

Runaway Inflation In Armenia Creates Dangerous Situation For Majority

By **Gevorg Gyulumyan**
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Inflation in Armenia continues to accelerate. The 12-month rate of inflation in the country was 9.6 percent, according to a report published by the Statistical Committee of the Armenian government. In the last quarter, all goods and services have become more expensive compared to the same period last year.

Inflation in the cost of food and non-alcoholic beverages grew 16.9 percent in November compared to the same month the previous year. This was greatly facilitated by the 4.8 percent and 16.4 percent respective rise in prices for fruits and vegetables.

Inflation was 63.5 percent for vegetables as compared to November of the previous year. In particular, in November, compared to October, registered a significantly greater rise in the prices of potatoes, mushrooms, carrots, green beans and green onions.

Fruit prices rose by 3.3 percent in November this year compared to the previous year, and by 4.8 percent compared to October this year. In November of this year, as compared to October, the general inflation of fruit and vegetable products was 11.35



percent. The above-mentioned product groups, having a share of 8.35 percent in the consumer basket, contributed to the growth of the general level of consumer prices by 0.9 percentage points during the mentioned period.

Cheese and eggs prices rose 13.3 percent compared to November last year. In November of this year, compared to the previous year, the price of eggs increased by 26.2 percent, cheese by 11.1 percent, meat by 8.0 percent, oils and fats by 21.1 percent, and sugar by 20.6 percent.

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Senator Bob Dole Dies

Longtime Friend and Supporter of Armenian Community

WASHINGTON (Combined Sources) — Bob Dole, the plain-spoken son of the prairie who overcame Dust Bowl deprivation in Kansas and grievous battle wounds in Italy to become the Senate majority leader and the last of the World War II generation to win his party’s nomination for president, died on Sunday, December 5. He was 98.



From left, Kevork Marashlian, Sen. Bob Dole and Dr. Noubar Afeyan at the Genocide Centennial in Washington, during which Dole received an award.

His death was announced by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation.

It did not say where he died. He had announced in February that he had Stage IV lung cancer and that he was beginning treatment.

It was that grievous injury during World War II which changed his life and certainly his relationship with and championship of the Armenian-American community and recognition for the Armenian Genocide.

His surgeon, Dr. Hampar Kelikian, did more than try to mend the broken parts of Dole’s body when the future Senate majority leader returned from World War II, a decorated battleground hero who’d been strafed by German bullets in Italy. Over the course of a remarkable three-and-a-half-decade friendship, Kelikian became a guiding light, a “second father” as Dole puts it, an inspiration and a teacher. “You have to live with what you have left,” Kelikian told Dole. “You can’t dwell on what you’ve lost.”

“Pretty good advice,” Dole, said last year.

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Sen. Bob Dole with Dr. Hampar Kelikian

Aliyev Again Threatens Armenia Over ‘Corridor’

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on December 7 again threatened to forcibly open a land “corridor” that would connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave via Armenia southeastern Syunik province.

Aliyev recalled last year war over Nagorno-Karabakh when he commented on the transport link sought by Baku during a visit to a region in northern Azerbaijan on Monday.

“Armenia and the whole world saw [during the war] that nobody could stop us... I was demanding that they present us with a date for the liberation of our lands before we stop [hostilities.] I am saying the same thing now: tells us when the Zangezur corridor will be opened and there will be no problems,” he said in remarks publicized on Tuesday morning.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry condemned the remarks as a threat to Armenia’s territorial integrity. It said they also run counter to understandings that were reached by Aliyev and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan during their talks hosted by Russian President Vladimir Putin in Sochi on November 26.

Speaking right after those talks, the three leaders reported major progress towards the opening of transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan envisaged by the Russian-brokered ceasefire that stopped the six-week war in November 2020.

Putin said a Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani working group dealing with the matter will announce in the coming days “decisions which we agreed today.”

The group co-headed by deputy prime ministers of the three states announced no agreements after holding a meeting

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Azerbaijani Forces Kill Another Karabakh Civilian

STEPANAKERT (RFE/RL) — Azerbaijani forces shot and killed another ethnic Armenian resident of Nagorno-Karabakh on Friday, December 3.

Karabakh’s National Security Service (NSS) said the 65-year-old Seyran Sargsyan was captured in the no-man’s-land outside the town of Chartar before being murdered at a nearby Azerbaijani army post.

An NSS statement said the “criminal actions” of Azerbaijani troops were caught on camera from the Armenian side of the current “line of contact” in and around Karabakh.

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

More than 515,000 Fully Vaccinated in Armenia

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — More than 1.35 million doses of the coronavirus vaccine have been administered in Armenia since the beginning of the vaccination program in the country, health authorities said on November 29. According to the Ministry of health, 516,989 people, predominantly adults, have been fully vaccinated in the country. Armenia is currently using AstraZeneca, Sputnik-V, Moderna, SinoPharm and CoronaVac vaccines to inoculate people aged above 18. The vaccination program rolled out across the country in mid-April, with health authorities also setting up mobile vaccination facilities near shopping malls and on major streets in Yerevan.

Armenian, French Human Rights Defenders Discuss Return of POWs

PARIS (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan raised the need for the repatriation of the Armenian prisoners of war at a meeting with his French counterpart Claire Hédon on December 7. According to Tatoyan, the POWs are being kept in violation of international law. The Armenian HRD weighed in on the gross violations of the rights of Armenian servicemen and civilians by the Azerbaijani armed forces, including the issue of responsibility for torture and atrocities.

“I have stressed that the Azerbaijani authorities are spreading their Armenophobic policies and promoting hatred against Armenians throughout the world,” Tatoyan said. The negative effects of Covid-19 on people, the rights of women and children, and the involvement of human rights institutions in international bodies were also on the table.

Video Shows Parliament Speaker Suggest POWs Are ‘Nonexistent’ for Him

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — There are numerous hero soldiers in the Armenian army, but unfortunately, there are soldiers, including officers, who failed to fulfill their duties and were taken prisoner, Armenian National Assembly Speaker Alen Simonyan told reporters in the parliament on December 7, commenting on a video recording of him talking about prisoners of war (POWs). In the video, which emerged online earlier that day, he says: “I consider those POWs as non-existent.” According to Simonyan, the servicemen in question laid down their arms, fled and got lost, as a result of which they ended up in Azerbaijani captivity. The parliament speaker noted that those who did not fulfill their military duties and were taken prisoner must be held to account. As for the statement that “those POWs are nonexistent” for him, Simonyan claimed that the video was edited.

Armenia Ruling Party Suffers More Local Election Setbacks

By Nane Sahakian and Karine Simonian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's party was defeated in Armenia's third largest city of Vanadzor and several other major urban communities in local elections held on December 6.

The Civil Contract party suffered similar setbacks in other parts of the country in October and November. It failed to install its members as mayors of the second largest city of Gyumri and the three main communities of southeastern Syunik province.

The latest polls were held in 36 other communities that were mostly enlarged by the Armenian authorities earlier this year. Voters there elected, on a party-list basis, new local councils empowered to choose community heads.

Citing preliminary vote results, Civil Contract claimed on Sunday night to have prevailed in 25 of those communities.

Opposition representatives disputed that claim on Monday. Some of them insisted that the ruling party won outright only in 15 municipalities, most of which comprise a city or town and multiple villages. They said that in all other communities Civil Contract fell short of a majority of seats in the local councils.

In what was arguably its biggest setback, Civil Contract won only 25 percent of the vote in Vanadzor, compared with about 39 percent polled by a local bloc led by Mamikon Aslanyan, who served as the mayor until October.

Aslanyan was affiliated with the then President Serzh Sarkisian's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) when the former Vanadzor council elected him mayor in

2016. He sought reelection not as a candidate of the HHK but as the leader of the bloc bearing his name.

Aslanyan needs to cut a power-sharing deal with other election contenders in order to again become mayor. He did not indicate as of Monday afternoon whether he would try to team up with Civil Contract or another party that finished third with 14.5 percent of the vote. The party is led by Arkadi Peleshyan, his former deputy.

During the election campaign Aslanyan and Civil Contract's mayoral candidate, Aram Khachatryan, harshly criticized each other and ruled out the possibility of a post-election alliance. Khachatryan is also the governor of the northern Lori province, of which Vanadzor is the administrative center.

Pashinyan's party was also defeated in Abovyan, 15 kilometers north of Yerevan, long a political stronghold of Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) leader Gagik Tsarukyan.

The BHK was led in the local mayoral race by Eduard Babayan, Tsarukyan's former chief bodyguard, and won more than 45 percent of the vote. An alliance with the opposition Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun), which garnered over 5 percent, would be enough to make Babayan the new mayor of Abovyan and nearby villages. Civil Contract got about 37 percent of the vote in the community.

Other municipalities won by opposition or nominally independent candidates included the capitals of Gegharkunik and Vayots Dzor provinces as well as the towns of Masis and Aparan.

By contrast, Civil Contract scored victories in three other provincial capitals and other major such as Echmiadzin, Spitak and Jermuk.

Pashinyan sought to put a brave face on his party's electoral performance, saying that the latest elections were free and fair and that this is more important than their results. He also said that his administration's top priorities are currently “connected with external challenges” facing Armenia.

“I know and understand the view that it would have been better for us to have rigged elections but a higher degree of [national] security,” the prime minister wrote on Facebook. “But I remain convinced that it is the long-running practice of vote rigging that eroded the system of state resilience formed in the 1990s and... led to security disasters.”

While there have been virtually no allegations of serious and systematic fraud in the latest polls, Armenian opposition forces have for weeks accused Pashinyan's political team of abusing its government levers and bullying challengers to try to gain control of more local governments. The authorities deny the accusations.

Critics have also noted the abundance of former political allies of Armenia's previous leadership among Civil Contract's election candidates. They defected from the former ruling HHK after Pashinyan swept to power in 2018.

A Civil Contract spokesman dismissed late last week suggestions that the strong presence of such individuals on the party's electoral slates is at odds with Pashinyan's extremely negative characterizations of the country former rulers.

Runaway Inflation Creates Dangerous Situation For Majority

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Compared to the previous year, non-food prices rose by 9.9 percent. In November of this year, compared to October, the prices of gasoline and diesel fuel increased by 3.2 percent and 3.1 percent respectively. Compared to the beginning of November last year, the price of gasoline increased by 48.1 percent and diesel fuel by 53.1 percent.

The Statistical Committee singled out clothes and shoes in the list of non-food products, which in November of this year, compared to the same month of the previous year, increased by 12.1 percent in price.

Items for household use and household appliances became more expensive by 8.7 percent, and transportation by 8.5 percent. Health services have risen in price by 4.5 percent and the prices of restaurants and hotels by 4.7 percent.

Rise in Prices Poses a Threat to Armenian Population

“The official statistics on price increases do not inspire confidence. We see faster increases prices in real life,” worried Armen Poghosyan, chairman of the Consumers' Association of Armenia, a non-government organization. According to him, about 80 percent of the income of the population goes towards food and public services.

“It turns out that people cannot use other necessary goods, while man was not born only to consume food or shoes. If we see in the consumer basket or family expenses that the expenditures for cultural life are 0 drams, this was not living. This was consuming or simply existing,” he said.

Touching upon the rise in water prices and possible increase in gas tariffs, Pogho-

syman noted that in the West, when it comes to public services and, for example, it is necessary to increase gas prices, the supplier presents his reasons, NGOs present their arguments, and the state commission, listening to both sides, finds an optimal solution. In Armenia, however, he said that everything is done differently. The voice of non-governmental organizations is generally not so audible.

According to Poghosyan, there is a class of people in Armenia that composes 10-12 percent of the population, for which it does not matter how much the price of water or any service or product will increase.

“The other 88-90 percent either find a way somehow to get by, or are in a terrible condition, and think about leaving the country. It is not surprising that 100,000 people have already left the country this



Armen Poghosyan

“The supplier presents his rationale to us, the commission presents its reasoning, and they also listen to our argumentation, but none of this has any impact,” said Poghosyan. He remarked that the increase of water tariffs and later, gas tariffs, will cause additional financial burdens for people.

year. We always hear positive numbers, especially that 6 percent economic growth is expected, which is a fairy tale. In the post-war situation, 6-7 percent growth is not even theoretically possible. People are misled by those numbers,” concluded Poghosyan.



ARMENIA

December 7 Marks 33rd Anniversary of Devastating Spitak Earthquake

YEREVAN (Panorama.am/PanArmenian.net) — December 7 marked the 33rd tragic anniversary of one of the worst natural disasters in our contemporary history — the devastating Spitak earthquake. Three decades later, the pain and grief from the disaster are not eliminated and wounds not healed with tens of thousands of lost human lives and hundreds of thousands homeless, some living in temporary shelters up to these days.

On December 7, 1988 at 11:41 am local time (07:41 UTC/GMT), an earthquake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale struck the northern Armenia. The epicenter was in the city of Spitak and surrounding villages. The magnitude in Spitak was 10; Gyumri (then known as Leninakan), 9; Stepanavan, 9; Vanadzor, 8-9; and Yerevan, 6. The total zone of the disaster covered 3k sq. meters, hitting a total of 21 towns and districts, 343 villages.

According to official data, the quake killed 25,000 people, leaving some 20,000 people wounded and 514, 000 homeless, while the value of material losses were estimated at US \$10 billion.

The devastating earthquake destroyed 17 percent of the housing of the republic, 170 industrial enterprises quitted their activity. Major damage was caused to architectural, historic, cultural monuments as well as to 917 educational institutions.

Thanks to the efforts of ordinary citizens and rescuers, about 45,000 alive and dead people were recovered from the ruins, 12,500 were hospitalized.

Expert conclusions later revealed that the main reason for such extensive damage was that the seismic risks all across the country had been underestimated. The special government-assigned commission to look into the earthquake aftermath identified that seismic resistance norms for construction had been violated, as was its quality and technology, construction materials failed to meet state standards.

Most human casualties were the result of poor construction, delay of the rescue efforts, lack of knowledge and skills necessary to implement disaster risk reduction activities and awareness of the population during emergency situations.

According to Gyumri Mayor Vardges Samsonyan, 2776 shipping containers repurposed into small homes for the homeless over 30 years ago still remain in the city; 508 of them are vacant.

All material, financial and labor opportunities of the USSR were mobilized for reconstruction work, as 45 thousand builders from all the member states arrived to help reconstruct the areas destroyed. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the restoration program was suspended.

President Ronald Reagan's Statements On the Spitak Earthquake of 1988

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WASHINGTON — On December 7, 1988, after learning about the earthquake in Armenia, then leader of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev interrupted his visit to the United States to fly back to the USSR. Gorbachev informed his American counterpart Ronald Reagan about the disaster at his farewell lunch in Newark, NJ.

“The earthquake was severe. There are many losses of lives, many casualties. I have been told that one village just disappeared,” Gorbachev stated, perhaps meaning the destruction of the town of Spitak. The Soviet leader added that he had just sent a telegram to the people of Armenia.

“Are there any estimates on the number of lives lost?” asked Vice President George Bush. The latter was present at lunch together with Secretary of State George Shultz and President Reagan’s National Security Adviser Colin Powell. “Not yet,” Gorbachev replied, offering his assumption that the toll should be around hundreds.

The video recording of the event shows President Reagan was shocked to learn that an entire settlement was wiped out. “If a village just disappeared, the number must be high,” Secretary of State Shultz added. As it would later be known, according to various estimates the final statistics of the death reached 38,000.

Ronald Reagan’s Presidential Library has made several public videos of the president’s statements on the disastrous quake in Armenia: his December 7 lunch with Gorbachev, the meeting with the US rescue officers who flew to Armenia, and the Christmas address highlight the Armenian earthquake.

“The last two weeks, the hearts of the Americans have gone out to the people of Armenia,” President Reagan said when he met the rescue professionals. “Rescue workers and medical teams from across the country flew to the Soviet Union, where you searched to the living and gave care to those injured. Ladies and Gentlemen, thanks to people like you, the Armenians did not have to face this disaster alone,” he added.

At this meeting at the White House, the president also highlighted the work of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to coordinate the relief efforts and the tireless endeavors of the Armenian-American community. Reagan mentioned Hazel Barsamian, an Armenian-American community activist, in his Christmas radio address: “As Hazel Barsamian, an American of Armenian descent, says, and I quote, ‘we have a history of this kind of tragedy. We are fighters. We are survivors. We stand together, and we will survive,’” noted Ronald Reagan, adding: “They will go on for the Armenian people are made of hardy stuff.”

Reagan had close professional and personal relationships with the Armenian-American community, both as governor of California in 1967-1975 and as the 40th president of the United States (1981-1989).

See mirrorspectator.com for the accompanying videos.

Moscow Hits Back at Armenian Speaker

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) — The Russian Foreign Ministry slammed Armenian Parliament Speaker Alen Simonyan on Friday, December 3, for his reported claim that Russia sought to restore Azerbaijani control over Nagorno-Karabakh through peace proposals made before last year’s war.

Simonyan was quoted as making the claim in a recent interview with several Russian journalists. He responded to one of those journalists who accused the Armenian government of “surrendering” Karabakh to Azerbaijan with the aim of ending Armenia alliance with Russia.

“For its part, Armenian society is opinion of the opinion that Russia surrendered Karabakh,” Simonyan said in comments published in Russian media last week. “If anybody [in Armenia] wanted to surrender anything, there were several variants of doing that, including the Lavrov plan.”

The Armenian speaker, who is a key political ally of Prime Minister Nikol Pash-



Parliament Speaker Alen Simonyan

inyan, referred to a peace plan that was drafted by US, Russian and French mediators and reportedly promoted by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

The plan was based on the so-called Madrid Principles of a Karabakh settlement, which were first put forward by the three co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group in

2007.

A spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry scoffed at the claim attributed to Simonyan.

“It is difficult to comment on something that exists not in reality but in the imagination,” the unnamed official told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

“It is deeply regrettable that some Armenian politicians not only do not refute absurd ‘thoughts’ about Russia ‘surrender’ of Nagorno-Karabakh... but, in fact, agree with such baseless judgments,” said the official.

The official argued that the peace plan stipulated that Karabakh’s internationally recognized status would be determined through a future referendum and envisaged firm security guarantees for the territory’s predominantly Armenian population.

“Once again compare those proposals of the co-chairs with the current situation and draw conclusions,” the Russian official

added, clearly alluding to sweeping Armenian territorial losses suffered as a result of the six-week war with Azerbaijan stopped by a Russian-brokered ceasefire in November 2020.

A spokesman for the Armenian parliament refused to comment on the criticism.

Pashinyan likewise repeatedly criticized the mediators’ peace proposals during and after the disastrous war. In a January 2021 article, he claimed that their most recent version amounted to a proposed “surrender of lands” to Azerbaijan “in return for nothing.”

The then Russian co-chair of the Minsk Group, Igor Popov, bluntly denied that in written comments posted on the Russian Foreign Ministry’s website. Popov said Yerevan and Baku intensively negotiated on the proposed peace formula until Pashinyan’s government “came up with new approaches” in 2018.



ARMENIA

Women's Fund Armenia Offers Grants to Rural Youth

YEREVAN — This December, Women's Fund Armenia (WFA) launched its teen girl campaign which provides grants to girls aged 14 to 21 in the regions of Armenia, with consideration to applicants in border communities where there are few

art and creative initiatives; economic resilience; and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Each grant is for \$2,000 with half provided at the start, and half provided mid-way after interim reports and updates are submitted. A final narrative and finan-

Established in 2018, Women's Fund Armenia is a grant-making organization that supports women and girls in Armenia through capacity building, providing financial support and development of feminist movement.

able feminist philanthropy to support the strengthening of feminist discourse, safe spaces and collective initiatives addressing main challenges that women and girls are facing today in Armenia.

Since 2018, WFA has funded 115 projects, awarded \$135,000 to support women and girls, and 95 percent of awarded grants are to projects in the regions of Armenia, outside the capital city of Yerevan.

WFA is aimed at the improvement of women's conditions, advocating for their rights, anti-militarism, enhancement of women's visibility and representation.

To learn more or to donate, visit www.womenfundarmenia.org.



The Women's Fund Armenia trainees

options and limited opportunities, especially for girls.

WFA's support of teens' projects helps them build self-confidence and initiative. These grants also foster entrepreneurship as the teens become stewards of the money and take ownership of the success of the project.

Grants are given to project proposals in the areas of: STEM and IT related fields;

cial report is also required. The grant recipients also receive training and mentorship throughout their project and are welcome to join all future workshops and seminars.

Continually providing opportunities to teens through grants is the goal of the WFA teen campaign. A selection of past grant recipients can be viewed at <https://womenfundarmenia.org/teenage-girls-projects-and-initiatives/>

The Fund's mission is to support building the women's movement in Armenia by providing necessary resources and tools to women's organizations, women's initiatives, feminist activists, and researchers and scholars to design and implement projects that advance women's rights and feminist efforts. (Watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsYAypo5aQU>)

The Fund's goal is to develop a sustain-

Gyumri Information Technology Center Partners with IBM to Launch AI Education Program

GYUMRI, Armenia — Gyumri Information Technology Center (GITC) partners with IBM to announce AI educational program in Armenia. Within the framework of the program, GITC and SmartClick offer an advanced course of Artificial Intelligence + admission of a program with a trial period.

The program's partner company SmartClick, the largest artificial intelligence (AI) company in Armenia, is always looking for AI specialists. According to Rem Darbinyan, founder and CEO of SmartClick, the demand for specialists in the company will continue to grow, and this program is a good opportunity to train new specialists and provide them with jobs.

The educational program is based on the professional needs of SmartClick and includes AI content of IBM. The graduate with the best final exam results will be given the opportunity to visit IBM's headquarters in London.

The 6-month course will begin on January 12, 2022, and will be led by SmartClick Data Science technical lead Ardalan Hosseini. Applications must be submitted by December 7.

The program currently has more than 100 applicants who will take the exam to participate in the program.

"Members of the GITC Board of Trustees in the United States have been in discussions with IBM about introducing and implementing IBM's educational programs in Armenia. As a result of the negotiations, we are now implementing the pilot phase," noted Amalya Yeghoyan, the director of the GITC, adding that the long-term goal of the partnership is for IBM to consider Armenia as its strategic partner.

Switzerland Directing 7M Francs to Agricultural Education in Armenia

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Switzerland is launching a long-term development project to assist Armenia in its efforts of modernizing its Vocational Education System in agriculture. The Swiss Development Cooperation has now approved a support program with a total amount of 7,130,000 Swiss francs (\$7.7 million).

The project is carried out by a unique alliance of international and local development actors, as well as public and private sectors, which will also mobilize additional funds. The reform will be implemented by the Swiss NGO HEKS, the Armenian NGO SDA as well as the German Corporation for International Cooperation GIZ, under the overall coordination of the Government of Armenia.

The intervention will assist the government of Armenia to reform the vocational

education in agriculture and to make it better matched with the market demand, leading to more economic development and more decent jobs. The project aims to improve employment opportunities of youth living in rural areas by the means of combining theoretical knowledge with practical training in a selected number of professions. Part of the reform is that along with receiving theoretical knowledge at vocational education colleges, the students shall get an opportunity to improve their skills in local companies and farms. Their training paths will conclude with a state diploma.

The project started on December 3, 2021, with a preparatory phase of 9 months. After that, the phase of implementation will last at least for 8 years.

To increase the project's impact and ef-

fectiveness, Switzerland is cooperating with a wide range of partners: the Government of Armenia, international organizations, the public and private sectors, and academic institutions. Other funding partners, who add significant funds to the Swiss contribution, include the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development BMZ, the Austrian Development Agency ADA, the Armenian Izmirlian Foundation and some private companies in Armenia. Some of these contributions are subject to a final approval.

The project will be executed in the Southern Syunik and Vayots Dzor and several Northern regions. Implementing organizations are the Swiss NGO HEKS, the Armenian NGO SDA as well as the German Corporation for International Cooperation GIZ.

Azerbaijani Forces Kill Another Karabakh Civilian

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The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry claimed, meanwhile, that an "individual of Armenian origin" attacked an Azerbaijani soldier in an attempt to steal his weapon. It said the soldier acted in self-defense and shot the man.

Authorities in Stepanakert dismissed the claim, saying the Azerbaijani military is trying to justify its "barbaric terrorist act."

Armenia also strongly condemned the "deliberate" killing. The Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Vahan Hunanyan,

said Azerbaijani attacks on Karabakh civilians are becoming "systematic" and show that "it is impossible to guarantee the physical security of Artsakh's Armenians under Azerbaijani control or jurisdiction."

Both sides said they notified Russian peacekeeping forces stationed in Karabakh about the incident.

Sargsyan is the third Karabakh civilian shot dead by Azerbaijani forces in less than two months.

The previous incident occurred on November 8 when four Karabakh Armenian

utility workers repaired a water pipe outside the Azerbaijani-controlled town of Shushi (Shusha). One of them was gunned down while the three others wounded as a result. Baku did not deny that the civilians were shot by an Azerbaijani serviceman but blamed the Armenian side for the shooting condemned by the US State Department.

Public Radio of Armenia reported later that the Artsakh Prosecutor General's Office released the name of the actual killer, Rahimzade David Gabil oglu, a private in the Azerbaijani armed forces.

Under the agreement reached between the Prosecutors Generals of Armenia, Russia and Azerbaijan, the Prosecutor General of the Russian peacekeeping contingent visited the scene, listened to the witnesses of the Azerbaijani side, the person who committed the murder, and investigated the alleged scene of the murder cited by the Azerbaijanis.

Peacekeepers are currently negotiating to organize the handover of Seyran Sargsyan's body to the Armenian side.



INTERNATIONAL

Aliyev Again Threatens Armenia Over ‘Corridor’

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in Moscow on December 1. A senior Armenian official confirmed that it failed to hammer out final details of the deal. He said the Azerbaijani side is “not displaying the kind of political will that necessary for furthering the agreements reached in Sochi.”

Aliyev said on Monday, December 6, that Yerevan should end its “insincere” position in the talks before it is “too late” to do that.

The truce accord commits Armenia to opening rail and road links between Nakhichevan and the rest of Azerbaijan. Armenia should be able, for its part, to use Azerbaijani territory as a transit route for cargo ships to Russia and Iran.

Aliyev has repeatedly said that the deal calls for a special “corridor,” a claim de-

nied by the Armenian government. Deputy Prime Minister Grigoryan insisted last week that the three leaders discussed in Sochi conventional transport links, rather than “exterritorial roads” implied by Aliyev.

In related news, Azerbaijan’s Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov cancelled at the last minute a fresh meeting with his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan which was due to be held late last week.

The two men had planned to meet in Stockholm on the sidelines of an annual meeting of foreign ministers of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) member states.

An Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said Baku called off the meeting in response to an Armenian parliamentary del-

egation’s “illegal visit” to Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry reported earlier on Saturday that Mirzoyan’s planned talks with Bayramov did not take place. But it gave no reasons for the cancellation.

The US, Russian and French mediators co-heading the OSCE Minsk Group regretted the ministers’ failure to meet for the fourth time in less than three months. In a joint statement issued over the weekend, they expressed readiness to host such a meeting “as soon as circumstances allow.”

In a separate development, Azerbaijan freed on Saturday ten Armenian prisoners of war in return for receiving more information from Armenia about minefields around Nagorno-Karabakh.

Indictment Issued Against Trio Who Damaged Church Gates While Dancing on Them

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A suit has been filed against three people who danced on the gate of the Surp Takavor Armenian Church in İstanbul’s Kadıköy in mid-July and were briefly taken into custody over the incident, Bianet reports.

With the indictment issued by the İstanbul Anadolu Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office, defendants Ozancan Y., Yunus Emre U. and Ömer Faruk A. are now facing up to 1 year in prison on charge of “publicly degrading the religious values of a segment of society.”

The indictment states that that the defendants came before the church in a vehicle on the day of the incident. While defendant Ozancan Y. was playing music in the vehicle, other defendants Yunus Emre U. and Ömer Faruk A. got on top of the church’s front gate where a cross stands and danced there.

The indictment has noted that this act sparked public outrage and was criticized by citizens on social media. According to the indictment, the defendants, in their statements of defense, admitted having committed the act, but said that they did not act with criminal intent.

The indictment has indicated that the committal of the act by the defendants has been confirmed by witness statements and camera footage. Referring to the examination carried out at the church by the law enforcement officers and to the remarks of the church official, the indictment has added the act in question did not lead to any damage or dirt at the church.

Emphasizing that the act committed by getting on top of the church’s wall and dancing publicly “degraded the religious values embraced by a segment of society and disturbed public peace,” the Prosecutor’s Office has demanded that defendants Ozancan Y., Yunus Emre U. and Ömer Faruk A. be sentenced to 6 months to 1 year in prison each on charge of “publicly degrading the religious values embraced by a segment of society.”

The defendants will appear before the judge at the İstanbul Anadolu 27th Criminal Court of First Instance in the coming days.

Armenian Religious Heritage Sites in Turkey Remain under Threat, US Report Says

ISTANBUL (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenian religious heritage sites in Turkey remain under threat, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom said in a new report on Turkey on December 6.

“In early 2021 the Surp Toros Armenian church in Kutahya was demolished after coming into the possession of an unknown individual — despite holding protected status. In August bulldozers destroyed an Armenian cemetery in Van Province, the same month an Armenian church and cultural center in Malatya hosted its first mass following a restoration,” the report reminded.

“Although many attacks on cemeteries in Turkey appear to be the work of non-state actors, the Turkish government has also been implicated in the destruction of religious minority burial sites. Moreover, authorities often fail to catch or prosecute non-state actors responsible for these crimes, creating an environment of impunity,” the Commission said.

Similarly, it noted “the Turkish government frequently fails to halt construction projects that threaten cemeteries; for example, in March 2021 the opposition Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) Member of Parliament (MP) Garo Paylan submitted a parliamentary inquiry to ask why the government had not halted the construction of a state-owned bank over an Armenian and Catholic cemetery in historic downtown Ankara.”

“In April 2021, in response to Turkish-Armenian MP Garo Paylan’s statements on Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, nationalist MP Ümit Özdağ threatened: “you’ll also have a Talat Pasha experience and you should have it.” Talat Pasha was the principal architect of the Armenian Genocide. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic and the November 2020 conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh has fueled anti-Armenian conspiracies and intimidating, anti-Armenian protests,” the report reads.

Council of Europe Urges Turkey to ‘Release Selahattin Demirtaş Immediately’

ISTANBUL (BIA news) — The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) rulings, has pronounced its interim resolution following its meeting on December 2, where it discussed Turkey’s failure to implement the ECtHR ruling of “immediate release” given for Selahattin Demirtaş, the former co-chair of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP).

The interim resolution recalled that “domestic courts failed to give specific facts or information that could give rise to a reasonable suspicion that he had committed the offences in question and justify his detention.”

The Committee has also noted that “the way in which his parliamentary immunity was removed, and also deficiencies in the reasoning of the courts in ordering the pre-trial detention, violated his rights to freedom of expression.

“The pre-trial detention moreover pursued an ulterior purpose, namely to stifle pluralism and limit freedom of political debate,” recalling that it constituted a violation of the Article 18 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECtHR) in conjunction with Article 5/1,” the statement added. “The nature of the violation under Article 18 left no real choice as to the measures required to remedy it, and that any continuation of the applicant’s pre-trial detention on grounds pertaining to the same factual context would entail a prolongation of the violation of his rights as well as a breach of the obligation on the respondent State to abide by the Court’s judgment in accordance with Article 46 paragraph 1 of the Convention.”

The Committee of Ministers underlined that measures to restore Demirtaş’s situation as far as possible to the position he would have enjoyed had these violations not occurred, should be taken.

In being a party to the ECHR, Turkey accepts the authority of the Council of Europe and the ECtHR, pledging that it will abide by the rulings and resolutions of the administration.

These rulings are also binding as per Article 90 of Turkey’s Constitution.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

UN Court Orders Azerbaijan to Prevent Incitement of Racial Hatred Against Armenians

THE HAGUE (Panorama.am) — The International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, on December 7 delivered its order on Armenia’s request for the indication of provisional measures against Azerbaijan. The court indicates the following provisional measures:

1. a) The Republic of Azerbaijan shall in accordance with its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, by 14 votes to one, protect from violence and badly harm all persons captured in relation to the 2020 conflict who remain in detention and ensure their security and equality before the law.

1. b) Unanimously, take all necessary measures to prevent the incitement and promotion of racial hatred and discrimination including by its officials and public institutions, targeted at persons of Armenian national ethnic origin.

1. c) By 13 votes to two, take all necessary measures to prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration, affecting Armenian cultural heritage including but not limited to churches and other places of worship, monuments, landmarks, cemeteries and artifacts.

2. Unanimously, both parties shall refrain from any action, which might aggravate or extend the dispute before the Court or make it more difficult to resolve.

Azerbaijan Elected To UNESCO Culture Protection Committee

PARIS (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijan was elected a member of the UNESCO Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of an Armed Conflict on December 2, according to media reports from Azerbaijan.

The membership term is four years.

Baku’s election comes one year after the end of the Karabakh War unleashed by Azerbaijan in 2020. During the hostilities, Azerbaijani forces launched two targeted attacks on the Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi. Azerbaijan earlier had “restored” a church by replacing its Armenian inscription with glass art. Furthermore, President Ilham Aliyev visited the region of Hadrut in territories occupied by Azerbaijan and declared his intention to “renovate” a 12th-century Armenian church, which he claimed to “Albanian.”

Concerns about the preservation of cultural sites in Karabakh are made all the more urgent by the Azerbaijani government’s history of systemically destroying indigenous Armenian heritage — acts of both warfare and historical revisionism. The Azerbaijani government has destroyed a striking number of cultural and religious artifacts in the late 20th century.

Community News

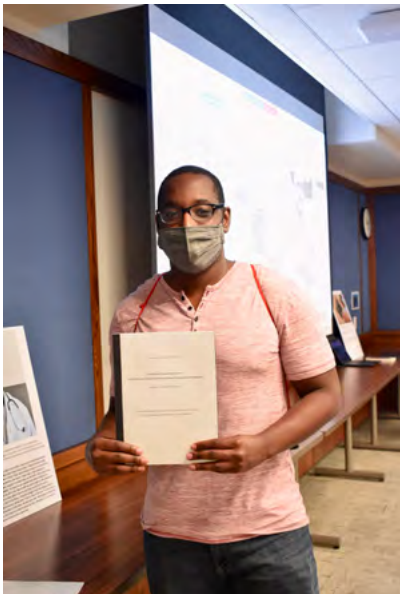
Rerooted Archive Presents Syrian-Armenian Testimonials at Harvard Law School

By Cris Patvakanian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The Harvard Law School (HLS) Library welcomed the two co-founders of the Rerooted Archive, Anoush Baghdassarian and Ani Schug, for its first fall “Ideas Salon” gathering, an event series meant to highlight the work Harvard Law School students do outside of the classroom. Baghdassarian, a third-year law student at HLS, and Schug, who works for an immigration non-profit, were sharing their incredible archive of Syrian-Armenian refugee testimonies, a project they had jointly started in 2017 and continue to work on to the present day.

The Syrian Civil War, which has been raging for over ten years, left a horrific toll on the country with over 400,000 lives lost, displacing over half of the country’s population including many Syrian-Armenians. The Armenian community in Syria, which by some accounts was over 100,000, is almost fully composed of ancestors of the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Now, 100 years after the Genocide,



Mtume Sangiewa, former Rerooted Archive intern and speaker, holding the report for the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Syria to which he contributed

the community faced another horror. Since 2011, more than half of the Armenian population living in Syria, mainly Aleppo, has been forced to flee its homes due to the current conflict. Rerooted’s oral history project focuses on collecting the narratives of some of the estimated 20,000 Syrian-Armenian refugees currently resettled in Armenia and beyond. The documentation process not only archives stories but helps to humanize the aggregate statistics regarding the millions of Syrian refugees currently rebuilding their lives not only in Armenia but also across the Middle East and Europe.

see ARCHIVE, page 11



Araksya Karapetyan at work

Anchorwoman Araksya Karapetyan Is a Storyteller With Empathy and Purpose

By Maria Cozette Akopian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES — “Everyone has a story. That’s what’s fascinating about journalism,” says Araksya Karapetyan. An anchorwoman at present for Fox 11’s Good Day L.A. morning news show, she has maintained a sense of curiosity and an appreciation for storytelling throughout her career.

Karapetyan’s mornings begin at 4:30 a.m. The audience sees a polished product, but tremendous time-consuming work is required to reach that stage.

She has honed her craft over the years, and got her career start in Idaho Falls, Idaho, many years ago.

After graduating from Syracuse University with a bachelor’s degree in International Relations and Broadcast Journalism, she began her journey in media at KIDK-TV in Idaho as reporter, anchor, and producer. “I was one of those people who thought I could avoid bouncing around [geographically for employment], that I was the exception to the rule, but reality hit. I accepted the job blindly and had no idea where it was. I just packed up the car and hit the road... I was the only Armenian in town but saw that as a chance to teach them what an Armenian was.”

She would often sit on the floor of her apartment in this unfamiliar city and cry. Her family supported her but didn’t necessarily understand why she was subjecting herself to such challenges. “I will say one person, who is now my husband, always pushed me to keep going and not give up,” Araksya said.

Her experiences in Idaho Falls forged her professional tenacity. She next moved to Portland, where she was a television host and reporter for KOIN-TV, and after two years, accepted an offer at Fox 11 in Los Angeles.

Karapetyan’s work ethic was inspired by her mother and grandfather. She related: “Growing up, they always told me ‘You’re going to work for a certain number of hours. You can give it your all or be lazy.’ So, if I’m doing something, I’m going to give it my all. Maybe nobody will notice, but I will, and I wouldn’t be able to live

see ARAKSYA, page 10

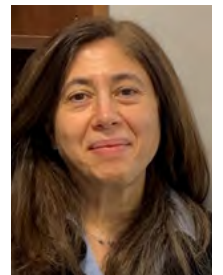
NAASR Hires New Executive Director

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) announced this week the hiring of Silva Sedrakian as its next executive director.

Sedrakian is an accomplished non-profit manager, having worked for nearly 15 years at Oxfam America, an international organization addressing urgent humanitarian needs and striving to end poverty and injustice. As NAASR’s new executive director, she will manage the day-to-day operations. Sarah Ignatius, who is retiring as executive director, will serve as executive advisor during the transition and into 2022.

“Silva is an outstanding choice. We are eager to welcome her as Executive Director,” said Yervant Chekjian, Chairman, NAASR Board of Directors. “She has an excellent combination of skills and experience well-suited to NAASR’s next phase of expansion, collaboration, and growth, speaking several languages including Eastern Armenian, working for many years in various areas, including academia, nonprofit, and corporate, and having an international background and receiving her undergraduate degree in Armenian Studies in France, and earning an MBA from Northeastern University. During our five-month search, we were impressed by the caliber of the candidates and are delighted Silva will be joining NAASR as the new executive director.”

“NAASR will benefit immensely from Silva’s expertise in nonprofit management, her experience



Silva Sedrakian

in building international partnerships, and her fluency in multiple languages to help NAASR serve its global mission,” said Judith Saryan, First Vice Chair, NAASR Board of Directors. “We were also impressed with her strong commitment and enthusiasm for NAASR’s mission, her dedication to Armenian Studies, as well as her leadership style rooted in respect, humility, hard work, integrity, and humor.”

“I am honored and thrilled that the Board has put their trust in me,” said Sedrakian. “I am impressed by the talented and dedicated Board and staff and am eager to work with them and the many NAASR members and supporters around the world,” she said.

At Oxfam America, Sedrakian specialized in program planning, monitoring and evaluation, led strategic planning processes, developed grant proposals, defined new partnership strategies with local and global organizations, and improved organizational practices and metrics aligned with Board strategy. She is also an adjunct faculty at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, VT, teaching monitoring, evaluation, and learning concepts and practices for sustainable development programs.

She received her Bachelor of Arts in Middle Eastern Civilization, see NAASR, page 11



Araksya Karapetyan as a child in Armenia



OBITUARY

Senator Bob Dole Dies

Longtime Friend and Supporter of Armenian Community

DOLE, from page 1

During Dole's frequent stays at Kelikian's home in Chicago, the doctor shared his tragic family history amid the horrors that began in 1915. Dole learned that three of Kelikian's sisters had been burned to death during the genocidal rampage, and Kelikian had been forced to leave his homeland.

Kelikian, an innovative orthopedist had offered to treat him and other veterans for free — in gratitude to a country that had given him a new life, and to honor the doctor's brother who had been killed fighting for the United States in Italy during World War II. Dole, then 23, remembers arriving to find Kelikian waiting to greet him. Kelikian had achieved prominence after emigrating at age 21 and earning a medical degree at the University of Chicago without having graduated from high school. Yet the doctor made him feel like he was the most important patient in the hospital, Dole said in an interview.

Though he was more than 20 years Dole's senior, Kelikian insisted on calling him "Captain," a moniker he kept using as their relationship morphed from doctor-patient to the deepest of friendships. In their talks, Kelikian told Dole he would never become a doctor, which had been an aspiration, and he'd never shoot baskets. But still there was hope for something better.

Kelikian's handwritten notes, provided by his daughter, lay out a medical long shot: "Surgery June 3, 1947. Arthroplasty of shoulder." "Surgery August 12, 1947. Resection of humeral head." The surgeries, which removed and sought to repair damaged parts of Dole's right shoulder,



were just the first of seven. The procedures couldn't fix him completely, but they did allow his mostly immobilized right arm to hang in a somewhat normal position at his side.

Those recollections were prominent in Dole's mind as he set on a quest years later, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, to force the United States government to officially acknowledge what so many historians consider indisputable: that a genocide had taken place. While he was in office, Dole was never able to achieve that goal, blocked by Senate colleagues and a White House loathe to anger Turkey, which continues to deny that there was a genocide.

But Dole had planted a seed. And so it was with a quiet joy that he recently got the news that President Biden — a Democrat and foe on many things, but an ally in the Armenian-genocide debate while they served together in the Senate — had accomplished what Dole waited so long to see: Biden formally recognized the mass killings of Armenians as a genocide, making him the first U.S. president to acknowledge this reality since Ronald Reagan, who'd used the term fleetingly. Biden's announcement came on a day of great significance: April 24, the same date historians have pegged as the start of the genocide.

A Republican, Dole was one of the most durable political figures in the last decades

of the last century. He was nominated for vice president in 1976 and then for president a full 20 years later. He spent a quarter-century in the Senate, where he was his party's longest-serving leader until Mitch McConnell of Kentucky surpassed that record in June 2018.

President Biden called Mr. Dole "an American statesman like few in our history. A war hero and among the greatest of the Greatest Generation." He added, "To me, he was also a friend whom I could look to for trusted guidance, or a humorous line at just the right moment to settle frayed nerves."

In one of his last public appearances, in December 2018, he joined the line at the Capitol Rotunda where the body of former President George H.W. Bush, an erstwhile political rival and fellow veteran, lay in state. As an aide helped him up from his wheelchair, Mr. Dole, using his left hand because his right had been rendered useless by the war, saluted the flag-draped coffin of the last president to have served in World War II.

He was national Republican chairman under President Richard M. Nixon in the early 1970s; the running mate to President Gerald R. Ford in 1976; chairman of the Senate Finance Committee during Ronald Reagan's presidency in the 1980s; and presidential standard-bearer during Newt Gingrich's "revolution" of the mid-1990s, when the Republicans captured the House for the first time in 40 years and upended the power dynamic on Capitol Hill.

More recently, Dole, almost alone among his party's old guard, endorsed Donald J. Trump for president in 2016, after his preferred candidates had fallen by the wayside. On the eve of his 93rd birthday, he was the only previous Republican presidential nominee to appear at the party's convention in Cleveland, where Trump was nominated.

Dole himself ran three times for the White House and finally won the nomination in 1996, only to lose to President Bill Clinton after a historically disastrous campaign. He had given up his secure post in the Senate to pursue the presidency, although, as he acknowledged, he was more suited to the Senate.

As the Republican leader, he helped broker compromises that shaped much of the nation's domestic and foreign policies.

He was most proud of helping to rescue Social Security in 1983, of pushing the landmark Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 and of mustering a majority of reluctant Republicans to support Mr. Clinton's unpopular plan to send American troops to Bosnia in 1995. (Mr. Dole was not wild about the deployment either, but he long believed that a president, of either party, should be supported once he decided something as important as committing troops abroad.)

A skilled legislative mechanic, Mr. Dole understood what every senator wanted and what each could live with, and he enjoyed the art of political bartering.

He was so at home in the Senate's marble corridors that during his last campaign, in 1996, he constantly had to remind voters that he was "not born in a blue suit" — Dole shorthand for saying that he had a life before arriving in Washington in 1961. In fact, he had been shaped profoundly by the twin experiences of growing up poor in



Sen. Bob Dole with Ambassador Varuzhan Nersesyan

Depression-era Kansas and enduring the shattering wounds of war.

Mr. Dole began his political career as a conservative and evolved into a pragmatist, even forging relationships with prominent liberals. With George S. McGovern of South Dakota, he expanded the food stamp program, and with Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota, he made school lunches a federal entitlement. Kansas farmers applauded both efforts.

He was such a good deal-maker that his own convictions were not always apparent. By the end of his long career, Dole had cast more than 12,000 votes, having stood on both sides of many issues.

He opposed many of the Great Society programs of President Lyndon B. Johnson, but he supported the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Avoiding budget deficits had been his North Star, given his hardscrabble youth. Sometimes he supported tax increases, which led Mr. Gingrich to brand him "the tax collector for the welfare state." But in 1995, he tried to recast himself as a tax-cutter, memorably telling party leaders, "I'm willing to be another Ronald Reagan, if that's what you want." He then signed a pledge not to raise taxes as president, a pledge he had previously rejected.

"It adds a certain poignancy," Richard Norton Smith, the former director of the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas, said in an interview in 2009, "that he found himself chasing the caboose of movement conservatism at the height of his career."

But away from Capitol Hill, Mr. Dole was a fish out of water. His insider skills as a tactician and deal closer did not translate to the presidential campaign trail.

During the 1996 race, he was faulted as having no overarching vision — for his campaign or for the country. He chafed at handlers who tried to package him, and he never adapted to the scripted politics of the television age. During speeches, he often lapsed into legislative lingo and referred to himself in the third person. He was detached as a candidate, more wry commentator than engaged participant.

After that final quest for the presidency, Mr. Dole became a lobbyist for the powerhouse international law firm Alston & Bird. Despite his standing as a well-connected Washington insider, he cultivated a new persona, one unexpected for a man of Dole's dark visage and mordant wit: that of self-deprecating loser.

"Playing up the image of the downtrodden also-ran was great fun," he wrote in his 2005 book, *One Soldier's Story: A Memoir*. He starred in Super Bowl commercials for Visa ("I just can't win") in 1997 and for Pepsi in 2001 and later made a cameo in a Pepsi ad featuring Britney Spears. He spoofed previous ads he had made for the male potency drug Viagra, for which he

had become a spokesman after undergoing surgery for prostate cancer.

"Once you lose," he told the New York Times, "people like you."

Armenian Connections

"Senator Dole played an enormous role in the lives of all Armenians, and we are grateful for his continuous efforts throughout his political career to help Armenians around the world. We appreciate his partnership with the Armenian Assembly of America throughout the decades, from his support of our internship program, to our collaborative efforts as we sought U.S. affirmation of the Armenian Genocide," said Assembly Co-Chairs Anthony Barsamian and Van Krikorian.

In 2015, the year of the Genocide centennial, the National Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide Centennial (NCAGC) honored Senator Bob Dole earlier this month with the organization's Survivor's Gratitude Award in the category of Hero of Responsibility and Principle for his tireless efforts in raising attention to the Armenian Genocide and its victims.

"I am both honored and humbled to receive this award from the NCAGC," said Dole. "But we must not forget that there is still much to be done to globally recognize what occurred a century ago. Only by acknowledging and accepting the past for what it is — however painful — can the world truly begin to work to heal and ensure a future free from genocide."

Dole's award was transported to the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics where it will reside.

In addition, in 2019 Armenia's President Armen Sarkissian signed a decree earlier in July 2019 awarding Dole with an Order of Honor for his contribution to the development and reinforcement of Armenian-American friendly ties.

In 2018, the Robert and Elizabeth Dole Archive and Special Collections at the Dole Institute of Politics in Kansas awarded two grants related to the Armenian Genocide, one an archival fellowship to author Michael Bobelian and a travel grant to Professor Julien Zarifian.

As the Archival Fellow, Bobelian worked with Dole Archives staff to create a web-based learning module with primary sources documenting the US response to the World War I-era Armenian Genocide and former US Sen. Bob Dole's advocacy on behalf of Armenians and Armenian Americans.

"Dole was the unparalleled champion," Peter Mirijanian, an Armenian-American political and business consultant in Washington, said. "It would have been much more difficult to get recognition of the genocide without him. He kept it alive."

(Articles from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* were used in compiling this report.)



OBITUARY

Isabelle Elizabeth Aranosian Hodgson

Dedicated to Family, Business Owner

BOW, N.H. — Isabelle Elizabeth Aranosian Hodgson of Bow, NH passed away peacefully on November 22, 2021 at the age of 99.

Born on June 3, 1922 in Concord, NH, she was the daughter of Oscar and Mary Aranosian. She is predeceased by her late husband, Joseph Hodgson, who was the one and only love of her life and her sister (Gladys Hayes). She is survived by her sister (Margaret Gattis) and brother (John Aranosian), her nephew and wife (Floyd and Suzanne Hayes), her nieces (Mary Austin,

Catherine Aranosian and Mary Aranosian), her five jewels (Justin Hayes, Savannah Hayes, Benjamin Blakeslee, Brianna Austin and Zachary Austin) and many cousins in Massachusetts and Canada.

Known as “Auntie B” to most who knew her, she was a family first person who enjoyed hosting family gatherings and reunions. She was extremely proud of her Armenian heritage and was a longtime supporter of several Armenian causes such as the Armenian Church in Haverhill, Mass, The Armenian Missionary Association



she was also a very successful business owner. Fresh out of high school she joined her mom and dad in the family business. She worked in the family business right up to her early 90s as president of the company. Known in the business community as being very assertive with a sharp business mind she led the company with her siblings for over 60-plus years. She enjoyed her work and was very fond of her employees.

She also enjoyed traveling especially to Armenia. She was a member of the Concord Zonta club and the New Hampshire Republican party. She also supported and donated her time to many community causes. Her favorite hobby was cooking for her family with her signature dish being “Aunt B’s Penne Pasta”. She was also an avid gardener, enjoyed reading books and spending time at Lake Winnepesaukee. All who knew Aunt B came away with an appreciation for her spunkiness and sincere kindness. She touched so many lives in a great way.

A private burial service took place at Blossom Hill Cemetery.

of America, The Armenian Assembly of America, The Armenian Tree Project, The American University of Armenia and *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*. If there was an Armenian cause that needed support she was always willing to help.

In addition to being a family-first person,

Sarkis Kevork Keushkerian
Artist Who Didn’t Let Disability Stop Him

LOS ANGELES — Sarkis Keushkerian passed away peacefully on Monday, November 22, 2021. After a two year battle with cancer, he could no longer endure the heavy consequences of the chemotherapy.

Sarkis was born in Aleppo, Syria in 1953, the youngest of Levon and Mary Keushkerian’s three children. When he started to walk, he was limping. His family attributed this condition to polio, which was widespread at the time in the Middle Eastern countries. After he moved to the US, a neurologist told them his disability was cerebral palsy caused by a lack of oxygen during birth.

He never studied beyond his elementary education, due to his physical disability. His left hand was tightly closed with twisted fingers and he dragged his left foot, as he walked.

He had expressed a keen interest in painting from early childhood. Later, as he grew older, his paintings were exhibited in Aleppo’s National Museum.

He immigrated to the United States to join his parents. After a short while, he moved to his own place. He had gained self-confidence and applied to the various county resources and was successful in getting all the benefits the government extends

to disabled people.

Sarkis continued painting in America and affiliated himself with Tierra Del Sol, a foundation who looked after the disabled people. As an active member of that foundation, Sarkis was invited, among others, to the City Hall of Los Angeles and was awarded a certificate of appreciation, for which he was very proud.

He was loved by everyone and he will be missed dearly.



Malcolm Kasparian Jr.
Electrical, Mechanical Engineer

WALTHAM, Mass. — Malkom Kaspi-
an Jr. died on November 29, 2021.

He was the son of the late Malcolm Sr. and Charlotte (Zarohian) Kasparian, brother of the late Lucy (Kasparian) Aharonian and uncle of Christine Aharonian and Gregory Aharonian.

Malcolm was born in Lynn and grew up in Saugus.

After graduating from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with bachelor’s and master’s

degrees in electrical engineering, he received a PhD in mechanical engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He worked as an engineer and eventually started his own company. In the 1970s, he also served as an elected City Councilor in Waltham.

In his spare time, he tinkered with machinery and cars. Later in his life, Malcolm enjoyed swing dancing and tai chi.

Malcolm passed quietly in the loving care of Hospice House in Lincoln, leaving behind his niece and nephew and affectionate friends and neighbors who helped him through his illness.

Funeral services were held at the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Watertown on December 3. Interment followed at Mount Feake Cemetery, Waltham.

Eugenie Seta (Mekhitarian) Terzian
Dedicated to Family

DEDHAM, Mass. — Eugenie Seta (Mekhitarian) Terzian of Dedham passed away peacefully on December 2, 2021, at the age of 98.

She was the wife of the late John Mesrop Terzian; mother of Laura Terzian and her husband William, and Dr. John Terzian and his wife Donna; grandmother of Rachel Louie and her husband Toby, Jeffrey Okerman, James Terzian and Jack Terzian; great-grandmother of Ruby Louie. Loving sister of the late Alice Mekhitarian. She is also survived by her Ghazarian (maternal) and Terzian family members and many dear and close friends.

Seta, the name she preferred, was born in Cairo, Egypt on September 25, 1923. She loved her life in Cairo. She completed her education at the American University of Cairo and talked fondly of her alumna status. She worked as a young adult at the U.S. Office of War Information in Cairo during WWII. In 1947, Seta and her father and mother headed off to the United States to join her mother’s family (Ghazarian) in New Jersey. Unfortunately, her mother passed away within a month of their arrival. This memory stayed with Seta for the rest of her life.

She moved to Boston, lived on Marlborough Street and worked for the ARS in the old Hairenik Building. There she met and



married John and began a family life in Dedham raising her two children. She went back to school to become a teacher, worked at Barber Colman Company, and spent many years working for Westwood Public Schools in the Special Education Department. She also obtained her real estate license.

Seta was proud of her Armenian heritage and dedicated her life to Armenian charitable causes, following in her father’s footsteps. Her father, Kourken Mekhitarian, was a journalist and Armenian political figure. He was the editor of the Armenian newspaper *Housaper* in Cairo and the *Hairenik Daily* in Boston. Seta involved herself in leadership positions in the Armenian Relief Society and later was a founding member of the Armenian Renaissance Association, Heritage Chapter. She also was a member of AIWA and delivered a speech at the 2000 AIWA Conference in Yerevan.

Later in her life she became an author and wrote a fictionalized memoir about her life, titled *Two Girls from Heliopolis*. It was a labor of love for her and a testament to the strength she showed coming to this country as a young adult.

Funeral services were held at Saint Stephen’s Armenian Church, Watertown, on December 10. Interment was at the Needham Cemetery, Needham.



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OBITUARY

Actor Eddie Mekka

'Laverne & Shirley' Star, Tony Nominee

LOS ANGELES (Combined Sources) — Eddie Mekka, born Edward Rudolph Mekjian in Worcester, Mass., who was a regular on the hit television series "Laverne & Shirley," died on November 27 at his home in the Newhall area of Santa Clarita, Calif., northwest of Los Angeles. He was 69.

His death was announced on Mekka's Facebook page. No cause was given.

Mekka starred as Carmine "The Big Ragu" on the hit TV series.

Mekka, began his career in entertainment at the Worcester County Light Opera in Massachusetts as a voice instructor, according to the New York Post. He soon landed a role in the 1975 Broadway production of "The Lieutenant," which earned him a Tony Award nomination for best actor in a leading role.

His TV credits included "Blanksy's Beauties," "Moonlighting," "The Love Boat" and most recently "It's Always Sunday in Philadelphia," but it was his role as "Laverne & Shirley's" Carmine, the boyfriend of Cindy Williams' Shirley, a boxer



Eddie Mekka on "Laverne & Shirley"

who wanted to make it big on Broadway (his favorite catchphrase was singing the opening lyrics to the Tony Bennett classic Rags to Riches), that forever endeared him to audiences. The series co-starred Penny

Marshall as Laverne.

Williams paid tribute to Mekka via Twitter calling him "a world-class talent who could do it all."

Mekka's film credits include "Beaches,"

"Dream Girls" and the 1992 Penny Marshall-directed "A League of Their Own," in which Mekka famously got to show off his hoofing prowess as a soldier courting Madonna's character, Mae, during a dancing scene at the local bar.

Michael McKean, who co-starred as Lenny Kosnowski on "Laverne & Shirley," remembered Mekka in a tweet, calling the actor "a genuinely good guy and purveyor of cheer."

Mekka began and ended his real-life career on the stage, even earning a Tony



Award nomination. He was nominated for best actor in a musical for his performance as Lt. William L. Calley Jr., who perpetrated the My Lai massacre of civilians during the Vietnam War, in "The Lieutenant" (1975).

Clive Barnes, reviewing the show for the *New York Times*, said Mekka displayed "an honesty and openness that proves very attractive" in his portrayal of "a puzzled kid with a gun who has been told to kill." The musical, with its difficult subject matter, closed after nine performances but received four Tony nominations.

Mr. Mekka returned to the New York stage in 2008, starring in the one-man Off Broadway comedy "My Mother's Italian, My Father's Jewish and I'm in Therapy."

He also continued to appear in regional theater. He was Harold Hill in "The Music Man," Pseudolos in "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," Seymour in "Little Shop of Horrors" and Teyve in "Fiddler on the Roof," his favorite role, which he said in 2003 he had already played more than 20 times.

He had a unique take on the character, as he told the Boston Globe in 2014: "I play him like an older, grumpier and slower Jackie Mason."

He married the actress DeLee Lively in 1983; they divorced in 1992, and he married Yvonne Marie Grace two years later. Mekka is survived by his daughter, Mia; two brothers, Warren and Wayne; and his sister, Lenore.

(Material from NBCnews, the *New York Times* and *Chicago Sun Times* were used to compile this report.)

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Araksya Karapetyan Is a Storyteller with Purpose

ARAKSYA, from page 6

with myself if I didn't do my best. In this business, there are moments when we think we can take shortcuts, but when you do that, somehow you end up losing the benefits you would've gained if you worked hard."

In 1988, the Spitak Earthquake hit Armenia. Araksya was born in Gyumri (then called Leninakan), a city that was heavily impacted by the earthquake. "I had just finished painting a bird in class and at that moment, the entire building shifted." She described waiting alone at school amidst the rubble, covered in dust with trails of tears on her cheeks.

As she fled through the chaos to find family members, Araksya heard of her aunt's passing. Her aunt was a physician at a local hospital that had collapsed. Araksya's cousin let out a scream upon hearing the news that still rings in Araksya's ears to this day.



Araksya Karapetyan as a child in Armenia

"There are these moments I remember so well," she continued. "As we sat in the town center waiting for my grandparents to meet us, everyone was gathered in the middle of the street. I was so traumatized and begged family members not to go back in their homes. There are just these flashes that come to me... When there's an earthquake in California, I always go back to that day."

Araksya's family emigrated to America in 1990 and she recalls how she felt as they landed: "I saw the palm trees and thought we were in Africa. It may have been all the movies I had seen. I also envisioned that my room would be filled with Barbie dolls from the floor to the ceiling."

It was a new world for a bright-eyed little girl. She said, "I immediately acclimated and went into survival mode. I knew I had to learn the language and when they put me in ESL [English as Second Language classes], my goal was to get out as soon as possible. I wanted to be a part of everything, every activity."

There isn't a moment when Araksya forgets her roots. She is involved in several charitable initiatives by Armenian cultural organizations such as Armenia Fund, where she has hosted fundraisers and promoted annual projects. Araksya also has supported Armenian businesses and individuals who are doing meaningful work by publicizing them through her media platform. She declared, "It's wonderful to be in a place where I can be a voice for the voiceless."

At her station she regularly pitches stories about Armenian subjects. She tries to ensure that the story appeals to a broader audience. She is fortunate to work for a

station that has embraced her heritage and given her leeway to pursue her interests.

She said, "Being able to showcase Armenian artists, therapists, professors, and filmmakers gives our community a chance to shine. It's so gratifying. One of my favorite sayings is: 'The measure of success isn't what you achieve for yourself. It is what you do for others.' I hope to do just that and never lose sight of it."

Araksya has found a balance in understanding the intricacies that come with being a media personality and being able to tell stories that are personally significant to her such as those about the Armenian Cause. "I never want to be told 'Do less of

this,' so I have to be very mindful in what I do, how I do it, and when I do it."


Araksya's thirst for knowledge is matched by her empathy. She observed: "When I'm interviewing people, I'm mindful of the fact that maybe for me, this is just another story, but for them, it's a moment they get to share something special about their lives."

Indeed, many of the stories she tells are devastating and this is where her vulnerability comes through. Karapetyan explains that the ones about children hit the hardest. "I wear my emotions on my face... I think that also makes it authentic. People love seeing the real you," she said. The impact of these stories on her often are so powerful that she needs to stay in her car alone for some time to decompress before going home.

Witnessing such tragedy also allows her to feel immense gratitude for the blessings in her life, starting with her kids. "When I get home, I'm reminded of how much joy there is, that there is beauty in the world, there is innocence," she exclaimed.



Araksya Karapetyan at Fox 11 in Los Angeles



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IMAGE: Detail of Mary and the Christ Child from Altar Curtain, made in Evdokia (Tokat) in 1766. We were honored to loan this piece to Tufts University Art Galleries this past fall for their exhibition, Connecting Threads/Survivor Objects.

Celebrating Fifty Years!





COMMUNITY NEWS

Rerooted Archive Presents Syrian-Armenian Testimonials

REROOTED, from page 6

Following a warm introduction from Jocelyn Kennedy, the executive director of the Harvard Law School Library, an excerpt was screened from an interview of a Syrian-Armenian couple who had fled Syria and repatriated to Armenia. “We want the stories of the Syrian-Armenian people to be amplified,” Baghdassarian explained, as the goal of the archive is to preserve the language, customs, and culture of Syrian-Armenians, provide vibrant primary sources for scholarly purposes, and ensure Armenian voices are heard in the efforts for justice for Syria. Now with over 200 testimonies collected, Schug and Baghdassarian highlighted their accomplishments and vision for the future, describing in detail the work Rerooted completed in the summer of 2021.

Rerooted was able to not only gather more testimonies, but hire interns, largely from Harvard Law School, who analyzed the existing stories in the archive and created comprehensive reports with that data. The interns, also present at the Ideas Salon, were called up to share their work experi-



Speakers from the Rerooted Archive pose for a photo after their presentation. From left, Mtume Sangiewa (intern), Ani Schug (co-founder), Anoush Baghdassarian (co-founder), and Mazelle Etessami (intern).

ence with Rerooted to the greater Harvard community. One of them, Mtume Sangiewa, a second year HLS student, presented the report he contributed to that will be sent to the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Syria, and shared why his experience working with Syrian-Armenians was of importance to him. In the past, during military service, Sangiewa explained that he never truly had the opportunity to interact with the communities and populations where he was stationed and being a part of Rerooted gave him the ability to not only apply his expertise as a law student but be truly immersed in the firsthand narratives and stories of people.

Another intern, Mazelle Etessami, described her experience going to Lebanon to conduct interviews with the Syrian-Armenian community there. Amre Metwally, a third intern with Rerooted, shared with the audience the portal he created for the Re-

rooted Archive, which guides users on how to conduct interviews themselves when a Rerooted member cannot.

Following the presentation, guests were invited to the adjacent exhibit room to look at poster boards with pictures and quotes on them highlighting individual narratives from Rerooted Archive interviews. There were also copies of the reports written and submitted to the UN, a litigation guide, education plans, video testimonies playing on loop, and the opportunity to explore the Rerooted Archive’s interactive website. In addition, there were artifacts from the Syrian-Armenian community such as textbooks and photographs for visitors to explore.

For Baghdassarian and Schug, the presentation is considered a big accomplishment. Baghdassarian explained, “It was a big milestone for us since it was our first presentation to the Harvard communi-

ty and one of our first to a non-Armenian audience.” What made this presentation unique was the greater number of refugee stories registered by this time and the creation of an exhibit room, allowing audience members to interact with the stories, the material, and the interviewees in a way Rerooted had never done before.

Beyond working and using the archive within the Armenian community, both believe the testimonials can be utilized, Baghdassarian said, in “different [academic fields] such as refugee studies, ethnic and religious minority studies, and to better understand notions of home and identity.” She highlighted that PhD students have reached out to Rerooted to use its archive for their dissertations, noting that “they’re not all even writing about Armenians specifically!”

In the near future, Rerooted aims to finish transcribing and translating its remaining interviews, but for the long term, the two founders hope to continue presenting and sharing the archive and reach larger audiences. One of the overall goals they hope to achieve by sharing their archive is to humanize the conflict. “The conflict in Syria wasn’t being paid attention to until there was a human connection...when things are humanized, people care, and they learn better. You just internalize what happens more than when you read a textbook,” Baghdassarian said.

Schug and Baghdassarian continue to look into opportunities on how best to make the Rerooted Archive more accessible and known. This could be in the form of museum exhibits, getting their education plans integrated into school curricula, or creating an interactive map highlighting 100 years of Syrian-Armenian history. No matter the form, Rerooted hopes to continue to bring this history to life in a way that it will never be erased, forgotten, or ignored.



Rerooted Archive co-founders Ani Schug(right) and Anoush Baghdassarian(left) in the exhibit room.

AMAA’s Boston Orphan and Child Care Fundraiser Features Next Generation Giving

By Dianne Chilingirian

WELLESLEY, Mass. — When planning began for the AMAA Boston Orphan and Child Care Committee’s 2021 gala, none could have predicted what a delightful and well-attended evening November 10 would be. Committee chairs Susan Adamian Covo and Phyllis Dohanian were hopeful as they worked tirelessly with Committee members to plan an event to help children. On that crisp fall evening, the Wellesley Country Club provided a glowing backdrop, as did the warm renderings of soulful, classic Armenian melodies by educator, composer and guitarist John Baboian. The evening was lit with the energy and enthusiasm of stunning emcee host Miss Grand Armenia 2021, Kristina Ayanian. Young attendees were also represented by Norayr Orchanian, who offered an inspiring invocation before dinner as well as a moment of silence in remembrance of martyrs who gave their lives in the recent Artsakh War.

Long-term AMAA Board Member Jean-

marie Papelian then enlightened guests about the work of the Avedisian School—an “amazing place,” where students—many of whom come from families who are “desperately poor”—learn multiple languages, science, art, dance, and all go on to university. Her lovely daughter, Grace Bottomley, narrated a video presentation introducing the group to four such families. One of these families lived in a 130 square foot home, and tended sheep in lieu of rent. Guests may never forget the child who said with such depth of heart, “I love my school.”

A moment of excitement then followed when a very generous donation was announced in honor of Michele Simourian and her 30 years of service to the AMAA. Guests’ energy and enthusiasm for multiple opportunities to contribute throughout the night — the wine pull, silent auction, live auction, child sponsorships, etc. — was evident, and many departed with one-of-a-kind designer items, events tick-

ets, travel and sports packages; but more, they left with a feeling of gratification that comes only from the goodness of giving.

In his message addressed to the attendees of the event, AMAA Executive Director/CEO said: “Christ propelled Hope and a strong will to survive in us. Anchored

on our Faith, the Grace of God and Good Samaritans like you, this nation is destined to resurrect, recover and rejuvenate. Thank you for anchoring AMAA’s endurance and thank God for His infinite love.”

For additional information, visit www.amaa.org.



L to R: Susan Covo, Grace Bottomley, Kristina Ayanian and Phyllis Dohanian

NAASR Hires New Executive Director

NAASR, from page 6

Classical Arabic, Armenian & Japanese Studies at the National Institute of Oriental Languages in France. She earned an MBA from Northeastern University. She also has a certificate in Impact Investing from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies and a Certificate in Community Management from the World Bank.

She speaks English, French, Armenian, and Farsi and has some knowledge of Arabic and Japanese. She has served on the Board of Directors of the Armenian Heritage Park and is a member of the Armenian Relief Society.



Arts & Culture

Blurring of Boundaries

Zarouhie Abdalian's Art and Politics

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

When so much seems lost to our governments' policies of war and destruction, it is good to know that art is still available to open our eyes to a different way of looking at the world. "If we do not rebuild the world, mankind will perish," says Zarouhie Abdalian, a 39-year-old artist from New Orleans, whose entire oeuvre is propelled by her desire for change.

Zarouhie is best known for her site-specific sculptures and installations. Although trained in traditional techniques, like painting and ceramics, where the artwork can be moved from one exhibit space to another exhibit place, Zarouhie soon became interested in the contexts in which people encounter art. This context includes the viewer and the place where the artwork is viewed. "I start with a specific location — its physical characteristics, social situation, history etc., to determine what I will make. A context-specific installation is produced for a particular place and a particular time; it cannot be moved without changing its meaning and purpose," explains the artist.

Zarouhie's work has been featured in countless exhibits, both solo and group, across the United States, and also in museums around the world, extending from Mexico, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Austria, Germany and Norway, to China, Russia, Australia and South Africa. Her installations are on permanent display at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Berkeley Art Museum, and others. Zarouhie is a graduate of Tulane University in New Orleans (BA, summa cum laude) and of the California College of the Arts, in San Francisco (MFA). The young artist is featured in an impressive bibliography of articles in prestigious art reviews, journals and magazines, like *Art Review*, *Art in America*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *New Yorker*.

I started this piece with the intention of introducing Armenians to one of theirs. I was surprised, however, to discover a woman who has kept close to her roots and who has travelled to Armenia, three times already. Speaking of Shushanik Kurghinian, the early-20th-century socialist feminist writer from Armenia, described as having "given a voice to the voiceless," Zarouhie says: "I can't believe it took me nearly 40 years to — rather accidentally — come across her work but am grateful to be able to read her now. Everyone should." That confident tone pervades everything the artist says and does.

Zarouhie creates sculptures and sound installations that explore injustices, both past and present — the exploitation of labor, racism and see ABDALIAN, page 16



Ahmed Magdy Hammam

Ahmed Magdy Hammam

'My Novel Is a Literary Cry Against Crimes'

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/GIZA, EGYPT — Ahmed Magdy

Hammam (born 1983) is an Egyptian novelist, storyteller and journalist. Ahmed started working as a cultural journalist since 2010, collaborating with *Al-Ahram*, *Akhbar el-Yom*, *Al-Dustour*, and other media. He was also the editor-in-chief of the *World of Books* magazine. He has published many fictional and short stories in the Egyptian and the Arab periodicals, publications, and websites. Hammam participated in many cultural and artistic conferences and events in Egypt and abroad. His books have been published in Cairo, Dubai, Dammam and Beirut, including: *From Cairo* (novel, 2008), *Ibn Awaa's Pain* (novel, 2011), *The Gentleman Prefers Losing Cases* (short-story collection, 2014), *The Story Factory* (25 interviews, 2016), *Ayyash* (novel, 2017), *Recipe No. 7* (novel, 2017 and 2018), *Reports to Sarah* (diaries) (2019), etc. His works have valued him awards (including the Sawiris Cultural Award), as well as recognition of criticism and a wide circle of Arabic language readers.

We Armenians learned about Ahmed Majdi Hammam when his novel *Organized Death* on the Armenian Genocide was published this year. "With his latest novel *Maout mounazzam* (*Organized death*), writer Ahmed Majdi Hammam, a serious and melancholic voice that comes from deep Egypt, uses a certain shocking title but that says a lot about his narrative. A story announcing the setbacks, expectations and tragedy of humans in front of an unfair, torturer, greedy, and bloody and unpredictable society" (Edgar Davidian, *L'Orient-Le Jour*).

Ahmed, first of all it will be interesting to know about your personal and educational background, as well as where you work now.

I was born in the UAE to Egyptian parents, and I grew up there in the city of Al Ain, in Harat al-Souriin (Syrian Quarter) neighborhood in a Bedouin environment. This blending of Gulf, Syrian Levantine and my own Egyptian culture contributed greatly to giving me a unique cultural mix.

When I returned with my family to Egypt, I studied Arabic language and literature at the Faculty of Education at Helwan University. Currently, I work as a cultural editor for *Al-Dustour* daily. I also write for some Arab newspapers and websites as a correspondent from Cairo.

In his review about your novel in *L'Orient-Le Jour* Edgar Davidian called you a writer, who never addresses innocent subjects. So what are your subjects?

In my literary project, I focus on the issue of diversity. I do not like to write two books that are similar, neither in terms of idea nor in terms of narration techniques. In my novel *Jackal's Pains*, for example, I wrote about psychological impairments and hidden internal distortions compared to the apparent physical damages. In the novel *Ayyash*, I wrote about corruption in the press through the character of the protagonist see HAMMAM, page 13

'Bon Voyage' Film Reveals The True Nature of The Unrecognized Status of Artsakh

By Aramatz Kalayjian

Despite being filmed two years prior to the 44-day war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Garegin Papoyan's film about Artsakh's airport is still relevant and a must-see for anyone interested to see Artsakh's unrecognized status. His approach to telling the story of this pristinely renovated yet non-operational airport is hypnotizing.

Through this documentary, we see the airport represents a microcosm of the in-between nature of the Republic of Artsakh as a part of Armenia and as a nation as a whole. Artashes Matevosyan's cinematography beautifully captures the sinuously still nature of the functioning yet non-operational airport. The truth is, Artsakh's only airport has been renovated completely as if new, rendered operational for 8 years with over 50 employees and yet it remains without a single commercial flight.

In "Bon Voyage," we see the staff of a sleepy airport in the vicinity of a small city goes through its daily routine. Weather is checked in the control room, the secretary makes coffee for the director, the workers come in for an obligatory medical check-up while the cleaners ensure that the marble floors are spotlessly clean. Something is not quite right however...The airplanes and the passengers are nowhere to be seen.

Through wry observational scenes, "Bon Voyage" describes the absurd ironies of a not-so-ordinary post-Soviet community stuck in the political impasse generated by a frozen military conflict, which has since erupted into full-blown warfare. Fully equipped for accommodating small civilian flights, the recently rebuilt Stepanakert Airport in Artsakh does not operate due to the permanent threat of missile strikes, which is exacerbated now due to Azerbaijani-control of much of the area surrounding the airport.

Unwilling to risk any lives, the airport, nevertheless, remains "open." The dreary ritual of keeping the standby facility operational turns the workers into a closely-knit family unit, where each individual lives out their personal dreams while continuing to hope for the basic freedom to cross borders and receive guests. Since the pandemic effectively had shut down many festivals and theaters throughout the year, and the war in Artsakh has delayed many creative projects in lieu of more emergent needs, "Bon Voyage" is now being pre-released on the Vimeo Video-on-Demand platform by Open Studio. Pre-orders are available for a December 15 release date. Please consider supporting independent filmmaking and buy a pre-order rental of this wonderful film today. Here's the link: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/bonvoyagemovie>



ARTS & CULTURE

Ahmed Magdy Hamma: 'My Novel Is a Literary Cry against Crimes'

HAMMAM, from page 12

- a rambler and an opportunist. As for *The Gentleman Prefers Losing Cases*, I wrote about personal defeats, and how to receive them with open arms or in a humorous way. Finally, in *Organized Death*, I chose to open the file of the Armenians in Egypt, and the genocide to which the Armenian people were subjected at the hands of the Ottoman Empire, and put it in comparison with contemporary crimes, especially those that coincided with the period of the Muslim Brotherhood's rule in Egypt in 2012 and 2013, and its extension after the fall of the Brotherhood until 2016.

When and where did you learn about the Armenians and that tragic page of their history?

of an Egyptian-Armenian woman, passing through her tragic life story, which is the history of all Armenians and reaching her present that belongs to her alone. In one way or another, the *Organized Death* is my literary cry against intolerance, terrorism and murder. And for me an Armenian heroine was more suitable to be the main character of the novel.

The geography plays a pivotal role in your novel. What are the connections between your proposed geography and Armenian existence?

In principle, I do believe that good literature — in some of its manifestations — is a good geography, and perhaps the course of the Armenian diaspora after the 1915 genocide was one of the factors that tempted me

with her criminal neighbors, related to the chaos coincided with the era of Muslim Brotherhood rule in Egypt, or even her tragic end in the bombing of Church in Cairo, which is a real event.

How has the reaction of Arab readers been?

The vast majority of the reactions I received were positive and encouraging. The readers of the novel sympathized greatly with Magda Simonian, whether because of the bloody past embodied in the Genocide that made her ancestors flee to Egypt, or because of her precarious present on the personal and public levels. But this does not negate the existence of some very few reactions from some Arabs who made pro-Turkish statements. Probably they are most likely Arabs belonging to the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. I read some of these statements on the publishing house's Facebook page.

Was there any response from the side of Turkey?

Not at all, and even when the publishing house, *Hachette Antoine*, took the novel to the Istanbul Arab Book Fair, there were no reactions, neither negative nor positive. In fact, I was so worried about the employees of the publishing house while they were at the Istanbul Book Fair that they would share the fate similar to what happened to Hrant Dink, or at least be arrested and imprisoned, that I thought do not announce the novel's presence at that fair. But things went smoothly: perhaps the Turks had not even heard of the novel.

Are you in touch with Armenians in

Arabic countries?

I have good contacts with the Armenians of Egypt, and I communicate less with some Armenians from Syria and Iraq.

Do you have the intention to visit Armenia again?

In 2015, I visited Armenia, attended the commemoration of the centenary of the Genocide, joined the procession to the Memorial of the Genocide victims and delivered flowers on their memory. I also visited Yerevan Lake, Garni Temple, and other Armenian cities.

Let me mention here the role of the Cultural Resource Foundation, which contributed to supporting me with a production grant to write the novel. I also want to mention the role of the Embassy of Republic of Armenia in Egypt and an Armenian charitable organization, who supported me with many references and facilitated my travel to Armenia.

I may be in Armenia in April 2022, to talk about my novel and discuss it in some Armenian universities and literary forums. I am not sure yet, but I must strive to make this journey.

Do you intend to continue writing on Armenian subjects?

I am thinking about writing the second part of the novel. There are many unknown Armenian martyrs, relatives of the heroine of the novel who were mentioned briefly. I think of zoom in on one of them and create his story. In any case, I will not be able to do this in the near future, as I am currently working on other novels and short stories, which I had planned to write for a long time.



This happened by a strange coincidence. A Syrian friend on Facebook published the immortal picture of crucified naked Armenian girls, attaching a comment on the occasion of her Armenian grandfather's birthday, and wrote a summary of his path during the displacement and deportation from Anatolia to Syria, specifically Aleppo, and how he miraculously survived. Only then I did realize this tragedy and start reading about it. I was horrified by what happened, it touched my feelings deeply, and I decided to write about the Armenians. That was probably in 2011 or 2012.

Organized Death is built in four chapters as the four seasons of a life.

I cannot say that the novel *Organized Death* is only about the Armenian Genocide, because it expands to deal with other matters. Although the issue of the genocide occupies a large space in the novel, but on the other hand, I can say that the novel, largely embodies the life and end

to write about the Armenians. The dispersion of Armenians to Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Palestine and Jordan provided me with raw material in terms of geography. It was a "big canvas" of artistic work. Then came the presence of Armenians in Egypt and the penetration of Armenians into Egyptian history and geography, which encouraged me to write more about them. Therefore, I had to travel to the Armenian districts of Lebanon, but also to visit Armenia itself, to see personally the role that geography played with the Armenians. That is why the novel has as preamble the words attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte: "Geography is destiny."

Is there a prototype for Magda Simonian, the heroine of the novel?

No, Magda Simonian is absolutely born in my imagination, but the circumstances surrounding her have realistic references, whether her family story associated with the Genocide, or her present and sufferings



Aivazovsky Painting Fetches \$1.14 Million at Christie's

LONDON — The painting "Genoese towers in the Black Sea" (above) by Ivan Aivazovsky fetched \$1.14 million in Christie's sale on November 29.

The painting was created in 1895, a period when Aivazovsky dedicated most of his time to his beloved Crimean home of Feodosia.

The description on the auction house's website reads, in part:

"Depicting a section of the 14th century fortress constructed by the Genoese Republic along the shoreline of Feodosia, this painting is an exemplary of Aivazovsky's desire and ability to achieve dramatic effect. The remnants of a pre-existing maritime power, the ruins of the Genoese towers still present an imposing strength against the greatest force on earth - that of nature. Having spent countless hours near, and on various bodies of water, Aivazovsky had an intimate understanding of the nuances and the capriciousness of the sea and of changing weather. His paintings reveal the wide spectrum of nature's capabilities - ranging from the exquisitely calm to the terrifyingly destructive.

"An artist who lived and worked in the Romantic era, Aivazovsky often prioritized emotion in his depictions of specific locations. Capturing the spirit of a moment and of a place was key to Aivazovsky's mastery. Aivazovsky was able to consistently achieve awe-inspiring scenes on sea and on land, at different times of the day and night, throughout the seasons, with his indomitable talent and envied technique. Many of his observers and followers found it difficult to comprehend, let alone to imitate, his enduring ability to create images that are highly emotive and convincing."

ARTS & CULTURE

Directorial Visionary Rouben Mamoulian Highlighted on Eve of 125th Anniversary

By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BELMONT, Mass. — It is interesting to note that some of the most influential American artistic figures of Armenian descent have been controversial in the eyes of the critics. Writer William Saroyan won the Pulitzer Prize in the 1940s before being critically panned in the 1950s and consigned to the dustbin of history by all but Armenians. Modernist orchestral composer Alan Hovhaness was criticized by the much more renowned fellow modernists Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein but recognized as a genius by other listeners. And Rouben Mamoulian, despite being the director of some of most influential motion pictures in Hollywood's 1930s-1940s Golden Age, and some of the most influential American stage musicals of Broadway's simultaneous Golden Age, was best known in later years by one critic's summary as "an innovator who ran out of innovations."

Dr. Milena Oganessian, a researcher who hails from Mamoulian's hometown, Tbilisi (Tiflis), Georgia, aims to change that assessment. She says that Mamoulian has not been appreciated as much as he should be for his film and stage artistry, and that his Armenian cultural background has not been understood by the critics either.

The 125th anniversary of Mamoulian's birth is coming up next year, and in honor of that fact, various cultural organizations have been planning a look back at his career.

One of the first was a lecture by Oganessian, sponsored by NAASR on October 8, which took place via Zoom on October 8. Cosponsoring organizations were the Ararat-Eskijian Museum and the Armenian Film Foundation, both of Los Angeles.

Aside from the fact that Mamoulian made his career in Hollywood,

both of the LA organizations have further connections to the man. This was highlighted by Maggie Goschin of the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, which is on the grounds of the Ararat Home, an Armenian assisted living facility. Goschin related that Mamoulian's mother spent her last days at the facility, which also was home to Mamoulian family artifacts. As for the Armenian Film Foundation, Mamoulian is listed as a Founding Honorary Member and was a friend of founder J. Michael Hagopian.



Researcher Milena Oganessian

Tiflis Roots
As Oganessian related in her lecture, Mamoulian was an Armenian-American artist whose connection to his roots was no stretch. After all, he was an immigrant born in Tsarist-era Tiflis, the capital of the Caucasus Viceroyalty of the Russian Empire, which had jurisdiction over present-day Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, as well as the North Caucasus. At the time, 36 percent of the population of the city of Tiflis was Armenian. The city was dominated by Armenian bourgeois business interests, and even the mayor from 1910-1917 — Alexander Khatisian — was Armenian; he later served as a prime ministers during the First Republic of Armenia.

Tiflis was also home to a strong Armenian cultural scene, especially known for the theater, which became even stronger with an influx of Armenian actors and theater artists from Constantinople after the Turkish government shut down Armenian theatrical performances in the late 1800s. Mamoulian's parents, especially his mother, were very active in the Armenian theatre scene and the young Rouben was raised in this tradition as well, while also being sent to school in France and Russia. It was from the Armenian stages of Tiflis, as well as the Russian theatrical world where he was partially educated,



Rouben Mamoulian

that Rouben learned the craft which he would apply in the United States.

The Mamoulian family fled to the West, first to London and then to New York, in the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1917. This writer would add that not only the Mamoulians but many other artistes fled Tiflis at the time, such as Armenian-American Hollywood actor Akim Tamiroff, or Setrak and Masha Sourabian, who were active in the Armenian-American immigrant theatre scene and music recording industry.

While Armenian themes did not really appear in Mamoulian's Hollywood and Broadway productions, he was a staunch Armenian outside his professional life, as Oganessian relates. He wrote a great deal, including about his upbringing in Tiflis and the Armenian culture of that city. Oganessian was pleasantly surprised and enthralled to discover Mamoulian's description of the Armenian linguistic dialects of multi-cultural Tiflis, which have remained the same in her own time.

Mamoulian's religious side was perhaps also surprising for a member of the artistic-intellectual elite of that time. Oganessian described his promotion of Armenian churches in the Los Angeles area, and presented his little-known poem "Armenia," which appeared in Ararat magazine in 1962. It reads like an English-language answer to Vahan Tekeyan's renowned "Yegeghetsi Haigagan" (the Armenian Church); Armenia is described as the land of Paradise where God place Adam and Eve, and later Noah. The author's commitment to racial equality is stressed in the poem as Adam and Eve, made in God's image, are described as parents of "all of us — white, black, or tan."

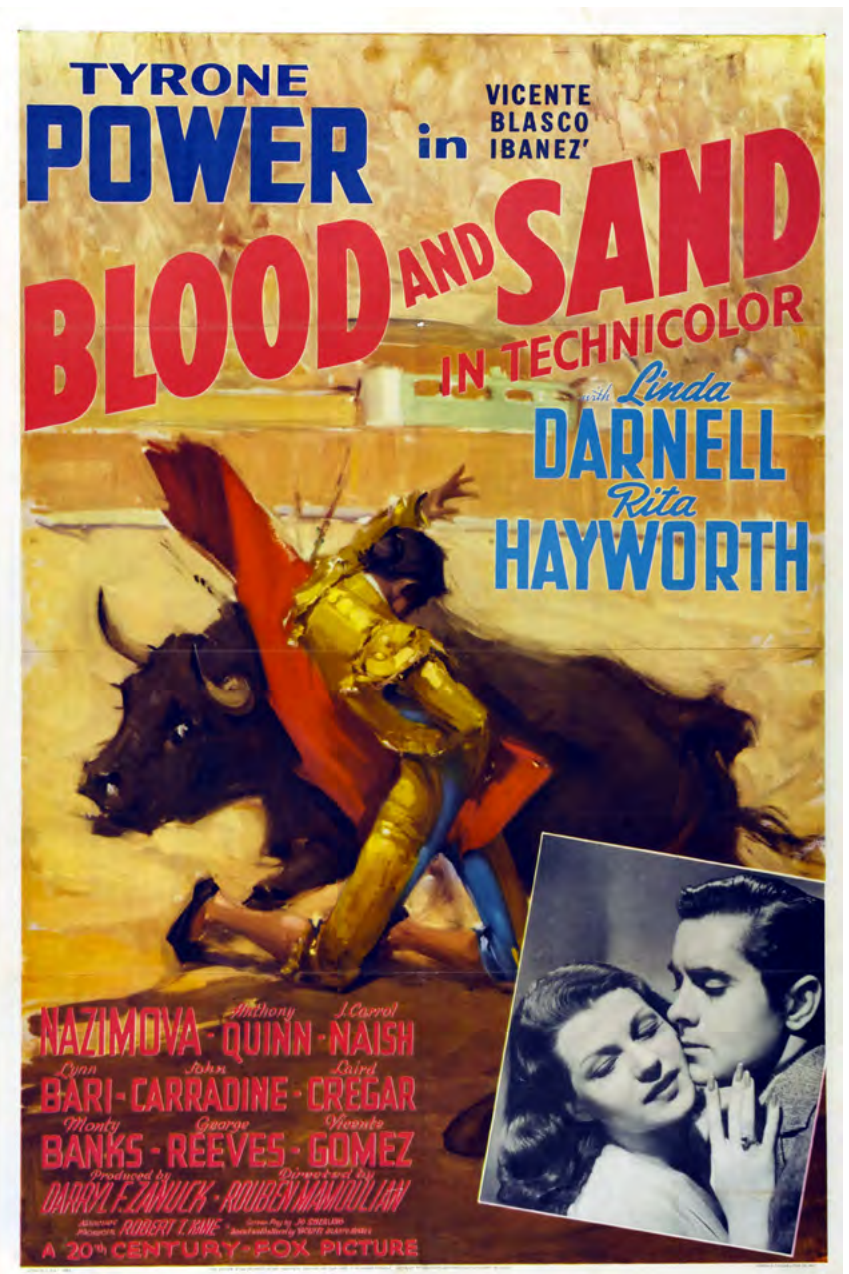
We would be remiss not to briefly mention that Mamoulian was known for his love of cats. He and his wife, who had no children, had 40 felines. Mamoulian even combined these fascinations, writing and publishing a children's story about a cat who witness the Nativity of Jesus.

Innovative on Broadway and in Hollywood

One of Mamoulian's first major successes was also one of his most consequential. His Broadway directorial debut was the 1927 play "Porgy," which later became the basis of the jazz-inflected Gershwin opera, "Porgy and Bess." Based on the novel by DuBose Heyward, "Porgy" was one of the first Broadway productions with an all-Black cast, something that was demanded by the producers, Dorothy and DuBose Heyward, and embraced by Mamoulian. The theatrical world took note of how Mamoulian was able to connect with the actors, encouraging them to display their authentic culture and personality in their acting, so as to bring the African-American experience to the public stage and reveal the realities of life in the American South at that time (the play was set in Charleston, SC).

In 1935, George Gershwin made "Porgy and Bess," and Mamoulian was again entrusted with the directorial responsibility, to great acclaim. Featuring a cast of classically-trained African-American singers, the opera has gone down as a monument of the American stage as well as African-American culture; its songs, like Summertime remain standards in the vocal repertoire of classical and jazz singers. In 1943, Mamoulian directed the first Broadway production of Rogers and Hammerstein's "Oklahoma!," widely considered the landmark show that gave birth to the Golden Age of American Musical Comedy. Its run of 2,212 performances was unprecedented and it won Rogers and Hammerstein the Pulitzer Prize in 1944. Mamoulian continued to direct musicals on Broadway, at the same time (often within the same year) that he was directing hit Hollywood movies.

Mamoulian had begun his career as a film director with



Poster for Blood and Sand (1941)

"Applause" in 1929. It was one of the early sound films, and displayed his innovative use of camera technique. As even his critics recognized, Mamoulian's strength was in his innovations rather than his storytelling in one genre



ARTS & CULTURE

or another. Rather than being known as a great director of Westerns or a great director of comedies, he tried his hand at everything, even stating that he would be bored if he had to stay in one style all the time. “City Streets” in 1931, starring Gary Cooper, was a gangster film; in the same year came the classic horror film “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” considered the definitive version of the novel by Robert Louis Stevenson, and for which leading actor Frederic March received an Oscar. (Though grouped in with “horror” today, Mamoulian disagreed with that categorization, Oganessian states.) The year 1932 saw “Love Me Tonight,” a musical romantic comedy starring French crooner Maurice Chevalier and in 1933 Mamoulian directed Greta Garbo in one of her most legendary roles, the historical epic “Queen Christina.”

In 1935 Mamoulian became the first director to film a full-length feature in color; the period society drama “Becky Sharp,” based on Thackeray’s novel Vanity Fair. Comedies, dramas, and adventure films followed: 1940’s “The Mark of Zorro,” starring Tyrone Power and Linda Darnell was a landmark; it was the first Zorro film and in many ways foreshadowed the superhero genre as it fea-



Rouben Mamoulian

tured a crimefighting masked man (comics authors later wrote the film into Batman’s backstory). The following year, Mamoulian again directed Power and Darnell in a story about a Spanish matador, “Blood and Sand.”

After the 1940s, Mamoulian’s career in film began to wane (he was famously fired from three separate films by industry head Darryl F. Zanuck), but he had made an indelible mark. Throughout all his films, Mamoulian was noted for his innovative ideas, especially using dance techniques, sound and color. He used music and sound effects



Tyrone Power and Linda Darnell in “The Mark of Zorro” (1941).

to express the emotions of the characters, notably in “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” in ways that were groundbreaking at the dawn of sound films. He was known as an autocratic, controlling director, but also one who cared about the actors and bringing out their talents. He was also considered a go-to director for productions showcasing various cultures and “folk” traditions, which is how his work with shows like “Porgy and Bess” were characterized at the time, but which also included his films that took place in Spain, Russia, and Mexico/Spanish California.

Oganessian said that as a stage and

film director Mamoulian was dedicated to art, but rather than describing it as “art for art’s sake,” he preferred the phrase, “art for life’s sake.” Mamoulian was an idealist who believed that great art, including film and theatre in



Frederic March in “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” (1931)



his case, could lift people up, and make our lives better. Oganessian leaves us with two excellent quotes by Mamoulian: “The true vocation of the theater is to uplift, elevate the soul, enrich the heart, and ennoble the man,” and “A film must have two elements — it must deal with the real world, and show how it could be made better.”

A lively question-and-answer period followed the talk, which was moderated by Marc Mamigonian of NAASR. Jerry Papazian of the Armenian Film Foundation also mentioned that events and programs are being planned to celebrate Mamoulian’s 125th anniversary in 2022.

Blurring Boundaries: Zarouhie Abdalian’s Art and Politics

ABADALIAN, from page 12

militarism, among others. The deliberate, often unusual, choice of sites for her installations, like a derelict building, a downtown plaza, a homeless shelter, or a parking lot, reveals the relentless woman who will

could not achieve alone.” For example, to make “Banner” (2018), an installation at the Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans, “a group of six people, including myself, embroidered a large canvas over a two-week period.”



“threnody for the unwilling martyrs” (detail), 2021: signaling bells, modular pipe, electronics. Dimensions variable

stop at nothing to bring, in her own words, “gaping inequalities and real atrocities” to light.

“threnody for the millions killed by silicosis” (2017) is a memorial to lives lost to silicosis, a disease endemic to miners, caused by the inhalation of silica. The banging and tapping heard throughout the exhibition depict the act of knapping, a process of making stone tools by striking with rocks. The whole exhibit is an invitation to thought and reflection.

Even when one doesn’t fully understand the “meaning” of a specific installation, one trusts the artist’s knowledge of the historical and the social issues that the artwork tries to highlight. Whether it is about the divide we have created between “brain work” and manual labor, or the “murderous sanctions and military assaults of the US gov-

Zarouhie’s is certainly not art for art’s sake aestheticism. The political motivation behind her work is unmistakable. Labor abuse and the mass murders of the United States government are all ideas intricately connected with her aesthetic creations. Art and politics are not separate realms for her. “Aesthetics is not ahistorical, and the criteria by which something is judged to have aesthetic merit have changed over time,” points out the artist. Her “politics,” on the other hand, is resistance to existing conditions. “Politics is about wanting to create change, it is not about an issue,” she emphasizes. Ultimately, it is the artist’s commitment to her vision that inspires confidence and empowers the viewer to act — the ultimate “politics.”

Abdalian may not be a household name in the Armenian community, yet she is very much in touch with her Armenian heritage. As a child, she was exposed to Armenian music, art and poetry at home. As a young artist, she was influenced by Arshile Gorky, but “encountering the work of the great Soviet Armenian artist Sergei Paradjanov,” at 18, when visiting Armenia with her grandmother, “was eye-opening because it exposed me not only to his oeuvre but also introduced an extremely creative era of Armenian art history I knew nothing about.”

As a young adult, Zarouhie attended Dr. Kevork Bardakjian’s erstwhile Armenian Language Summer Institute in Yerevan, through the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, “to expand my knowledge of Armenian language and history.” Years later, she returned “to reconnect with dear friends.” “It would give me great pleasure to make a project that would speak to and more directly solicit feedback from an Armenian audience, which I expect will happen in the coming years,” confides the artist.

Her Armenian identity is something Zarouhie has never shied away from. In 2011, she was commissioned to make work for the Istanbul Biennial. “I found myself in

the position of creating a site-specific piece for a country I mainly knew through hundred-year-old family stories of the Armenian genocide. I wanted to make a piece that would honor these histories while also speaking to and of the present. As an Armenian-American artist making work in Turkey, I felt I needed to make a work that conveyed what that context meant to me,” she says.

Yet, Zarouhie’s art transcends her Armenian roots. “As descendants of survivors, the Armenian Genocide charges us to actively remember while giving us the strength to do so. As Armenian Americans, genocide also pervades our diasporic home; genocide is foundational to the United States and it continues to define state policies,” states the artist. Indeed, her 2021 “threnody for the unwilling martyrs,” in downtown Oakland, is a monument to the “unwilling martyrs” of the policies of the US government — those killed on the job

because of unsafe conditions, those murdered by police or obliterated by bombing campaigns etc. The installation centers around the use of bells as a basis for sound sculpture. “I wanted to give expression to living through this historical moment and to memorialize it. I used bells to create this work because bells signify a range of things: a call to service, warning, commemoration, marking of time. The piece is meant to function across these registers, as memorial but also as incitation.”

Installation art is ephemeral. Much of it will not end up in museums and galleries. To those of us schooled in the “illusion of permanence” of traditional paintings and sculptures, the fact that installation art cannot be commodified and sold may seem like a drawback. But if we should redefine permanence, with Virginia Woolf, as “the ever-changing moment,” the transitory achieves “permanence,” and our judgment see BOUNDARIES, page 17

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

DECEMBER 12 — 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@Armenian-HeitagePark.org

DECEMBER 19 — City of Smile Charitable Foundation is hosting its first ever CHESS Tournament to benefit Children with Cancer in Armenia!Sunday, 4– 8 P.M. Featuring Chess Grand Master Samuel Sevan, an American-Armenian chess prodigy who shattered the Historical American record of the youngest ever- American Grandmaster by a whole year at age 13, in 2014. In 2012 Sevan became World U12 Champion and in 2017 the youngest winner of the Continental Championship in Medellin Colombia . He is currently the TOP 50 Player in the World Ranking. Just recently Sevan shared the Top 3 spots with World # 2 Fabiano Caruana and World # 8 Wesley So in the highly competitive US Championship, taking 3rd place on tiebreaks. The event is organized by a nine year old American Armenian, Aram Papoyan, with support of his family and friends. This is an amazing opportunity to play with one of the Greatest Chess Players and show your support for children in Armenia! ACEC (Armenian Cultural & Educational Center), 47 Nichols Avenue, Watertown. Call or email for entry form and tickets: Dr. Yelena Bisharyan, Chair of the Board, City of Smile USA,email: yab3@cornell.edu,cell phone: 607-227-6322. \$50.00 Entry fee. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/chess-tournament-fundraiser-tickets-216040070667>



“Hull,” 2018: ballast stone, gold plate, 12 x 24 x 24 in.

ernment,” Zarouhie’s indignation comes through. All one needs to do to appreciate the artist’s sincerity is to watch her in conversation with professional art critics. There is something extremely appealing in the relaxed, yet amazingly self-confident, manner with which this young woman delivers her powerful messages. A gentle smile confirms that all is said and done with conviction. Zarouhie’s motto is: “Believe in what you’re doing. The key to success is to do projects that feel right to you.”

The young artist’s creations sometimes seem “bigger” than the delicate woman who conceived and put them together. Zarouhie chisels, cuts, saws, paints, sands and polishes. She works with other professionals only when “the project is at a scale I

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ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Faye Levy's Chicken in Persian Pomegranate Walnut Sauce (Photos: Yakir Levy)

Faye Levy's Chicken in Persian Pomegranate Walnut Sauce

This recipe for the traditional Persian dish of chicken in walnut and pomegranate sauce was posted by Barbara Hansen at tableconversation.com on January 14, 2019. The recipe appears in two of acclaimed author, culinary columnist, food teacher, and food journalist Faye Levy's best-selling cookbooks: *Feast from the Mideast* and *1,000 Jewish Recipes*.

Faye is a treasure trove of information on Middle Eastern shopping and cooking — with extensive travel to keep up with the cuisines. In Faye's words, "From the Fertile Crescent, where agriculture began, to the extravagant tables of Ottoman emperors, the Mideast boasts a surpassingly rich culinary heritage." This author brings 250 time-honored recipes into the 21st century American kitchen. Accessible and authentic dishes, helpful shopping tips, and her trademark user-friendly approach make *Feast from the Mideast* a must-have introduction to a vibrant international cuisine.

A native of Washington, D.C., whose experience at her family dining table was not very exciting to her, Faye visited and fell in love with the Middle East — and



Faye Levy with husband Yakir who is her writing and photography partner.

Yakir Levy, the man who became her husband and has been for many years — the first time she visited Israel. She worked at the Tel Aviv University library, as she tells it, finagling a way to listen to the food expert of the day on her weekly radio show. The Levys are well known experts in the Middle East who have lived and traveled in the region.

As a culinary columnist and cooking teacher, Faye is the author of 23 cookbooks in English, Hebrew and French. She lived in Israel for seven years, where she studied at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and at Tel Aviv University, and graduated magna cum laude in sociology and anthropology. But Faye's passion was learning about cooking, so she obtained a job as the assistant of Israel's "grande dame de cuisine," cookbook author Ruth Sirkis, and worked with her for two years.

Later Faye and Yakir moved to France where she spent five years at La Varenne, the Parisian cooking school and earned the "Grand Diplome" of the first cooking

class. With Fernand Chambrette she authored *La Cuisine du Poisson* on the cooking of fish and became the first American to publish a book on French cooking — for the French. The Levys have written articles for the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Jerusalem Post*. Faye has written for other major newspapers throughout the U.S., and for *Gourmet Magazine*, *Bon Appetit*, *Chocolatier* and *Vegetarian Times*.

For almost four decades, Faye has shopped, cooked, and dined her way through the Middle East, and her enthusiasm for this flavorful, unfussy cuisine will inspire you to make these ancient culinary traditions your own. Featuring the bold flavors and simple, healthy techniques of more than ten countries, *Feast from the Mideast* has dishes for every occasion, from dinner-party feasts to quick and healthy weekday meals.

Faye's repertoire of specialties ranges from a simple sandwich enlivened by a zesty Grilled Eggplant Sesame Dip to elegant Grilled Lamb Chops spiced up with Garlic Cumin Tomato Salsa. She won a James Beard Cookbook Award for *Faye Levy's International Vegetable Cookbook*; three of her other books won The International Association of Culinary Professionals (IACP) cookbook awards. She became the main cooking columnist of the *Jerusalem Post* in 1990 and writes for the *Orange County Register* in California.

INGREDIENTS:

2 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 1/2 pounds chicken pieces, rinsed and patted dry
1 large onion, chopped
1 1/2 to 2 cups walnuts
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour (optional)
1 1/2 to 2 cups pomegranate juice or 1/3 to 1/2 cup pomegranate paste
1/2 cup water or chicken broth (if using pomegranate juice), or 1 1/2 cups water or broth (if using paste)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 to 2 tablespoons tomato paste, or 3 to 4 tablespoons tomato sauce (optional)
1 teaspoon ground cardamom, or 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon, or to taste
1 tablespoon fresh-squeezed lemon juice, or to taste
1 to 2 teaspoons sugar, or to taste
1/3 to 1/2 cup pomegranate seeds (optional)
1 tablespoon chopped Italian parsley (optional)
A few toasted walnuts (optional)
Serves 4-6.

PREPARATION:

Heat oil in heavy casserole or Dutch oven. Add chicken in batches and sauté over medium-high heat until brown. Remove chicken to plate.

Discard fat from pan, leaving 1 to 2 tablespoons. Add onion to pan and sauté over medium heat for seven minutes, or until golden. Meanwhile, finely chop walnuts with pulsing motion of a food processor. Reduce heat under onion pan to low. Stir in flour, then walnuts, and cook over low heat, stirring, for 1 minute. Stir in pomegranate juice and 1/2 cup water, or pomegranate paste and 1 1/2 cups water, and bring to a simmer, stirring.

Add chicken and any juices on plate to pan. Sprinkle chicken with salt and pepper. Cover and cook over low heat about 35 minutes for breast pieces or 40 to 45 minutes for leg and thigh pieces, or until chicken is tender, turning occasionally. Remove chicken from pan; add tomato paste, if you like, and cardamom to sauce and simmer until thickened to your taste.

Taste and add lemon juice and sugar if needed. If you like, whisk in a few more teaspoons pomegranate juice or paste. Return chicken to sauce and heat through. Serve hot, garnished with pomegranate seeds, parsley or walnuts, or all three.

See:

<https://www.tableconversation.com/2019/01/faye-levy.html>

Connect at: Facebook: @FoodbyFaye and @faye.levy.9 or Instagram @foodfaye or Twitter: @foodfaye

ORDER TODAY: *Feast from the Mideast: 250 Sun-Drenched Dishes from the Lands of the Bible* (Cookbooks) Hardcover – October 1, 2003. Go to:

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<https://localfoodeater.com/cookbook-legend-faye-levys-feast-from-the-mideast-book/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCmCf2yFsKo>

<https://www.facebook.com/172579193406031/photos/172580146739269/>

Zarouhie Abdalian's Art and Politics

BOUNDARIES, from page 16
becomes less dismissive. Woolf's comment on London, in her essay "Oxford Street Tide," comes to mind here: "The charm of modern London is that it is not built to last;

it is built to pass. . . . We knock down and rebuild as we expect to be knocked down and rebuilt. It is an impulse that makes for creation and fertility." There is, indeed, joy for Woolf in knowing that things are per-

ishable, yet possible to rebuild. It is the joy of knowing that, "All things fall and are built again/And those that build them again are gay," to borrow the words of celebrated poet W. B. Yeats ("Lapis Lazuli"). This awareness of the possibility of building something new, something that will, hopefully, dismantle the divisions and correct

the inequities of the existing social structures, is at the core of Zarouhie Abdalian's vision of transforming the status quo. "Art that is innovative and proposes new forms goes hand in hand with the human activity of trying to build a new society," affirms the artist.

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COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

One Man's Story Became Another Man's Mission: Bob Dole and the Armenian Genocide Resolution



By Edmond Y.
Azadian

The death of Bob Dole, at age 98, on December 5, was a loss for American politics and a loss for those championing recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

He was a larger-than-life presence on the American political scene, “one of the most durable political figures in the last decades of the last century,” as characterized by Katharine Q. Seelye of the *New York Times*. He

was nominated for vice president in 1976 and for president in 1996, but failed to succeed in either quest. However, his impact was mostly felt in the US Senate where he served for a quarter century and left his personal imprint through strategic leadership and the 12,000 votes he cast on legislation, much of which had historic consequences.

His personal life and his political career are the epitome of resilience. He was a skillful dealmaker on the Senate floor and, more often than not, was a champion of bipartisanship.

President Joe Biden, an erstwhile opponent on the Senate floor, had this to say upon hearing of his passing: “An American statesman like few in our history. A war hero and among the greatest of the Greatest Generation.”

Growing up in the Dust Bowl of Kansas in a poor family, he empathized with the downtrodden and that empathy became the trademark of his politics when he steered into law the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

It seems, also, that empathy was one of the most significant factors in his espousal of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. He was sensitized to this issue by a survivor of that genocide, Dr. Hampar Kelikian, who touched his life miraculously and healed his wounds.

The story of their fabled relationship has appeared in many publications and particularly in *One Soldier's Story*, written by Dole himself. Dr. Kelikian not only had given a new life to the veteran Dole but offered a philosophical key in the most simple words, which became very characteristic of the late senator: “You have to live with what you have left with, you can't dwell on what you've lost.” With those words he had earned the title of “second father” for Dole, he confessed.

Dr. Kelikian was one of a kind. He had survived the self-defense battle for his native Hajin and later become a down-to-earth yet celebrated surgeon respected globally, all the while wearing his Armenian heart on his sleeve. He had no-nonsense conversations about everything, which probably affected the senator. He was famous for his blunt and pithy remarks as well as sly humor. His ordinary conversation could be characterized as raw wisdom.

Kelikian was even a literary figure, again without much pretense. He made friends after his first encounter with anyone and left an indelible mark through his humor. He never hesitated to call me after midnight to ask a question about Armenian literature or order me to ship a volume of Krikor Zohrab's short stories by overnight mail. The Chicago Armenian community, where Dr. Kelikian was an icon, remembers many hilarious stories about him.

This brings us to the issue of the role of the individual in history. Dr. Kelikian was a passionate Armenian who told his unvarnished story. Senator Dole, the recipient of that message, was equally sensitive to human misery, and that is how a single person's story became a political cause in the US senate for many years. There, Senator Dole's opponent was fellow Republican Sen. Robert Byrd, an unrepentant racist and former Ku Klux Klan leader, beholden to the Turkish lobby.

Robert Byrd was the longest-serving senator in US history and throughout his career, he was a staunch supporter of Turkey, defending that country's gory history, a public stance which was in keeping with his domestic policy of denigrating African-Americans.

Just as we, Armenians, mourn Senator Dole's passing now, the Turks similarly mourned Senator Byrd's death in 2010. At that time, the Turkish Coalition of America released a statement joining “all Americans in mourning the passing of legendary West Virginia Senator Robert Byrd. Senator Byrd was

one of Turkey's most enthusiastic supporters in Congress and a friend to Turkish Americans.”

The statement counts one of the “heroic” acts by Byrd: “Senator Byrd had a long track record of promoting and defending the US-Turkey relationship. In 1990, during an earlier push by Armenian Americans to pass the so-called ‘Armenian Genocide Resolution,’ Senator Byrd worked exhaustively to block the passage of the resolution, eventually leading a successful three-day filibuster which resulted in the defeat of the resolution in the Senate.”

The Turkish government was paying well for this campaign and it accorded accolades and medals to the senator when he visited Turkey. The Turkish government was also part of a smear campaign against Dole. At one point, it went so far as to boycott bananas from the Dole Food Company, believing he had a connection there. (He did not.)

Mr. Dole, in his characteristic dry humor, merely answered, “I don't have bananas.”

The reason Senator Byrd fought so passionately against the passage of the Genocide resolution seems to have had a personal factor — a “family affair.” Many believe his son-in-law, the Turkish-Iranian Mohammad Fatemi, must have played a role.

On the other hand, another son-in-law, this time Armenian,



evidently was not able to help his mother-in-law, US Secretary of State Madeline Albright, act on the Genocide issue. Albright served as US Ambassador to the UN before she was tapped for President Bill Clinton's cabinet. I had the opportunity to meet her and when I began advocating for recognition of the Armenian Genocide, she stopped me in the middle of the conversation, interjecting, “You cannot teach me more than I know about the Armenian Genocide, because I get an earful from my son-in-law, who is Armenian.”

It is impossible to know how much headway that son-in-law made and how much empathy Mrs. Albright brought to the issue but we know the politics of the time were against the case. She had to follow President Clinton's line. We all know that when the votes were lined up in the Congress for the passage of the resolution on the Genocide, the Democratic president ordered Republican Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert to block the bill from coming to the floor. The now disgraced Hastert obliged gleefully, as we later found out that he was bankrolled by the Turkish government.

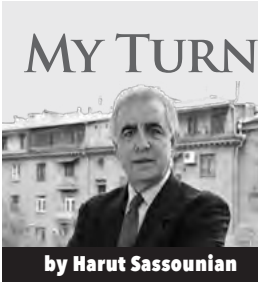
Although individuals cannot always turn the tide, in certain moments in history, when the right person is in the right place at the right time, impactful events of historic consequence can take place, as we see with Senator Dole's story. On the flip side of the coin, it is lamentable when people face and miss historic opportunities. One such case is that of Steven Zaillian, who won an Academy Award in 1993 for best screenplay for the Steven Spielberg Holocaust film, “Schindler's List.” The movie touched the hearts of millions around the world, and the subject was certainly one close to the hearts of the Armenians.

Most in the Armenian community had taken it for granted that Mr. Zaillian would take the opportunity and relate the

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COMMENTARY



MY TURN

Celebrity Dr. Oz Running For US Senate; Do We Need a Second Trump in Washington?

by Harut Sassounian

TV celebrity Dr. Mehmet Oz announced on November 30 his Republican candidacy for one of the two US Senate seats from Pennsylvania.

Just like his idol Donald Trump, Dr. Oz has no background in politics. He has not even served as a City Councilman. The American public and the world-at-large suffered enough in the hands of the incompetent celebrity Trump who appointed Dr. Oz to the White House council on sport, fitness and nutrition, after appearing on “The Dr. Oz Show” as a presidential candidate.

Besides his lack of political experience, there are several other issues that should discourage or disqualify Dr. Oz from running for a Senate seat. Even though he is a medical doctor, he has offered plenty of baseless medical advice and promoted questionable treatments, such as diet pills and hydroxychloroquine, Trump’s fake cure for coronavirus, in order to enrich himself, jeopardizing the health of the American public. He shockingly suggested on FOX-TV that “a 2-3 percent increase in COVID-19 mortality from reopening schools nationwide might be a worthwhile trade-off.”

According to Wikipedia, Dr. Oz “has promoted pseudoscience and alternative medicine, and has been criticized by physicians, government officials, and publications, including the British Medical Journal, Popular Science, and The New Yorker, for endorsing unproven products and non-scientific advice. The British Medical Journal published a study in 2014 that found more than half of the recommendations on medical talk series, including “The Dr. Oz Show,” either had no evidence or contradicted medical research.”

Another problem is that Dr. Oz is running for the Senate from Pennsylvania, even though he is not a resident of that State. He lives in a mansion in New Jersey which violates the residency requirement to run for political office in that State. In late 2020, he changed his voter registration to a home owned by his mother-in-law in Pennsylvania. The only link he has with that State is that he graduated from the University of Pennsylvania over three decades ago in 1986.

Finally, without wanting to say anything disparaging about his Turkish background, it remains to be seen, if elected, Dr. Oz will act as the mouthpiece of the Turkish government or serves the interests of the United States. In the few days since announcing his candidacy, several articles have been written questioning his exclusive allegiance to the United States as a dual Turkish and American citizen. Even though Dr. Mehmet Oz was born in Ohio, he spent his childhood summers in Turkey and served for two years in the Turkish army.

Regarding his position on Armenian issues, there are two indications:

1) In 2014, the Assembly of Turkish American Associations headquartered in Washington, DC, announced Dr. Oz’s participation in its “master plan” to deny the Armenian Genocide in advance of the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide in 2015. However, a spokesman for Dr. Oz said in an email to the Armenian Asbarez newspaper that “Dr. Oz is not involved in this in any way.”

2) In 2008, when I was being awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in New York, Dr. Oz was also one of the recipients of that medal. During the official ceremony, in my acceptance speech, the minute I said that I was a descendant of survivors of the Armenian Genocide, Dr. Oz got up from his chair and left the hall. To be fair to him, this could have been a mere coincidence.

Nevertheless, it is up to Dr. Oz to clarify his position on the Armenian Genocide which is already recognized by both Houses of Congress and the President of the United States. Dr. Mehmet Oz’s true allegiances will be revealed if he shows any reluctance to criticize the grave human rights violations committed by his good friend, the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Despite his celebrity status, Dr. Oz will face an uphill battle in his political campaign. He will be competing with a dozen other Republican candidates in the race for the Senate. If he overcomes that major hurdle, he would then go up against his Democratic rival. The current Republican Senator Pat Toomey has announced his retirement.

Dr. Oz has come under relentless attacks from the American media for his questionable past statements. Dr. Dale Summers wrote an article in The Daily Beast titled: “Please Don’t Elect Dr. Oz -- He’s a Disgrace to Our Profession.” Summers stated: “I greet this prospect with the same enthusiasm I’d have for contracting dysentery.... He’s been promoting pseudoscience on his show for years.”

In another article, the Daily Beast’s Matt Wilstein reported the sarcastic comments made on TV by comedian Stephen Colbert about Dr. Oz’s political prospects. The article was titled: “Stephen Colbert Exposes Known ‘Liar’ Dr. Oz Ahead of Pennsylvania Senate Run.” Colbert ridiculed Dr. Oz’s statement that his candidacy will “help re-light the ‘divine spark’ inside every American.” He noted that Dr. Oz, before tossing his hat in the political ring, had a “lucrative career as a liar, peddling questionable health advice on TV.” Colbert then added: “But Dr. Oz may not just have fake medical claims; he may have fake Pennsylvania claims, because he’s running there despite living in New Jersey for years.”

Karen Tumulty, deputy editorial page editor and columnist for the Washington Post, wrote an article headlined: “What Dr. Oz’s Senate campaign is missing.” Tumulty stated: “Oz has now offered himself as a prescription for what ails politics. Count me as skeptical that Pennsylvania voters will buy the idea that he is the cure they are looking for.”

It remains to be seen whether Dr. Oz’s celebrity status will overcome his political inexperience and fake medical cures.

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Jewish case to the plight of his own ancestors if and when he had a global audience of two billion. Instead, he accepted the Academy Award with an uneventful, bland speech. By contrast, the documentary filmmaker Michael Moore’s political speech, during the Academy Award’s 2003 ceremony, led to him being booed and dragged off the stage. However, he had the courage to deliver his message no matter what the fallout.

A counterexample was provided by British playwright Harold Pinter, who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2005. He was too ill to travel but he sent a videotaped speech, where, after some philosophical ruminations, he delivered a scathing message to the world political players. Therefore, it is not uncommon for prize winners to take an opportunity and deliver a political message if they have a chance to address a world audience.

As of this writing, the first Armenian scientist to ever win a Nobel Prize, Dr. Ardem Patapoutian, who won this year for medicine, is on his way to Stockholm to receive his prize. While it would sound too pretentious to give advice to a scientific genius, it is not unfair to expect that he should make some reference to the most epoch-making event in Armenian history in such an august setting, maybe along the lines of wondering how many other Nobel laureates of Armenian descent would have been there had it not been for the mass extermination by the Ottoman rulers.

Incidentally, Dr. Patapoutian’s Nobel Prize came at a most opportune time, when Armenia was defeated in a war and all Armenians were grieving. The Armenian genius had to sprout somehow, somewhere. That was the mysterious revenge of history.

Dr. Kelikian rose to the occasion and made history. Senator Dole took the ball and ran with it, and although in the end he could not deliver during his quarter century in the Senate, his keeping the issue alive led to its eventual success. He lived long enough to see the rewarding culmination of his mission, when the US House of Representatives and the Senate adopted bipartisan resolutions and President Biden put the icing on the cake.

This is a moment to ponder the purposeful life of a great leader, mourn his loss and glorify his enduring legacy.

Patronage Marginalizes Qualified Turkish Diplomats

By Semih Idiz

Once considered the cream of the bureaucracy, Turkey’s foreign ministry is in decline as it becomes marginalized in policy-making and turns into an outlet for government loyalists waiting to be rewarded.

This is not just the view of the opposition but also of former ambassadors who have served in some of Turkey’s most important posts abroad.

As a multilingual class of highly educated officials, who were expected to hold their own in any part of the world, diplomats had a unique position in the state apparatus in former days.

This has changed fundamentally under the Justice and Development Party (AKP); especially after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ushered in his system of one-man rule following the elections in June 2018.

The foreign ministry has been largely sidelined, with foreign policy being conducted mostly from the Presidential Palace.

Many see a link between this situation and Ankara’s numerous foreign policy mistakes, which it is trying hard to correct now. Part of the problem is thought to be the appointment of government cronies to desirable ambassadorial posts, regardless of qualifications. Although such appointees existed in the past also, their number has increased in recent years.

Experts say Erdogan is determined to undermine the traditional Western-oriented and secular foreign ministry and replace it with a ministry that meets his Islamized foreign policy expectations.

Utku Cakirozer, a deputy from the main opposition Republican Peoples’ Party (CHP), highlighted the state of the foreign ministry during parliamentary debate this week.

Cakirozer accused the Erdogan government of appointing acolytes who appear more interested in self-promotion than diplomacy, including an ambassador who was appointed despite serious corruption claims against him; an ambassador who used his position to advertise a relative’s law firm; and an ambassador who lined his staff up and got them to salute him in order to share the video on social media.

He also referred to an ambassador who entered his embassy accompanied by the theme music from the popular “Valley of the Wolves” series. The long-running Turkish series depicts the fight by agents of the “deep state” against the country’s alleged enemies, including the U.S.

“Ambassadorial seats have turned into retirement projects for AKP deputies and Palace bureaucrats” said Cakirozer. “As a result of this we have lost significant ground in our relations with our traditional friends, allies and neighbors. Our reliability and neutrality has been compromised.”

Brushing off such criticism, Erdogan never misses a chance to reflect his antipathy for old guard diplomats, such as calling them “Mon Cher” (French for “My Dear”), based on a perception of them as cosmopolitan careerists.

Yet it is career diplomats who have traditionally been relied on to steer Turkey’s international ties in one of the most turbulent and dangerous regions of the world.

Turkey’s diplomacy used to also be based on the principles of remaining western oriented and not getting embroiled in the endless disputes of the Middle East. Foreign policy was also kept out of domestic politics to the extent possible in order not to jeopardize the greater interests of the Republic.

Former Ambassador Yusuf Buluc says such principles no longer apply. “The present regime has explicitly declared itself determined to transform the Republic into its Islamist mold,” he told Al-Monitor.

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Patronage Marginalizes Qualified Turkish Diplomats

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“Being a key component of a highly integrated civil service structure, the foreign ministry took a big hit from this political meddling,” Buluc said. “This has laid the groundwork in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs enabling nepotism, cronyism and sycophancy with a huge disregard for impartiality and expertise.”

Only 15 days after ushering in his one-man rule following the June 2018 elections, Erdogan decreed that any person who has served in any state institution for more than five years could join the foreign ministry. This applied not only to ambassadorial posts but to all posts in the ministry.

The independent press saw this as a shift from a system of meritocracy to one based on political loyalty. Under these conditions, more and more career diplomats are opting for early retirement.

Responding to a parliamentary question by Cakirozer, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu revealed recently that eight ambassadors had called for early retirement in 2021. He did not respond to the second part of the question, which concerned the number of ambassadors waiting in Ankara for a posting abroad.

Cakirozer maintains that there are around 50 such ambassadors who have not been appointed because positions are being reserved for former AKP deputies.

Retired Ambassador Selim Kuneralp pointed out that political appointees are common in many western countries. “Besides, not all the ambassadors appointed in this way are bad,” he said, citing the current ambassadors in the Vatican and Luxembourg. “What is new and detrimental are the appointments from other ministries or organs of government to internal foreign ministry positions.”

Katarina Terzyan Appointed Executive Secretary of SAS

LOS ANGELES — The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) is pleased to announce that Katarina Terzyan has been appointed as the Executive Secretary of the SAS. The appointment comes at a time when SAS has dramatically expanded its activities in the United States, Armenia, and Artsakh. Since 2018, SAS membership has doubled, and its projects have multiplied in all dimensions in the field of Armenian Studies, from its prestigious journal the Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies (JSAS) to its Podcast Series and from its cooperation with chairs and directors in the U.S. to its joint projects with academic institutions in Artsakh and Armenia.

Terzyan will be responsible for managing the day-to-day activities that include membership outreach, the SAS website, mailing list, SAS publicity, SAS relations with affiliated institutions/organizations, SAS Zoom lectures and meetings, annual EC elections, and report to the president.

Terzyan works as an elections assistant with the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk, where she assists in completing special projects geared towards preparing for upcoming Los Angeles County wide elections. Before this Terzyan served as a program specialist with CivilNet, a non-profit news organization based in Armenia. She holds a BA in international relations from the University of Southern California.



Katarina Terzyan

Kuneralp believes that the general decline in the foreign ministry actually started in 1998, when the rules for entering were changed, resulting in personnel with insufficient language skills. “Later, under the AKP, the rules were changed again. Existing exams, which included interviews and sought competence for example in composition writing, were replaced by simple multiple choice tests” Kuneralp said.

Former Ambassador Ahmet Uzumcu said the system of performance records had been abolished in the foreign ministry, leaving no basis for evaluating the competence of candidates.

“I was the head of Human Resources for three years in the 1990s. The candidates to senior positions we presented to the minister were then selected as a result of meticulous examination of performance records and consultations within a special committee,” Uzumcu told Al-Monitor.

He pointed out that the number of political appointees as ambassadors “has increased to historic levels” under the present government.

In the past, the foreign ministry would prepare different options for the consid-

eration of the political authority, but now “the President reacts to international developments before the MFA presents its recommendations,” Uzumcu said. The only consolation for the MFA’s senior diplomats, he said, is that “the current state of Turkey’s relations with foreign countries and its standing in international forums is not of their making.”

(This column originally appeared on the site Al-Monitor on December 3. See <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/12/patronage-marginalizes-qualified-turkish-diplomats#ixzz7EOaAWZ2t>)



Once again, it has been a challenging year. The Mirror-Spectator has covered the crises in Artsakh, Armenia and Lebanon, supported efforts at humanitarian fundraising, and secured new young correspondents in Armenia, Artsakh and the US. We continue to provide periodic video reports online.

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is the first English-language Armenian weekly published in the US, and for nearly 90 years it has served the community. Readers learn of the most important developments in Armenia, as well as international politics, art and culture throughout the world in a convenient and concise format.

We continue with our annual tradition of publishing your Christmas and New Year’s wishes and greetings to relatives and friends in the final issue of the year. If you wish to give gift subscriptions of the Mirror-Spectator for Christmas, for your convenience, we are placing a gift subscription form in the newspaper as well as one below.

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