

Karabakh Leadership Rejects Pashinyan’s ‘Pro-Azeri’ Statement

STEPANAKERT (RFE/RL) — Nakhorno-Karabakh’s leadership has openly criticized Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for making statements which his political opponents say play into Azerbaijan’s hands.

In televised remarks aired late on Friday, December 31, Pashinyan again blamed Armenia former leaders for last year war over Karabakh won by Azerbaijan. He said it was the result of their mishandling of protracted peace talks with Baku.

He reiterated his criticism of peace plans drawn up by the US, Russian and French mediators since 2016. He claimed that they envisaged the eventual restoration of Azerbaijani control over Karabakh.

Pashinyan further declared that “Artsakh (Karabakh) could not have ended up being completely Armenian. It was obvious during those negotiations that Artsakh is going to have both Armenian and Azerbaijani populations,” he said.

Opposition politicians in Armenia were quick to denounce the remarks. They claimed that Pashinyan is not only trying to dodge responsibility for the disastrous war but also preparing the ground for Karabakh’s return under Azerbaijani rule.

Ara Harutyunyan, the Karabakh president, also took issue with the remarks in rare public criticism of Pashinyan.

“The people and authorities of Artsakh will never accept any status [of autonomy] within Azerbaijan,” Harutyunyan wrote on Facebook on Sunday. “There can be no return to the past in terms of not only status but also demography.”

He stressed that only the authorities in Stepanakert can speak for the territory’s predominantly Armenian population.

The Karabakh parliament expressed outrage at Pashinyan’s statements in a statement unanimously adopted on Monday. It accused the Armenian premier of “distorting the essence” of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and calling into question the

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Berj Najarian Launches Organization Dedicated to Preserving Cultural Identity through My Cause My Cleats

By Angelique Fiske

BOSTON (patriots.com) — Last year, Berj Najarian took a step out of his comfort zone and into the spotlight “to raise awareness for Armenians under attack.” The support Najarian received was swift and passionate. The winning bid for his sneakers last year was the highest since the NFL established the My Cause My Cleats campaign.

This set the groundwork for Najarian to take his activism a step further. Najarian announced the launching of Who We Are, an organization that will support those who are committed to preserving, creating, learning, and sharing cultural identity.

While for Najarian that cultural identity is Armenian, Who We Are is a multi-cultural initiative that will celebrate people’s uniqueness and similarities.

“Culture is a lot of things. It’s values, language, art, music, sports, architecture, food, traditions, and customs. It is science and innovation. So it could be different things to different people,” Najarian said. “Our aim is to support organizations and individuals committed to preserving, understanding cultures, theirs or others’. That’s where we feel the connection and unity will come from in our communities.”

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Remembering Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian

The Central Board of Directors of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA) is deeply saddened to report the loss of its longtime member and former president, Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian, who passed away on December 26 in Montreal, leaving his family, all TCA members, and the Armenians of Canada in mourning. (See full obituary and related story on pages 8-9.)

The legacy of the deceased as a pioneering doctor, free-thinking editor, cultural figure and devotee and leader of the Armenian Apostolic Church is great and irreplaceable.

He was a devoted father and husband to his Armenian family, with three talented children (Zaven, Anahid and Yervant) who grew up and made their family and the Armenian community proud.

In addition to his medical career - where he earned a reputation as a lead-



ing scientist - his contribution to the Armenian community in Canada, especially during the years of the formation of the Armenian Diocese of Canada, is considerable.

As a member of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, he held senior positions and authored numerous bylaws-related legal documents.

For nearly half a century, he supported the editorial board of the Montreal-based *Abaka* newspaper, writing editorials in Armenian and English. His articles in *Abaka* under the penname of Masis are anthologized in a volume entitled *Nshmarner* which was published in 1988.

As a permanent member of the TCA Central Board, he dedicated himself to the development of its programs and

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Iran to Open Consulate in Strategic Armenian Region



Kapan, in Syunik province

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Iran announced on December 29 that it will open a consulate in Kapan, the administrative center of Armenia southeastern Syunik province bordering the Islamic Republic.

The Iranian Embassy in Yerevan said on its Twitter page that the Iranian government approved a relevant proposal made by the Foreign Ministry in Tehran. It gave no reasons for the decision.

The embassy posted several photographs of Syunik’s historic monuments and other landmarks.

Reacting to the development, an Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesman told the Armenpress news agency that Yerevan is planning to open a consulate in an unspecified Iranian city. He did not comment further.

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GYUMRI

Vocational Training Program Launched in Gyumri as Part of Anti-Poverty Program



USA/ARMENIA

AAHPO ‘Light of Love’ Holiday Candles Raise Funds for Artsakh Physicians



WASHINGTON

Exchange Students Experience Life in the US





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Tobacco Products Will Not Be Displayed Anymore

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A law banning retailers and restaurants from publicly displaying cigarettes and other tobacco products (including e-cigarettes) to the general public went into effect January 1.

Ruling Civil Contract party lawmaker and former Minister of Healthcare Arsen Torosyan said in a statement that this law passed parliament back in early 2020 in a move aimed at preventing and reducing the health hazards from smoking.

“The full implementation of these regulations will gradually, significantly reduce tobacco use in our country, which will significantly improve our population’s health and economic development,” Torosyan said, warning businesses to strictly adhere to the law and calling on inspection agencies to supervise.

“There can’t be a strong economy without a healthy society,” Torosyan said, reminding that a smoking ban in restaurants and other public food facilities (both indoor and outdoor) will enter force from March 15.

Armenian Ambassador Delivers Lecture for Students of US Naval War College

WASHINGTON (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenia’s Ambassador to the US Lilit Makunts delivered a lecture for the students of the U.S. Naval War college on January 4.

She outlined the priorities of the Armenian foreign policy, highlighting the Nagorno Karabakh issue, security environment and regional developments.

The lecture was followed by a question-and-answer session.

Armenia’s Emin Ohanyan Wins European Youth Rapid Chess Championship

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The 2021 European Youth Rapid&Blitz Chess Championships took place in Novi Sad, Serbia, December 27-29.

Armenia’s Emin Ohanyan became a European Rapid Champion in the U16 category with 7.5/9 points, the Chess Federation of Armenia reported.

More than 450 children from 29 European federations participated in the event.

Turkey’s Pegasus seeks Armenia’s permission for Istanbul-Yerevan flights

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Turkish carrier Pegasus has submitted an application to the Civil Aviation Committee of Armenia for launching Istanbul-Yerevan flights, Sona Harutyunyan, press secretary of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures, said, according to Sputnik Armenia, on January 4.

Authorities Block Inauguration Of Opposition Mayor

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Police cordoned off the municipal administration building in Vardenis on Tuesday, January 4, to prevent a local opposition figure from taking over as mayor of the eastern Armenian town and nearby villages.

The mostly rural community has been in turmoil since the December 5 election of a local council empowered to appoint its mayor. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan Civil Contract party garnered most votes but fell short of an overall majority in the 27-member council, winning only 13 seats there.

The remaining 14 seats were won by two local opposition blocs. They reached a power-sharing deal and nominated one of their leaders, Aharon Khachatryan, for the post of community head.

The 14 opposition members of the new Vardenis council elected Khachatryan as mayor during its inaugural session held on December 30. Civil Contract members led by Aram Melkonyan, Vardenis’s incumbent mayor seeking reelection, tried to disrupt the session before walking out in protest.

Melkonyan went on to ask Armenia’s Administrative Court to annul the appointment of the new mayor, saying it was “illegal.” The opposition forces dismissed the allegation and scheduled Khachatryan’s inauguration for Monday.

Scores of police officers deployed at the entrance to the local government building did not allow the council majority to enter it to hold the swearing-in ceremony. Local police chiefs told the oppositionists that Khachatryan cannot start performing his duties because of the lawsuit filed by the ruling party.

The ban angered Khachatryan’s supporters who gathered outside the building. “One gets the impression that the Civil Contract party has started a civil war against residents of Vardenis,” said one of them.

A lawyer representing Khachatryan insisted that council members are legally allowed to enter the building regardless of the court case. “The police are overstepping their powers,” he said.

Khachatryan had to take an oath of office in the building’s courtyard. His loyalists admitted that he would not be able to take office before a court verdict.

Meanwhile, Melkonyan said that the police acted on his orders. “I personally made sure that this buffoonery does not take place,” the incumbent mayor told reporters.

Melkonyan said the two opposition forces must not be allowed to run the community comprising Vardenis and two dozen villages because they “deceived” voters. He did not elaborate.

On Monday, the ruling party’s candidate called on all newly elected council mem-

bers to resign and pave the way for a repeat election.

“The council held a session and elected a community head. What should we annul after that?” countered Davit Shahnazaryan of the United Vardenis bloc allied to Khachatryan’s alliance.

United Vardenis’s leader was arrested on corruption charges shortly after the power-sharing deal cut by the two groups. Opposition politicians and human rights campaigners in Yerevan condemned his arrest, saying that it is part of a government crackdown on political figures who defeated Pashinyan’s party in some of the three dozen communities across Armenia that elected their local councils on December 5.

Arman Tatoyan, the country’s human rights ombudsman, charged on December 17 that opposition groups that did well there are being illegally pressured not to install

their leaders or allies as community heads.

“These practices are fundamentally at odds with democratic norms,” said Tatoyan.

Pashinyan’s political allies maintain that neither these nor any other post-election criminal cases are politically motivated.

Pashinyan’s party suffered its biggest election setback in Vanadzor, Armenia’s third largest city. It won only 25 percent of the vote there, compared with 39 percent polled by a local bloc led by former Vanadzor Mayor Mamikon Aslanyan.

Aslanyan was thus well-placed to regain his post lost in October. But he was arrested on December 15 on corruption charges rejected by him as politically motivated.

The Administrative Court blocked the first session of the new Vanadzor council slated for December 24. It cited an appeal against the local election results lodged by another party that fared poorly in the ballot.

More Armenian Government Officials Get Hefty Bonuses

By Astghik Bedevian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — In a move strongly criticized by Armenia leading anti-corruption watchdog, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has allocated hefty holiday bonuses to his two members and all members of his staff.

In a statement, Pashinyan’s press office said each of those 479 officials has received bonuses equivalent to their monthly salary. The payout cost taxpayers 97.5 million drams (\$ 203,000) in total, it said.

Several government ministers acknowledged that they and their subordinates too have received such yearend payments. But they refused to reveal any figures.

Parliament speaker Alen Simonyan rewarded all members and staffers of the National Assembly just as lavishly last week. Simonyan approved similar, albeit slightly more modest, bonuses on the occasion of Armenia Independence Day marked on September 21.

Both opposition alliances represented in the National Assembly noted that decision as profligate and unethical. Lawmakers representing them donated the money to victims of the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh and their families.

Pashinyan significantly increased the amount and frequency of bonuses paid to civil servants and especially high-ranking government officials after coming to power in 2018. Responding to criticism from opposition figures and other government

critics, he has said that these payments discourage corrupt practices in the government and the broader public sector.

The Armenian affiliate of the anti-graft watchdog Transparency International, has dismissed these explanations. Its program coordinator, Varuzhan Hochtanyan, this week denounced the lopsided bonuses as “political corruption” aimed at making sure that Pashinyan’s political allies and other senior officials remain loyal to the prime minister.

“The loyalty of doctors, teachers or kindergarten workers is probably not important,” Hochtanyan said, alluding to much more modest salaries and bonuses received by these and other public sector employees.

Most of them are paid less than Armenia’s official average wage of 200,000 drams (\$ 417) a month. Government ministers and deputy ministers earn 1.5 million and 1 million drams respectively.

Pashinyan caused uproar in 2019 when it emerged that he secretly doubled these officials’ monthly incomes.

Hochtanyan argued that the latest holiday bonuses paid by Pashinyan are also not performance-based.

“If the people’s living standards improve and pensions are raised... significantly, then [the senior officials] are doing a good job and let them get [those bonuses,]” he said. “But I do not see that. So what’s the difference from the past when they stole from the state budget? Now they have simply legalized that theft.”

Karabakh Leadership Rejects Pashinyan’s ‘Pro-Azeri’ Statement

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very “existence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.”

The statement also insisted that peace proposals made by the US, Russian and French co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group in recent years upheld the Karabakh Armenians’ right to self-determination.

Pashinyan rejected the unprecedented criticism in two lengthy Facebook posts.

Pashinyan began criticizing the mediators’ peace plans shortly after the six-week war stopped by Russia in November 2020. 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.

Pashinyan and his political allies made more such claims in the following months. In particular, parliament speaker Alen Simonian last month described as pro-Azerbaijani a peace accord that was drafted by the mediators and reportedly promoted by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in 2016.

A Russian Foreign Ministry official hit back at Simonian early this month. The of-

ficial argued that the proposed deal stipulated that Karabakh’s internationally recognized status would be determined through a future referendum and envisaged firm security guarantees for its population.

“Once again compare those proposals of the co-chairs with the current situation and draw conclusions,” the official added, alluding to sweeping Armenian territorial losses suffered as a result of the war.

The assessments of the last press conference of the Prime Minister of Armenia are very dangerous. Ombudsmen of the Republic of Armenia



ARMENIA

New Vocational Training Program Launched In Gyumri as Part of Anti-Poverty Program

GYUMRI, Armenia — Dr. Gary and Linda Assarian have a mission to empower people and get them to work. With their support, the Hianali Beauty Center was launched last month both as a high-end, high-quality beauty center and as a training program free-of-charge for people wishing to work in the beauty services sector in Gyumri.

“Our hope is that by providing people in Gyumri with a real skill and employment opportunity, they will work hard to raise

services available. All proceeds from paying customers will be used to support the vocational training services provided. The training programs currently have 44 students enrolled in three specific courses in cosmetology. This social enterprise is part of the Assarian Vocational Training Program at Debi Arach.

The social and economic impact of the Hianali Beauty Center of the next five years will be significant. The training program at the center includes skill development in men’s, women’s and children’s haircuts, styling and dyeing, manicure and pedicures and facials and make up application. Armed with these skills and by continuously providing training opportunities for new students, it is expected that the economic impact of the center in Gyumri will be at least \$350,000 over five years.

“Our goal is to hire the best of our students to work at the center,” said Peter Abajian, executive director of the Paros Foundation. “By both training and providing employment op-

portunities to these young people, we are slowly chipping away at the level of generational poverty in Gyumri.”

Launched in 2017, The Dr. Gary and Linda Assarian Vocational Training Program at the Debi Arach Children’s Center (a project of The Paros Foundation) has created employment opportunities for Gyumri’s impoverished community in both high-tech and low-tech skill areas.



Dr. & Mrs. Gary and Linda Assarian

themselves from poverty,” said Dr. Gary Assarian. “I am looking forward to the success of the Hianali Beauty Center and its program as we have seen with the other programs we have supported in Gyumri thus far.”

The Hianali Beauty Center is already building a stable of steady paying customers who are pleased with the pleasant environment of the center and the quality of



Forty four students receive free-of-charge training at Hianali Beauty Center.

Jailed Former Defense Minister Warns of ‘Surprise’ Revelations

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Davit Tonoyan, a former defense minister arrested three months ago, pledged on January 3 to shed more light on the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh as he continued to strongly deny corruption charges leveled against him.

Tonoyan warned that he must not be made a scapegoat for Armenia’s defeat in the six-week war.

“A visible desire to find the scapegoat is hovering, so to speak, in the political scene, but I think that there will be surprises in this regard,” he said in written comments to the press circulated by his lawyers. “One thing is clear: we are witnessing a fanatical desire to discredit me and the defense system.”

Tonoyan, two generals and an arms dealer were arrested by the National Security Service (NSS) in September in a criminal investigation into supplies of allegedly outdated rockets to Armenia armed forces. The NSS charged them with fraud and embezzlement that cost the state almost 2.3 billion drams (\$ 4.7 million). All four suspects deny any wrongdoing.

The NSS said in September that a private intermediary delivered the rockets to Armenia in 2011 and that the Defense Ministry refused to buy them after discovering that they are unusable.

Seyran Ohanian, Armenia’s defense minister from 2008 to 2016, confirmed afterwards that 70 percent of them were not accepted by the military during his tenure. The rebuff forced the supplier to

store the rockets at a Defense Ministry arms depot, he said.

Tonoyan insisted on Monday that the ammunition did not go past its expiration



Davit Tonoyan

and was successfully used during the Karabakh war. He complained that the NSS cancelled a planned test-firing of those rockets during the probe described by him as “not objective.”

One of Tonoyan’s lawyers, Sergey Hovannisyan, also slammed the NSS investigators for not carrying out the forensic tests. He said they would have proved that the rockets are usable and the investigators would have had “no choice but to close the criminal case.”

The NSS declined to comment on that. In an October 11 statement, Tonoyan’s

legal team noted that he possesses “a great deal of information” about defense issues but is not publicizing it to disprove the accusations because he places Armenia’s national security above his personal interests.

Asked whether he thus sent a warning to Armenia’s political leadership, the former minister said: “Up until now I have maintained restraint in terms of getting involved in political processes. ... There will still be occasions to present to the public my clarifications about the 44-day war through an investigative commission to be formed [by the Armenian parliament,] provided that it works objectively and impartially.”

“As I said in my November 20 statement, I am ready to bear my share of responsibility. But only for what I did, and not for what I did not do.”

Tonoyan stopped short of openly accusing Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of ordering the criminal proceedings against him. He blamed instead other, unnamed officials for what he considers baseless charges.

Pashinyan appointed Tonoyan as defense minister just days after coming to power in May 2018. The latter was sacked in November 2020 less than two weeks after a Russian-brokered agreement stopped the devastating war.

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

Iran to Open Consulate In Strategic Armenian Region

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Sandwiched between Azerbaijan and its Nakhichevan exclave, Syunik connects the rest of Armenia to Iran through mountainous roads used not only for Armenian-Iranian trade but also cargo shipments to and from other parts of the world.

Armenia lost control over one of those roads after a controversial troop withdrawal ordered by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan following last year war over Nagorno-Karabakh. In September this year, Azerbaijan set up checkpoints there to tax Iranian trucks and other vehicles. The move triggered unprecedented tensions between Tehran and Baku.

An influential Iranian cleric accused Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in October of trying to “cut Iran access to Armenia” with Turkey help. More than 160 members of the Iranian parliament likewise issued a joint statement warning against “any geopolitical change and alteration of the borders of neighboring countries.”

Visiting Yerevan last week, a conservative Iranian lawmaker, Mahmoud Ahmadi-Bighash, reportedly warned that Tehran is strongly opposed to any redrawing of borders in the South Caucasus. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made similar statements this fall.

Aliyev has repeatedly threatened to forcibly open a “corridor” to Nakhichevan, drawing strong condemnation from Armenia.

Yerevan says that Azerbaijani troops advanced a few kilometers into Syunik in May and November. The Azerbaijani side denies crossing the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.



INTERNATIONAL

A Home Away from Home in Yerevan For Rural Students

By Joseph Dagdigian

YEREVAN — Students from Armenia's and Artsakh's villages hoping to attend one of the many universities in Yerevan face a number of obstacles, most importantly the challenge of affordable housing. Other difficulties include problems resulting from the poor conditions within many village schools where a lack of resources may result in inadequate preparation in some subjects. Unfamiliarity with life in a large urban environment may be another issue. Families of students from remote villages who cannot afford to support a student's in-



Student Home sign on Malyan Street, Yerevan

dependent living expenses in Yerevan may consider leaving their village and moving to Yerevan for the sake of their children's education. But abandoning Armenia's villages, and especially Armenia's border villages, poses serious problems for Armenia. Villages must be strengthened, not emptied of families. Despite cases of underfunded and understaffed village schools, however, many students from such villages excel due to their strong work ethics, and sheer determination to succeed.

Student Home, operating under the auspices of Armenia's Strong Minds NGO, was established in 2021 by businessman Mher Mkrtchyan, business leader and educator Tsovinar Sargsyan and scientist Paytsar Muradyan, together with others. Student Home's mission is to provide a supportive, affordable home for students from Armenia's and Artsakh's remote villages who are attending universities in Yerevan. Cost to students is approximately one quarter (25 percent) of the cost of university housing. Additionally, Student Home provides a welcoming and supportive environment for young Armenians unaccustomed to a big city environment. Informal educational lectures on topics of interest are organized

and tutorials are offered for students who may need additional instruction in subjects such as English or Russian language, or computer skills. When feasible, scholarships may be offered to some of the neediest students. Just as important as the above, a community of determined young men and women from villages across Armenia and Artsakh is established. Though students are from different villages and are focusing on different majors at different universities, a common bond of community is established within a nurturing environment.

Student Home is located on 20 David Malyan St., Yerevan in a vacant factory building. As the building was unused, Strong Minds negotiated a low-cost 10-year lease on a portion of the building which they renovated with funds from Armenian and Diaspora donors. Much of the work was done by volunteers. Though construction work is not quite complete, there are currently about 30-35 resident students there (fall semester - 2021) with a goal of housing 45-50 students. There is the possibility of purchasing the facilities sometime in the future. Student Home includes a large kitchen area, a meet-



Kitchen at Student Home

among the student residents. In the entrance way there is a large, nearly completed painting of a map of Armenia and Artsakh. Each student will have his or her village marked on the map. During evening hours, a security guard will be posted at the Student Home and the entrance will be monitored with a

Yerevan.

•Dianna Grigoryan from Vanadzor in Lori province: Dianna is studying IT at the National Polytechnic University of Armenia (Polytechnic Institute), hoping to pursue a career in data science and cyber security. She wants to use these skills to develop her country. For the Diaspora, she says "Follow your dreams and help your country, it's our home."

•S. Torosyan from Martuni: He is studying at the Pedagogical University. He notes that his is a new village, established in 1921 by refugees from Western Armenia. He wants to return to his village and enhance youth activities there. He indicated "Student Home is like a large family."

•Ruzanna Vartanyan from Artabuynk, Vayots Dzor province: Ruzanna is studying architecture and construction techniques at Yerevan State University.

•Nareg Baghdasaryan from Karmir Gyugh in Gegharkunik province: Nareg is at the Polytechnic Institute majoring in engineering and computer science. He complains that the youth do not have enough after school activities and many leave their village.

•Mariam Alexanyan from Arevashat village: Mariam is a student at the Armenian Economic University. She says "My village is a beautiful village and I cannot foresee living outside my village. Student Home has given me an opportunity to help my village." She intends on returning and organizing the youth of her village to address village issues.

•S. Muradyan from Horatagh village in northern Artsakh. He is a second year mathematics student at the Armenian – Russian university. Though his village is in a very suitable area near the North-South highway, he is dismayed that many villagers work outside his village. Regarding Student Home, he says "I feel very comfortable here."

•Samonik from Sanahin in Lori: Samonik is enrolled at the Armenian Pedagogical University learning how to help deaf children. She wants to help children overcome their difficulties. Her village, like most, depends on farming and raising animals but also has a cottage industry selling handicrafts to people visiting the Sanahin Monastery.

•Nikolai Aghahjanyan from Gegharkunik province: Nikolai is law student studying at the French university. He was always interested in law. He says the Diaspora can help Armenia even if they are unable to come to Armenia.

Information about Student Home is available from their go-fund-me site at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/st546-student-home>.



Students at the home

ing room for socializing or lectures, new bathrooms and a laundry. During an initial visit to their library, the library was about 20 percent populated with donated books. Each subsequent visit evidenced more and more books. Now sufficient books have been collected for some to be donated to village libraries, village schools, or community centers. Rooms are neat and modern with usually two students per room. The environment is cordial, attractively furnished and decorated, with a sense of community

video camera.

Admission criteria are that students must be from remote villages, and must demonstrate a commitment to contribute to their village's development. Students attend a number of Yerevan's universities including Yerevan State University, the State Engineering University (Polytechnic), the French University, the Russian University and the Pedagogical University, with a number of majors including law, mathematics, architecture, international relations, science, psychology, philosophy, languages, and education.

Interviews with some of the students provided insight into students' feelings for and commitments to their villages, and how they believe they may help. They also addressed some of their thoughts to the diaspora. The following are some excerpts from interviews with these young Armenian men and women:

•Dianna Askaryan from a border village in the Askaran region of Artsakh: She is majoring in international relations at Yerevan State University. She is sure she will be able to bring benefits to her country. "Armenia and Artsakh – one country, inseparable." Her village has security issues which they need to deal with. She intends to establish youth activities upon her return, first in her village, then in neighboring villages. She said that without Student Home it would be difficult to rent an apartment in



Students at the library



INTERNATIONAL

Armenia Lifts Ban On Imports From Turkey

By Sargis Harutyunyan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The Armenian government has lifted a ban on imports of manufactured goods from Turkey which it initiated during the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The ban came into force on December 31, 2020 and was extended by six months in June. Yerevan described it as retaliation for Ankara’s “inflammatory calls,” arms supplies to Azerbaijan and “deployment of terrorist mercenaries to the conflict zone.”

The Armenian Ministry of Economy told RFE / RL’s Armenian Service on December 13 that it will likely recommend another six-month extension to the government. However, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s cabinet has adopted no such decisions since then. The cabinet held its last session of the year on December 30.

In a statement issued later in the day, the Ministry of Economy confirmed that the embargo will no longer be in force starting from January 1. The ministry said this is the

result of “interagency discussions” held in recent weeks.

Economy Minister Vahan Kerobyan hinted at the impending lifting of the ban when he spoke with journalists on January 4. “Political motives will be the overriding ones,” he said.

Armenia and Turkey are due to start soon talks on normalizing bilateral relations. The governments of the two neighboring states appointed special envoys for that purpose earlier this month.

In recent months, Turkish leaders have made statements making the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations conditional on Armenia agreeing to open a land corridor that would connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave. They have also cited Baku’s demands for a formal Armenian recognition of Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh.

Citing these statements, Armenian opposition leaders have accused Pashinyan of being ready to make unilateral concessions to Ankara and Baku. The Armenian Foreign

Ministry has insisted that Yerevan continues to stand for “normalizing relations with Turkey without preconditions.”

Turkey has refused to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia and kept the border between the two states closed since the early 1990s out of solidarity with Azerbaijan. It has also banned all imports from Armenia.

Armenia imported (mostly via Georgia) \$ 267 million worth of Turkish-manufactured products in 2019. According to the Ministry of Economy, Turkish imports fell to just \$ 20 million in the first nine months of 2021.

The ministry statement said the ban, which does not cover raw materials, has had both positive and negative effects on the Armenian economy.

“The positive results include a number of newly established or expanded manufacturing businesses in the light industry, construction materials, furniture and agricultural sectors,” it said. “But the main negative consequence of the embargo is its substantial impact on inflation.”

Azerbaijan’s Pro-Government Media: Just Following Orders

BAKU (Eurasianet.org) — Every day, sometimes multiple times a day, editors at news outlets in Azerbaijan get identical WhatsApp messages, usually with a file attached labeled: “Recommendations.”

For example, on a recent day it was about Iran. Baku and Tehran were suffering through a period of heightened tensions, and Azerbaijan’s government was trying to thread a needle: stand up to what it saw as aggression from its much larger neighbor, without letting things escalate too far.

So Azerbaijan’s media got specific instructions.

A screenshot of a message “recommending” how journalists cover the meeting with Iran’s president.

“Based on President Ilham Aliyev’s speech on Iran, it is requested to expand the campaign on Iran-Armenia relations, drug trafficking, and looting of the occupied territories [in and around Nagorno-Karabakh] by these two countries,” went one October 15 message, hours after Aliyev had spoken at a video summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

A few hours later, media agencies got another message. This time they were asked to be careful with their wording: no expressions that insult the “honor and dignity” of Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. There should be no mention of “South Azerbaijan,” as Azerbaijani nationalists refer to the northern provinces of Iran, populated heavily by ethnic Azerbaijanis. Media should use “hard logic and facts” to make the case that “instead of making false accusations against Azerbaijan, Iran should apologize.”

Azerbaijan’s media got to work immediately, airing all sorts of never-before-voiced accusations against Tehran.

The news agency APA published a lengthy piece detailing Iranian companies’ involvement in Karabakh. The Trend News Agency followed up with an interview with member of parliament Javid Gasimov in which he alleged that Iran had been sowing “drug plantations” for 30 years there. Another state-affiliated media outlet, Axar, quoted an analyst who claimed that Iran had used Karabakh not only for drug trafficking but for money laundering.

None mentioned Khamenei specifically, or “South Azerbaijan.”

These sorts of messages from above arrive regularly, instructing Azerbaijan’s

media every day on what to cover, and how. Eurasianet obtained a cache of the messages, which provide unique insight into how the state’s tight control over the media works.

It’s not clear where the messages originate; the versions Eurasianet obtained had been forwarded from the original source. But journalists familiar with the instructions told Eurasianet, on condition of anonymity, that they believed they came from the office of the president.

On September 20, a week before the one-year anniversary of the start of the war with Armenia, “we ask you to produce materials and start public discussions with a tempo increasing every day,” the message read. “The keywords are ‘Victorious Azerbaijani people’ and ‘Triumphant Supreme Commander-in-Chief.’”

Then, as the one-year anniversary of Azerbaijan’s victory approached, the tone was again to gradually change: “From November 1 to November 7, the policy is to significantly reduce the sad content (crying and so on) and to reorient toward Victory Day.”

On August 26, media were requested to exhaustively cover the birthday of first lady and first vice president Mehriban Aliyeva, “but without the effect being artificial,” it clarified.

On October 16, following a controversial rise in household utility prices, journalists were given the names and phone numbers of government energy officials to interview.

Often the instructions are on what not to cover. When Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was visiting Azerbaijan with Aliyev, he made a joke about the fact that Jahangir Asgarov, the president of Azerbaijan’s flagship airline AZAL who was accompanying the two leaders, did not have a moustache. The exchange was captured on video but shortly after, media got a message: “Please do not broadcast the mustache joke [...] that part of the video can be presented on social media by making that section inaudible.”

When Aliyev was interviewed by Italian newspaper La Repubblica, he was asked about an investigative report, known as the Pandora Papers, that detailed his family members’ and associates’ vast real estate holdings in London. Aliyev parried the question, and the transcript was accurately recorded on his website. But the media

were requested to ignore it: “Hello, please do not highlight the part about the ‘Pandora papers’ in President Ilham Aliyev’s interview with the Italian newspaper La Repubblica in headlines and stories.”

Azerbaijan is far from the only country whose government tries to steer media coverage. In Georgia, government representatives are known to have cozy relationships with heads of friendly media, speaking to them regularly by phone and communicating on Facebook messenger groups. In Armenia’s pre-revolution days, the president’s office also spoke regularly with affiliated media to discuss coverage; the current government doesn’t have as many ties with the press, but it too has been steadily increasing control over media since taking over in 2018.

The difference in Azerbaijan is the formalization of the process, and the fact that there are very few outlets that aren’t subject to the instructions.

Until the 2000s, media was relatively diverse in Azerbaijan, expressing a wide variety of perspectives, said Khaled Aghaly, a lawyer specializing in Azerbaijani media law. But the government has over the years steadily cracked down on independent media, while building up a network of friendly media outlets.

“The result of this policy is that the government is now able to control broadcasting and other media outlets that are most influential in influencing public opinion in Azerbaijan,” Aghaly told Eurasianet. “Unfortunately, [government] media policy in Azerbaijan is to spread content that praises the government, praises what it does, and promotes it to the public.”

Occasionally, the wires get crossed.

A message sent out on October 7 was related to a proposal to switch around the country’s national holidays. The new calendar would mark May 28 as Independence Day and October 18 as Restoration of Independence Day.

The proposal was a controversial one, as it involved sensitive political reinterpretations of the country’s history. May 28 had been marked as Republic Day; it was the anniversary of the founding of the first Azerbaijan Republic in 1918. October 18 had previously been Independence Day; it was the anniversary of the declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Turkish Government Seeks To Strip 28 Opposition MPs Of Parliamentary Immunity

ISTANBUL (Hurriyet) — The presidency has submitted summary proceedings seeking to lift legislative immunity for 28 opposition members of parliament, including 25 deputies of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), among whom is Garo Paylan.

Turkey’s parliament has received 40 files of summary proceedings on January 3. The Joint Constitution and Justice Committee of the parliament will examine them.

The proceedings include HDP co-chair Pervin Buldan, Workers’ Party of Turkey (TİP) Deputy Barış Atay Mengülluğlu, main opposition Republican Peoples’ Party (CHP) lawmaker Sezgin Tanrıkulu, Democratic Regions Party (DBP) co-chair Salihe Aydeniz and independent Muş MP Mensur Işık.

Blinken, Cavusoglu Discuss Process of Armenian-Turkish Normalization

WASHINGTON (Public Radio of Armenia) — US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken discussed the process of normalization of relations with Armenia with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu on January 4. “Secretary Blinken and Foreign Minister Cavusoglu discussed issues related to the Horn of Africa, Turkey’s appointment of a Special Envoy to discuss the process of normalization with Armenia, and opportunities to deepen cooperation bilaterally and as NATO Allies to address areas of mutual concern,” the Department of State said.

Georgia Refuses to Attend Next 3+3 Caucasus Platform Meeting

TBILISI (PanArmenian.net) — Georgia will not participate in the next 3+3 Caucasus platform meeting to be held in Turkey, the country’s Ambassador to Turkey George Janjgava said on January 3, according to the report by Georgia’s First Channel. Turkey’s Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, on the sidelines of the recent Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) meeting in Islamabad, earlier had said that Turkey hopes Georgia would also attend the upcoming meeting.

Janjgava underlined that Georgia sees both Turkey and Azerbaijan as “strategic partners” and views Armenia as a “historical and good neighbor, but Russia is a country which is occupying 20 percent of Georgian territory.” Russia last month hosted the inaugural meeting of the regional platform. However, Tbilisi refused to attend due to Russian aggression towards Georgia. The 3+3 regional consultative mechanism was proposed by the presidents of Turkey and Azerbaijan, comprising Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia plus Iran, Russia and Turkey. Georgia earlier rejected the idea and refused from participation. Official Yerevan stated that the proposed regional format can not replicate the existing ones and that issues of the Nagorno Karabakh settlement as well as demarcation and delimitation between Armenia and Azerbaijan cannot be discussed within the new format.



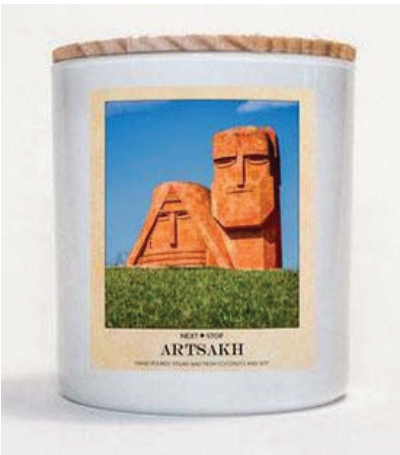
Community News

AAHPO ‘Light Of Love’ Holiday Candles Raise Funds for Artsakh Physicians

By Stephan S. Nigohosian

In keeping with its longstanding mission of improving the healthcare of Armenians in the homeland, the Armenian American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO) is spreading light this holiday season with the sale of two limited-edition, premium Armenia and Artsakh-themed candles to raise funds for teaching state of the art medical skills to physicians serving the villages and rural areas of Artsakh.

Net proceeds from sales of “The Light of Love” campaign candles will be donated directly to AAHPO and earmarked for the organization’s Continuing Medical Education (CME) program. “This campaign provides a simple and thoughtful way for Armenians in the diaspora to support healthcare professionals in Artsakh who provide medical care to our brethren in the region,” said AAHPO



The Artsakh candle

President Lawrence V. Najarian, MD. “You can give the candle as a unique gift year-round to friends and family, while simultaneously providing much-needed medical care to Armenians through doctors in Artsakh.”

Created by Next Stop Candles, each limited-edition candle is infused with a unique fragrance crafted to embody the iconic global destination of its namesake city. The Artsakh candle is scented with sandalwood and features a photo of the iconic Tatik-Papik monument. The Yerevan candle features the aroma of freshly-sliced pomegranate, with an image of the city with historic Mount Ararat beckoning on the horizon.

Each candle may be sent as a gift for any occasion and is shipped to the recipient in an attractive box with a handwritten gift note filled out online at checkout. Orders will continue to be fulfilled into January 2022 - just in time for Armenian Christmas.

Next Stop candles are hand-poured in the US, with clean burning vegan wax from sustainably farmed coconuts and slow-burning soy for longer candle life (60 – 80 hour burn time). They are infused with luxury fragrances and feature a wood wick for a safer, more controlled burn than a see CANDLES, page 12



Exchange student Mariana

Exchange Students Experience Life in the US

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WASHINGTON — Esther-Marie Emslie of ASSE International Student Exchange Program is excited to proselytize about her organization.

The American Scandinavian Student Exchange (ASSE) was established in 1976 by the Swedish government but its roots go back to 1938 when the country’s Ministry of Education started a program with the goal of allowing Swedish and German high school students to spend a school year in another country.

Today, it has expanded around the world to 60 countries, from Australia to Italy and from Denmark to New Zealand. About 30,000 high school age students and host families participate annually around the world. The program also has 38 offices in 31 countries.

Students from the US go to 25 countries. The students, both the ones coming to the US and those going overseas, stay with host families for the entire school year.

This year there are two students from Armenia, Mariana and Anna, both of whom received a full tuition for the program. (Emslie asked that the girls’ last names not be used.)

Emslie is a volunteer with the organization. “There are representatives like me all across the US,” she said.

The biggest part of her job at ASSE is finding host families in the US.

The host families are not paid, instead they are recruited through word of mouth at cultural events, through social media and mailings. However, to make sure that they are as compatible as possible with someone who will be living in their house, they are asked detailed questions about their preferences. They get the final choice regarding the student’s age, hobbies, country of origin.

“By choosing the student you want, you are more invested,” Emslie said.

The students typically arrive from mid-August to Labor Day and stay through the academic year, with many returning in May and June.

The students need to be at least 15 and at most 18 when they arrive here and maintain at least a C average. In addition, they have to be able to speak English.

“It is a fantastic opportunity for the kids,” she said. And it is not like a vacation. “They are expected to do chores and help with dinner or take out the trash, just like the natural kids in families.”

Of course COVID wreaked havoc on the program last year, with the majority leaving around Easter 2020.

The great majority of students pay for their exchange program, which costs around \$8,000-\$10,000 a year, but a lucky few get scholarships from the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX), administered by the US State Department, including the two visitors from Armenia. In addition to the tuition payment, those with FLEX scholarships get a \$125-a-month stipend.

see STUDENTS, page 7

Azerbaijani Ambassador Speaks at Princeton

By Harry Kezelian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

PRINCETON, N.J. — On December 8, Princeton University in New Jersey hosted a talk by Azerbaijan’s ambassador to the United States, Khazar Ibrahim, through its “Institute for the Transregional Study of the Contemporary Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia” (TRI).

That one of the most prestigious universities in the country — and the world — gave the Azerbaijani government a platform to promulgate its ideas, did not go unnoticed by the Armenian-American public. Formal complaints were filed by Armenian community institutions, including a large number of Armenian-American student groups.

Nevertheless, the talk went on as scheduled. Entitled “The Caucasus Region at a Crossroads: The Challenges and Prospects for Peace and Cooperation,” the event took place on Zoom and was moderated by Prof. Bernard Haykel, director of the institute.

Haykel, an expert on contemporary Middle Eastern politics, has been interviewed by the media numerous times in regard to conflicts in the region; he is especially noted as one of the Western world’s foremost authorities on ISIS. Haykel opened the meeting by noting that although complaints and protests had been registered by Armenian community members, the talk was justified by the principle of free speech. He also noted that the institute plans to host speakers from a variety of viewpoints in the future, including the viewpoint of the Republic of Armenia.

The Speech

Ibrahim, appointed in July 2021, previously served as ambassador to Turkey and also its representative before NATO. He holds master’s degrees from Baku State University and Georgetown.

Ibrahim began his talk with subjective and vague statements about the Caucasus being a “Crossroads of East and West,” and the claim that Azerbaijan hosts “at least 15 quite large ethnic groups.” He continued with statements like “the three countries of the Caucasus were always living together” and that the challenge today is “mindset and issue of trust,” further stating that issues of “occupation” and “ethnic cleansing” having happened in the recent past were an obstacle to progress. In saying this, Ibrahim seemed to be employing a rhetorical tactic of characterizing Karabakh’s independence struggle as an “occupation” and other incidents (perhaps Khojaly) as “ethnic cleansing,” without actually naming the incidents he was referring to, making his statements almost impossible to rebut. It should be noted that the ambassador engaged in this kind of rhetoric throughout his talk.

see PRINCETON, page 13



Exchange Students Experience Life in the US

STUDENTS, from page 6

Getting accepted into FLEX is very hard, with only 2.5 percent of roughly 45,000 applicants a year winning a scholarship.

Said Mariana, “I’m so thankful to the FLEX program and my placement organization ASSE for organizing and placing me in this wonderful area. I’m living my best life here. I’ve already managed to experience a lot of new things and developed some new characteristics that will help me throughout my whole life. I’m doing my best to have a wonderful experience and fully enjoy this year.”

This academic year, about 500 students have come to the US, down from the pre-COVID numbers of 800 to 1,000.

Armenia has been participating in the program for several years; this year there are 11 students from the country in the US.

Emslie said that the experience was designed to give them a different experience. “They can gain insight into a different culture,” she added. “We hope they will leave with a better grasp of the language and an idea of the culture, politics and customs in the US.”

The group takes the students to different historic cities while they are here, including to New York and Philadelphia, and hosts cultural events for them. In addition, they visit the state capital of whatever state they happen to be in. They are expected to learn about the country’s political system and participated in holidays. In addition, they are to do three presentations about their own countries, presenting information

differently). This is all a coincidence and I’m very happy and feel so lucky to be with them. I can say that I have found my second family here. They treat me like a family member and I appreciate everything they do for me and every moment spent with them. I know I’m going to miss them the most when I go back home.”

Of course, some difficulties are to be expected. “Like everyone else I also had some difficulties making new friends in the beginning. But there are people that are nice to me at school and now, I already have some friends that I can hang out and have fun with,” Mariana said.

Another difference for her is that between the educational system, and it is one she is enjoying now. “I really like that here students have a chance to choose the subjects they want to study. I already got used to my everyday life here and enjoy every moment,” she added.

The other Armenian student is Anna, from Stepanavan, Lori, who is also 17 and a high school senior, like her friend Mariana.

“At first it was not strange at all. I had talked to my host family on internet for a long period of time and when I came I can say I thought I knew them well enough and of course there were weird moments but not as many as I expected. When the excitement ended the cultural shock started but I can say I didn’t notice that I was having culture shocks until I got adapted,” Anna said. “It’s very nice that there are people who are so kind that are ready to accept you



Mariana with her host family in the US



Anna and her host family

about the culture, food and history at pot-luck dinners. “They are teaching us about their culture and food,” she said.

There are many, she explained, who did not know Armenia existed.

Emslie works fulltime at Penguin Random House books in customer service for Southeast Asia.

“I love working with our kids. It is a fun job,” she said.

Mariana, 17, from Gyumri, is a senior at River Hill High School and living with an Iranian-Armenian family in Clarksville, Md.

She said, “This is my very first time in the US, but before I have traveled a lot and have been abroad. I have been to Germany, Georgia and Russia. But the US has always been my dream country and I have worked very hard to make it here. This is a long-awaited achievement for me.”

She added, “My adjustment period has gone very well. From the very first day I was in a really good relationship with my host parents. They are also Armenians and we have the same last name (Just spelled

as a family member and I really appreciate my host family. Now I think I have a second home in the world where I can always return to. Of course there can be problems and misunderstandings from time to time but I think that those things can be even in your natural family so it’s totally normal. They’re like a family to me and I hope that they can say the same about me.”

Life is certainly different in the US than in Armenia. “Everything is different and by saying this I mean EVERYTHING. The way people who are friends to each other

text, the topics they discuss, the way they hang out. I had some difficulties about making friends and I think it was because I had to step out of my comfort zone which wasn’t easy at all,” Anna said. “Now I am more aware of which level of knowing each other is considered being friends. It was funny because it’s like you’re friends with everyone but you are not really friends and it was the opposite back in Armenia - I was friends with a couple of people and knowing a lot of people didn’t mean they were my friends. I guess it’s just the difference between understanding the word ‘friend’ in two cultures and also how differently people build personal borders.”

Anna was also grateful to ASSE and FLEX which allowed her to come. “I love it. I can say that you must be a strong person to do an exchange year because besides the great experience, fun times and education it sometimes comes with a little bit of stress, homesickness and some hard times of adaptation. If I had to go back and choose I would surely choose applying again and again. I feel like in these 4 months I became such a strong and thankful person that when I look back I don’t even recognize Anna before this. Living with people who are just really different from me not only with cultural backgrounds but also with personalities helped me improve my communication skills which I am sure will help me during my whole life. To new generations I’d just advise to figure out why they want to do an exchange year, what expectations they have and talk to alumni and make sure this is what they want and they’re ready to come to a whole another continent without knowing anyone which now kind of seems scarier to me than it did before I came.”

To learn more about the organization or to participate as a student or host family, visit asse.com.



Anna from Stepanavan, Lori



OBITUARY

Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian

Physician, Intellectual and Armenian Leader

Haroutiun Arzoumanian was born on April 24, 1935 in Cairo to Yeghia and Srpouhi Arzoumanian, both of Everek ancestry, as the fourth of six children. He attended the Kalousdian Community School of Cairo, whose principal was then Dikran Babikian, and graduated its secondary school division in 1952. He studied chemistry at the American University in Cairo, receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1956. Continuing his studies, he directly went to the Medical Faculty of the American University of Beirut, which he graduated in 1964.

As an adolescent, he attended Cairo's Armenian Artistic Union [Hay Kegharuesdasirats Mioutiun] and played an active role in organizing its youth movement, under the watchful eyes of Avedis Yapujian. He came to know the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) leaders Alexander Saroukhan, Eugene Papazian, Hampartsoum Karayan and Dr. Nubar Berberian. He began making corrections and editing for the *Arev* newspaper with the encouragement of Dr. Berberian. In 1956, he took the oath and joined the ADL with Hampartsoum Karayan as his sponsor.

He also taught one year at the Melkonian Educational Institute in Cyprus, under the tutelage of Principal Piuzant Yeghiayan.

To the New World

In 1964, Dr. Arzoumanian moved to Philadelphia, where his elder brother Very Rev. Zaven Arzoumanian, served as a clergyman. He studied Internal Medicine for two years in two different hospitals, and in 1965 was married in a service conducted by his brother to Sima Kotchounian, a nurse. The newlyweds moved permanently to Montreal, Canada, in 1966, where Dr. Arzoumanian became involved in the new field of nuclear medicine. Their three children were born in Canada: Zaven (who became an astrophysicist with a doctorate from Princeton University), Anahid (who obtained an MBA), and Yervant (who also became a physician, specializing in radiology).

Despite his substantial professional and family responsibilities, Dr. Arzoumanian became fully committed to the development of the relatively new Canadian-Armenian community, and thanks to his calm temperament, unsullied character, modesty and conscientiousness, he won great respect from all quarters. He first joined St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Cathedral's Parish Council as a member, and then became its chairman. Later he became a Diocesan delegate when the Canadian-Armenian churches were part of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America. He joined his friend of many years, Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, in the latter's efforts to form a Canadian Armenian diocese with its own bylaws. When Catholicos of All Armenians Vasken I in 1984 proclaimed the creation of this new diocese by appointing Bishop Vazken Keshishian as its first Primate, Arzoumanian formed a part of its Diocesan Council.

In the mid-1960s, the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) and the ADL Eugene Papazian Chapter had already been established in Montreal in a small center of their own. Dr. Arzoumanian, who was a member of both organizations, was elected a member of the executive and chairman of the ADL chapter, which ushered in a vibrant period with the support of both new members who had emigrated from Egypt and Lebanon and the existing members.

The rapidly growing Canadian-Armenian community in Canada felt the need for a newspaper. Therefore, again under the leadership of Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, and with the direct support of Edmond Azadian in Detroit, the Baikar Association in Boston, the ADL Eastern District Committee, and the TCA of the East Coast, Dr. Arzoumanian supported the publication of a trilingual weekly called *Abaka*, which saw its first issue in September 1975 by means of the efforts of Arsène-Noubar Mamourian, Vahe Ketli and Vartouhi Balian. Dr. Arzoumanian continued to contribute to the newspaper both administratively and editorially throughout his life.

Beyond his activities on a local level in Canada in the 1980s, Dr. Arzoumanian had responsibilities on a higher level. He was elected a member and then chairman of the ADL Eastern United States and Canada District Committee. In October 1991 this body celebrated the 70th anniversary of the ADL in Boston under the honorary chairmanship of Professor Parounag Tovmasian and the aegis of Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), with Suren Fesjian as president. Speakers came from all over North America and even from Yerevan, while a film made by Berj Fazlian, "ADL's Service to Our Nation," was screened.

During the years of the Lebanese Civil War, when the ADL Central Committee was temporarily relocated to Montreal and a subcommittee of the Central Committee was formed, Arzoumanian became a part of that body, together with Maitre Hrachya Setrakian, Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, Edmond Azadian, and others.

He served for many years as president of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada, until he resigned that post in November 2016.

He is the author of numerous articles on current affairs in the Armenian press in both Armenian and English, and his Armenian-language book *Nshmarnar* published in 1998, is an anthology of his weekly articles for *Abaka* under the same title.

In appreciation of his decades of accomplishments, the TCA Central Board named the hall of the newly constructed Tekeyan Center of Montreal the Dr. Haroutiun and Sima Arzoumanian Hall.



IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Arzoumanian passed away after a long illness on December 26, 2021 in Montreal. Out of respect, the various Armenian flags in front of the Montreal Tekeyan Center remained at half mast for one week starting on January 2. Funeral services took place at St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Cathedral in Montreal on January 5 but due to covid restrictions as to participants, were also broadcast live on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/events/3110967602564044/?ref=newsfeed>) and are available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXgCpS8KYzY>). Interment took place at Saint-Laurent Cemetery.

Donations in lieu of flowers may be made to the Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian *Abaka* Fund (825 Rue Manoogian, St-Laurent, H4K 1Z5 Canada, or online at <http://abakanews.org/donate/>) or to the Alex Manoogian School (755 Rue Manoogian, St.-Laurent, H4K 1Z5 Canada).

Dr. Arzoumanian leaves behind his widow Sima Arzoumanian; Dr. Zaven and Sian Arzoumanian and children Ani and Matthew; Toma and Anahid Pinchis and children Julian and Anais; Dr. Yervant and Sytana Arzoumanian and children Lucas, Andreas and Christopher; Rev. Dr. Zaven Arzoumanian and Yeretzing Joyce Arzoumanian; Makrouhie Artinian and family; Hagop Arzoumanian and family; Maro Pattoukian and family; Kaloust Kotchounian and family; and the entire Arzoumanian, Pattoukian, Kotchounian, Artinian, Mazmanian, MacAdam, Pinchis, and El Mubarak families.

Giragosian

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OBITUARY

Remembering Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian

ARZOUMANIAN, from page 1
for 12 years (1981-1983, 1986-1987, 2008-2017) headed the organization as its president.

In gratitude for his work, the Tekeyan Cultural Association named the hall of its center in Montreal, in honor of himself and his wife, as the Dr. Haroutiun and Sima Arzoumanian Hall.

The best way to remember Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian would be as the epitome

of modesty and humility.

May incense and prayer be proffered in his memory and due respect paid to his imposing legacy.

The Central Board of Directors of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada
December 29, 2021

A Fraternal Tribute to Dr. Haroutioun Arzoumanian (1935-2021)

Our dear Sima Arzoumanian and children Zaven, Anahid and Yervant, beloved grandchildren,

With a heavy heart I write these words of condolence and comfort, pain in my heart and soul, hearing the passing of my brother Dr. Haroutioun Arzoumanian the day after Christmas 2021. Both Sima, his beloved wife of 56 years, and my sister Maro called me from Canada, tears in their eyes, to inform me about the great loss of our family. His passing, even if remotely expected due to his failing health, leaves behind a chain of great accomplishments as true comfort for us all, believing if the loss was great so was the comfort of a wonderful and highly self-spoken family that both Haroutioun and Sima have offered to the community.

One word alone, "excellence," will encompass the life of Dr. and Mrs. Arzoumanian and speak loudly on behalf of their family reflecting their involvement in the professional, cultural, and educational life of the Canadian-Armenian community. Humility remained the height as far as Dr. Haroutioun was concerned, unsurpassed, never looking for exposure or loud recognition.

He seldom was seen in group photos seated in the front lines; on the contrary, he worked diligently and most fruitfully instead. His satisfaction was highly professional — that attracted his three educated children to follow equally professionally along the steps of their parents. That is why the doctor and his wife Sima stood tall, unassumingly, together with their children Zaven, Anahid, and Yervant, whose carriers were no different than the lifelong steps taken by their father. God blessed their families with seven grandchildren, the pride of dedicated grandparents.

His specialty included both internal and nuclear medicine, which made him silently outstanding, as he served in the Montreal General Hospital. I asked my brother at one point if I could visit him at his office. There I saw at the hospital's special section the only two nuclear specialist physicians working at the most sophisticated branch treating patients. One of them was my brother, who at the same time was invited to lecture at McGill University's medical school.

In addition, Dr. Arzoumanian was involved in the vastly widespread activities of the Armenian community, school, publication of the *Abaka* weekly, the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, as well as the establishment of the new Canadian Diocese, for which he was awarded the St. Nersess Shnorhali Pontifical Medal by the Catholicos of All Armenians with an Encyclical. As I receive calls of condolences from his co-workers, they all testify to his highly qualified personality with kindness and diligence being his driving forces through his active participation in various fields.

A great surprise happened as we were visiting Montreal with my mother some twenty years ago, when we were told members of the Tekeyan Cultural Association, whose longtime president was my brother, would be honored one evening by the presentation of medals. We heard many names and those



called approached the stage and received their awards. My brother's name was not heard until the very last, when Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, the MC of the evening, called Dr. Haroutioun and Sima Arzoumanian, disclosing yet the biggest award for them, the naming of the main hall of Montreal's Tekeyan Cultural Center as the "Haroutioun and Sima Hall," pulling from the desk the bronze plaque with their engraved names to our great surprise. The plaque was affixed permanently above the entrance of the hall ever since.

I always expressed to him my pride on behalf of their three children. He used to smile softly despite the great positions all three had reached. Zaven, with a PhD in physics from Princeton University, has been a part of the group of distinguished space scientists with NASA for many years. His scientific reviews are published in prestigious journals. He resides with his family in the DC area. Anahid, an MBA from McGill University, was the European sales representative of the Proctor and Gamble corporation, presently residing with her family in Romania. Yervant, an MD from McGill University, specialized in the same field as his father, and resides with his family in Brockville, Ontario.

We feel assured that our beloved has not gone, but remotely remains with us as long as his achievements are recalled in the Cultural Hall named after him and his wife Sima.

With condolences and prayers
Father Zaven and Yeretsgin Joyce Arzoumanian
Glendale, California

Dr. Vartiter Kotcholosian Hovannisian A Message of Appreciation

On the occasion of the Karasunk/40th Day Requiem for Dr. Vartiter Kotcholosian Hovannisian, her family expresses its deepfelt gratitude for the outpouring of personal testimonies, cards and flowers, and generous contributions of \$70,000 to Orran (www.orrn.org), Armenian Educational Foundation (www.aefweb.org), and Armenian Center for National & International Studies (www.acnis.am).



tion to President Armen Sarkissian, Archbishop Moushegh Mardirossian, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, and Consul General Armen Baibourtian for their kind words of consolation.

May Vartiter's memory be blessed and her all-embracing humanity and compassionate service act as a guiding bea-

con for us all.

—The Richard Hovannisian and Nazik Messerlian Families

The family also extends its apprecia-

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The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* thanks Dean Shahinian for his generous donation of \$10,000 in recognition of its journalistic achievements over the years.



2021

IN REVIEW



JANUARY

• ADL and TCA activist Makrouhi Koumrouyan (Kouyoumjian) passed away on Friday, January 22, 2021. Services took place at the Bourdj Hammoud Armenian cemetery chapel, after which interment took place. Born Makruhi Avedisian in 1927, she was the wife of ADL leader Hampartzoum Koumrouyan (1924-1991), who was former editor of the party organ Zartouk, former chairman of the TCA in Lebanon and veteran member of the Armenian General Benevolent Union and the Armenian Youth Association. He was an intellectual and educator, who used the penname Hrach Vahuni. Together the couple brought up four children, Dr. Hrach (current chairman of the ADL Supreme Council) and wife Shushan, Vahe and Eleanor, Nora and Kevork Kevorkian, and Harout and Silva, who in turn collectively gave them 10 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren as of today.



APRIL

• Representatives of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) participated in the 106th Armenian Genocide Commemoration at the Armenian Genocide Martyrs Monument in Montebello, CA on Saturday, April 24, 2021. The annual commemoration was organized by the United Armenian Council of Los Angeles, which represents over forty religious, political, cultural, benevolent and patriotic organizations.



Members of Metro TCA and children with Executive Secretary Mayda Kuredjian to right of wreath

The service for the canonized saints of the genocide was conducted by the clergy, which included the singing of the solemn “Hrashatsan” sharagan, which was masterfully composed by the late Archbishop Zareh Aznavourian of the Great House of Cilicia.

• Nora Ipekian Azadian passed away on April 29. She was born into a privileged family in Alexandria. Both sides of her family were involved in professional theater. Nora’s



mother, Chake Damadian Ipekian, was an accomplished pianist and actress in the Armenian theater. For a long time, she served as president of the Armenian Artistic Union in Cairo. Nora developed her artistic talent early on to join that group of artists, among whom she held own. Nora participated regularly in Cairo’s annual salon. She held

individual art shows and participated in group shows in Egypt, Lebanon, Armenia, Europe and the United States, mostly to critical acclaim. She was the first one to introduce textile paintings in Egypt and her exhibitions featured women’s dresses, scarves, tablecloths and items in

Mondrian’s design or in abstractions of her imagination. She had a mastery of watercolor, wherein she exhibited spontaneity, poetry and command of vivid colors. Her oil paintings were heavier, allocating dignity and grace to street vendors or veiled Egyptian female figures. Nora was a passionate teacher of art. Nora served as president of the Tekeyan Cultural Association in Detroit for 13 years, organizing art shows, staging plays, concerts and exuberant Christmas parties. She also served for 30 years on the Fine Arts Committee of St. John’s Armenian Church and together with Zabel Belian and the other committee members, brought to life the Armenian art world in Detroit. She leaves her husband, Edmond Y. Azadian and son Gerald Papasian.



JUNE

• Tatul Hakobyan, journalist, writer and the coordinator at the Ani Armenian Research Center, spoke on June 11 at a presentation of the English translation by Arsen Kharatyan of his new book *The Valley of Death, 44-Day Catastrophe*. The event was organized by the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA), with the participation of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, Armenian Rights Council of America, Armenian Society of Los Angeles, Iraqi Armenian Family Association of Los Angeles, and the Organization of Istanbul Armenians, at the TCA Beshgeturian Center in Altadena.

• The official opening of the Nora Ipekian Azadian Armenian Language Classroom took place on June 24 at the Vahan Tekeyan School of Yerevan. Husband Edmond Y. Azadian, son Gerald Papasian, and family friend Marina Arakchyan were present along with the school’s princi-



From left, Edmond Azadian, Tsovinar Mardanyan and Gerald Papasian cut the ribbon to the newly renovated classroom.

pal Tsovinar Mardanyan and the teachers of the school. It was Edmond Azadian’s idea to name a classroom after his wife Nora in one of the schools bearing the Vahan Tekeyan name in Armenia because Nora placed such great importance on Armenian schools. She would always say speak and use the Armenian language. By speaking you will advance and enrich it.

JULY

• Graduation ceremonies took place at the Vahan Tekeyan School in Beirut on Saturday, July 3. Diplomas were distributed in the presence of the trustees of the school and their chairman Dr. Hovig Vartanian, the daughters of the recently deceased Armenian Democratic Liberal Party leader Garabed Babahekian — Jenny Babahekian and Sosi Babahekian Kalinjian — Chairman Hagop Kasarjian and board members of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Founders Body, teachers, and parents of the graduating students. The ceremony was broadcast live on the

school’s Facebook page.

• Edmond Y. Azadian’s new Armenian-language book, *Az-kayin-kaghakagan hortzanudi mech* [In the National Political Vortex] was presented on July 6 in Yerevan’s Tekeyan Center, hosted by the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Armenia. This first volume of a two-part series is an anthology of editorials from the weekly newspaper Baikar, of which he is one of the founders and principal editors. The prolific Azadian previously had published nine volumes of his collected writings in English and Armenian. Literary critic, scholar and writer Yervand Ter Khachatryan, who was editor of the new volume, served as the event’s master of ceremonies. He spoke in detail about the book, followed by Hagop Avedikian, chief editor of the newspaper Azg. The latter noted that Azadian’s editorials from *Baikar*’s sister English-language weekly *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* could fill 10-12 volumes, and that many of his pieces should be considered of lasting value for those interested in the life of the Armenian people. After thanking TCA of Armenia President Rouben Mirzakhanyan and other organizers, Azadian stressed that he has never asked himself why he writes. However, Avedikian in the volume’s preface appropriately quoted the French philosopher René Descartes’ words, “I think, therefore I am,” and translated them into the creative realm as “I write, and therefore I exist.”

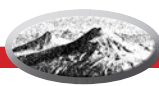
• Tekeyan Cultural Association’s Beshgeturian Center Social Committee organized a Family Night for all members and friends on Saturday, July 17 in Altadena. Yvette Baibourtian, the wife of Ambassador Armen Baibourtian, Consul General of the Republic of Armenia in Los Angeles was present, along with many leaders of the ADL and TCA, and representatives of various other organizations who attended with their families. Mayda Kuredjian, Executive Secretary of TCA West Coast, welcomed all and introduced the members of the new Social Committee who had worked hard for the success of this gathering.

AUGUST

• The TCA Pasadena-Glendale Chapter, after a hiatus in activities of nearly two years due to the coronavirus pandemic, recommenced its event series with a lecture by lawyer Roupen Avsharian on August 12 at the TCA Beshgeturian Center. The topic was Lebanese political life from 1920 to 2020, with a focus on the Armenian vote in the 2018 Lebanese parliamentary elections and the upcoming Lebanese 2022 elections. TCA West Coast Executive Secretary Mayda Kuredjian welcomed the approximately 100 guests and chapter chair Siran Oknayan introduced the speaker. Among the points Avsharian made was that a low 27-percent turnout of the electorate already has decreased the number of Armenian deputies more than necessary, and the results of the 2022 elections may be even worse for the Armenians as a result of the emigration of their majority, yet Armenian organizations do not appear very concerned about this.

• On August 2, a delegation from the TCA West Coast led by its Executive Secretary Mayda Kuredjian and Chairman of the TCA Beshgeturian Center Trustees Ara Babayan visited the Consulate General. During the meeting with Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles Ambassador Armen Baibourtian

• On Friday, August 13, local members of the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA), representatives of the three Los Angeles area chapters, and TCA West Coast Executive Secretary Mayda Kuredjian visited the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America and met with the Diocesan Primate. Archbishop Hovnan Derderian welcomed his guests who paid their first courtesy visit to the Diocesan headquarters this year. TCA Metro Los Angeles programs and future events were communicated to the Primate who commended their zealous spirit in preserving the Armenian culture and heritage in the Diaspora. Collaborations between the Western Diocese and the TCA Western Coast chapters were discussed.



SEPTEMBER

• On September 23, new Ambassador to the United Kingdom Varuzhan Nersesyan received Dr. Hratch Kouyoumjian and Garo Boyadjian, representing the local chapters of the ADL and the TCA. In an hour-long meeting and after a general tour d'horizon, the ambassador gave an expose of the current situation in Armenia in the post-war period and talked about his vision to promote Armenia and its interests in the United Kingdom. To this end he is looking forward to the support and active cooperation of the ADL and TCA and other grassroots UK-based organizations in carrying out his diplomatic mission. Dr. Kouyoumjian and Boyadjian, in turn, congratulated the ambassador on his recent nomination to St. George's Court, and on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Armenia. They wished the ambassador success and promised all the support the two organizations can muster in accomplishing his diplomatic duties. Nersesyan expressed his appreciation for the visit and wished the dialogue to stay open, adding that the embassy is always ready to welcome the representatives of ADL and TCA. (CAPTION: From left, Dr. Hratch Kouyoumjian, Amb. Varuzhan Nersesyan and Garo Boyadjian.

• Edmond Y. Azadian, president of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA), and TCA Central Board member Mihran Minassian during a working visit to Los Angeles met with various community leaders as well as local TCA executives in mid-September. They had meetings with Ambassador Armen Baibourtian, the Consul General of the Republic of Armenia in Los Angeles, officials of the Armenian American Museum in Glendale. On September 17, they participated in a special dinner with local TCA chapter leaders and members, TCA Central Board members, members of the TCA Beshgeturian Center Administrative Committee, and TCA West Coast Executive Secretary Mayda Kuredjian, at which the latter, Amb. Baibourtian, and Azadian spoke. Baibourtian praised the cultural and patriotic role of TCA, while Azadian spoke on its activities in Armenia, its assistance to Lebanon, and its work in North America as well.

• On September 16, President of the Board of Directors of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of the USA and Canada Edmond Azadian, board member Mihran Minassian, and TCA West Coast Executive Secretary Mayda Kuredjian visited the Consulate General of Armenia in Los Angeles.

OCTOBER

• The management of Tekeyan Cultural Association's "Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund" announced the names of students awarded in 2021 for their academic studies. They were Elena Azadian Martinez, from Boynton Beach, Fla., studying at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, majoring in international politics and government and David Melikian, from Yerevan, studying in American University of Armenia, majoring in politics and governance.

• The 27th Vahan Tekeyan Awards ceremony of the TCA, supported by the Shake Tekeyan-Ghazarian Fund of the TCA of the United States and Canada, took place on October 8 at the Tekeyan Center in Yerevan. These annual awards recognize and encourage the best work in various fields of Armenian culture. During its existence, more than 100 worthy individuals have been recognized. This year, Edmond Y. Azadian, president of the TCA of the United States and Canada, and president of the TCA of Armenia Rouben Mirzakhanyan, spoke at the event, and many Armenian intellectuals and writers were present at the ceremonies for six categories of awards. There were approximately 70 applicants from which the awards committee had to choose. Artavazd Nazaryan received the award in the field of literature for his collections of poetry titled Arvartzan [Suburb] and Ughepagots [Barrier]. Professor Arman Yeghiazaryan, doctor in the field of history, received the award for Armenology for his work Ashot III Voghormats Tagavor Hayots [Ashot III the Merciful King of Armenia]. In the field of drama, the winner was Professor Armen Elbakyan, Honored Figure in the Field of Art of the Republic of Armenia, for his staging of "Trichk kkui bni vrayov" [One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest]. In the category of the visual arts, the award was bestowed upon People's Artist of the Republic of Armenia Anatoli Avetyan for his creation "Erebuni-Yerevan-2800." The winners in the field of journalism were Diana Markosyan for her series *Hachoghutyan banadzev* [Formula for Success] on A-TV (an Armenian television station) and Hakob Asatryan for his publications concerning the Armenian communities of

Europe in the monthly *Orer* (Prague). In the field of fine art photography, Armen Yengoyan's series *Giughakan Es-kizner* [Village Sketches] and Zaven Khachikyan's *Anvernagir Paterazm* [Untitled War] series.

• The Tekeyan Cultural Association Sponsor A Teacher Program, which has been helping teachers for the last 20 years in four schools in Armenia and one school in Karabakh, resumed its help to Karabakh teachers one year after the bloody 44-day war initiated by Azerbaijan and Turkey. During the war, the unthinkable happened. The Tekeyan School of Berdzor, Karabakh, now lies in ruins. It is situated in the narrow corridor of Kashatagh or Lachin province. During the war it was used as a barracks for Armenian soldiers. At the end of the war, the Armenian population was evacuated and Russian peacekeeping forces controlled this area, except for around 100 remaining Armenians. The TCA of the United States and Canada is assisting and helping them find alternative income work, led by Arto Manoukian of Montreal, who initiated and implemented the "Sustainable Assistance" program for Berdzor refugees in Armenia by making investments in agriculture and beekeeping through Syunik Development NGO. Sponsor a Teacher Program, led by Maro Bedrosian of Houston, Texas, raised enough funds between January and September of 2021 to help not only all four Vahan Tekeyan Schools in Armenia but also to 90 teachers of 5 newly located village schools in what left of Karabakh, namely the villages of Yeghtsahogh, Aghavno and Shushi District schools of Medz Shen, Hin Shen and Lisakor, through a non-profit organization called the Gurgen Melikyan Multichildren Family Foundation of Kashatagh.

• A leader in Los Angeles of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA) and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL), George Mandossian passed away on October 17. He played an important role in the Armenian Church and the Armenian General Benevolent Union. He was a founder and guiding spirit of the TCA Arshag Dickranian Armenian School and a member of the founding council of the Montebello Armenian Martyrs Memorial Monument. As a civil engineer, he left his stamp on many structures in the Los Angeles area. He was born in Jerusalem, studied at the American University of Beirut, and obtained degrees from the University of California, Los Angeles and the University of Southern California.



• Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II on October 23 received a delegation of leaders of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) at his pontifical offices. Their discussions touched upon the current situation in the Republic of Armenia, the role of the Armenian Church, and the various TCA organizations and structures. In the above photo are, from left, Dr. Rouben Mirzakhanyan, president of the Central Board of TCA of Armenia, Hagop Kasarjian, president of the Founders Body of TCA of Lebanon, Catholicos Karekin II, and Edmond Y. Azadian, president of the Board of Directors of TCA of the United States and Canada.

NOVEMBER

• The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Greater New York Chapter visited Ambassador Mher Margaryan, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Armenia, with a delegation, cosponsored a meeting with Artsakh State



From left, Serge Panossian, Shoghig Medzadurian, Vartan Ilanjan, Ambassador Mher Margaryan, Hilda Hartounian and Barkev Kalayjian. Missing from photo are Taleen Babayan and Sylvia Buzantian.

Minister Artak Beglaryan, and participated in a second meeting with the latter in mid-November.

On November 11, a group of TCA Greater NY committee members met with Amb. Margaryan in his offices. The meeting was an opportunity to introduce the latter to new committee members and discuss how TCA can work with the UN Armenian Mission to strengthen the Armenian community in the tristate area.

On November 13, TCA Greater NY chair Hilda Hartounian participated on behalf of her chapter in a private luncheon and meeting with Beglaryan in New York City, along with representatives of other organizations, to discuss current events in Artsakh. The next day, the TCA chapter was a cosponsor with other organizations of a presentation by Beglaryan in the DoubleTree Hotel of Fort Lee, New Jersey.

• A traditional book presentation which included pouring wine over the pages and blessings by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, brought Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian, the coordinator of the Armenian Studies Program and director of the Center for Armenian Studies at Fresno State all the way to the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Beshgeturian Center in Altadena on Saturday, November 6. The event was cosponsored by the Armenian Studies Program and the TCA Metro Los Angeles chapter. Der Mugrdchian was presenting the book he had co-edited with Umit Kurt and Ara Sarafian, *The Committee of Union and Progress, Founders, Ideology, and Structure*.

DECEMBER

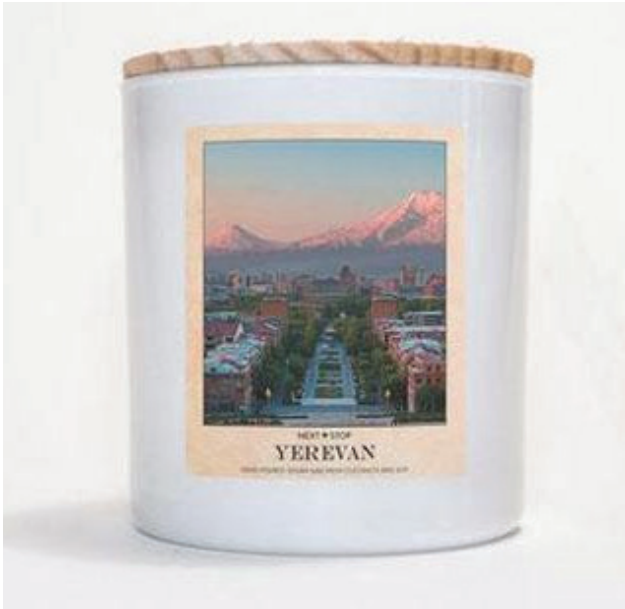
• After the fall of the Cilician kingdom, the Armenian people lost not only their state and country, but also their culture and language as a result of being under Turkish rule for almost 600 years. Despite the fact that only 20 percent of the current population of Turkey is of Turkish ethnic origin, according to historical sources, Turkey has been able to forcibly rule and Turkify the majority of the population, especially the population of Cilicia, such as Armenians, Assyrians, Greek and Arabs. A collection of sayings used during Ottoman rule have been passed down from generation to generation to Kevork Keushkerian, the author of *Armenian Sayings* Translated from Turkish into English. The book presentation ceremony was organized by the Tekeyan Cultural Association Pasadena-Glendale chapter on December 12 at the TCA Beshgeturian Center in. Siran Oknayan, chair of the TCA Pasadena-Glendale Chapter, opened the event. Dr. Krikor Simonian, chairman of the AGBU Krikor Satamian Theater Group, read a few passages from Keushkerian's book. This was followed by Krikor Satamian, who presented the book.

• The TCA Los Angeles Chapter together with the Metro Los Angeles Chapter, organized a commemoration of the centennial of Armenian composer Arno Babajanian (1921-1983) at the hall of the Armenian Society of Los Angeles. More than 200 people attended the event. The event was held under the auspices of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, who attended together with Fr. Zaven Markosyan. Guest of honor was the First Secretary of the Consulate General of the Republic of Iraq Aqeel Al-Sodanie, who attended with his family. Professional musicians presented the audience with some of Babajanian's compositions, including a string quartet composed of Armen Mangasaryan (first violin), Hovhannes Meghrikyan (second violin), Hovhannes Fishyan (viola), and Hovik Hovhannesian (cello), with Armine Ghazaryan on piano. Singers Anahit Nersesyan (soprano) and Suren Mkrtichyan (tenor) also participated. The evening's program included a performance of Babajanian's songs *Mer sireli Yerevan* [Our Beloved Yerevan], *Chknagh Yeraz* [Wonderful Dream], *Arajin Siro Yergeh* [The First Love Song] and *Im Yerevan* [My Yerevan]; *Meghedi* [Melody] performed by the string quartet; and two Russian songs sung by Suren Mkrtichyan.

• The Central Board of Directors of the TCA United States and Canada reported the death of its longtime member and former president, Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian, who passed away on December 26 in Montreal. The legacy of the deceased as a pioneering doctor, editor, cultural figure and devotee and leader of the Armenian Apostolic Church is great and irreplaceable. He was a devoted father and husband. In addition to his medical career his contribution to the Armenian community in Canada, especially during the years of the formation of the Armenian Diocese of Canada, is considerable. As a member of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, he held senior positions and authored numerous bylaws-related legal documents.

AAHPO ‘Light Of Love’ Holiday Candles Raise Funds for Artsakh Physicians

CANDLES, from page 6
cotton wick flame. The candles come with a cedarwood lid
“We are pleased to be able to offer such high-quality, environmentally-responsible



The Yerevan candle

candles to serve as a tribute to Armenia and Artsakh,” said AAHPO Board member Lynn Cetin, MD. “Sales of the candles provide a

platform for people to fund continuing medical education, which will ultimately benefit Armenians living in Artsakh and aligns with AAHPO’s core mission.”
The CME Program was first created in 2005 by the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) and the FAR Fellowship Alumni Association to bolster the overall health of Armenia’s people by improving the skills of Armenian doctors. FAR and AAHPO, through the vision of the late Raffy A. Hovanessian, MD, recognized the importance of this training and partnered to fund the CME Program for physicians from Artsakh. This program is vital to training physicians and nurses as tens of thousands of Armenians depend on their medical skills.
To view photos of the Artsakh and Yerevan candles and place an order, visit <https://aahpo.org/the-light-of-love-holiday-candles/>
For more information about AAHPO, visit www.aahpo.org.



WATERTOWN — On December 29, 2021, the Armenian American Veterans of Greater Boston celebrated the 100th birthday of member Harry Keshishian of Waltham at the Oakley Country Club in Watertown. Harry turned 100 on December 30. (Photo courtesy of Albert D. Parseghian)

AGBU Receives One Million Dollar Year-End Gift from Vatche and Tamar Manoukian

LOS ANGELES — In line with their continued support of the organization’s mission, Chair of AGBU Council of Trustees Vatche Manoukian and his wife Tamar Manoukian announced a year-end contribution of \$1 million in support of the expansion of AGBU’s programs and activities.
In response to the announcement, AGBU President Berge Setrakian remarked, “It is no secret that the generosity of the Manoukians is not only deeply heartfelt, as proud

Armenians and compassionate humanitarians, but also informed by strategic considerations. With their finger on the pulse of the times, they can assess what is needed and when to meet the moment and secure the future. We are grateful to the Manoukians and to all of our donors, without whose support AGBU could not successfully pursue its mission.”
The Lebanese born multi-national business leader Vatche Manoukian inherited a genuine interest in philanthropy from his

family and established a strong tradition of charitable initiatives globally. He and his wife have long supported the promotion of the Armenian Church and Armenian interests in general. Their benevolent spirit has

extended to numerous initiatives, not only for the benefit of Armenians but also for the wider international community through their support of major humanitarian, educational, cultural and religious programs.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Happy New Year to All

Apet Torosian
Watertown, MA

Thank you for all the work you do and bring the news to the Armenian community.

Cynthia Kazanjian
Burlington, MA

Christmas Donations Received after December 15, 2021

- Aranco Oil Company, Floyd Hayes, Margaret Aranosian Gattis, John Aranosian, Cathy Aranosian and Mary Ann Aranosian, Concord, NH \$5,000
Norehad Charitable, Bay Village, OH \$2,000
Ajemian Foundation, Bloomfield Hills, MI \$1,000
Yervant Chekijian, Watertown, MA \$500
Dr. Ghevont and Yeranouhie Wartanian, Lutherville, MD \$500
Dr. and Mrs. Nishan Goudsouzian, Winchester, MA \$500
Tekeyan Cultural Association, Los Angeles Chapter, Glendale, CA \$250
Peter Balakian, Hamilton, NY \$200
Arlene Avakian, Boca Raton, FL \$200
The Pattersons, Lexington, MA \$200
Tavit Najarian, Eatontown, NJ \$100
Yeramian Family, Newton Square, PA \$100
Raffi Hagopian Dorian, Fresno, CA \$100
Robert Mirak, Winchester, MA \$100
Cynthia Kazanjian, Burlington, MA \$100
Dr. Ruben Boyajian, Effingham, IL \$100
Apet Torosian, Watertown, MA \$100
Arek Torosian, Cleveland, OH \$100
Arax Balakian, Fort Lee, NJ \$50
Levon Hrant Jamgochian, Silver Spring, MD \$50
Mary Aroian, Worcester, MA \$30

Happy New Year and Merry Christmas

Arek Torosian
Cleveland, Ohio

Thank you for all you do for the Armenian community. I appreciate each and every issue I receive.

Harry N. Mazadoorian
Kensington, CT



COMMUNITY NEWS

Azerbaijani Ambassador Speaks at Princeton

PRINCETON, from page 6

Because of the difficulty of presenting Ibrahim's words without context, Professor Anna Ohanyan, an Armenian-born political scientist at Stonehill College in Massachusetts, was interviewed by the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* to comment on some of Ibrahim's statements.

In regard to the history of the Caucasus, "this conflict is not a new conflict," says Ohanyan. "It's not a post-Soviet war; it has imperialist roots."

3+3

Ibrahim became more specific when he mentioned the "3 plus 3" plan which has been put forward by Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev. The plan essentially states that future issues in the South Caucasus should be resolved in concert by the three countries of the region (Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan), plus the three regional powers which border the region (Turkey, Iran and Russia).

Ibrahim claimed that "we have a lot of opportunities" because "the countries have changed in the last 20 years." Again, he did not specify much about what had changed, although he went on to mention that economic corridors (i.e. the oil pipeline) have linked Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey, and that 3/4th of the regional economy is based in Azerbaijan and Georgia. He also stated that Azerbaijan was proud to have been elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2012.

In response to the 3 + 3 issue, Ohanyan discussed the concept of regionalism. Azerbaijan's leaders use "peace" and "regionalism" as euphemisms, said Ohanyan. Furthermore, there are different kinds of regionalism. For example, "hegemonic regionalism" is something imposed from the top down by great powers. This is seen in the Caucasus throughout its history of being governed by the Russian, Persian and Ottoman Empires. The suggestion of bringing back Russia, Iran and Turkey to oversee the region's affairs in a 3+3 arrangement seems to be a new form of hegemonic regionalism. The format "imports the same problem that the region had for centuries, which is great power rivalry in the region," according to Ohanyan.

"Armenians are very nervous about 3+3," she continued. She stated that the Armenian leadership has "been clear that the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] Minsk Group is the model [for solving the Karabakh issue]," and that the 3+3 model "is only for connectivity."

Ohanyan suggested a 3+0 format instead, which would mean regional issues would be solved by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia in concert without their more

powerful neighbors. "If we look at other regions," Ohanyan noted, "the countries come together and institutionalize to keep great powers at bay." Ohanyan further suggested that "we need to develop regional diplomatic stability" in the Caucasus, in order to "strengthen the norm against militarization, to take war off the table."

But is that what Azerbaijan wants? Ohanyan mentioned that a different type of regionalism is found in the European Union (EU), where there is real regional connectivity and cooperation. Of course, the Caucasus is far from this. In the EU type model, "there is a lot of contact between businesses and civil society groups, it's a lot more developmental," Ohanyan explained. Ohanyan admits that "it is in Armenia's interest to have greater regional connectivity and more diplomatic states of engagement." However, this is not what the Azerbaijan government is suggesting, she stated. Azerbaijan is not interested in an arrangement that is "institutionalized and rules-based." Rather, the Azeris "essentially want a forceful peace on their terms," she concluded.

'Territorial Integrity' and 'Transport Links'

Stating in the Princeton talk that the "region is different [now]," Ibrahim claimed the border issue between Armenia and Azerbaijan is "over." Ibrahim reinforced this by saying that "territorial integrity" has been restored, which for him means that Armenia and Azerbaijan "can actually see each other" and engage in peace talks.

On this point, Ohanyan stated: "Aliyev is the only one saying the conflict is resolved. For him it's a territorial issue, for them [Karabakh] it's a self-government issue."

Ibrahim stressed that the creation of a transport link from Azerbaijan to the Nakhichevan exclave under the authority of Azerbaijan, is part of the peace deal that ended last year's war and needs to be opened. He also mentioned that when Azerbaijan started their energy infrastructure project (i.e. oil pipeline), Armenia was the shortest route between Baku and Turkey. However "because of the occupation, politics, and practical reasons this was impossible." Again, Ibrahim glossed over the entire Karabakh conflict with the simplistic term "occupation."

As opposed to the time when Karabakh was free, "now we have the opportunities," and there is so much economic activity in the region that the links between Armenia and Azerbaijan can have an impact beyond the region. However, Ibrahim opined that "if this window closes, we will be back to our old realities," and laconically commented that "it's not the most important thing for my country," suggesting Azerbaijan would be doing Armenia a favor to now engage in

trade. The ambassador went on to say that "it's even more in the interests of Armenia, the more roads and investment there is."

In regard to regional economic activity and Azerbaijan's role, Ohanyan stated that "regionalism starts from community organization...regions are as strong as their weakest links...disregarding ethnic communities has been the problem [for Azerbaijan]." She further stated that Azerbaijan is "a rentier state," meaning that it derives a majority of its revenue from rent paid by foreign entities, and that there is "not a lot of productive capacity." She also suggested that Armenia needs to "increase the cost of war for Azerbaijan," potentially by building economic and other ties that would make it non-beneficial for the Azerbaijanis to attack Armenia and Karabakh.

Question and Answer Period

The floor was opened to questions, and numerous queries were sent to the Professor Haykel through the chat function of Zoom, especially from pro-Armenian individuals. A question was asked about the oil pipeline, which Ibrahim really didn't answer, though he mentioned that a highway would be built through Armenia to Nakhichevan. To him, that was a certainty and "a question of when and how."

Haykel also questioned Ibrahim about growing tensions with Iran and changing relations with Turkey, along with the possibility that Russia is "tilting" more toward Azerbaijan than in the past. Ibrahim mentioned that Azerbaijan has great relations with Israel and Turkey, and even mentioned the slogan "One nation, two states," in reference to Turkey and Azerbaijan. He mentioned that it is a bit strange that Iran does not side with Azerbaijan, even though they are also a Shia Muslim country and have a historical connection. He also stated that Azerbaijan will never take foreign policy steps against Israel, and that they are allied because of the historic, longstanding Jewish community in Azerbaijan. Finally, he mentioned that Azerbaijan does not have a collective security agreement with Moscow.

Haykel asked about the POW issue, which was being brought up by numerous members of the viewing audience. Ibrahim claimed that anyone being detained by Azerbaijan at this point is not a POW, but a detainee "that happened after the war," and further claimed that "Armenian agrees with that." He stated that some of these instances came about when people lost their way near the border.

When questioned about the jingoism in Azerbaijan or racism toward Armenians in Azerbaijani textbooks, Ibrahim said, "Forget the theory or allegations, look at the outcome," stating that if there was something wrong in the textbooks, then there would

be more hate among the youth in Azerbaijan. He claimed that this is not the case, and attempted to prove his point by mentioning that today there are many students from Azerbaijan in US schools, but they are not protesting the Armenians "for committing genocide," rather, "hundreds of Armenian young people are protesting" Azerbaijan, going further to state that racism against Azerbaijanis is "probably in the textbooks in Armenia and in Diaspora organizations." He chose not to address the Trophy Park in Baku, where the helmets of dead Armenian soldiers as well as realistic figures of Armenian soldiers are on display.

Ibrahim further claimed that "our armed forces are for defense," and that "we never in the last 500 years went against anybody. Our armed forces are for peace." Like all other grandiose statements, this also went unchallenged.

Student Protesters

An Armenian-American student at Princeton, Artur Sirkejian, who is originally from California and is a senior majoring in Molecular Biology, was contacted for comments. Sirkejian, who was among those protesting the ambassador's talk, and also attended the talk virtually, wrote: "The event was organized with tight control around audience participation as questions from spectators passed through the arbitrary filter of [the Institute], which hosted the event. Questions that were critical of the Azeri regime, namely those regarding the unlawful capture and torture of Armenian POWs, of which there is ample evidence, were sugarcoated as 'claims of POWs, torture,' etc..."

In regard to Ibrahim's statement about Armenian-American students, Sirkejian had the following to say: "Perhaps the lowest point of the Azeri ambassador's monologue came towards the end, when he stated his disappointment at the fact that hundreds of Armenian-American youths had opposed the event and contacted Princeton faculty in an attempt to stop a speech by a representative of the Azerbaijani government. The Azeri ambassador pointed out that Azeris don't engage in such activities, which is untrue, but even still it drew a false parallel between the Azerbaijani government, which conducts human rights violations on a daily basis and engages in ethnic cleansing to this very day, with the Armenian government which, despite its faults, has no such burden. On this point also, the host of the event, Bernard Haykel, made no reproach."

At press time, the Institute for Transregional Study had not uploaded the Zoom video of Ibrahim's talk onto its website where past speeches in the same series are available.

Berj Najarian Launches Organization Dedicated to Preserving Cultural Identity

CLEATS, from page 1

Being an Armenian-American is foundational to why Najarian wanted to start Who We Are. The Armenian Genocide killed more than a million Armenian people between 1915 and 1922. Cultural identity for Armenians around the world is a point of pride and an act of survival.

Through conversations as a team about racial and social injustices over the last two years, Najarian recognized common themes regarding human rights, self-determination and justice. He saw people from all backgrounds come together to support one another and was able to educate the team about Armenians. After

the murder of George Floyd, players and coaches shared their experiences of living as Black men and dealing with racism in the United States. Chris Mattes shined a light on issues facing Native communities through his friendship with Lyle Thompson and support of his family's non-profit.

Seeing these connections play out between people from different cultures, traditions, and heritages in the locker room was part of what motivated Najarian to create Who We Are.

"Everyone has a story about who they are, where they came from and where they are going. That's what Who We Are

is about and a lot of it stems from the special environment within our team and organization," he said. "It is a testament to how much can be accomplished when people are willing to listen, learn and act on behalf of others."

The launch of Who We Are coincides with My Cause My Cleats, and Najarian is again wearing custom sneakers with a purpose. One shoe is an homage to his Armenian heritage, including smiling Armenian children, an eternity symbol very prominent in Armenian designs, and notably to Najarian, an image of Mount Ararat within the Armenian coat of arms. Above the mountain is a symbol repre-

senting the iconic biblical ark's final resting place. "Yes, that ark," Najarian said, referring to Noah's Ark.

The other shoe represents the broader mission of Who We Are, with the words "Who We Are" inscribed in as many languages as could fit on one shoe, including Spanish, Portuguese, Swahili, Hindi, Hebrew, Thai, and others.

"Who We Are exists to help advance cultural identity and connections between diverse people who make incredible contributions to the world. We think it's a great way to simultaneously carry on legacies and help create new ones."



Arts & Culture

Medz Yeghern Through History

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK—What is the meaning and use of *Medz Yeghern* and how has it been used?

Historian and literary scholar Dr. Vartan Matiossian presented a fascinating talk on December 8, on his ten years of extensive research on the history of the term “Medz Yeghern,” at the New York headquarters of the Eastern Armenian Prelacy, under the sponsorship of Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Prelate.

The event was in launch of his new book, *The Politics of Naming the Armenian Genocide: Language, History and ‘Medz Yeghern,’* which has been published by I.B. Tauris, a section of Bloomsbury Publishing. This is the first volume in the “Armenians in the Modern and Early Modern World” series.

A moment of silence was first observed for the victims of both the massive earthquake in Armenia 33 years ago, and the recent invasion of Artsakh. This was the first public gathering at the Eastern Prelacy headquarters since the pandemic began in early 2020.

Matiossian, who was born in Montevideo, Uruguay, and has been extensively published in Armenian, English and Spanish, is also the executive director of the Armenian Prelacy. The presentation, moderated by Anahid Ugurlayan, was live-streamed and recorded on Facebook.

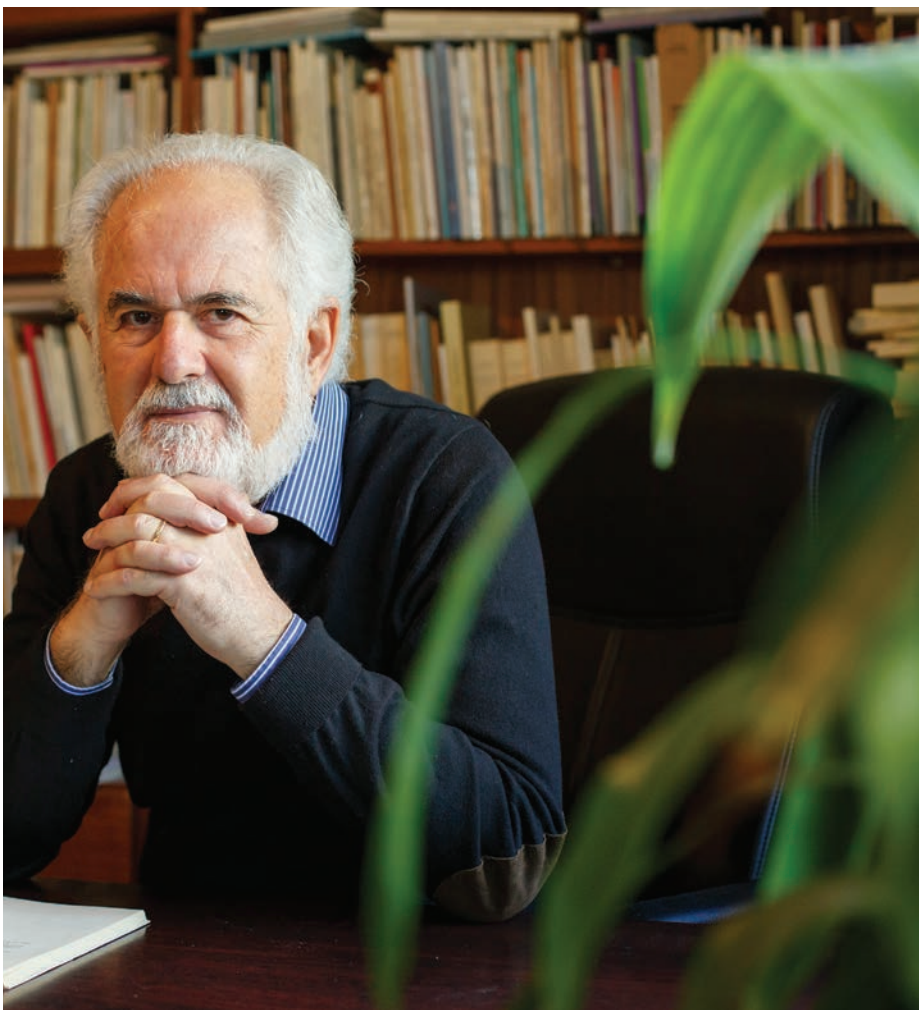
Matiossian explained in great detail the Armenian term *Medz Yeghern*, meaning “Great Crime” and used for the Genocide of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. He declared with emphasis that the “subject has been both omitted and misinterpreted in historiography,” and especially by people who did not know the Armenian language. The speaker said the term genocide was invented by Raphael Lemkin, but the first use of its Armenian equivalent tseghasbanutun, with the meaning “race murder,” was during the 1915 Genocide.

Before and after 1915, “Yeghern” was also used meaning “tragedy” or “calamity.” “Is it a crime or a calamity,” he asked.

Recalling Pope John Paul II’s visit to Armenia in 2001 marking the 1700th anniversary of Christianity when the Roman Catholic Church leader prayed at the Tsitsernakaberd Genocide Memorial and used the term “Medz Yeghern,” the speaker said a bombshell exploded, with many voicing the idea that the Pope wanted to avoid the word Genocide. In addition, the worldwide media joined in the controversy.

On the other hand, Matiossian mentioned that in November 2000, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II had paid a visit to Pope Paul II

see HISTORY, page 16



Giorgos Moleskis

This love is kin to me, that creates bread from the stone

Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / NICOSIA — Cypriot writer and translator Giorgos Moleskis was born in 1946 in Lysi, Cyprus. He studied at the Nicosia English College and at the Lomonosov Moscow State University. He has an M.A. in Russian language and literature and a Ph.D. in literature.

He worked at the Cultural Services Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, as Senior Cultural Officer and was the Executive Adviser of the Cyprus Symphony Orchestra Foundation. He was president of the Committee for State Prizes for Literature, the Cyprus National Jury for the European Prize for Literature and the Union of Cyprus Writers.

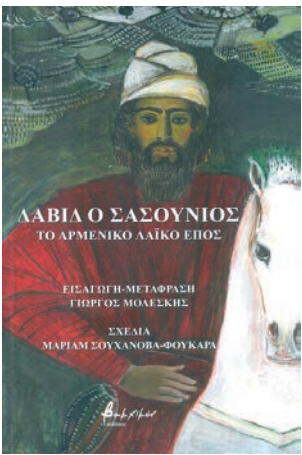
Moleskis received an Honorary Diploma and Prize for Poetry from the Cyprus government, as well as the Pushkin Medal from the Union of Russian Writers. He is, also, an Honorary Member of the State Academy of Slavic Culture of the Russian Federation, the Union of Cyprus Writers and the Greece — Cyprus Cultural Association.

Since 1967 he has published thirteen poetry collections, two books with collected poems and five books with poetry translations. Some of his books are: *Vladimir Mayakovsky* (introduction-translation-comments, 1995), *Russian poets of the 20th century, an anthology* (introduction-translation-comments, 2004), *Awaiting rain* (poems, 2008), *Contemporary Turkish Cypriot Poets: An attempt to communicate* (introduction-translation, 2010), *The unfinished poem* (2014), *When the sun enters the room* (short stories, 2017), *Russian poetry 20th century*, (introduction-translation-comments, 2019), *Every July I return* (2019), *Vladimir Mayakovsky, Pre-Revolution Poems* (introduction-translation, 2019), *David of Sassoon, The Armenian Folk Epic* (2021).

Nine of Moleskis’ books of poetry books were translated and published in separate volumes in France, Italy, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania. His poems have been translated and published in literary magazines and anthologies in Russia, Germany, France, Italy, Bulgaria, Rumania Turkey, Ukraine, Finland, Armenia, Estonia, Spain, Chile and other countries.

Moleskis lives in Nicosia with his Armenian wife, they have three children.

Dear Giorgos, already in the beginning of 1970s you wrote: “Without dreams, without heroes, how can one live? The mind loaded with so many broken columns, trunks of trees, broken bones... It founders.” In my perception, in 2020s the dreams are ruined and the mankind remains without heroes: I see only anti-heroes. What do you think about it?



Michael Minassian’s A Matter of Timing: Poetic Meditations On Time and Place

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Like many modern nation states, the United States of America was founded in genocide, upon the eradication of its indigenous population — in this case Native Americans. Our country was then physically built and enriched off the labor of millions of black African slaves and white indentured servants. All these groups then suffered generations of intergenerational poverty and trauma, the effects of which are still being felt today from white Appalachia to the black ghettos of urban America. In *A Matter of Timing* Michael Minassian seeks to lay bare this history from the standpoint of both perpetrator (he is Caucasian) and victim—he is Armenian, the indigenous Anatolians whom the Young Turks attempted to wipe out in order to establish a monoethnic Turkish Republic. These poems limn topics of importance without righteous indignation—heartfelt and well-crafted, they received the 2021 Catherine Lubbe Prize in Poetry.

The reader welcomes the forthrightness of Minassian’s pen — he is direct and doesn’t shy away from calling a fig a fig or a trough a trough. At the same time, he delivers verse rich in metaphor and symbolism starting from the very first poem, “Tribes”:

“I dreamt that the trees
had organized themselves
into tribes
[...]
the moon revealing
its long tooth,
its jagged smile

five hundred years of manifest
destiny and genocide—”

Then the italicized “*we live in a stolen continent*” followed by a powerful ending image also steeped in native imagery:

somewhere in a stone canyon
the man with no eyes
paints the wind.

Minassian repeats similar patterns throughout the book. In “You’ve Got Nothing to Lose,” he continues his American exegesis, noting in detail the many ways in which the native or so-called “American Indians” were wiped out:

“Some came on sailing ships,
others had no choice—
there was always an ocean to cross.

Barbed wire made an early appearance;
Buffalo robes and deer hide
Couldn’t stop bullets or disease.

One hundred years after Little Big Horn
we sent soldiers to Vietnam;
some went off the Rez.”



ARTS & CULTURE

NAASR Announces 2021 Sona Aronian Armenian Studies Book Prize Winners

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) announced in December the 2021 Dr. Sona Aronian Book Prizes for Excellence in Armenian Studies were jointly awarded to Dr. Stephen Badalyan Riegg for *Russia's Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914* (Cornell University Press, 2020) and Dr. Marc David Baer for *Sultan's Saviors and Tolerant Turks: Writing Ottoman Jewish History, Denying the Armenian Genocide* (Indiana University Press, 2020); and to Nareg Seferian for his translation of the novel *Mayda* by Srpuhi Dussap (Armenian International Women's Association Press). The 2021 awards are for books with a 2020 publication date.

NAASR's Aronian Book Prizes were established in 2014 by the late Dr. Aronian and Dr. Geoffrey Gibbs, to be awarded annually to outstanding scholarly works in the English language in the field of Armenian Studies and translations from Armenian into English.

NAASR's Director of Academic Affairs Marc A. Mamigonian commented that "this year's prize-winning books — in a year with a number of very valuable publications also worthy of attention — really reflect the diversity of Armenian studies and its inextricable relationship with other fields such as Russian studies, Ottoman & Turkish studies, and Feminist studies to name just three. I think that Dr. Aronian, with her own diverse interests, would be pleased."

Stephen Badalyan Riegg is assistant professor of history at Texas A&M University. *Russia's Entangled Embrace*, his first book, examines the complex relationship between the Russian imperial state and the Armenians who lived in the empire and in areas that over the course of the long nineteenth century would come under Russian control. In doing so, Riegg explores, at the meeting point of territoriality and religion, the "dramatic vicissitudes of policy and perception [that] characterized Russo-Armenian ties" in this period. The author examines the Armenian case as a vehicle to explore Russia's colonization of the South Caucasus and to disentangle the "complex processes by which imperial Russia mobilized certain groups into loyal minorities."

Via email, Riegg wrote, "It is a true honor to learn that my book is a winner of the Dr. Sona Aronian Award. My sincere gratitude goes to the members of the selection committee and the esteemed NAASR organization, which is a model of how to bridge the gap between the public and academe." Riegg commented that "the work of historians remains as important today as ever. We must resist the illusory search for 'the truth' in history; instead, we must embrace the fact that the past was no less complicated than our present."

Baer is professor of international history at the London School of Economics and Political Science. *Sultan's Saviors and Tolerant Turks* provides both the history and analysis of the mythology and stereotypes of Ottoman and Turkish philo-Semitism, and how members of the Jewish community in Turkey and certain scholars leveraged this mythology in the service of denial of the Armenian Genocide. Baer adopts a long historical perspective as he sets out to answer the questions, "How can we understand that group's identification and alliance with the perpetrators and their propagation of denial? What emotional world or affective disposition compels them to take this public stand?"

Baer responded to the news of the prize by email, commenting, "I am greatly honoured to receive this prestigious award from your organisation. It is much-appreciated acknowledgement of my effort integrating the histories of Jews and Armenians, genocide recognition and genocide denial."

Seferian is a doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech's

School of Public and International Affairs in the Washington, D.C., area. His dissertation will focus on the province of Syunik and geographical imaginations in flux following the emergence of new borders after the Second Artsakh War. The translation prize awarded to Seferian for Dussap's ground-breaking feminist novel *Mayda*, first published in Constantinople in 1883, recognizes not only the excellence of the English-language version but also the enormous historical significance of making available what is one of the earliest novels in Western Armenian, the first known novel by an Armenian woman, and a landmark in the formulation of an Armenian feminism.

Also deserving acknowledgement is the effort of the Armenian International Women's Association to make this and other important works by Armenian women writers available; and specifically, the role of the volume's editor Dr. Lisa Gulesserian, with Dr. Barbara Merguerian (who wrote a short biography of Dussap for the book), Dr. Joy Renjilian-Burgy, Judith A. Saryan, and Danila Jebejian Terpanjian must be noted, as well as Dr. Valentina Calzolari who wrote the learned introduction.

Seferian commented, "I felt very privileged indeed when I was invited to take on the translation. I owe Barbara Merguerian a special debt of gratitude in this regard. Now I feel doubly privileged to be in the company of past recipients of the award. This publication was in truth a team effort, so a great deal of credit is due to the hard-working committee at AIWA. The dedication of AIWA members and supporters is exemplary. I hope our work together reflects Dr. Aronian's hopes and expectations in establishing this award. God bless her memory."

Authors or publishers wishing to submit books for consideration for future Aronian Prizes may contact NAASR Director of Academic Affairs Marc A. Mamigonian at marc@naasr.org

Michael Minassian's *A Matter of Timing*: Poetic Meditations on Time and Place

MEDITATIONS, from page 14

Minassian was born in New York City but taught school for many years in Texas where he currently resides. The passage of time weighs heavily on the poet — the state of things as perceived first in childhood and later as he ages. In "Along the West Texas Highway," his meditation extends to the act of writing itself, cleverly set against an unchanging Texan sky. In this case, he alludes to the act of writing inside one's head, where one composes lines and tries to piece together meaning while multitasking or involved in some other activity:

"I'm writing a poem
inside my mind
but stall after every line
like an old typewriter
with a busted
carriage and keys.

I keep expecting
the sky to change,
but nothing breaks
the grey monotony,
not even falling words
buffeting the car
with me inside."

child, he makes the reader privy to some of urban superstitions and habits that make city life so rich: "...we always sat in the last car/so we could see/what was behind us, /from where we had come." Minassian *files* mind you wears "cowboy hat/short pants and empty holster." On another occasion riding the MTA, he spots a nun, and ignoring her crucifix, buries his head in his father's shirt: "*She's a witch*, I trembled." It's also on the subway that he learns to identify pregnant women and models alike, one in particular "her face as elaborately/made up as a kabuki *onnagata*."

In "Life During Plague Time," the wonderful line: "The rain falling this morning/smells like the bottom of the sky." Referring to the "plague tradition" during the Middle Ages of artists representing skeletons holding hands with the nobility, Minassian lets loose his inner angst and otherwise controlled poetic emotions: "I'm overcome by a desire to amputate tradition,/torture the past,/and terrorize the present,/tossing manifestos, dreams,/ and libidos like bombs," before the equally quixotic ending, alpha to his

opening omega: "Some books are written backwards/we know how they end/but not how they begin."

But it's Minassian the poet of nature who remains when one has fully considered to forty-four poems in this freshman anthology. There's a prosaically beautiful "Friday Afternoon":

Blue sky, white clouds
the sky a noun

Cloud verbs,
Birds like commas—


That floating leaf
The end of the week.

And finally, "Padre Island," where the mood turns decidedly Zen: "Sand glistens, /footprints crisscross/boardwalk to beach...To paint the wind/I must first look/For empty space." It's an empty space, one might add, that we all face daily while getting on with the business we call life.

The books is available on Amazon.

A Matter of Timing

Winner of the Poetry Society of Texas
Catherine Case Lubbe Prize



Michael Minassian

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CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

NEW YORK

OCTOBER 15 — Save the Date! The Tekeyan Cultural Association Greater New York Chapter is celebrating its diamond anniversary with a gala. Details to follow.

.....

Giorgos Moleskis: *This love is kin to me, that creates bread from the stone*

MOLESKIS, from page 14

These verses are from the poem “Great was the Moon,” which was written soon after the war of 1974 in Cyprus. At that time my village Lysi was occupied by the Turkish army and we were forced to leave our houses and become refugees. Leaving the house, you were born and grow up, with all the images of people who lived there, the stories, the memories, the feelings and the dreams that are associated with it, is tragic. These feelings and these ideas I tried to express in that poem. As far as I know, this subject is common in Armenian poetry, as a result of the historical experiences of the people, which are very similar to those of Greek and Cypriot people. Gevorg Emin wrote very expressive poems on that subject. In 1980 I translated and publish some of them in a literary magazine in Cyprus.

It is true that the situation in today’s world does not live much space for hope and dreams. Wars, refugees, poverty, leaders with totalitarian behaviour, the climate change. In a way we live the death of ideologies. There is no much space for dreams and heroes, but we don’t have other way than to dream and hope for a better world.

When I was a teenager, poets had a special status in Soviet Armenia. They were recognized and greeted on the streets. I am sure you remember that being studied in Soviet Union. How was it in Cyprus and how is it now?

I think that historically Armenian people respected their poets, writers, composers, painters, the creators of a culture that could express the identity of the nation against all kinds of interventions. An example for that is the creator of the Armenian alphabet, Mesrop Mashtots, was sanctified. The situation in Russia during the Soviet period was, I think, different. Some poets were widely published and promoted by the media, so they enjoyed a special status and they were recognized in the streets, others couldn’t publish their works. But this is a long story to analyse. The situation in Cyprus was never like that. Poets were not public figures. Only after many years of writing and publishing their works they get a kind of public recognition.

Armenian poet Paruyr Sevak in his poem “A Moment of Doubt” says: “If I really believed, / That my song can benefit you, / I would arm you with poems like an army! / But what’s the use of sitting down and writing some poems?And that the poem even becomes a weapon, / Where is

the hand that voluntarily takes up arms?...”

Do you also have such moments of doubt? Do you think that we should consider a poem a kind of weapon or something that can benefit people?

When I was young, I tended to see poetry as a kind of weapon that could contribute to the change of the word. Now I think of it more as a way of communicating with people with whom we share the same views and ideas. At the same time, I believe poetry opens new ways to express our feelings and ideas about the world we live, about life and share them with the people, hoping that this is a gesture that will have some effect.

Reading your poetry also makes the readers know the problems and troubles of Cypriots in the 20th-21st centuries. I loved very much the poem “Our Dead Zone” presenting the sad reality of divided Cyprus. Today in South Caucasus the big powers try to make Artsakh a new Cyprus.

This Dead Zone is a deep wound on the island of Cyprus, which affects both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. It is a hard reality, with its bloody history laying on the surface. This gives to it a kind of symbolic meaning as well, which I tried to express in that poem. Unfortunately, we see this happening today in Artsakh and other places of the word, with the great powers of our times thinking always about their interests and how they will sell more weapons, for the benefit of their war industries.

You try to build a dialogue between Greek and Turkish poets of Cyprus. Does it work?

I believe that such a dialogue is very important in our situation. Poetry, as a means of expressing one’s inner feelings and ideas, can contribute a lot to this dialogue. To promote this idea, I translated and published poems from 17 Turkish Cypriot poets in an anthology with the title *Contemporary Turkish Cypriot Poets: An Attempt to Communicate*. The book was published in 2010 in Athens and it was very well received by people of literature in both sides. I also wrote several poems in which I try to create a dialog with Turkish Cypriot poets, to speak about peace and friendship. Some of these poems were translated into Turkish language and published in newspapers and literary magazines in Cyprus and in Turkey. Based on that, I can say that this dialogue works between people who share the same ideas.

Yes, in your poem “Letter to Fikret Demirağ,” a Turkish Cypriot poet, you

wrote: “We are getting poorer, our songs are getting poorer, / we no longer write like we did, we have nothing to say.” What about now?

Fikret Demirağ is, probably, the best Turkish Cypriot poet. We were good friends and several times we travelled to Turkey and other countries to participate in poetry festivals and other meetings. Unfortunately, he died eleven years ago, at the age of 70. In his poetry he speaks about the war as a tragedy of all Cypriot people, he speaks about peace and friendship. In the years that follow the Turkish invasion and the partition of the island there were some periods of hope for a solution of the problem. These hopes are becoming less and less as time paces.

The Armenian readers know you due to Gevorg Emin’s translation of your *My Stone Love (Armenia)* poetic cycle. It begins with such words: “This love is kin to me, / that creates bread from the stone... that squeezes art, / colors, sounds / and eternity...”

How was your interest toward Armenia begun?

The best way to get to know a country is through its people. This is what happened to me. In Moscow, as back as 1974, I met my future wife, an Armenian girl studying classical philology at the Lomonosov University. We were married in 1979 and since then we travelled many times to Yerevan, I met her relatives, other people, who were friends of the family, I heard their stories. Stories from people who faced war end exile in their childhood, stories about their struggle to survive and keep the memory of lost people and places alive. Thus, my interest in the country, its history, its culture and literature grow. Eventually I saw similarities in the historical fates of Armenia, Greece and Cyprus. This is how the poetic cycle “My Stone Love” was written, the first parts during a visit to Yerevan and the rest in Moscow in 1978.

You also wrote a poem “Letter to Armenian Poet Gevorg Emin.” Please tell the story of its creation and if you received a respond of your letter.

I met Gevorg Emin first in Moscow, in a meeting with Armenian friends of my wife’s family and we became friends. We were meeting when he was coming to Moscow or when I was going to Yerevan. I remember, I was one of the participants in a three hours’ live program dedicated to his poetry by the first television channel in Moscow, and when he visited Cyprus, on an invitation by

the Armenian community, I presented his poetry in an event dedicated to him. Gevorg Emin translated “My Stone Love” into Armenian and published it in the magazine *Sovetakan Grakanutiun* (Soviet Literature) in November 1981. From time to time we were writing letters to each other. So, when I heard the news about that terrible earthquake in Spitak on December 7, 1988 I was deeply moved by sad feelings, feelings of pain for the people and their tragedy. A few days later, on December 15, I wrote a rather long poem, consisting of four parts, talking about Armenia, its culture and its tragic history. The poem was written in the form of a letter, addressed to Gevorg Emin and it was published in the Cypriot literary magazine *Nea Epochi* (New Era) in December 1988. Later I sent the magazine to Gevorg Emin with a rough translation of the poem in Russian. He translated it into Armenian and published it in “Hnchak” newspaper, on January 15, 1994.

Are you in touch with Armenian communities of Cyprus and Greece?

I have some friends from the Armenian community of Cyprus. With regard to Greece, I met some people in Facebook, after the publication of my book “David of Sassoon” by a publishing house in Athens.

By the way, from what language was this translation done?

I read *David of Sassoon* in Russian, during my studies in Moscow. Then I read it in two different English translations. The idea of translating it to Greek language came from my mother-in-law Bella Gulakyan. Her wish to do this translation was great and she was often asking me about that. Then we spent many hours reading it. She was reading the Armenian text, so I could listen the tone of the work and I was reading the Russian version making notes on the margins of the book about things I should take into consideration. Working on the translation I, also, had the help of my wife, Nona Gulakyan-Moleski, whom I used to bother often with my questions and my readings of the translation. Then I had the help of my friend Mariam Suchanova-Foukara, granddaughter of the great Armenian painter Alexander Bazhbeuk-Melikyan, daughter of the painters Alexander Sukhanov and Lavinia Bazhbeuk-Melikyan, who also did the beautiful and very expressive drawings, which are published in the book. The book was published in Athens by the Vakhikon Publishing House in July 2021.

Medz Yeghern Through History

HISTORY, from page 14

at the Vatican, and they had jointly issued a statement, which included the sentence “the Armenian Genocide which began the century, was the prologue to the horrors that would follow.” Therefore, *Medz Yeghern* and Genocide were understood to be synonymous.

On the other hand, a group of Turkish intellectuals translated *Medz Yeghern* as “Great Catastrophe” in the English version of the apology statement they released in 2008. This was broadly in line with what the Erdogan regime tried to do afterwards, Dr. Matiossian pointed out.

The Turkish dictator offered condolences during the 2014 Genocide commemoration, which again were “misconstrued as a formulaic expression of sympathy, like any stated during a funeral, with no acknowledgement of the Genocide.”

Though U.S. President Ronald Reagan in 1981 referred to the Genocide, much to the delight and appreciation of the American Armenian community, he later “walked back from this symbolic statement.” And President Barack Obama used the term *Medz Yeghern* 17 times in eight years, even though during his presidential campaign he had declared he would recognize the “Genocide.” He never did.

Matiossian pointed out that *yeghern* in Armenian is a synonym for genocide as seen in a short story by acclaimed science fiction writer Robert Sheckley, whose short story, “Shall We Have a Little Talk,” was translated into Armenian and published in Yerevan in 1984. The translation used the word genocide as *yeghern* “in its generic use” without referring to any particular event. This book about interplanetary exploration won the Nebula prize in 1965.

During the question-and-answer session,



Prof. Vartan Matiossian

a query was made about a 2015 prayer written on the Genocide Centennial where the term *Tseghasbanoutyun* (genocide) was used instead of *Medz Yeghern*. Matiossian reflected perhaps the term was used “not to help denialist’s arguments that *Medz Yeghern* does not mean Genocide.” This permitted others “to impose the meaning that they intend” instead of the real sense of *Medz Yeghern*.

Following the lecture, Professor of Christian Philosophy Siobhan Nash-Marshall at Manhattanville College who was among the large crowd present, praised Dr. Matiossian’s book for “his contribution to understanding what we are talking about, and as the truest way to find the abuse and the denial of history” because she declared strongly that “there is no question that the *Medz Yeghern* took place.”



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Alice Bezjian's Walnut-Date Ma'amoul Lebanese Cookies

Alice Bezjian's Walnut-Date Ma'amoul Lebanese Cookies

The Armenian Film Foundation was established in 1979 as a non-profit, educational and cultural organization dedicated to the documentation and preservation of Armenian heritage in multi-media formats. Its primary aim "continues to be to inspire pride in, and world-wide recognition of, the Armenian people and their contributions to society, thereby fostering human dignity and enhancing understanding and goodwill between present and future generations of Armenians and other cultures."

One of the Armenian Film Foundation's Cultural Heritage Videos showcases The Art of Traditional Armenian Cooking by renowned chef and author Alice Bezjian. Author of the bestselling The Complete Armenian Cookbook (published in 1987), Mrs. Bezjian, who passed away in 2003, shares her cherished cooking secrets with a step-by-step demonstration of traditional Armenian foods. The 280+ pages of her cookbook includes family recipes spanning back 70-80 years, along with her own favorites from family and friends for over 40 years. In the video, her recipes include selections from hors d'oeuvres to main dishes, breads, and desserts. Chefs Zov Karamardian, Hagop Bezjian and Maurice Sabbagh also share step-by-step demonstrations of their recipes (<http://www.armenianfilm.org/drupal/films/art-of-traditional-armenian-cookin>).



Alice Bezjian

Mrs. Alice Bezjian was born in Cairo, Egypt of Armenian parents. "The family moved to Asia Minor for a short time and later to Syria, finally settling down in Beirut, Lebanon. At an early age, Mrs. Bezjian was introduced to the joy of cooking by her maternal grandfather. He was a widely traveled man, who had been around the world at a time when traveling was neither easy nor fashionable. He used to bring new recipes from faraway places and cook large dinners for the whole family. He often said that cooking was fun, but the greatest pleasure was sharing one's creative dishes with appreciative friends."

In Beirut, Mrs. Bezjian took cooking lessons from the best known chefs in the country. Later, she gave cooking lessons and taught her students how to cook and present food in creative and appetizing ways. In 1964, she moved to Los Angeles with her family, where she and her husband started a gourmet delicatessen store. The store was extremely successful, and became a landmark for many gourmet cooks and food lovers. Mrs. Bezjian was always at her store, graciously dispensing recipes and culinary expertise with her customers. Sunset Magazine and New West wrote articles about the store, and her recipes were published in those magazines. She also went to the store frequently to see her old customers and exchange ideas and recipes before she passed away (<http://www.abrilbooks.com/alice-bezjian>).

Ma'amoul (also spelled m'aamoul, m'amul, m'aamul) is an Arabic filled butter cookie made with semolina flour. The filling can be made with dried fruits like figs or dates or nuts such as pistachios, walnuts, and occasionally almonds. Ma'amoul is usually made during the Easter holiday, and a few days before Eid (then stored to be served with strong Arabic coffee and chocolate to guests who come during the holiday). The Mizrahi Jewish version of ma'amoul differs from the Levantine or Turkish versions by being made with pure white flour and no semolina, today this variation is eaten in Syrian and Egyptian Jewish communities in Israel and the Diaspora.

A more elaborate version known as Karabij (Kerebiç in Turkish) is used on

special occasions. For this, nut-filled ma'amoul balls are stacked in a pyramid and served with a white cream called Naatiffe made from egg whites, sugar syrup and soapwort (Saponaria officinalis). It is popular in Syria, Lebanon, and other Levantine countries.

The semolina dough for these cookies is an abridged version of Mrs. Bezjian's recipe from The Complete Armenian Cookbook, and is available at the "This Is How She Does It" food blog (<https://1.shortstack.com/5vWPbq>). These cookies may be made in the shape of balls, domed or flattened cookies. They can either be decorated by hand or made in special wooden molds called tabe.

INGREDIENTS:

Dough/crust:

3 cups semolina (fine)
3 tablespoons flour
1 cup unsalted butter, melted
3 tablespoons orange blossom water
1 package active dry yeast
1/2 cup warm water

Filling:

1 pound Medjool dates, pitted and smashed into a paste
1 cup walnuts, coarsely chopped
1/3 cup powdered sugar
1-2 tablespoons orange blossom water
1 teaspoon cinnamon

PREPARATION:

To prepare the dough, in a mixing bowl, combine the semolina, flour, melted butter and orange blossom water. Knead well until the mixture holds together. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

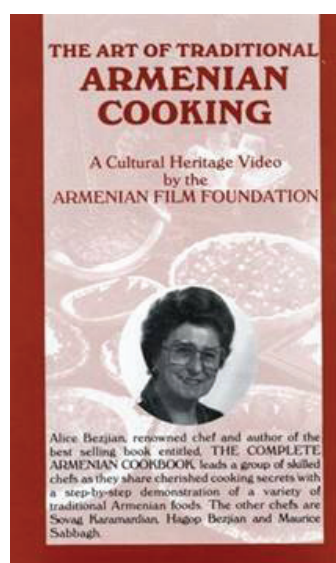
The next day, in a small bowl, bloom the yeast in the water. Then add the yeast mixture to the flour mixture that you prepared the day before, kneading well. Set aside.

In a separate bowl, combine the filling ingredients together, mixing well. Set aside.

Divide the dough into 1" to 1 1/2" balls. To form the ma'amoul, place a ball in the palm of one hand. With the forefinger of your other hand, press an opening into the dough. Continue turning and pressing against your palm with your finger until the hole is enlarged enough to hold about a teaspoon of the filling.

Pinch off a gumball-sized piece of the filling and put it inside the hole. Press the edges of the dough together and roll between your palms to seal and shape it. Gently flatten the cookie and place on a baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough and filling. Bake at 350F for about 20 minutes until golden (but not brown). Transfer to wire racks to cool. Dust with powdered sugar and store for up to one week.

For a story about this famous shortbread cookie, see: Maamoul: An Ancient Cookie That Ushers In Easter And Eid In The Middle East at: <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2017/04/11/522771745/maamoul-an-ancient-cookie-that-ushers-in-easter-and-eid-in-the-middle-east>



The Art of Armenian Cooking
A Cultural Heritage Video
Dr. J. Michael Hagopian (filmmaker)
Armenian Film Foundation
Released: 1975
Time: 60 minutes

Go to: <http://www.armenianfilm.org/drupal/films/art-of-traditional-armenian-cooking>

All films (on DVD format) cost \$19.95 except Supplement to The Forgotten Genocide, which costs \$14.95. For other films available purchase (on DVD format), go to <http://armenianfilm.org/drupal/affstore>

To purchase Alice Bezjian's The Complete Armenian Cookbook, go to:

<https://www.amazon.com/COMPLETE-ARMENIAN-COOKBOOK-INCLUDING-INTERNATIONAL/dp/B000YI8NYI>

<http://www.abrilbooks.com/complete-armenian-cookbook-the.html>

<https://agbubookstore.org/products/pre-order-here-the-complete-armenian-cookbook>

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A legacy of excellence in documentary filmmaking on Armenian heritage and the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

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COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

Is Karabakh Doomed?



By Edmond Y. Azadian

A political rift between Armenia and Karabakh may prove extremely dangerous, with unprecedented results, while intensive exchanges are taking place between Armenia and Turkey on the one hand, and between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the other.

And this, within the context of the US-Russia standoff over Ukraine.

President Joe Biden's advice to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to open the borders with Armenia may have helped begin a new chapter between Armenia and Turkey, but Washington's pressure on Russia may adversely impact Armenia, as an unintended result, because Moscow, in its massive mobilization on the Ukrainian border and with a prospective faceoff with Washington, maybe forced to forgo nuanced politics with its Armenian ally, having no time or appetite to calibrate with the latter.

While President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan continues to persist in his demand for opening a corridor through Zangezur, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk had reassured Yerevan that opening communication lines and railways would be under each respective country's sovereign control. That assurance was also given in a statement by the Russian Foreign Ministry. However, during a recent inquiry by a journalist, Mr. Overchuk maintained an ominous silence over the issue. Also, this month, Russian's Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko revealed that a package agreement was on its final stages. "Within the framework of this mechanism, important preparatory work has been done to restore both railway and automobile roads in the region. Currently, a single package is being finalized. This approach will ensure the sustainability of the decisions," added Rudenko. Again, no word was uttered on the control of those roads, which renders suspect Russia's intentions.

During the context of these international developments a controversy arose between the authorities of Armenia and Karabakh. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's position on Karabakh has never been consistent. He once declared that he did not have a mandate to negotiate on behalf of Karabakh, since the people in that enclave had never voted for him. And then, on another occasion, he claimed that "Karabakh is Armenia. Period," infuriating Azerbaijanis and providing a casus belli to them.

On December 24, 2021, during an online press conference, he washed his hands of the problem entirely and declared that the destiny of Karabakh had been predetermined by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations Security Council and that it was beyond his power to change anything. In the meantime, he did not miss the opportunity to blame the previous administrations for their mismanagement of negotiations.

The historic truth is that, as corrupt as the previous leaders were, they managed — or were lucky enough — to avoid a war such as the catastrophic one that took place in 2020. Pashinyan stated that in 2016, three packages of proposals were placed on the negotiating table, which precluded a reference to the interim status of Karabakh. The document transferred the issue of the interim status to the UN Security Council, where a decision had to be made on the legal-practical application of the temporary status. Thus, Pashinyan noted, the UN Security Council would reach a predictable solution on the interim status, as "Nagorno Karabakh is mentioned as part of Azerbaijan in two UN Security Council resolutions on the Karabakh conflict adopted in 1993."

Pashinyan concluded his remarks on the topic by stating: "I consider this a disaster in the negotiation process, because it is obvious that the UN Security Council will make all the decisions according to the logic of its own resolutions on the Karabakh conflict, where Nagorno-Karabakh was recognized as part of Azerbaijan."

This position may give some comfort to a segment of society in Armenia that favors the philosophy "let's get rid of Karabakh and have a comfortable life in Armenia," but it spells only a disaster for the future of Armenia. That position was also held by certain commentators and further enunciated by

the supporters of the current regime, but that policy could only trigger a domino effect, as proved by President Aliyev's demand on Syunik and also in the near future, the entire territory of Armenia.

Predictably, a storm of fury developed not only among the ranks of the opposition but particularly in Karabakh itself. President of Karabakh Republic Arayik Harutyunyan issued a statement refuting Pashinyan's stand and defined his position in eight different points which start with the following assertion: "The full recognition of the rights of the Armenians of Artsakh to self-determination is not subject to reservation and concession; the exclusive owner of this issue is the Armenians of Artsakh. Therefore, only the authorities of the Artsakh Republic are authorized to speak on behalf of the people of Artsakh." A similar statement followed from the Karabakh parliament.

We have to be reminded that unlike the tripartite ceasefire signed in 2020 by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia, the 1994 ceasefire was signed by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Artsakh, which gave legitimacy to the authorities of Artsakh. This inclusion of a semi-recognized entity may resemble, in certain aspects, the treaties signed between the US federal government and different Native American tribes, which do not enjoy international recognition. However, the US government, to this day, admits the validity of those treaties.

When Artsakh became a signatory of the ceasefire and the UN Security Council recognized that fact in stating that Armenian forces of Karabakh [not the Republic of Armenia] must withdraw from Azerbaijani territories, Baku realized that down the road it may be dealing with a legal entity. This is why it manipulated the situation to leave out Karabakh as a negotiating party.

Former President Robert Kocharyan, hailing from Karabakh, believed that he could represent the enclave, along with the Republic of Armenia, during the negotiations. That proved to be a fateful mistake.

In Pashinyan's formulation, he was envisaging a Cyprus-style solution, where ethnically-segregated communities would share an internationally-recognized territory. That solution was re-

fused outright by the international community; after all, it has not worked for Cyprus and would be no different for Karabakh.

The standoff between Yerevan and Stepanakert has some similarities with the Palestinian situation where the rift between the Palestinian Authority and the Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip gives some comfort to the occupying power, especially when Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, serves as a security apparatus that quells any foreseeable Intifada.

Thus, in light of the above situation, it is not surprising that Pashinyan's position has gained more support in Azerbaijan than in Armenia, as the following quote will ascertain. Azerbaijani commentator Orkhan Amashov, writing in Azer News, states, "Armenian society is still regurgitating and cogitating some of the statements made by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. ... Despite this, the uproar in Armenia is not inexplicable, as it was the first time that an Armenian leader, in a sharp contrast with his predecessors, admitted the fundamental hopelessness of the stance of Yerevan within the protracted negotiations. ... The Armenian prime minister's confessional admissions are not out of kilter with Baku's stance."

Pashinyan's abdication of Armenia's responsibility for Karabakh's status and future will fuel Mr. Aliyev's hopes that his forthcoming negotiations with Armenian authorities will be a breeze.

Although these developments brought about a somber mood in Armenia's political atmosphere, some commentators, like Stepan Krikoryan, came up with a positive statement, seeing a blessing in disguise. Indeed, they believe this will give a chance to the Karabakh authorities to have their individual voice heard and independent policy shaped, thereby becoming an international entity. This may seem a far-fetched possibility. One thing is certain: Karabakh's people are on their own. They may become the Rohingyas of the Caucasus, causing calls for help from many quarters, but not benefitting from any benevolent actions.





COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Patriarch of Istanbul Spreads Falsehoods About Covid, Under The Guise of Religion

In October 2021, the Patriarch of Istanbul, Sahag Mashalian, delivered at the Holy Hovhannes Church in the Kumkape district of Istanbul a very strange sermon full of conspiracies and fear-mongering statements. His anti-scientific and irresponsible words were intended to deter his parishioners from getting vaccinated against the coronavirus, thus endangering their lives.

In his sermon, the patriarch quoted from Chapter 13, Verses 16-18 of the Book of Revelation in the Bible. I am not a theologian, but I believe he is misusing verses from the Bible to spread falsehoods and disinformation. The Book of Revelation, an enigmatic work by Apostle John, has many interpretations, but linking his writings to a virus that surfaced two thousand years after his death is senseless and dangerous, particularly in Turkey which has the sixth highest number of deaths in the world from the coronavirus.

The patriarch began his sermon by referring to the following passage of the Book of Revelation: The beast “forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.... That number is 666.”

Here are excerpts from the Patriarch’s bizarre sermon which I have translated into English:

“And whoever will not have this seal [of the beast] will not be able to do any business, will not be able to travel, [and] will not even be able to eat bread.... Therefore, placing a technology chip in our body, on our hand or our forehead, we understand that it is the symbol of perfect control. This means that wherever you go, they will know where you are. Whatever information exists about you will be in it [the chip]: your illnesses, your relationships, your condition, [and] your bank accounts. It will all be in it. Your health will be in it. And without it, you will not be able to do anything. And, of course, this will be presented to us as progress, as a technological advantage. And sometimes we will willingly take this chip.

“These are no longer theories. In certain European countries, this system has started. What will we do? What will we be? When the time comes, they will compel us to have such chips in which it’s written 666 or the name of that son of Satan. What will we do? Christians have always spoken about this topic as a musing that it will happen in the future. People in the future should think about

it. But it has come now. It came to our doors. In a few years, at the latest in the year 2030, this development will become a reality.

“What will we Christians do? Our church leaders, the Primates, should speak about this issue which they do not. But the faithful at the bottom of the church speak because the prophecy is so explicit, the word of God is so clear that it is spoken about. And what will happen when the leaders of the church, the Primates, those with the rank of Bishop do not talk about it, when the people at the bottom speak about it, then this will be spoken about in an exaggerated and redundant manner? The church has a doctrine called eschatology. It is the knowledge of the last days. In our faith we say that Christ shall return. This is an integral part of our faith. Therefore, the doctrine of the church, in a clear manner, should elucidate this topic to the Christian communities.

“Christian leaders should get together and speak about this issue, while it is still early. After these things happen, it will be too late. We should now come together and talk. Church and bishopric meetings should be held about this topic now, while we are still free and have the ability. In a few years, we will not have that ability. As a Patriarch, I call upon my people and church leaders to get interested in this topic and blow the horn. Because in the Bible, for us, for Christian leaders, there is a dreadful statement. By the mouth of prophet Ezekiel God says: I appointed you a watchman over this people. If you see the sword, the danger, and do not sound the alarm, and the sword comes, then their blood will reach you. But if you sound the alarm and say that the sword is coming, take precautions, and if they do not do that, the sword comes, then you are free of their blood. Therefore, for Christian leaders, a topic that is redundant or exaggerated, when Christian leaders come together and speak about a topic that is considered shameful, can speak about it. I commend those who listen to us and my people within the reach of my voice: the day has come! We can no longer postpone the eschatology. We are obligated to apply the healthy doctrine in our days, spread the faith and acquire the means to see what we can do....”

To show that the Patriarch’s alarming words about vaccination are not based on religion, all we have to do is refer to the statement issued by the Catholicos of All Armenians, Karekin II, about the vaccine.

According to a recent dispatch by Azatutyun.am, “The Armenian Apostolic Church dismissed religious reasons given by its believers refusing to be vaccinated against the coronavirus.” The Church’s Supreme Spiritual Council stressed that “vaccination does not pose a spiritual danger.”

The Church also announced that Catholicos Karekin II and many other clergymen have been vaccinated.

I hope Armenians will listen to the advice of the Catholicos and not that of the Patriarch of Istanbul regarding the coronavirus vaccine to save their own lives as well as the lives of those around them.

Armenian Americans Will Never Forget Bob Dole

By Stephan Pechdimaldji

FOR MILLIONS OF AMERICANS, Bob Dole was the epitome of American exceptionalism, a leader who represented and reflected the qualities that make the United States the envy of the world. He was part of the Greatest Generation who served the United States for close to eighty years with distinction and honor. From the battlefields of World War II to the halls of the US Senate, Dole left an indelible mark on US history that continues to reverberate to this day. A politician and statesman from a bygone era, it is one of the reasons why there has been a cacophony of voices honoring him and the life he lived in the wake of his passing earlier this month.

But for thousands of Armenian Americans, Dole was also something else. He was a friend and champion of our causes, particularly the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. As a grandson to survivors of the Armenian Genocide, I always wondered why a US Senator from Kansas would be such an unyielding advocate for an issue that had little to do with his state or constituents. But then I learned how Dr. Hampar Kelikian, a proud Armenian American surgeon, did a great deal for him after he was wounded in World War II. He performed seven operations and refused to accept any payment. It was during this period that Dole learned about the Armenian Genocide because Kelikian was an Armenian Genocide survivor himself.

Through this budding friendship with Kelikian, Dole learned about the first genocide of the twentieth century,

when more than 1.5 million Armenians were systematically exterminated by the Ottoman Turks, an event that Turkey still denies to this day. That experience had a lasting impact on Dole that would help inform his political beliefs as a US senator and US presidential candidate. As a public official, he made it clear that America needed to be on the right side of history. His fight for recognition of the Armenian Genocide culminated in 1990 when he sponsored and tried to pass Senate Joint Resolution 212, legislation that would properly recognize the Armenian Genocide by the United States, but faced strong opposition from Turkey, President George H.W. Bush and Robert Byrd, the president pro tempore of the US Senate.

Taking his fight to the Senate floor, Dole made an impassioned speech where he said, “For the one million Armenians in this country, the wounds have been open

AFTER A DEVASTATING EARTHQUAKE STRUCK ARMENIA IN DECEMBER 1988, SENATOR DOLE AND HIS WIFE, ELIZABETH, TRAVELED TO ARMENIA TO SEE THE DAMAGE FIRSTHAND WHILE SPEARHEADING RELIEF EFFORTS.

for almost 75 years, and the hurt is not going to be able to heal because the world has not faced up to the truth of the suffering of the Armenian people in this period of 1915-1923 ... because the world stood by and did nothing.”

The resolution was ultimately rejected but it did not deter Dole from using his position in government to raise awareness around the Armenian Genocide and other crimes against humanity. It is why Dole became a primary advocate for Bosnians during the 1990s when he helped support President Bill Clinton’s unpopular plan to send American troops to Bosnia to prevent ethnic cleansing in the region. He saw what was happening and did not want history repeating itself with another Armenian Genocide. Those deeply rooted beliefs played a significant role in the senator’s formulation of American

foreign policy towards Bosnia from 1992—1995.

And despite his best efforts, Dole was not successful in getting the United States to recognize the Armenian Genocide while serving as a public official. However, his advocacy did pave the way for President Joe Biden’s recognition of the Armenian Genocide earlier this year, calling it long overdue and a proud and historically significant moment for the United States. In many ways, US recognition of the Armenian Genocide does not happen without Bob Dole.

Dole’s support for Armenian-American issues also went beyond genocide recognition. After a devastating earthquake struck Armenia in December 1988, Senator Dole and his wife, Elizabeth, traveled to Armenia to see the damage firsthand while spearheading relief efforts and securing millions of dollars in US aid.

And when Azerbaijan launched pogroms against Armenians living Sumgait, Kirovabad, and Baku in 1990, a harbinger of Azerbaijan’s unprovoked war against Armenia last year over Nagorno-Karabagh, Senator Dole won congressional approval for the US government to allocate nearly \$5 million to help private voluntary organizations resettle thousands of displaced Armenians.

For me personally, Dole was my unsung hero. He did more for Armenian-Americans than any other public servant in US history. While many politicians push for such causes in search of votes and money, Dole did it because he truly believed it. A rare and diminishing commodity in Washington, DC today.

While I never met the Senator in person, we did correspond over the years through letters and email where I would take every opportunity to thank him for his service to our country and the Armenian American community. He was a larger-than-life public official who was authentic and vulnerable at the same time. He stood for his principles and was a champion for the underdog. In many ways, his disability made him stronger, not weaker. Armenian-Americans lost a great and loyal friend. He will be missed.

(Stephan Pechdimaldji is a communications strategist who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. He’s a first-generation Armenian American and grandson to survivors of the Armenian Genocide.)



Women's Support Center Celebrates 10th Anniversary

LOS ANGELES — It was a star-studded program, as well as a festive gathering, on Saturday, December 4, 2021 when approximately 100 guests celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Women's Support Center. This event was hosted by benefactors Zarig and Jack Youredjian at their home in Toluca Lake.

The guests consisted mainly of activists, Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) members, community leaders as well as Women's Support Center supporters.

This event raised more than \$100,000.

Antranig Kasbarian, trustee of the Tufenkian Foundation, served as master of ceremonies, representing the Tufenkian Foundation and, together with AIWA and



Jack and Zarig Youredjian Benefactors Hosts

the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), were the founders and driving forces behind the creation of the Women's Support Center. Kasbarian stressed the positive role played by then-US Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch, who displayed strong support and appreciation for Armenia, its people, and the domestic problems they were confronting.

Early on, along with Joan Agajanian Quinn, she encouraged USAID to develop a partnership with AIWA and the Tufenki-

an Foundation, focusing on women's rights and particularly on the problem of domestic violence. At the beginning of the program, Armenian society was still in denial about domestic violence, relegating it as a family matter or ignoring it entirely. Ten years later, among its various accomplishments, the Women's Support Center can proudly state that this issue has been brought irreversibly into public consciousness and today there exists a grudging but growing acceptance both by public officials and civil society.

Nicole Nishanian, president of the LA Affiliate of AIWA, also welcomed the guests and emphasized AIWA's pride in being associated with this program which has brought progressive change to Armenia regarding women.

Kasbarian expressed the regrets he received from the Lilit Makunts, Armenia's new ambassador to the US, who was scheduled to attend, but was unable to do so after being recalled to Armenia following recent escalations of violence on its borders.

Maro Matosian, WSC's founder and executive director, in her presentation reflected on its decade-long journey. "WSC has come a long way in the 10 years since its inception. We were a completely unknown organization and now we are considered the premier domestic violence support center running the only two professional shelters in Armenia. We started with 40 beneficiaries and now we serve annually over 300. We trained and helped create domestic violence support centers, one in each region of Armenia, and now work to standardize our approach for systematic response to the protection of victims of Domestic Violence. In addition, government agencies, including the Ministry for Social Affairs, rely on us as a source of expertise and information on the subject," she said.

Yovanovitch was the keynote speaker and in her presentation, not only focused on

celebrating the impact of the WSC, but emphasized the 30 years of Armenian independence. Yovanovitch stated that "...in fact, next week, is the anniversary of the signing of the Belovezhskoye Accords, which dissolved the Soviet Union, something many of us never thought we'd see. The past three decades have been a consequential time for Armenia. Independence, war, political upheavals, economic struggle, social change, another war. And Armenia still stands. Armenia still thrives. As Armenia has done throughout the ages — and will into the future."

Yovanovitch reported that while she served in Armenia, she traveled constantly, all over the country and met people who kept on going despite the challenges. They wanted a better life for themselves, and most importantly, a better future for their children. These trips were the highlight of her three years in Armenia, she noted.

In 2010, following the tragic murder of a young woman by her husband and mother-in-law, a nucleus of people were finally ready to admit that domestic violence existed in Armenia and that something had to be done. This issue was at the top of her mind and she saw an opening and a part of the solution to a very real problem. The WSC was established in 2010 and, the ambassador noted, has made not only made an important contribution, but has achieved real results. It is saving individuals — women and their children, she added, as well as working at the institutional level to change laws, build budget support, partner with police, and train social workers.

Yovanovitch emphasized that the WSC is at the forefront of the most important thing: changing the way Armenians think

about domestic violence. "Changing that mindset, that somehow it is the women's fault," she stated "and that raising this issue undermines the family, is absolutely crucial. When domestic violence is not accepted in a culture, a woman feels more comfortable



From left Antranig Kasbarian Trustee Tufenkian Foundation, Ani Aivazian AIWA L. A. , Joan Quinn AIWA L. A. Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch, Maro Matosian

standing up for herself; friends, families, neighbors, report it; the police take the action seriously; social services are provided so that the woman and her children have a place to go; the perpetrator is held accountable. Once that cultural shift is made, domestic violence will still be with us, but it will be far less prevalent. Addressing domestic violence strengthens the family; it strengthens the next generation, and that strengthens Armenia."

In conclusion, Yovanovitch expressed her thanks to the Tufenkian Foundation, AIWA and USAID for having the vision and coming together in a public-private partnership to put their collective shoulders to the wheel and make that vision a reality and a success.

Other noted guests included the Hon. Varagdet Pahlavuni, Counsel to Armenia's Consulate General in Armenia and Araksya Karapetyan, Fox TV Newscaster.

Group Teaches Modern Methods to Educators in Armenia, Artsakh

By Tamara Babaian

In August 2021 the Armenians Forward Together (AFT) Forum in Yerevan brought together more than 25 different organizations, including business, nonprofits and governmental agencies, and over 200 individuals interested in sharing about their work and creating new collaborative ties. Participants from eight different countries came together in three days of presentations and workshops, aimed at strengthening Armenia and Artsakh. While the AFT website and social media channels document the Forum's activities and press coverage, this article highlights one volunteer organization, EduArmenia, and ways in which Armenians living in the diaspora contribute their experience and knowledge in a mission to elevate primary and secondary education in Armenia and Artsakh.

Vicky Kherlopian lives in Belmont, Mass. After a distinguished and fulfilling career as a mathematics and ESL teacher, she now works as a Boston University field supervisor, supervising teacher candidates for Elementary Education Certification and Bilingual/ELL Teaching Certification.

Mrs. Kherlopian is also very well-known to the education specialists and teachers all over Armenia as a devoted member of EduArmenia. She shares her wisdom, experience and knowledge of the teaching methodologies and program administration through preparing written materials as well as conducting online seminars over Zoom. Hundreds of teachers from different regions of Armenia and Artsakh get inspired and learn from the work that Vicky and other volunteers put into supporting and enriching the education culture in Armenia.

"It is a great satisfaction to work with our teachers in Armenia and Artsakh," Vicky says. "They are very dedicated and hungry to incorporate global education into

their practice. It is our duty to encourage their enormous hard work and civic responsibility to shape the future generations through excellent education. We need to spark a national conversation about transforming teaching for the 21st century. EduArmenia brings a group of professionals from around the world to promote educational success, professional excellence, and collaborative teaching. These important ideas brought my interests to join EduArmenia to share my experiences and bring my humble contribution to the education system in Armenia."

EduArmenia's founders are Seda Kocharyan, an experienced Social Sciences teacher, and Lilit Mkrtchyan, a professor of History at Yerevan State University, who created EduArmenia in 2018, as a volunteering platform through which experienced educators of Armenia and diaspora can work together on professional development programs. The two work tirelessly in their spare time every day to implement many important initiatives. During the post-war period, the professionalism and devotion of EduArmenia's leaders and volunteers helped lift Armenia's teachers from depression and hopelessness; one of the teachers expressed her admiration, even writing a poem about it.

EduArmenia has volunteers from outside of Armenia: Yeprem Mehranian, Marine Khachadour and Karine Armen from the US, while Talar Partiyan is from the Netherlands. The remote work that became commonplace during the Covid period enabled their close and effective collaboration with the EduArmenia team.

After presenting its work at the AFT Forum, EduArmenia attracted the interest of many Forum participants, including Araksya Gukasova from Moscow, Russia who calls herself "a regular person." In the 1990s, Mrs. Gukasova fled Baku, escaping the ethnic cleansing perpetrated against the Armenian population of the city,

and has made a new life and a career as a teacher of English in Moscow. Araksya writes about the Forum and her volunteer work with EduArmenia: "After the last war I was, like all my nation, miserable and disappointed." After learning that she can find people who share her desire to be useful to the reconstruction of the Motherland at the AFT Forum, "I managed to get to Yerevan and met a lot of interesting, exciting and enthusiastic people. The atmosphere in those days was so positive and friendly. I realized where my competences could yield benefits and I offered my services to some people. Nowadays, I collaborate with a volunteer organization EduArmenia, and lead online seminars about contemporary teaching methods."

"I hope that can be helpful for teachers from Armenia and Artsakh. The priority goal of the country is the task of youth upbringing and education, that is why EduArmenia is doing a great job! I believe we'll do it," says Araksya. All EduArmenia's seminars are free and accessible on their YouTube channel. Watching the lively and warm interaction between the participants, it is impossible not to be moved by their spirit of mutual support, appreciation and desire for learning and positive change.

EduArmenia's presentation at the AFT Forum is available on the AFT YouTube channel among others, that span many domains, from education to community development, healthcare, technology transfer, and digital health. The Armenians Forward Together organizing committee is planning the next Forum in the summer of 2022 in Armenia and is looking to hear from people and organizations interested in meeting new partners and making new collaborative plans together.

(Prof. Tamara Babaian is a co-founder of Armenians Forward Together initiative. She teaches at Bentley University.)