diaspora's Armenian children, to turn the contest into a holiday for them, and unite the present and future generations of Armenians around their mother tongue. The internationalization of the Meghu contest and the switch to online format aim to increase the number of children loving and interested in the Armenian language — especially beyond the borders of our homeland and to show the importance of preserving the mother tongue.

Meghu 2021 will be held online this year, creating a particularly good opportunity for diaspora children. All awardees will receive diplomas, incentive prizes, while the winners of the contest will get the main prize.



**Ayb Educational
Foundation**

The date of the contest is October 31, 2021. The registration deadline is October 22, 2021.

The competition is available to all children, regardless of their progress.

Competition questions are both linguistic and logical. The questions for the diaspora's participants have been prepared to take into account the educational peculiarities.

The results are summarized through a special program, after which a final information letter is sent to the email addresses of all participants.

The contest will be held on the online platform of [Ayb Contests](#). The contest procedure is available on [the Ayb Contests website](#). For any updates you will need to follow the Facebook page «Այբ»-ի մրցույթներ / [Ayb Contests](#) or visit the Ayb website.

The Meghu contest was first held under the title "Armenian for Everyone" originated in Armenia, 2014, then expanded its range to the Armenian Diaspora living in other parts of the world.

Kristapor A. Najarian: ‘I love everything that is good and sincere’

NAJARIAN, from page 12

to Ravel's *String Quartet in F*. Accessible without mortgaging a sense of mystery..." (Mark Stryker, *Detroit Free Press*, 5 November 2015).

Kristapor, in the US many people change their Christian names to make it easier to pronounce. Yet you are not Christopher, but Kristapor! How come?

My parents wanted to give my brother and me traditional Armenian names (my brother's name is Shahan). But they were also aware of the difficulties we might encounter from having non-traditional American names. So, the names they chose were ones that my brother and I would be able to "modify" if we chose to, in order to fit more easily into American circles. Some of my American friends refer to me as "Kris" while some of my brother's refer to him as "Shaun." In general, though, we use our Armenian names as much as possible!

And my second question is the typical one for us, Armenians: where are your ancestors from?

My paternal grandparents are from Adana and Marash. My father is Vigen Najarian, who was born in Beirut. He is a luthier of the oud, an art form he learned from his grandfather (my great-grandfather) Dikran Najarian, who escaped the Genocide in 1915 and settled in Lebanon. Besides being a builder of the oud, my father is also a highly skilled performer on the instrument. I have learned much Armenian and Arabic music from him!

And your non-Armenian appearance immediately betrays being half-Armenian. Let me guess your mother's origin. German?

Right!

And Irish!

Exactly! How do you know that?

I cannot explain. Maybe because of being in constant contact with people of various backgrounds I became good in recognizing their roots.

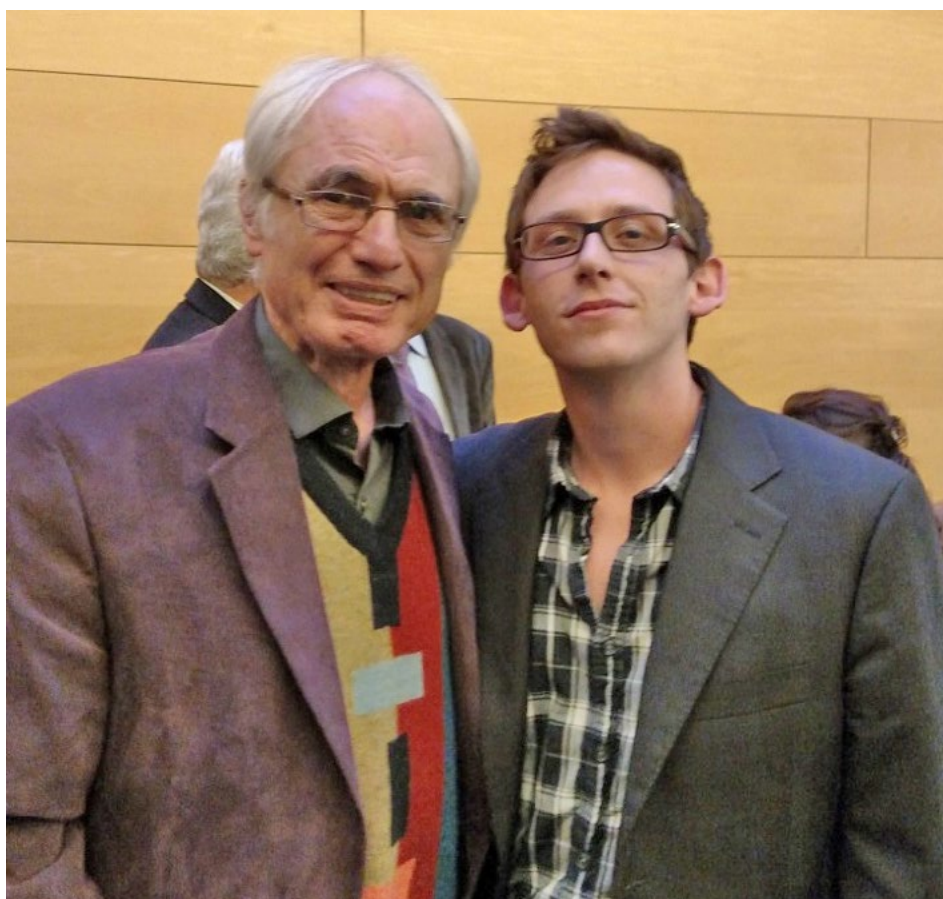
My mother understands Armenian and speaks a little. Before marrying my father, she took Armenian classes to feel better in her husband's environment. At home we speak both English and Western Armenian.

Did you get an Armenian education?

Ever since I was a child, until I was 12 years old, I went to the Armenian Mesrobian College in Montebello. We have family gatherings once a month, where I get to practice speaking Armenian with relatives. At UCLA, I took Western Armenian language classes from Prof. Hagop Koulojian. He is a very experienced teacher, a master of the language. I also took Armenian history classes with Prof. Richard Hovannisian.

What are your musical influences?

Everything that is sincere, everything that is sincerely expressive, that was created as a purpose of expression, not necessarily for money or any other purpose. I grew up playing the classical violin — Mozart, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Khachaturian — the list is big! I also like folk song of some genres, jazz, blues, rock, I cannot say all. I love everything that is good and sincere. As a composer I take my greatest inspirations from Beethoven and Bartok; I like Samuel Barber very much. He is a wonderful melodic composer and, of course, our compatriot Aram Khachaturian. I also have books of Komitas's folk songs and studies, but I still have to study him a lot. I cannot say



Kristapor A. Najarian with Tigran Mansurian

that we know that greatness well enough.

Please speak about your own compositions.

I write pieces in various different genres: solo, chamber music, and orchestral. Some of my recent works of which I am most proud include two pieces based on infinite numbers: *Pi* for piano sextet, and *The Square Root of 2* for nine instrumentalists. My newest completed work is a piece for orchestra entitled *Le Rêve Interrompu* (The Interrupted Dream), inspired by the difficulty that the recent pandemic has had on people's everyday lives.

Have you ever written songs based on Armenian lyrics?

Actually I have written some poems in Armenian.

You don't say so!

Yes, I have written a few very short things. Actually I have a song written on the Armenian subject matter, based on a poem in English about Western Armenia. But I have composed *Year 1915* for the string quartet. This was written in the year 2015, to mark the centennial of the Armenian Genocide. It had its world premiere in Orange, Calif., the same year by the Santiago String Quartet.

It is wonderful! You visited Armenia three times if I am not mistaken?

Yes, and I came to Armenia two times as a musician. When the Dilijan Chamber Music Festival was being held in Yerevan, I played the violin with a string quartet. And in 2015 I was happy to see the great Ani and Ida Kavafian sisters performing my piece in Armenia!

Please tell about your initiative, the “Renaissance Year” program, which you launched six years ago.

This program was introducing Armenian culture in English in a virtual space, presenting at least one artist each week. It took until April 2016. The archive contained musicians, writers, photographers, filmmakers with articles about them and samples of their works, be it Ara Güler, Gayaneh Khachaturian or Tigran Hamasian, many of them. For the moment, we have paused our curation of artists/artworks. But our Instagram page is still up for people to

discover our previous posts, and there is always a possibility that it will continue in the future!

Armenia has several good young composers. Do you know them?

I know Arthur Avanesov well, who is a

fantastic person, Ashot and Artashes Kartalian, but I do not know as many as I would like. I have also performed a solo violin piece, *Blooming Sounds*, by Vache Sharafyan, who is also extremely talented and kind-hearted. I met Tigran Mansurian in Los Angeles at the premiere of my work for two violins, entitled *Tale* (the one written for the Kavafian sisters). He enjoyed the work, and invited me out to coffee to discuss music! I received so many valuable pieces of advice from him that evening. He is a strong inspiration for me, as he is for many other contemporary Armenian composers.

Now you are in Paris. What an American and Armenian composer and violinist can acquire there? And what are your current projects?

One of the main reasons I chose to study in France was to gain some musical and cultural experience outside of the U.S. It has been eye-opening to learn how music is practiced in another country, and how it fits into the fabric of that society. It gives you an important perspective on the artistic life in your own country. Also, the Armenian presence is strong here, and it has been wonderful to connect with the French-Armenian community at the same time.

Currently, I am in the process of composing a piece for string orchestra, which I hope to finish by the end of the year. Also, I have some ideas in mind for a violin concerto, although that project has not officially begun!

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

OCTOBER 16 — St. James 74th Annual Bazaar – Noon to 6 pm. Armenian Food and Pastries by PRE-ORDER ONLY. Enjoy OUTDOOR SEATING under our large tent (No indoor seating). Browse our St. James Marketplace! St. James Artisans Craft Table, Armenian Items, and more. Online Silent Auction. \$100 Raffle. For full details and to order meals and pastries starting Oct. 1st, visit www.stjameswatertown.org/bazaar, or call the Church office. St. James Armenian Church – 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. For more information contact 617.923.8860 or info@sthapop.com.

OCTOBER 24 — The Armenian Museum of America's seventh Online Concert featuring young musicians from the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies. This free event is sponsored by the Dadourian Foundation. Streaming online at 2:00 pm via the Museum's Facebook page, YouTube Channel and website: www.armenianmuseum.org/concerts

NOVEMBER 14 — GIVING THANKS! TOGETHER IN CELEBRATION, Sunday, 2 p.m. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston Meet & Greet. Enjoy the Boston Children's Chorus singing an Armenian Folk Song .Walk the Labyrinth. Tie a Ribbon Giving Thanks on the Wishing Tree.

DECEMBER 4 and DECEMBER 5 — Holy Trinity 2021 "Grab and Go" Christmas Bazaar. Saturday and Sunday, Holy Trinity Armenian Church grounds, 145 Brattle St, Cambridge, MA 02138.

DECEMBER 19 — CANDLELIT VIRTUAL LABYRINTH WALK: IN PEACE & HARMONY, 4.30 p.m. Meet & Greet. Walk the Candlelit Labyrinth. Wish on The Wishing Tree. Hot Chocolate. Individually-wrapped cookies. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeirtagePark.org

NEW JERSEY

NOVEMBER 13 — Save the Date: Saturday. 12 Vocations, Fulfilling the Promise of St. Nersess Seminary. Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of St. Nersess Armenian Seminary and the vocations of the first 12 priests who graduated from St. Nersess and St. Vladimir's Seminaries and were ordained. This is the first in a series of events to recognize the alumni of St. Nersess, both ordained and lay, who are in service to the Armenian Church, in any capacity. The celebratory dinner will be held at the Old Tappan Manor in Old Tappan, N.J. For more info, go to www.stnersess.edu.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Sesame Anise Cookies from *Feast in the Middle East*

Blanche is an accomplished Arab American food blogger and author who reported on ABC's "View from the Bay," and has hosted the independent film show "Video I" for PBS for 10 years. In 2010, she began hosting her own cooking



Cookbook author and food blogger Blanche Shaheen

show, sharing many years of treasured Middle Eastern recipes preserved by her mother, grandmother, and family. "These are family recipes handed down from one generation to the next, recipes that many culinary schools today don't know about – however, there were no written measurements," Blanche says. That's when she decided to document the recipes in an ongoing cookbook and food blog, and *Feast in the Middle East* was born. (See: <https://feastinthemiddleeast.com/>)

"When I'm nostalgic about my childhood, these Sesame Anise Cookies (*Ka'ak bi Anson*) come to mind. "I used to eat them with my grandparents, and listen to their stories about our family history. My family thinks

the ground anise seed in the cookies can soothe the stomach, so my grandmother would give them to me when I had a stomach ache. The cookies are best served with hot coffee or tea...you can taste the licorice flavor of anise melting in your mouth with a hot beverage. Aside from any health benefits, these cookies remind me of the times I spent with my family when I was younger," she adds.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 3 cups flour (or more, if dough is too sticky)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 tablespoons ground anise seeds*
- 1 teaspoon turmeric, optional (this ingredient is not included in the how-to-video but it's a great addition to this recipe)
- 1/2 cup sesame seeds
- 1/4 cup heavy cream, optional (to add extra sheen on the cookies)

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

In a large bowl, beat the 3 eggs using a hand mixer. Add vegetable oil and sugar and beat until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. With mixer on low speed, add flour, baking powder, baking soda, ground anise seeds, and optional turmeric (if you want a yellow color).

Mix until you have a soft, pliable dough forms. The dough should not be sticky; add more flour in small increments if you need to so dough won't stick. Shape dough with your hands, using about 2 tablespoons of dough per cookie.

Pull off a ball of dough and roll it into about a 5-by-3/4 inch log under the palm of your hand on your work surface. If you feel air pockets on the dough, knead it a bit and roll it again. Bring the 2 ends of the log together to form a ring, placing 1 end over the other and pressing down on the top piece to secure it.

For added sheen to the cookies, add the heavy cream to a bowl. Using a brush, brush cookies with heavy cream. Gently press each cookie into the sesame seeds, and place on the baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough, making about 15 cookies spaced about 1 inch apart on the sheet.

Adjust rack to the center of the oven and bake cookies until they are golden brown, about 12 minutes. Remove cookies from oven and cool on a wire rack. Keep cookies in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.

Note from Blanche: "While traditional anise cookies use butter or ghee, I found avocado oil yields a more tender texture. Avocado oil might cost more than other seed oils, but cold pressed avocado oil is more of a whole food. Sunflower, canola, and corn oils tend to be highly processed, loaded with hexane and other chemicals. While this recipe uses eggs, if you are allergic to eggs you can use a flax "egg" consisting of 1 tablespoon of ground flax seeds along with 2 1/2 tablespoons of water. Whisk together before adding to the batter."

*Anise seed is rich in iron, which is vital for the production of healthy blood cells in your body. It also contains a small amount of manganese, a key mineral that acts as an antioxidant and is necessary for metabolism and development. Other research indicates that anise seed is high in antioxidants, which can reduce inflammation and prevent disease-causing oxidative damage. (See: <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/anise>).

For this recipe, go to: <https://feastinthemiddleeast.com/2019/12/18/the-cookie-that-soothes-your-tummy-middle-eastern-sesame-anise-cookies/>

For the how-to-video, go to: <https://youtu.be/INeS6bYTqcc>

Enjoy Blanche's series on YouTube, on Curious.com, and on Virgin America Airlines, where it has an estimated audience of 1 million people each month. She's been featured on NBC's "California Live," BBC World News, KQED's "Check Please" program, NPR radio, the *Palo Alto Weekly*, the *Los Altos Crier*, the *Mountain View Voice*, the *San Jose Mercury News*, and the Rumi Awards show she hosted for an international audience.

ORDER TODAY: *Feast In The Middle East - A Personal Journey of Family and Cuisine* by Blanche Araj Shaheen, go to: https://secure.mybookorders.com/mbo_index.php?isbn=9781545675113

For recipes featured on Blanche TV channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7ghcBe7PIrF6nh7xndilzg>) and more, this 200+ page hardback book is full of stunning photos, meticulous directions, and historical research on traditional recipes and family stories. Blanche shows how you can make your favorite Middle Eastern dishes at home -- from stuffed grape leaves to stress-free 10 minute dinners, soups, salads, and grain dishes.

References:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/blanchetv>

<https://feastinthemiddleeast.wordpress.com/>

<https://www.patreon.com/feastinthemiddleeast>

FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/FeastInTheMiddleEast/?ref=hl>

MY BLOG: <https://feastinthemiddleeast.wordpress>

Master's Student Haig Hovsepien Raises Funds for Artsakh Through Music

CLEVELAND, Ohio — In the Summer 2021 issue of the Cleveland Institute of Music *NOTES* magazine, Haig Hovsepien as the only Armenian student at the conservatory is recognized for his initiative to support Artsakh after the 44-day war for humanitarian purposes.

Hovsepien is a Masters of Music in violin candidate at the Cleveland Institute of Music. He received his Bachelor of Music degree in violin with high honors in 2021 where he had enrolled in the 5-year master's program. He was a 2017 Belmont High School graduate and a 2017 graduate of the New England Conser-

vatory of Music Preparatory School in violin receiving numerous awards, recognitions and winning a number of competitions including the BSO concerto competition.

He felt the need to do something to help his fellow Armenians in need after a devastating war with Azerbaijan a year ago. He contacted his friends and administration at CIM with his proposal for a musical benefit concert entitled "Armenian Music for Peace. His friends and the administration were fully supportive for this humanitarian effort. He also contacted the Armenian General Benevolent Union to be

the collaborative organization to facilitate the collection and transfer of donations to those in need in Artsakh.

The concert was virtual at the CIM Mixon Hall on March 31, 2021, with CIM donating all its resources, facilities and manpower with the support of President Paul Hogle on down. The concert was highly successful and collected more than \$10,000.

Being the only Armenian student at CIM, Haig has brought pride to his Armenian community by introducing Armenian music to an institution that rarely hears it.



THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST

Edmond Y. Azadian

STAFF WRITER

Harry Kezelian III

CONTRIBUTORS

Christopher Atamian, Florence Avakian, Taleen Babayan, Artsvi Bakhchinyan, Raffi Bedrosyan, Christine Vartanian Datian, Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, Ken Martin, Gerald Papasian, Harut Sassounian, Hagop Vartivarian

REGIONAL CORRESPONDENTS

LOS ANGELES: Ani Duzdabanyan-Manoukian, Kevork Keushkerian, Michelle Mkhlian
YEREVAN: Raffi Elliott
BERLIN: Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
PARIS: Jean Eckian
SAN FRANCISCO: Kim Bardakian
CAIRO: Maydaa Nadar

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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

Baikar Association, Inc.

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA
02472-1509

Telephone: 617-924-4420
FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

U.S.A.	\$80 one year
Canada	\$125 one year
Other Countries	\$200 one year

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

Other than the Editorial, views and opinions expressed in this newspaper do not necessarily reflect the policies of the publisher.

COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

Lebanon: An Erstwhile Paradise in Ruins



By Edmond Y. Azadian

For many years, Lebanon was considered an idyllic country, a veritable heaven on earth, because of its natural beauty and freewheeling society offering luxury and a vibrant nightlife. Lebanon was the destination of choice in the Middle East, with petrodollars pouring in with tourists, a free banking system and many peepholes for all kinds of spies to watch the developments in neighboring countries.

The original Lebanese population were the Phoenicians, a seafaring people who had colonies in North Africa, like Carthage. Carthage had become so powerful that it drove fear in the hearts of the Roman emperors to the extent that the Roman orator and censor Cato concluded all his speeches with the call “Carthage must be destroyed,” and indeed it was destroyed by the third Punic War in 146 BC.

In the tradition of their seafaring ancestors, Lebanese citizens have emigrated to faraway lands to form communities in Africa and South America, contributing generously to their native land.

Thus, like Armenians, the numbers of the Lebanese diaspora exceed the population back home. Before the recent crisis, Lebanon’s population was six million, with the diaspora estimated to be between four and 14 million.

Lebanon turned out to be one of the most hospitable safe havens for Armenian refugees after the Armenian Genocide. The Armenian population there at its peak was 250,000 strong. In the year 2009, the Armenian population had fallen to 112,000 and today it has further shrunk to 40,000. But no community can loudly voice its true numbers, because the Lebanese political system is based on religious communities and 18 confessional groups have their proportional representation in the Lebanese parliament. Therefore, if the community admits its numbers have shrunk, it loses representation in parliament. Currently the Armenian community is represented by six members of parliament.

Since Lebanon gained independence in 1943, on a 4,036-mile territory, many of the regional conflicts have caused upheaval there.

The Lebanese people are amazing survivors; after each conflict they have come together under the slogan of “no winners and no losers” and begin to reconstruct the country. In order to analyze Lebanon’s current crisis and predicament, one has to broaden the scope and review the regional developments to find out their fallout in Lebanon.

Most of the turbulence in the Middle East stems from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, when Israel declared its independence in 1948. Later on, that conflict degenerated to give way to other conflicts which ended up having their own lives.

The Arab countries, particularly Egypt and Syria, were motivated to destroy Israel and push out its population into the sea. Until the Yom Kippur War of 1973, Jordan controlled the West Bank and East Jerusalem, while Egypt controlled the Gaza Strip.

Rather than proclaiming the Palestinian state on those territories, they had set their minds on destroying Israel. For Israel, all wars, despite painful losses, were ironically welcomed because each conflict ended up with territorial gains. Thus, during the 1973 war Egypt lost Gaza and most of the Sinai Peninsula; Jordan lost East Jerusalem and the West Bank; Syria lost its most fertile land and strategic region of Golan Heights.

Ever since, the Arab countries have come to accept Israel’s right to exist, except Hamas, and they have been negotiating for a two-state solution, hoping to take back the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to form a Palestinian state.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict drove many Palestinians to Arab countries as refugees, creating social, political and mil-

itary problems for those lands. Palestinians in Lebanon organized and became a government within the government, irritating local Christians and threatening Israel.

Arab anger stems from the Israeli treatment of the Palestinians. To divert that ire, the US and Israeli political planners resorted to a new tactic, trying to convince the Arabs that the enemy is Shia Iran rather than Israel. This is how religious strife in the region was born. Saudi Arabia was assigned the leadership of the Sunni Arabs because it was the protector of the holy sites of Islam in Mecca and Medina. Few knew that Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Turkey would emerge as the defender of the Palestinian Cause and the leader of the Sunni world, taking the wind out of the Israeli-US policy planners’ sail.

The major Lebanese Civil War began in 1975 and lasted until 1989, ending with a power-sharing agreement signed in Taif, Saudi Arabia, under the auspices of the Arab League.

In that devastating war, the Lebanese Muslims sided with the Palestinians against the Christians. The Lebanese army split along confessional lines and warlords in both camps took the destiny of the people in their own hands. In 1982, the Israeli Army marched through Lebanon, all the way to Beirut, and destroyed the infrastructure of the Palestinian forces. But the strife continued until 1989 when peace was restored and Syria took over the security of the country.

Armenians who had taken sides in an earlier conflict in 1958, losing 200 young men, decided to adhere to the policy of “positive neutrality,” angering the Christian militias.

In the ensuing years, many countries in the region and in the West helped Lebanon to rebuild. The US deliberately kept the Lebanese forces under-armed, so as not to defy the Israeli hegemony in the region. That gave rise to an alternative force — Hezbollah — serving as a proxy for Iran. Although Hezbollah is considered a terrorist organization in the West, in Lebanon it has

also built its political infrastructure and has 14 members in parliament out of 128 seats.

Ever since Hezbollah’s emergence, the tug of war is continuing in the Lebanese political landscape, with the US and Israel trying to destroy that party and Iran arming and supplying it. The Lebanese people are caught in the middle. Saudi Arabia, the main benefactor of Lebanon, has discontinued any help at the behest of its overlords in Israel and the US, stifling Lebanon’s economy.

Hezbollah is considered to have 25,000 fighters in its ranks, with state-of-the-art weaponry. It has repelled Israeli incursions in Lebanon many times and at times it has dented the myth of invincibility of the Israeli Defense Forces.

In the recent couple of years, Lebanon’s political life has been at a standstill, paralyzing all government functions. Saudi surrogates in Lebanon have been trying to push Hezbollah out of the political scene but the latter is so entrenched that no government can be formed without its approval.

After many months of a caretaker government at the helm, finally Sunni Muslim Najib Mikati formed a new government, offering hope to some but leaving the majority despondent and seeking refuge in countries around the world. Their chagrin may be earned, as the billionaire Mr. Mikati was just recently named in the Pandora Papers as one of the world leaders who has squirreled away millions in secret off-shore accounts.

By World Bank estimates, it will take 19 years for Lebanon to recover from its current crisis. The World Bank also considers that Lebanon’s crisis is among the top three worst crises the world not seen in the last 150 years. And according to the United Nations, the situation is “a living nightmare.”

According to UN estimates, 78 percent of the population is living below the poverty line, with the threat of starvation looming large.

There is no running water, no electricity, no municipal services. Many hospitals, which depend on generators, need fuel

continued on next page





COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Why Did the Turkish Institute In Washington Close Down?

The Hoya, the student newspaper of Georgetown University in Washington, DC, published last week a lengthy investigative article about the demise of the Institute of Turkish Studies, established by the Turkish government.

Interestingly, a note at the bottom of the article stated that it was written by Liam Scott and another staff writer who “requested anonymity due to safety concerns in Turkey.”

Even though the Institute was established to paint a positive picture of Turkey in the United States, it ended up antagonizing its own American board members when the Turkish government decided to shut it down.

In 1982, the government of Turkey founded the Institute of Turkish Studies (ITS) at Georgetown University with an endowment of \$3 million. The purpose was to give Turkey a respectable image in the United States by recruiting and funding American academics who would do research on Turkish topics. Throughout its existence, the ITS spent around \$350,000 a year to give “grants, scholarships, subventions, and seed money” to 400 scholars in 19 universities to publish books and journals in order to promote Turkish studies. The ITS stated that it played “a key role in furthering knowledge and understanding of a key NATO ally of the United States, the Republic of Turkey.”

Not surprisingly, the ITS had appointed as its Honorary Chairman of the board of governors Turkey’s Ambassador to the U.S. to oversee its activities and funding decisions. The board consisted of prominent former State Department officials and well-known American scholars in Ottoman and modern Turkish studies. The first Executive Director of the ITS was Heath Lowry, a denialist of the Armenian Genocide.

I got involved in a legal dispute with the ITS in 1985 after I wrote an editorial in the *California Courier* titled, “How the Turks Use Our Tax Dollars Against Us.” I pointed out that many of the scholars who had received grants from the ITS were the same ones who had signed a statement denying the Armenian Genocide. The statement was published as a paid ad in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* on May 19, 1985. Lowry was involved in drafting this statement and collecting signatures for it. In my article, I reported that 20 of the 69 signatories of the statement had received tens of thousands of dollars from the ITS. Lowry’s role in this ad was a violation of the tax-exempt status of the ITS which was legally prohibited from political lobbying at a time when the U.S. Congress was considering adopting a resolution on the Armenian Genocide. The ITS also contradicted its own statement that it “does not seek to influence legislation nor advocate particular policies or agendas.”

Even though I had obtained the amounts received by the scholars who had signed this denialist statement from an ITS brochure, the ITS sent a letter threatening my newspaper with a major lawsuit, unless I published a lengthy retraction, which I refused to do. The ITS dropped the lawsuit.

The *Hoya* article provided extensive details about the collapse of the ITS, a Turkish propaganda project disguised as an academic endeavor. The Institute was closed down in September 2020 because some of the independent-minded scholars on its board had refused to go along with the directives of the Turkish government.

The *Hoya* wrote that “according to former ITS Executive Director Sinan Ciddi and former ITS board members Walter Denny and Steven Cook, Turkey’s decision to defund the ITS came amid rising government pressure to blindly support and loyally promote Erdogan. The ITS was caught in the line of fire of government repression that has characterized Erdogan’s increasingly autocratic Turkey, they said.”

Ciddi, a Georgetown professor of Turkish studies, told *The Hoya* that the ITS was initially a separate entity from Georgetown University. Later on, the university “provided the ITS with office space and administrative assistance, but the university did not have a say in the Institute’s operations. Georgetown also supplemented the salary of the Institute’s executive director after the ITS lost funding from the Turkish government.” Prof. Jenny White, who served on the ITS board for nearly 20 years, told *The Hoya* that the ITS was “the best advertisement that there could have been for Turkey.”

In 2006, former Binghamton University professor Donald Quataert resigned as chairman of the ITS board after insisting on the importance of researching the Armenian Genocide, reported *The Hoya*. The Middle East Studies Association’s Committee on Academic Freedom, in an open letter to then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, complained that “Quataert resigned because of pressure from the Turkish government. Several other ITS board members resigned in support of Quataert.”

As Erdogan became more repressive, the Institute was viewed by the Turkish government as funding academic research that was not favorable to Turkey. In May 2015, Turkish ambassador to the U.S. Serdar Kilic, during the semi-annual dinner at the Turkish Embassy in Washington, DC, complained to ITS chairman Ross Wilson that “some recent work from the ITS was negative toward the Turkish government and expressed interest in redirecting the work of ITS to politically benefit the government,” *The Hoya* reported. Amb. Kilic then cancelled the scheduled ITS dinner in the fall of 2015. Finally, “in early September 2015, Saltzman and Evinch, a Washington, D.C. law firm representing Turkey’s U.S. embassy,” told the Institute that the Turkish government would no longer fund the ITS. Later, Kilic sent a letter confirming the end of funding.

“After Turkey cut the organization’s funding, the [Georgetown University’s] School of Foreign Service provided the ITS with additional financial and administrative support,” *The Hoya* reported. The ITS had enough funds to continue its operations till Sept. 30, 2020 when it finally closed its doors.

The saga of the failed Institute of Turkish Studies should be a lesson to all universities not to repeat the mistake of Georgetown, welcoming a politically-motivated project contrary to its academic standards. Mixing academics and politics is never a good idea!

from previous page

which is hard to find. In fact, this past weekend, the entire country lost power for 24 hours, with both main power plants grinding to a halt due to a lack of fuel. In the previous months, electricity has been available for two hours a day only.

Iran has pledged to send fuel to Lebanon but the latter will fall under US sanctions against Iran if it accepts its gift. This fuel shortage has lasted for 18 months and it is still continuing. There is a mass exodus from the country. In recent months, 2,000 doctors and 1,500 nurses have left the country, dealing a near-fatal blow to the healthcare system which is on the brink of collapse.

The banking system is under a strain. Those citizens who had made deposits in US dollars cannot withdraw their savings unless they agree to receive them in Lebanese pounds, a currency that is currently in a freefall, having already lost 90 percent of its value. At this time, there are three exchange rates for the US dollars. The first two are considered the official rates and the third one is the black market rate. The official government exchange rate is 1,500 Lebanese pounds to \$1, the second semi-official exchange rate is 3,900 LL to the dollar while the black market rate is 25,000 to the dollar.

Citizens cannot figure out how they can survive.

As if these crises were not enough, last August a huge explosion in the port district devastated the capital, causing \$15 billion worth of damage, and leaving 300,000 people homeless.

Bourdj Hammoud, a suburb of Beirut, was called “Little Armenia.” Municipality and all services were run by Armenians. There is also an exodus of Armenians leaving the country. But with Covid and the world refugee problems, very few countries are charitable enough to taken in those destitute refugees. The first choice is Armenia and there is already a “Little Lebanon” in Yerevan, replacing Beirut’s “Little Armenia.”

The world Armenian community has invested tremendous amounts of resources in the community structure in Lebanon. All three Christian religious denominations have their churches, schools, sports and social centers there.

It looks as if the emigre Armenian history has begun to repeat itself — India, Egypt and many other countries were left with empty churches and institutions as the Armenian communities left due to circumstances outside their control.

Is the Armenian community destined to live that way?

Will Lebanon rise again under the optimistic slogan “no winners, no losers?” We can only pray it does.

Tbilisi’s Largely Forgotten And Neglected Armenian Heritage

By Soso Dzamukashvili

Tbilisi’s Armenian heritage is danger of being forgotten entirely, but there is some hope.

Armenian intellectuals, wealthy merchants and leading cultural figures have been an integral part of life in the Georgian capital Tbilisi for centuries.

Indeed, according to Finnish academic Serafim Seppälä, who has written extensively on Armenian culture and history, Tbilisi in the 19th century was “the most Armenian town in the world,” with Armenians accounting for more than two-thirds of the city’s population.

Today, while Tbilisi’s population tops one million people, Armenians constitute around just five per cent.

The decline has been steady, not precipitated by any one particular event, but the reduction in size of the city’s Armenian population has meant that much of its Armenian heritage — residential buildings, schools, churches and other cultural monuments built by the Armenians of Tbilisi — has been neglected or simply forgotten entirely.

The Armenian Apostolic Church has borne the brunt. Where once there were 24 Armenian churches in Tbilisi, today just two remain.

Some of these were confiscated under Soviet rule, only to be handed in the 1990s to the Georgian Orthodox Church.

According to a report on international religious freedom published by the US Department of State, both the Roman Catholic and Armenian Apostolic Churches in Georgia “have been unable to secure the return of churches and other facilities closed during the Soviet period, many of which later were given to the Georgian Orthodox Church by the state”.

The same could be said for many other Armenian heritage sites in Tbilisi, such as the Armenian Drama Theatre, one of the most potent symbols of Armenian culture in the city.

Named after an outstanding Armenian actor and poet, Petros Adamian, the theatre was established in 1858 by the Armenian theatre figure George Chmshkian.

Rebuilt in 1936 and renamed the Stepan Shahumian Armenian Theatre after a leading Bolshevik, it is currently in poor condition, and has been closed for seven years.

Fortunately, there is hope.

The Kartu Group, a charity organization founded by Georgia’s richest man and former prime see HISTORY, page 20



Tbilisi's Largely Forgotten And Neglected Armenian Heritage

HISTORY, from page 19

minister of Georgia Bidzina Ivanishvili, has undertaken to restore the building. Armenia's Ministry of Culture is also set to provide the theatre with funding.

However, while reconstruction was planned to be completed in 2020, Tbilisi City Hall recently announced that the date had been postponed until 2023.

Among the many Armenians who left their mark on Tbilisi few are greater than Mikael Aramyants, a man who in the latter part of the 19th century wanted to turn Tbilisi into the most beautiful city in Eastern Europe.

Originally from Karabakh, he made his home in Tbilisi in the 1860s and became a successful sugar and cotton trader, and later an oil magnate.

Part of his legacy is the magnificent renaissance and baroque Tbilisi Marriott Hotel, which he built at the beginning of the 20th century, calling it the Mazhestik, and the former Aramyants Hospital.

And yet his name is all but forgotten. Although some older Georgians still call the hospital after its founder, it is officially today simply known as Central Hospital.

According to Anna Sarkisyan, president of the Georgian Association of Cultural Relations, neglecting the Armenian legacy in Tbilisi is nothing new.

"The process of abandoning Armenian heritage in Georgia started during the repression of Tsarist-era Russia," she tells Emerging Europe.

And since then, little has changed.

"Unfortunately, the Georgian government is not usually interested in the preservation of [Armenian] heritage, which is systematically demolished."

Also at least partially forgotten is the name of the Tamamshevs, a wealthy Armenian family of merchants.

The Tamamshevs played a significant role in Tbilisi's cultural and educational development: Gavril Tamamshev funded the construction of the first opera house in Tbilisi in 1847 when the Russian Tsar's treasury refused to do so.

Gavril Tamamshev also donated his library, containing thousands of volumes, on the establishment of the Georgian National Library.

In the 1850s, the Tamamshevs constructed a magnificent house in Tbilisi, which in 1876 was part of Elizaveta Tamamsheva's dowry on her wedding to Mikhail Smirnov, a Russian botanist and ethnographer.

During the Soviet period, however, it was confiscated by the municipality. And while today the house is home to a museum that commemorates both the Tamamshevs

and Smirnov, it carries the latter's name.

Pantheon, or What's Left of It

Elsewhere in Tbilisi is Khojavank, an architectural complex in the north-eastern part of the Avlabari district of the city.

Integral to Khojavank was a huge memorial cemetery, which remains the burial site of many prominent Armenians, including writers Raffi and Hovhannes Tumanyans.

Parts were destroyed by the Soviets however in 1937, and what was left was taken over by the Georgian Orthodox Church in the 1990s, its heritage further erased by the subsequent construction of the huge Holy Trinity Cathedral. The tiny section that remains, together with some relocated gravestones, is preserved as the Armenian Pantheon of Tbilisi.

Sarkisyan says that Armenian heritage is viewed by many in Georgia as a "competing memory."

"The most important thing is to realize that Armenian architecture and legacy, in general, cannot be taken away from Georgia. It is our [Georgian-Armenian] shared heritage," she says.

"We can benefit mutually from its existence."

(This report originally appeared in the Emerging Europe website [emerging-europe.com] on October 9.)

Armenian Mining Giant Changes Hands

By Naira Nalbandian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A Russian company has bought a majority stake in Armenia's largest mining enterprise and immediately ceded part of it to the Armenian government. The GeoProMining group and the government announced the deals in a joint statement issued on October 1 more than two months after law-enforcement officers raided the offices of the Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine (ZCMC) in a crackdown promised by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

The statement said a GeoProMining subsidiary acquired 60 percent of ZCMC on September 30 and then "granted" a quarter of that stake to the Armenian government.

"The granted 25 percent of the shares constitute 15 percent of the equity of ZCMC that will consequently belong to the Republic of Armenia," it said.

"We intend to expand cooperation with the Government of Armenia," the GeoProMining owner, Russian billionaire Roman Trotsenko, was quoted as saying.

The statement gave no clear reason for Trotsenko's lavish donation to the government. Nor it did specify from whom the Russian company purchased the majority stake in ZCMC.

The Armenian mining giant employing some 4,000 people is based in Kajaran, a small town in southeastern Syunik province. A German metals group, Cronimet, officially owned 75 percent of its stock for many years. The rest of the company belonged to two obscure Armenian firms.

ZCMC's ownership structure changed significantly but remained opaque after Cronimet reportedly sold its controlling stake in 2019. A former senior Russian government official, Mikhail Zurabov, became one of its new minority shareholders.

ZCMC was believed to be controlled until recently by a group of individuals at odds with Pashinyan's government. One of them, former Syunik Governor Vahe Hakobyan, is a senior member of the main opposition Hayastan alliance led by former President Robert Kocharyan.

Contacted by RFE / RL's Armenian Service on October 1, Hakobyan refused to comment on the change of company ownership.

Campaigning for the June 20 parliamentary elections, Pashinyan pledged to crack down on ZCMC's "corrupt shareholders" and make sure their shares are "returned to the people." He accused the ZCMC management of banning workers from attending his campaign rally in Kajaran.

"The Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine, you have crossed the red line, which means that this blue hammer will first smash your heads," the prime minister declared during that rally. "Whatever you say, your fate is sealed, you just quietly wait for your verdict."

In July, masked officers of the Armenian National Security Service (NSS) repeatedly searched ZCMC's offices and detained three company executives. At least one of them remains under arrest. Also arrested were the mayors of Kajaran and two other Syunik communities affiliated with Hayastan. They are facing different charges rejected by them and the opposition bloc as politically motivated. Also in July, the Armenian parliament approved a government proposal to impose a new 15 percent tax on exports of copper and other metals. Government officials denied that the main purpose of the measure is to hurt ZCMC owners.

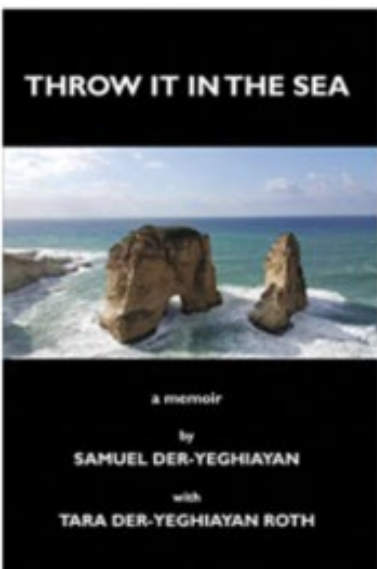
ZCMC has long been one of Armenia's top three corporate taxpayers. The government collected 41.7 billion drams (\$86 million) in various taxes from it last year. GeoProMining already owned two other Armenian mining companies before the latest acquisition.



Honorary Consulate of Armenia in Chicago
and
Armenian Bar Association



Invite you for an evening in honor of
**JUDGE
SAMUEL DER-YEGHIA YAN**
and
His recent publication
"Throw it in the Sea"



October 20th, 2021
Union League Club
Crystal Room
5:00pm to 8:00pm
5:30pm program
Complimentary
light hors d'oeuvres served
copies of the book
will be available



Please RSVP by October 10, 2021

email to: Irina@armenianconsulatechicago.com