

Yerevan Mayor
Sargsyan
Resigns

By Gayane Saribekian

YEREVAN (azatutyun.am) — Yerevan’s mayor, Hrachya Sargsyan, stepped down on Friday, March 17 after only 15 months in office. Sargsyan gave no clear reason for his resignation when he announced it at a meeting with other senior officials from the municipal administration.

“Now that the [next] elections of the city council are approaching and there is quite good cooperation between the mayor’s office and the government I want to announce my resignation,” he said, adding that he will remain part of Armenia’s ruling “political team.”

The elections of a new municipal council empowered to appoint the mayor are due to be held September. It was not immediately clear whether Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s see MAYOR, page 2



Hrachya Sargsyan takes over as mayor of Yerevan, December 22, 2021



Revealing of the commemorative plaque by Edmond Azadian

Reinauguration of Buenos
Aires’ Tekeyan Center

BUENOS AIRES — On Tuesday, March 14, two activities were held at the Tekeyan Cultural Center of Buenos Aires, Argentina: a press conference and meeting with Edmond Y. Azadian, president of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada; and the reinauguration of the Tekeyan Cultural Center of Buenos Aires.

After the press conference, a plaque was unveiled in memory of Nahabet Nahabetian, a great community activist, benefactor, and leader of the Tekeyan Cultural Association and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party of South America. The newly installed elevator of the building, providing accessibility to the handicapped and elderly, was blessed by

the Locum Tenens of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Argentina and Chile Very Rev. Fr. Aren Shaheenian, Archbishop Kissag Mouradian, and Rev. Fathers Egishe Nazarian, Mesrob Nazarian and Drtad Ohanyan. The modern facility now includes air conditioning in all rooms, and after the interruption of the Covid pandemic, is ready to continue to serve Armenian culture.

Armenian Ambassador to Argentina Hovhannes Virabyan and Fr. Aren Shaheenian spoke on the importance of culture in Armenian national life as a tool for preservation. Azadian took the floor to give the history of the poet Vahan Tekeyan, and the reason why see REINAUGURATION, page 6

West Accused of
Trying to Drive
Wedge Between
Russia, Armenia

MOSCOW (azatutyun.am) — Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused the West on Monday, March 20, of trying to end Russia’s close relationship with Armenia as he met with his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan amid unprecedented friction between Moscow and Yerevan.

“We see undisguised attempts by Western countries to estrange Armenia from Russia ... undermine the regional security architecture while thinking and caring not about the interests of the countries located here but about their own vested geopolitical interests,” he told reporters after their talks in Moscow.

Lavrov also renewed Russian allegations that the Western powers are seeking to hijack Armenian-Azerbaijani agreements brokered by Moscow during and after the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Russian Foreign Ministry similarly claimed last month that



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, right, meets his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan, Moscow, March 20, 2023.

the West wants to “squeeze Russia out of the region” when it reacted to the deployment of 100 or so European Union observers to Armenia’s volatile border with Azerbaijan. By contrast, the Armenian government hailed the deployment, saying that it will reduce the risk of fresh fighting along the border.

Earlier this year, Lavrov rebuked Yerevan for refusing a similar mission offered by the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in November. Armenian leaders have repeatedly accused the Russian-led alliance of failing to defend Armenia against Azerbaijani “military aggression” in breach of the CSTO statutes.

Speaking at a joint news conference with Lavrov, Mirzoyan did not see WEDGE, page 20

Aramice Malkhasian: Chemistry Professor to Saudi Royalty



Prof. Malkhasian receives a plaque from King Abdulaziz University

By Harry Kezelian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

STERLING HEIGHTS, Mich. — Armenians have made quite a name for themselves throughout the centuries and throughout the world for their expertise in science, business, and the arts. Whether in the Middle East, the Russian sphere, or the Western world, Armenians have been bankers to sultans, military advisors to czars, and physicians to senators. Arab rulers since the rise of Islam have valued Armenian advisors for their intelligence and their ability to serve as a bridge between the Western and Eastern societies.

Dr. Aramice Y. S. Malkhasian has followed in those footsteps, recently retiring from an extensive career in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, England, Canada, and the US, as a chemistry professor and research scientist. Among his proudest achievements were his 12 years teaching at King Abdul Aziz University in Saudi Arabia, where he gained the respect of the Saudis and upheld the see MALKHASIAN, page 11

WASHINGTON, DC
Blinken Offers
US Support to
Facilitate Bilateral
Peace



ARMENIA
Painter
Soghomonyan
Exhibits in
Yerevan



MASSACHUSETTS
Boston Area
Concert Funds
Preservation of
Manuscripts





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Forbes Includes Armenian Ucraft Platform in Best Free Website Builders of 2023 List

YEREVAN (ArmenPress) — Forbes magazine has included the Armenian Ucraft website builder in its Best Free Website Builders Of 2023 list alongside GoDaddy, WordPress, Wix, Mailchimp and others.

The top 10 website builders were selected by the Forbes Advisor Small Business team using “product data, strategic methodologies and expert insights.”

Ucraft is a free website builder with a drag-and-drop editor, hosting, CMS and e-commerce functions. You can build and publish a website for free and connect it to your own domain—a function that’s unusual for totally free site builders.

Former, Current Yerevan Municipality Officials Detained

YEREVAN (panorama.am) — The former secretary of the Yerevan Municipality staff, Seyran Mejlumyan, and the acting head of the Architecture and Urban Planning Department, David Dalkakyan, have been detained as part of a criminal probe carried out by the Anti-Corruption Committee, its spokeswoman Marina Ohanjanyan confirmed to Panorama.am on March 21. She promised to provide details later.

Mejlumyan stepped down as staff secretary on March 17 after the resignation of Yerevan Mayor Hrachya Sargsyan.

Earlier on 12 March, Gevorg Simonyan, a former deputy health minister currently serving as vice-mayor of Yerevan, was arrested on charges stemming from what Armenia’s law enforcement authorities called misuse of government funds provided for the fight against Covid-19 in 2020 and 2021.

Water Resources Specialist Warns of Major Amulsar Mining Risks

YEREVAN (panorama.am) — The planned mining at the gold deposit in Amulsar mountain near Armenia’s southern resort town of Jermuk poses major environmental risks, Lusine Taslakyana, a water policy and management expert and a doctoral research assistant in the Department of Soil and Water Systems at the US University of Idaho, said on Saturday, March 18.

Armenia’s Ministry of Economy, the Eurasian Development Bank and Lydian Armenia, a subsidiary of the U.S.-British Lydian International, on February 22 signed a memorandum for \$250 million to complete construction work at the Amulsar gold mine and purchase the necessary equipment.

“The Amulsar mining project poses major risks. Specialists have repeatedly warned about it, we are not “inventing the wheel” now, but everyone should know about it,” she said in an interview to Panorama.am.



The Armenian government nominates Seda Safaryan to the Constitutional Court, June 30, 2022

Ruling Party Defends High Court Judge Embroiled in Scandal

By Naira Bulghadarian

YEREVAN (azatutyun.am) — Pro-government lawmakers rejected on Monday, March 21, opposition calls for Armenia’s Constitutional Court to take action against one of its new members accused of having illegally worked as a private lawyer after joining the court in December.

Seda Safaryan was one of the two new justices nominated by the Armenian government and confirmed by the National Assembly in September. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s administration thus all but completed a purge of the Constitutional Court that began in 2020 with constitutional changes condemned by the Armenian opposition as illegal.

It emerged recently that on at least one occasion Safaryan represented a private client in another Armenian court after her election. What is more, she sent documents to the Court of Appeals on behalf of the client on December 28, two weeks after formally taking over as a Constitutional Court judge.

Safaryan denied any wrongdoing when she spoke to RFE/RL’s Armenian Service last month. She said that she only provided the Court of Appeals with additional documents on December 28 and that her actual appeal was filed on December 5.

A group of lawyers critical of the government insisted, however, that Safaryan violated an Armenian law which bans judges from doing any other paid work. They said that the Constitutional Court

must take disciplinary action or even consider ousting Safaryan. The law allows the Armenian parliament to ask the country’s highest court to consider such action. The main opposition Hayastan alliance initiated a relevant motion early this month. It was discussed by the parliament committee on legal affairs at a meeting held on Monday.

Speaking during the meeting, Hayastan’s Artsvik Minasyan echoed the lawyers’ arguments and also seized upon their revelation that as of the end of January Safaryan remained listed on a state registry of “individual entrepreneurs” working as lawyers.

“Being listed on the Justice Ministry’s state registry of legal entities is sufficient evidence of involvement in entrepreneurial activity,” said Minasyan.

Committee members representing the ruling Civil Contract party countered that Safaryan asked the State Revenue Committee to remove her from the registry late last year and earned no revenue after that. She must therefore not face any punishment, they said.

Although the parliament panel voted against the opposition motion, it will have to be debated on the parliament floor. Even so, the pro-government majority in the National Assembly is extremely unlikely to back the proposed appeal to the Constitutional Court.

Safaryan also raised eyebrows when it emerged that she had her husband appointed as her driver right after taking the bench. Critics accused her of nepotism. She said that she did not break any laws.

Yerevan Mayor Sargsyan Resigns

MAYOR, from page 1

Civil Contract party, which controls the current council, engineered Sargsyan’s resignation to bring forward the vote.

The ruling party announced a year ago that former Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan will be its mayoral candidate in 2023. Avinyan was appointed as one of the city’s five deputy mayors in September.

The Armenian press has been rife with speculation lately that Avinyan has low approval ratings and is overshadowed by Sargsyan despite leading most official ceremonies organized by the municipality.

Isabella Abgaryan, an independent member of the city council, said that the mayor’s resignation is part of government efforts to boost Avinyan’s chances in the municipal elections.

“I see only one explanation,” she told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service. “They want to make sure that the city is put under the exclusive control of Tigran Avinyan ahead of these elections.”

Abgaryan said that despite being installed by the country’s leadership Sargsyan followed “his own line” and relied on “his own people” during his tenure.

In his farewell remarks, Sargsyan said

that he supports Avinyan’s mayoral bid and hopes that Pashinyan’s party will win the upcoming polls. But he also acknowledged differences within the municipal administration.

The current Yerevan council appointed Sargsyan as mayor in December 2021 right after ousting his predecessor Hayk Marutyan, who fell out with Pashinyan following the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Marutyan, who is a former TV comedian, has since been coy about his participation in the 2023 polls.

None of Armenia’s major opposition groups have fielded mayoral candidates so far.



ARMENIA

How Is Taking One's Own Life a Solution? Stories and Stats from Armenia

By Sona Martirosyan

YEREVAN (JAMnews) — Around 900,000 people worldwide commit suicide each year. According to statistics, the number of suicides in Armenia has increased in recent years, especially after the 2020 war; in the last decade the number of suicides per year ranged from 150 to 215.

"It happened because of love"

In a small bedroom of the Karapetyans' house, there is much to remind one of happiness. A large photo of newlyweds hangs on the wall, the bed is carefully made, Lilith's perfume and a small jewelry box are on the dressing table. There is not a speck of dust in the room; mother-in-law cleans up every day. Nothing has changed after the deaths of Armen and Lilith.

A story reminiscent of Shakespearean tragedy is now a permanent feature of the village of Artsvanist in the Gegharkunik region.

"It happened because of love." This is how the suicide of 23-year-old Lilith is explained in the village. Her husband, Armen, died in September 2022 during the war in Karabakh. It hadn't been a year since they were married.

The couple dreamed of children. In the village the young couple's relationship was considered an example for everyone. Lilith was a teacher, Armen was a soldier. They were happy, purposeful young people.

"Both grew up before our eyes, both from our village, from intelligent families. Everyone at school loved Lilith. After the death of Armen, of course, she changed a lot. Always sad. On the day of the funeral, Lilith tried to commit suicide by overdosing, but they saved her. She told her relatives: I will follow Armen anyway. And that's just what she did" a neighbor says.

After the death of Armen, Lilith continued to live with her husband's parents, but often visited her own. On November 12, 2022, she stayed overnight with them. In the morning her parents found Lilith in the bathroom; she had hanged herself.

War Veterans Are at Risk

The Prosecutor General's Office conducted a study, which found that "a number of suicides and suicide attempts recorded in the recent period are directly related to the psychological problems caused by the 2020 war."

Not only those who saw war experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress, such as insomnia and hallucinations. Members of their families – wives, children, parents – are also at risk for various reasons associated with the loss of their fathers, husbands and brothers.

Considering all factors, the Prosecutor General's Of-

fice turned to the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs with a proposal: "discuss the current situation with professional circles involved in solving psychological problems; provide more effective psychological and psychiatric assistance to combatants and their families; expand the range of mental health services provided."

Psychiatrist and lecturer at the Department of Psychiatry of the State Medical University Aram Mamikonyan says:

"There is an interesting feature associated with wars. During wartime, there is a sharp drop in the number of suicides in all countries of the world, because during wartime the idea of social cohesion arises. This phenomenon of social cooperation creates harmony, there are fewer isolated people, society becomes more open, because everyone is trying to overcome one problem. We see a completely different picture with the end of wars, especially in countries that have suffered defeat. Loss becomes a very strong trigger for an increase in the number of suicides. Approximately the same picture is observed during revolutions."

Age, Sex, Reasons

According to statistics, unemployed men and pensioners most often commit suicide in Armenia. Vulnerable groups are also teenagers, middle aged men, aged people, those held in closed institutions such as prisons, and cultural minorities, including members of the LGBT community.

The main cause of suicide in adolescence is an existential crisis that is not controlled by professionals, family or environment, and adolescents are left alone with problems they do not understand. The second most common cause is drug use, which has risen in recent years.

In the case of the elderly, the age crisis also becomes the cause of suicide, when, after retirement, people lose a comfortable communication environment, a well-functioning life schedule, the opportunity to be financially independent and a sense of usefulness.

70% of suicides in Armenia are committed by men, whereas women are more likely to attempt suicide.

Why Do People Commit Suicide?

"In psychiatry suicide is viewed as a pathology. And it doesn't matter whether the person who committed suicide or attempted suicide was previously diagnosed with mental problems or not," psychiatrist Aram Mamikonyan says.

The American Psychological Association has included this phenomenon in the classification of diseases as suicidal conduct disorder.

"This pathology is self-directed aggressive behavior in which a person has a clear goal of committing suicide. At the same time, it is immaterial whether its action will end with death or not. A person can be saved, an attempt can be prevented, or they may simply not be able to carry out their plan. The end goal is essential," the psychiatrist explains.

Mamikonyan says that in the case of suicide, we often deal with "comorbidity," when one disease is due to the presence of another or makes the body more vulnerable to a second disease. In the case of suicides, depressive spectrum disorders are the most common primary illness. That is, the suicide rate among people with depression is much higher.

"In fact, the process goes in stages. First, a person has passive suicidal thoughts: a feeling of meaninglessness, emptiness, lack of motivation, loss of the meaning of life. The second stage is active suicidal thoughts, when there is not only this feeling, desire, but also a clear plan is drawn up.

"The third stage, the most dangerous, is called the trap stage, when suicide becomes the only and best way out for a person. The trap is that for a person at this stage, death becomes the light at the end of the tunnel," the doctor says.

A Doctor's Opinion

Aram Mamikonyan says there is a common stereotype about suicide that after several failed attempts, they will stop. According to Mamikonyan, in fact, among those who have committed suicide, the number of those who have made one or more unsuccessful attempts in the past predominates:

"We often confuse self-harm with suicidal behavior. Sometimes patients say that they just wanted to see blood at that moment, relax, or harm themselves and calm down, but their ultimate goal is not death. In this case, yes, there are usually no retries.

"But in the case of suicide, the likelihood that someone will repeat their step is very high. So people who have attempted suicide are immediately at risk. It is very important that psychologists and psychiatrists are involved in the treatment of these people."

According to Mamikonyan, at the heart of suicide is always a bitter sense of loss. This is not only about relationships, but also, for example, loss of work, a familiar environment, and so on.

In any case, according to the doctor, it is possible to prevent suicide.

That is why the National Suicide Prevention Plan is being developed in Armenia. The preventative measures included therein have already proved effective.

Health Officials Sound Alarm Regarding Measles Outbreak in Armenia

By Levon Karamanoukian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — According to health data released by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia, the rise in confirmed cases of measles this year may signal early warning signs of an imminent measles outbreak in the territory of Armenia and Artsakh Republic.

Between January 1 and March 13, 2023, there have been 50 laboratory-confirmed cases of measles in the Republic of Armenia, with data showing that roughly two-thirds of cases occurring in young patients under 16 years old.

Measles are considered a vaccine-preventable disease by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Armenia follows WHO guidelines for childhood vaccination. Surveillance data by the WHO and

Unicef report that measles vaccine prevalence among 12-23 month old children in Armenia was 94% in 2021, but actual field data in Armenia, released by researchers at Uppsala University in Sweden, report that the prevalence of vaccines among children in Armenia may actually be below 80%. This discrepancy may be due to failures in administrative reporting errors among health officials in Armenia.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that children receive two doses of MMR (measles-mumps-rubella) vaccines; the first one between 12 to 15 months of age and the second between 4 and 6 years. "This is a highly preventable disease," notes Los Angeles Pediatrician Jay Gordon, "as the first dose of MMR vaccine is 93% effective against measles. Once you receive two doses, it is

97% effective against the disease."

"We are seeing global outbreaks throughout the world," adds Pediatrician Sonya Sethi. "The CDC has reported an alarming 47,979 cases between August 2022 and January 2023 in India alone. It's imperative that the battle to control this vaccine-preventable disease in Armenia is achieved by increasing the vaccination status of the population," she adds.

According to Swedish researchers studying measles vaccination rates in Armenia, the factors driving vaccination rates may be influenced by many factors including maternal level of education, marital status, wealth index, and exposure to mass media. They reinforce the need to maintain high immunization levels among the population in order to reduce the continued spread of measles.



Child with day-4 rash from measles (Courtesy Wikipedia: CDC/NIP/Barbara Rice)

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Armenia Serviceman Got Lost, Ended Up in Azerbaijani-controlled Territory

YEREVAN (News.am) — According to preliminary information, at around 12:20 p.m. on Tuesday, March 21, Armenia serviceman M. G. got lost due to poor visibility and fog in the area while transporting food to a combat base by car, and ended up in the area under Azerbaijani control.

The Armenian Ministry of Defense reports that search and rescue operations have started immediately, and steps are being taken to confirm the presence of this serviceman in the territory under Azerbaijani control and to have him returned.

Francophonie Days Promote French Culture And Language, Says French Ambassador to Armenia

YEREVAN (ArmenPress) — The annual Francophonie Days event in Armenia promotes the French language and culture, French Ambassador to Armenia Anne Louyot said at a press conference.

She said that the Francophonie Days is one of the most important programs of the embassy's cultural agenda. "In 2023, the embassy is happy to present over 20 events in Yerevan and in provinces dedicated to French language and culture," the ambassador said, adding that the program will feature film, music, theater, debates, contemporary arts and French language competition.

"I'd like to thank all colleagues who contribute to spreading Francophonie," she added.

Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport Zhanna Andreasyan attached importance to the event, stressing that the International Day of Francophonie brings together over 320,000,000 Francophones, giving the chance to celebrate solidarity and the desire to live together, and presenting the values of Francophonie.

"Armenia is participating in all events and initiatives within the framework of the International Organization of La Francophonie with great responsibility and activeness," Andreasyan said, expressing conviction that the events will promote the spread of French language and culture, as well as provide new possibilities for strengthening cooperation.

Ambassador of Switzerland to Armenia Lukas Rosenkranz, who is the president of the association of Francophone ambassadors, described the International Organization of La Francophonie as a unique platform that develops cultural, educational and economic relations between member countries through common language. He said the political component of La Francophonie prioritizes strengthening peace, human rights and democracy, and freedom of press. "And I hope that these events will allow Armenian society to have an understanding about the cultural wealth of La Francophonie."

The La Francophonie Days were launched on March 18.

Edmond Azadian Participates in AGBU Distribution of Certificates of Distinction in Buenos Aires

BUENOS AIRES — On March 16, Edmond Azadian, president of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada, during his official visit to re-inaugurate the Tekeyan Center of Buenos Aires, participated in the bestowal of certificates of distinction on members of the local Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) at the AGBU Nazarian Hall.

AGBU Central Board Managing Director Anita Anserian, who came from New York to Buenos Aires for this occasion, read the congratulatory message of Berge Setrakian, President of AGBU International for benefactor Juan Chahinian.

Antonio Sarafian, president of AGBU Buenos Aires, commenced the ceremony by explaining the meaning of the certificates and praised Chahinian, the first recipient, who has donated extensively towards



Group photos of prominent guests and certificate recipients



One of the first graduates of Marie Manoogian Educational Institute Elena Achdjian, with her son Scout Chief Ari Andres

renovating and improving the building of the Marie Manoogian Educational Institute and adjacent rooms of the AGBU.

Other recipients were Very Rev. Fr. Aren Shaheenian, Locum Tenens of the Armenian Church, Marta Emirian, Chairwoman of Women's Committee, Alejandro Kalpakian, President of All Armenia Fund Argentina, Dr. Khatchik Der Ghougassian, a professor of International Relations at the Universidad de San Andrés in Argentina, Alejandro Tantanian, playwright, and Elena Achdjian, one of the first graduates

of the Marie Manoogian Educational Institute, teacher, former Director of the Armenian Department of the School and now visiting Director of Armenian Department of the Rosario University.

Also present were Ambassador of Armenia in Argentina Hovhannes Virabyan, representatives of the clergy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, and members of the local AGBU Board of Directors, committees and the General Antranig Scouts, as well as numerous members of the community at large.

Kurdistan Region Leaders Urge Unity during Newroz Messages

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region (Rudaw.net) — The Kurdistan Region's president and prime minister on Monday, March 23 urged for the Region to come together and unite in the face of intra-Kurdish disputes during their messages commemorating the Kurdish New Year.

Kurds celebrate Newroz, the Kurdish New Year, on March 21-23, with the occasion symbolizing a day of resistance and freedom from tyranny. The celebrations typically involve picnicking in the countryside and lighting bonfires. Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani congratulated the nation on the occasion of Newroz, calling for authorities to renew efforts to resolve disputes.

"Let us make Newroz a new opportunity for cooperation and acceptance. So that we can overcome the problems and conflicts in the Kurdistan Region, and resolve the issues together with Baghdad with one voice and one position, through dialogue and on the basis of the constitution," the president said in a televised speech.

President Barzani further reiterated that the Region is willing to resolve all issues and cooperate with the federal government on the basis of the constitution as well as "for supporting the work of government" in the country, adding that the cooperation between Erbil and Baghdad is "moving in

the right direction."

Speaking from a park in Erbil amid Newroz celebrations, Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Masrour Barzani called on the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)'s ministerial team to return to cabinet meetings amid an ongoing row between the two leading



Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Masrour Barzani, left, and Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani (photos Rudaw)

Kurdish parties on a number of issues.

"I call on the PUK team to return to the cabinet meetings. I reiterate my calls here for them to return," Prime Minister Barzani said, having sent a similar message earlier in the day asking deputy premier Qubad Talabani to return to the meetings. "If we have good will, we can resolve these issues," the Region's premier added.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the PUK have been at loggerheads in recent months over the Region's parlia-

mentary elections, the transparency of the oil and local income of the provinces under their influence, and the assassination of a former PUK colonel in Erbil in October.

Despite working together in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the two parties have established control over different parts of the Region, often being referred to as the "Yellow Zone" and "Green Zone." The KDP is dominant in Erbil and Duhok provinces, while the PUK rules Sulaimani and Halabja.

"We have made all efforts to resolve our issues with the federal government and we have a strong will to resolve all the issues," Prime Minister Barzani continued.

Tensions between Erbil and Baghdad have been high over the past months due to disagreements over the legality of the Kurdistan Region's oil and gas law and the Region's share of the federal budget. After approving the budget law last week, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani stated that Erbil and Baghdad have reached an all-encompassing agreement to resolve outstanding issues, a statement highly welcomed by Kurdish leaders such as the Region's prime minister, who on Tuesday, March 14, said that Sudani's "goodwill is recognized and important to restoring trust."

In their Newroz messages, the Kurdistan Region's president and prime minister both urged locals celebrating and picnicking to respect the cleanliness and the beauty of the Region's nature.



INTERNATIONAL

Blinken Offers US Support to Facilitate Bilateral Peace Between Armenia, Azerbaijan

WASHINGTON (rferl.org) — US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has offered support in facilitating bilateral peace discussions with Azerbaijan in a phone call on March 20 with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

The US State Department said that in the call Blinken “reiterated U.S. support for direct talks and diplomacy to support a lasting and sustainable peace in the South Caucasus and stressed that there is no military solution.” The statement also said Blinken thanked Pashinyan “for Armenia’s continued commitment to peace and encouraged concrete steps forward in finding solutions to outstanding issues.”

According to the press service of the Armenian prime minister’s office, Blinken reiterated his call for the immediate unblocking of the Lachin Corridor, the mountain road that links Armenia and the breakaway enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, and stressed that the United States is ready to continue supporting the process.

Pashinyan and Blinken exchanged views on the prospects for the settlement of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations and the opening of communication ties in the region, according to the prime minister’s press service. Pashinyan also expressed concern over the recent aggressive rhetoric of Azerbaijan.

Tensions have flared recently as the La-

chin Corridor has been blocked by government-backed Azerbaijani protesters since December 12.

The availability of food in Nagorno-Karabakh has become acute due to

the problem of the Lachin Corridor should be considered exclusively in the context of trilateral statements, and emphasized that each side has its own obligations.

He did not specify what Armenia



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, left, and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan (file photo)

irregular deliveries, and prices for food and other goods have risen significantly. There have also been periodic interruptions in the supply of gas and electricity.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov discussed Nagorno-Karabakh at a meeting in Moscow with his Armenian counterpart, Ararat Mirzoyan. Lavrov said that

should do in connection with the opening of the corridor but said the issues of rights and security guarantees for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh should be resolved between representatives of Karabakh and Baku.

Lavrov also lashed out at Brussels and Washington for “imposing their super-

vision” on the peace talks between Yerevan and Baku, accusing the West of “undisguised attempts...to undermine the region’s security architecture” and “tear Russia away” from the region.

Lavrov’s meeting with Mirzoyan came days after Pashinyan said he had complained to Russian President Vladimir Putin about “problems” with Russian peacekeepers in Karabakh, warning of an escalation in the region.

Baku and Yerevan have been locked in a conflict over Azerbaijan’s breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh for years, and the United States and European Union have recently taken the lead role in peace talks between them.

Armenian-backed separatists seized the mainly Armenian-populated region from Azerbaijan during a war in the early 1990s that killed some 30,000 people.

Diplomatic efforts to settle the conflict brought little progress and the two sides fought another war in 2020 that lasted six weeks before a Russia-brokered ceasefire, which resulted in Armenia losing control over parts of the region and seven adjacent districts.

Armenia’s Defense Ministry on March 12 rejected as “untrue” an accusation from Azerbaijan that Yerevan is transporting military equipment to the Nagorno-Karabakh region over ground routes bypassing the Lachin Corridor.

EU Raises \$7.5 billion for Turkey, Syria Earthquake Victims

By Nazlan Ertan

IZMIR, Turkey (al-Monitor.com) — The International Donors’ Conference in Brussels pledged on Monday nearly \$7.5 billion for reconstruction for the earthquake victims in Syria and Turkey, as the death toll reached more than 50,000 in Turkey alone.

Swedish Premier Ulf Kristersson, whose country holds the rotating term presidency of the European Union, said today that the fundraiser has “reached its goal” by providing €6.05 billion (\$6.48 billion) in grants and loans for Turkey and €50 million (\$1.018 billion) in grants for Syria.

One billion of the aid alone comes directly from the European Commission, pledged by EC President Ursula von der Leyen as she kicked off the EU-sponsored event in Brussels. “I am pleased to announce that the European Commission alone will support Turkey with 1 billion euros (\$1.072 billion) for the post-earthquake reconstruction. We also pledge a further package of 108 million euros (\$115.7 million) for humanitarian assistance and early recovery in Syria,” von der Leyen told participants that included EU member states, UN institutions, international financing bodies, India, Japan, Azerbaijan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United States.

Six hours later, von der Leyen announced that “Team Europe” — meaning the EC, the European Investment Bank, and the European Reconstruction and Development Bank — had raised 3.6 billion euros (\$3.8 billion), half of the total donations. The total sum includes grants, loans or, in the case of Hungary, funding the renovations of a specific church. EU member Cyprus, which is not recognized by Turkey, also attended the conference and pledged 500,000 euros (\$533,200) to Turkey and Syria.

Kristersson signaled that Sweden will commit 45 million euros (\$48 million) to re-

habilitate and reconstruct the two quake-devastated countries. Sweden’s entry to NATO is still blocked by Ankara on the grounds that Stockholm failed to fulfill its promises to address Turkey’s security needs. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said last week that his government will send the application of Sweden’s neighbor Finland for ratification to Parliament before the country’s dual elections scheduled for May 14. Asked about Sweden’s NATO membership at the final presser, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that Ankara was waiting for concrete steps from Sweden such as preventing the fundraising, recruitment and propaganda activities of groups that Turkey considers terrorists.

In the presser, Cavusoglu thanked the EU — and the Swedish presidency — for showing solidarity with Turkey and helping with the country’s reconstruction. “Turkey has submitted a detailed report on the recovery and rehabilitation assessment to the donors, as well as a detailed plan of our priorities,” he added.

Erdogan, who sent a video message to the conference, also expressed rare praise toward the EU for the conference. “This shows the strength of the bonds between our peoples,” he said, pledging that Turkey would continue to facilitate the land and air transfer of humanitarian aid materials to the quake victims in Syria.

The Turkish president put the economic toll of the earthquake at about \$104 billion, echoing the need assessments made by the UN Development Fund (UNDP) and the World Bank, which has reassessed its earlier assessment of \$34.2 billion.

A report prepared by the Turkish Presidency’s Strategy and Budget Office, with input from the World Bank, the UNDP and the EU, maintained that the economic toll of the quake amounted to 9% of Turkey’s

forecast GDP for 2023. “This is a shocking amount, reflecting the almost unfathomable scope of the devastation experienced by Turkey’s southern provinces. The path to recovery will be challenging and, even given the government’s dedication of enormous state resources, will depend in part on support from the international community,” the report said, citing the construction of both homes and infrastructure as priorities and explaining that the exodus from the region could not be reversed without them.

“Apartment towers and village houses lie in ruins across a vast territory of 110,000 square km,” says the 220-page report, referring to an area corresponding to one-seventh of Turkey or, as Sweden’s prime minister pointed out, the land of Belgium and the Netherlands combined. In addition, 3.3 million people have been displaced while about 2 million live in tents and containers.

Erdogan, facing one of the toughest challenges in his 20-year-rule in the upcoming elections, appears determined to bolster his tarnished image with promises of “rebuilding Turkey” and hopes donors’ funds will help him do so. His message to the conference underlined his reconstruction plans. “We are planning to deliver to our people a total of 650,000 houses — 319,000 of them within the first year. We have immediately broken ground and started the construction works in the areas where the location detection and land survey phases have been completed,” he said.

However, Erdogan’s pledges for “immediate groundbreakings” are alarming to international donors, particularly those within the EU. Without the new laws, controls and watchdog institutions strengthened, the new construction may lead to a new disaster, said a European diplomat familiar with the disaster zone. “That is why some of the speakers underlined the need for account-

ability and transparency while repeating over and over the need for building better, seismic-resilient structures,” said the diplomat who asked for anonymity.

Most of the donations are unlikely to come before the May 14 elections, said Sinan Ulgen, chairman of the Istanbul-based Center for Economic and Foreign Policy Studies and a former diplomat. “Turkey and the European Union — which has organized the donor’s conference — will draw the framework on the conditions and the transparency criteria for spending the aid, and the bulk of the funds is likely to be backloaded rather than frontloaded,” he told Al-Monitor.

Both the urgency with which the EU member states rushed to Turkey’s aid and the donor conference have softened the rhetoric between Turkey and the members of the EU, Ulgen said. “The assistance of the EU, its members and other countries of the global community made it very difficult to advance a rhetoric on the victimization of Turkey or create an external crisis to fuel nationalist sentiment as we head to elections.”

At the final conference, Cavusoglu said he hoped that the solidarity shown to Turkey by the EU would continue in other areas, but he did not make a specific reference to EU-Turkey membership negotiations that have been at a standstill or to the modernization of the customs union that has been shelved.

Cavusoglu met with his Greek counterpart, Nikos Dendias, on the sidelines of the meeting where the two agreed to support each other’s candidacy to international institutions in a new signal of warming relations. Turkey will support and vote for Greece’s bid for a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council in 2025-26, while Greece will back up Turkey’s bid for the general secretariat of the International Maritime Organization, Dendias said after the meeting.

INTERNATIONAL

Reinauguration of Buenos Aires' Tekeyan Center

REINAUGURATION, from page 1
the cultural association was named after this “Prince of Poets” in 1947. He spoke of the arduous period of the Cold War and the Tekeyan Cultural Association’s efforts to bringing artists and poets from Soviet Armenia to the diaspora, as well as the difficult times of the Argentine Tekeyan organization during the military juntas of the 1970s. Then, he bestowed Sergio Nahabetian with the golden emblem of the logo of Tekeyan Cultural Association.

The president of the local Tekeyan Cultural Association, Sergio Nahabetian, responded with a speech thanking those present, including the abovementioned

individuals as well as Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Honorary President Ruben Kechichian, AGBU President Antonio Sarafian, Administrative Institution of the Armenian Church President Varty Manoukian and All Armenian Fund President Alejandro Kalpakian.

Nahabetian declared: “Seeing this Tekeyan Cultural Center forces us to do a bit of history. It all began in the 1970s when Nahabet Nahabetian bought the property of Niceto Vega 4777, and turned that old house into the headquarters of Tekeyan and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party. But he did not do this work alone. He was accompanied by great colleagues



Edmond Azadian bestows on Sergio Nahabetian a golden emblem logo of Tekeyan Cultural Association



Edmond Azadian center, with representatives of the Armenian cultural and educational institutions of Argentina



From left, Fr. Aren Shaheenian, Sergio Nahabetian, Edmond Azadian, Archbishop Kissag Mouradian, Susana Nahabetian and Amb. Hovhannes Virabyan

such as Avedis Barsamian from Uruguay, Barkev Dergarabetian, Avedis Nalbandian from Uruguay, Haig Shahinian, Aram Donikian, Dicran Guezikaraian, Ardashes Vaneskeheyan, Jose Nerguizian, Armando Balassanian, and the then very young Daniel Youssefian, Mihran Sarafian and Miguel Ekizian. With drive and work they bought these two properties on Armenia Street and together with Haig Emirian they promoted the work of the Suren and Virginia Fesjian Center, named after benefactors from the United States of America who contributed financially to the construction of the headquarters. The Tekeyan Cultural Association has always lived up to its name and has always become not only the place where the *Sardarabad* newspaper was prepared and designed, with its Compugraphics donated by Alex Manoogian, and ...then printed, but also a cultural center where countless art shows, book presentations, conferences, venues for gallery nights, painting courses and Armenian needle art, and much more,

were presented. This is where we must highlight the enormous work of Diana Dergarabetian who for many years took over not only the direction of the weekly but also most of the cultural activities.”

Susana Dergarabetian Nahabetian pre-



Edmond Azadian speaking at the ceremony

pared the project and design for the remodeling of the building, Nahabetian continued. He thanked the artists, Alejandro Avakian, Mirta Kirbassian, and Gladys Apkarian, who kindly donated their works to provide an even more impressive setting for the reopening, and gave special thanks to Jorge Sarrafian for serving as the eyes and ears of the aforementioned designer.

Russia ‘Still Key Mediator’ Between Armenia, Azerbaijan

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (azatutyun.am) — Russia continues to play the central role in Armenian-Azerbaijani peace talks, parliament speaker Alen Simonyan said on Monday, March 20.

Simonyan said that Armenia and Azerbaijan are specifically using Moscow as their main channel of communication on a bilateral peace treaty discussed by them.

“Proposals regarding the treaty are exchanged through various channels and the principal way of exchange is through the Russian side,” he told reporters. “Russia remains the main actor.”

“But there are also initiatives by the United States, which is quite active, as well as France,” he said.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan most recently met in Munich on February 18 for talks mediated by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The US State Department said afterwards that the Europe-

an Union’s top official, Charles Michel, is due to host another Armenian-Azerbaijani summit “in the coming days.” There have been indications so far that the summit could take place soon.

The US, France and Russia had for decades spearheaded the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process in their capacity as the co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group. Their joint mediation collapsed following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Moscow has since repeatedly accused the West of trying to sideline it and use the Karabakh conflict in the standoff over Ukraine.

Aliyev declared at the weekend that he will not sign the peace treaty unless Yerevan recognizes Karabakh as a part of Azerbaijan and accepts Baku’s terms for demarcating the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. Armenians will not live in peace in the absence of such an accord, he warned.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry responded by accusing Azerbaijan of laying



Parliament speaker Alen Simonyan talks to journalists, January 12, 2023

claim to Armenia’s entire territory and “doing everything to make peace in the region impossible.” It again claimed that Baku is planning a “new military aggression” against Armenia and Karabakh.

Simonyan insisted that despite Ali-

ev’s latest threats the talks on the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace deal are not deadlocked.

“But this doesn’t serve as a deterrent against another Azerbaijani provocation,” he said.



Community News

St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School Appoints New Head of School

WATERTOWN — The Board of Directors of St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School (SSAES), New England's only Armenian Elementary School, is pleased to announce the appointment of Garine Palandjian, Ph.D., as its new Head of School.

Dr. Palandjian is an experienced educator with extensive experience in both the United States and Armenia. Her appointment, effective July 10, 2023, comes after a year-long comprehensive, worldwide search. A native of Rhode Island, Palandjian follows in the footsteps of Principal Houry Boyamian, M.Ed., who announced her retirement in the spring of 2022 after having served as principal for over 35 years.

Palandjian currently serves as a postdoctoral fellow at the Arizona State University (ASU) Melikian Center and faculty associate at ASU Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College. She completed her PhD at Arizona State University in Education Policy and Evaluation in 2022.

"The search committee was particularly impressed by both Dr. Palandjian's knowledge and innovative perspective to the field of education, as



Dr. Garine Palandjian

well as her passion for the Armenian community," said Michael Guzelian, chair of the Board of Directors as well as the search committee. "We are excited to have her lead our school to the next level of success."

Prior to completing her PhD, she spent upwards of 15 years working as an educator in both the US and Armenia. Her US experiences include teaching Language Arts and Social Studies on the elementary level at both the Vahan and Anoush Chamlian and Rose and Alex Pilibos Armenian Schools in California. At the American University of Armenia, she established the Center for Student Success, which offered a variety of support services including counseling, disability support, and peer mentoring.

"Building upon the incredible legacy of our retiring principal, Houry Boyamian, we are excited to see Dr. Palandjian elevate the school's successes and lead it into the future,"

see PALANDJIAN, page 8

LIANA GRIGORYAN PHOTO



From Youth Worker to Director: Karine Grigoryan Leads Glendale Youth Alliance to New Heights

GLENDAL, Calif. — "Someone once told me that the Glendale Youth Alliance is the best kept secret. But we want everyone to know about it!" exclaims Karine Grigoryan, the executive director of the organization that is better known simply by its initials, as GYA. Karine was only fourteen when she enrolled in the Summer Brush program — one of the few at that time operated by the GYA, a nonprofit organization operating through the City of Glendale.

Today, she marks twenty-seven years of both being at its roots and racing to the ultimate heights. She admits that the entire journey has shaped her as a leader: "I think it was definitely an advantage on my part, because I got to experience what the youth feel — the excitement of getting your first paycheck and the friendships you make, and then as a staff member operating the programs on a case manager level. So, I had a feel for as well as actual hands-on experience of all aspects of program operations."

Karine is certain that this has made her more empathetic. "Once there's an issue out in the field, I can relate to what the youth is going through and experiencing; or as a case manager, when there's frustration on documentation, or during an audit or a challenge at a worksite, I've actually been there and done that and experienced it. So, I completely understand where they're coming from," says Grigoryan.

Glendale Youth Alliance was founded thirty years ago when the city manager at a conference came across a book called *Reinventing Government*, which was all about involving young people in government programs. Inspired by that book, he conducted a survey in the community focusing on gang related youth, asking, "what would keep them away from those groups and out of the streets?" The answer was very simple — a job.

Based on the results of the survey, a small program was established employing school students during the spring break to work in the field. Tasks were basic: painting fire hydrants and brush clearance. Students were excited. The program turned out to be a success and became a permanent Summer Brush Program, which operates up until now. Over the years, over a dozen programs were added to the list organized by the Glendale Youth Alliance employing youth between the ages 14 to 24. Young people from different backgrounds, income levels, housing, barriers and disabilities, youth determined to build their future, joined the organization every year and slowly formed the new workforce of the city.

Karine was one of the latter. She came back to the GYA as a program specialist while she was earning her bachelor's in business administration at California State University, Northridge. Soon enough, she was promoted to a case manager and later, when she was only 24 years old, she was offered the role of the program supervisor. Since then, with her own growth to the position of executive director, GYA grew more and more, until it ending up serving more than 12,000 youth with various employment programs in retail, food industry, offices and even government.

see GRIGORYAN, page 8

Assembly Welcomes New York and Texas State Chairs

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) welcomes two new state chairs, Mariam Aghayan representing New York, and Hamlet Sarokhanian representing Texas, to lead efforts for grassroots activism in their respective states.

Currently based in Albany, New York, Mariam is a Major Gifts Officer at Pomfret School, and holds degrees from the Fletcher School at Tufts University (M.A. in Law and Diplomacy) and Gettysburg College (B.A. in Political Science and Public Policy). Originally from Yerevan, Armenia, Mariam's background as a direct descendant of Armenian Genocide survivors has instilled in her a passion for human rights, and she remains dedicated to work that benefits the Armenian people. Mariam has implemented five international grants, including two Andrew W. Mellon grants in Morocco and Greece, one Project for Peace grant in Armenia, a State Department Diplomacy Lab grant in Hungary, and a Tisch International Fellow grant in Armenia. Mariam has served as a volunteer to help with fundraising strategy at Paghapan NGO in Tavush, Armenia, the Artsakh Initiative at Columbia University's Institute of Human Rights in New York City, and St. Peter Armenian Church in Watervliet, NY.

As a member of the Dallas-Fort Worth Armenian community, Hamlet is an active member of the St. Sarkis Armenian Orthodox Church of Carrollton, Texas, where he also regularly organizes events to raise awareness and provide education about the Armenian Genocide. Hamlet has four decades of experience in the global Telecommunication industry, and currently leads an advanced 5G technology & product management initiative for AT&T. He holds a B.S. degree in Electrical Engineering from Oklahoma State University, an MBA from Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, and an executive certificate in Business & Strategy Innovation from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Hamlet's volunteer work includes serving as Visiting Professor at the American University of Armenia, where he teaches an Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Incubation course to MBA students.

"As a resident of Texas, which is the second largest populous state in America with over 30 million people, it is my ambition to promote Armenian identity and values here by staying connected to influencers and opinion leaders to have Armenian interests above the line," said Hamlet.

"We're delighted to welcome both Mariam and Hamlet as our new Assembly State Chairs in New York and Texas," said Assembly Director of Congressional Relations Mariam Khaloyan. "They are two very active individuals in their respective communities who understand the importance and influential impact of grassroots activism. The Assembly appreciates Mariam and Hamlet's dedication to advocacy and promoting Armenian issues in the US Congress."



COMMUNITY NEWS

Karine Grigoryan Leads Glendale Youth Alliance to New Heights

GRIGORYAN, from page 7

“I think GYA continues to make a significant impact in the lives of the youth. I’ve seen firsthand as youth start with their first experience. I’ve watched them grow within either the City of Glendale or just within the community, from a first job experience to permanent employment; to growing within the organization into a leadership capacity. If we only look at the City of Glendale, in almost every department, there’s a youth that started out at the en-

comes in, “to teach them, to guide them, to put them on the right path, connect them to the resources, so they can stand on their feet sooner than later.”

This year GYA is celebrating its 30th anniversary. On March 23, 2023, GYA was recognized as a Community Partner Awardee by the Glendale Chamber of

Commerce. The organization has a full calendar of events to mark the important jubilee such as the Charity Golf Tournament on May 15, its 30th Anniversary Wine and Music event on July 20 at which Ara Dabanjian and his quartet are performing, and an annual luncheon ceremony on September 20.

Currently, Glendale Youth Alliance is accepting applications for its summer program partnering with Los Angeles County and is placing young people in work during the summer break. For more information about GYA programs and upcoming events please visit the GYA website at www.glendaleyouthalliance.org



try level and worked themselves to where they are now,” adds Karine. Many alumni give back to GYA by serving as a board member, supporting fundraising events or contributing to help pave the way for the next generation of workforce.

A large group of participants in all programs is formed by immigrants. During the last several years their number grew as a result of the war and political turmoil in the world. Armenians are amongst them along with Russians, Ukrainians, Afghanis, and Syrians. In the process of finding themselves in a new country, they often need extra support in learning new skills, work ethics and behavior, and in becoming ready for the job market. That’s where GYA

St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School Appoints New Head of School

PALANDJIAN, from page 7

said Archpriest Antranig Baljian, pastor, St. Stephen’s Armenian Apostolic Church of Greater Boston, sponsor of SSAES.

Growing up in Rhode Island, Garine actively participated in various programs and activities in the Providence Armenian community. After graduating from the Mourad Armenian Saturday and Sunday School at Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Apostolic Church, Garine returned as an alumnus, establishing the early stages of her teaching career.

She went on to pursue a teacher training program at Rhode Island College, moved to California to complete her student teaching practicum and taught in the Armenian schools. Her passion for

Armenian education led her to pursue several research projects and fieldwork in Armenia which included focusing on post-Soviet transformations in education, peace education, inclusive education, national identity, textbook studies, and pedagogical practices.

In 2019-2020, Garine conducted her dissertation fieldwork on pedagogical practices of Armenian borders and identity in Yerevan, and the border villages of Shirak and Tavush, as well as one month in the Istanbul Armenian community. The Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) Eurasia Special Interest Group recently honored her dissertation with a best dissertation award at the annual CIES conference in Washington, DC.

Garine has published in peer-reviewed journals and edited books on various focuses of Armenian childhood and education and contributed to theorizing pedagogical practices. Recently, Garine was invited by the editor of the *Texts and Studies in Armenian History, Society and Culture* series of the University of Michigan Press to publish her dissertation as a book.

“I am both honored and humbled by this once in a lifetime opportunity to be able to serve the Armenian community and guide New England’s only Armenian elementary school to new heights,” said Palandjian. “I am looking forward to meeting our students and families, our dedicated teachers and staff, and the community.”



Tekeyan Cultural Association

SPONSOR A TEACHER

in Armenia and five villages in Artsakh

Since its inception in 2001, the TCA Sponsor a Teacher program has raised \$828,060 and reached out to 7,253 teachers and school staff in Armenian and Artsakh.

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

☐ \$200 ☐ \$400 ☐ \$600 ☐ other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Make check payable to: Tekeyan Cultural Association
Memo: Sponsor a Teacher
Mail your check to:
TCA Sponsor a Teacher
5326 Val Verde, Houston, TX 77056

YOUR DONATION IS TAX DEDUCTIBLE





OBITUARY

Paul Korian

A Life Well Lived

SOUTHFIELD, M.I. — Paul Peter Korian, or as some know him, Bedros Boghos, sadly left us on March 15, 2023, at the age of 78. As a dedicated and passionate husband, father, friend and mentor, Paul was both a deeply faithful servant of the church and a gregarious entrepreneur involved in business and many meaningful projects around the world.

Paul, along with his parents and two sisters, Veronica, and Sonia, came to the United States from Jerusalem in October of 1956. Born in Bethlehem to the late Bedros and Takouhi (Keuroghlanian) Korian on October 28, 1944, he graduated with honors from Northeastern University in 1969, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Pharmacy.

Paul started his long and successful business career as a local pharmacist at Osco Drugs store, where he climbed quickly to company management. Paul married Anoush Dodakian in July of 1969. They started their family in Watertown and Belmont, Massachusetts and were blessed with three children, Peter, Steven, and Karen.

In 1985, Paul was approached by the late Tom Stenberg and Leo Khan to join a new business venture called Staples. Paul joined this startup as a founding member and was key to Staples' exponential growth, worldwide recognition and becoming a Fortune 500 company. As a personal endeavor, he partnered with several friends and Armenian business colleagues to purchase, renovate, and re-launch what is known today as the Marriott Hotel Armenia. Paul and Ann also opened a travel agency which they successfully grew together, and much later he invested and advised his sons on growing an international software technology business.

Growing up in the Armenian quarter in Jerusalem had a profound impact on Paul, as he learned the importance and value of giving back to his Armenian community. Paul was an extremely active and dedicated member of St. James Armenian Apostolic Church in Watertown and served on the altar as a Deacon. Paul also served as Parish Council chairman and treasurer for more than 10 years, starting at the age of 35 years old. Paul was bestowed and decorated with the prestigious St. Nersess Shnorhali Medal for all the years of his service to the Armenian community.

Paul is survived by his wife Ann and their three children, Peter Paul, Steven Hovannes and Karen Anoush. Peter is married to Kristen Korian and has two children, Sosi and Paul. Steven has three children, Steven, Garen and Caroline and is married to Deb-

orah Korian. Karen is married to Andrew Shoushanian and they have three children, Nadine, Martin and Zaven. All of Paul's children and grandchildren's lives will continue to be shaped by his charisma, teachings, and love.

Paul accomplished so much in his life and defined the concept of, "the American Dream." He arrived through Ellis Island in 1956 at eleven years old and then lost his father just 3 months later. He worked harder than most, which defined him in many



ways. One of Paul's greatest joys was taking his boat out from his home in West Yarmouth, aptly named "Hye Dune," and cruising the Nantucket Sound to Martha's Vineyard for lunch and the ocean view. Paul spent a lot of time in Cape Cod and loved the beach, especially when his grandchildren would come to visit. He was fortunate to see many of them become young adults.

Paul's legacy will be remembered as a strong and proud Armenian and the much beloved Patriarch of his loving family. His tenacity and work ethic were second to none and his charitable and community work helped countless people.

Paul will be missed by all who knew him, but his presence and life will be felt for generations.

May he rest peacefully now, as he joins his beloved mother and father and so many others. No doubt, Paul will certainly be sharing genuine conversation, catching up on things long awaited, always with his favorite old-fashioned donut and Dunkin' coffee in hand.

Visitations were held on Saturday, March 18, 2023 followed by the funeral service at St. John Armenian Church of Southfield, Michigan. The entombment service followed at Glen Eden Memorial Park Cemetery of Livonia, Michigan.

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

Notice to Our Subscribers Regarding Print Version

Dear subscribers, it has come to our attention that for the past year, and specifically the past month, the delivery of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* has been erratic.

Please note that our paper goes to our printer at the same time every week and is mailed out the same time every week. Nothing has changed.

The delivery problems all lie with the postal service, which is understaffed, and though we have contacted them repeatedly, we have not been able to resolve the problem.

We apologize and ask for your continued understanding.



TCA
MHER MEGERDCHIAN
THEATRICAL GROUP

25 YEARS
OF THEATER
Celebration Gala

MAY 13, 2023
SAVE THE DATE

Telephone (617) 924-7400

Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN
PAUL BEDROSIAN
LARRY BEDROSIAN

Giragosian

FUNERAL HOME
James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC
Mark J. Giragosian
Funeral Counselors

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

DENNIS M. DEVENY & SONS

Cemetery Monuments

Specializing in
Armenian Designs and Lettering

701 Moody St. Waltham, MA 02543
(781) 891-9876 www.NEMonuments.com

ADVERTISE IN THE MIRROR

COMMUNITY NEWS

FAST Raises \$500,000 in Boston for The Armenian Innovation Sector

BOSTON — The Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology (FAST), announced that it raised \$500,000 at an event held at the Museum of Science in Boston on March 2. The event was part of FAST's Advance Armenia Global Campaign, which aims to support strengthening science and technology programs in Armenia.

Thanks to FAST's supporters and partners, Advance Armenia's Boston Reception was a tremendous success. The funds raised will help scale FAST's ADVANCE Research Grants program, which has facilitated the formation of research teams in Armenia led by international principal investigators. Additionally, FAST will contribute to the launch of the Generation AI high school program – an educational and career pipeline for AI researchers starting at the high school level.

Boston host committee Co-Chairs Dr. Avak Kahvejian and Dr. Raffi Afeyan opened and led the evening, which included remarks by FAST's Co-Founder, Dr. Noubar



FAST co-founder Dr. Noubar Afeyan

Afeyan, and FAST's Chair of the Board of Advisors, Dr. Mary Papazian. The speakers emphasized the importance of scientific advancement in Armenia and the important



Co-chairs of the Boston Host Committee of the Advance Armenia Global Campaign by FAST Avak Kahvejian and Raffi Afeyan



Dr. Noubar Afeyan and Berge Ayvazian at the FAST reception

symbolism in engaging the Boston community – known as a hub of innovation – in this mission.

FAST's Founding CEO, Dr. Armen Orujyan, discussed Armenia's scientific ecosystem and path forward, and shared FAST success stories. The keynote speaker of the



Dr. Daron Acemoglu



evening was Dr. Daron Acemoglu, an Institute Professor at MIT, elected fellow of several prominent educational institutions worldwide, winner of numerous international awards, and author of five books, including *Why Nations Fail: Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. Dr. Acemoglu focused his talk on how digital technologies and artificial intelligence are rapidly transforming communication, decision-making, and work.

About FAST

Established in 2017, the Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology (FAST) has implemented 29 programs impacting over 9,000 beneficiaries. Focusing on the core science ecosystem drivers of Education, Research, and Commercialization, FAST architects novel technology-driven innovation platforms that help shape Armenia's future as a modern, dynamic, and innovative country. See previous coverage at mirrorspectator.com.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Aramice Malkhasian

Chemistry Professor to Saudi Royalty

MALKHASIAN, from page 1

Armenian reputation for learning, intelligence, and excellence as a valued minority in Arab society.

Baghdad Roots

Aramice Yerwant-Sarkice Malkhasian was born in Baghdad, Iraq, in the time of King Faisal II. Both of his parents were born in Baghdad to Armenian genocide survivors; his grandfather was a native of Moush and his grandmother was from Akshehir. After attending a local Armenian elementary school, he graduated from an Iraqi state secondary school, and then went to Sulaymaniyah University in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq, where he earned his bachelor's degree in chemistry in 1974. Coming from a family which highly valued education, his late sister Beatrice Malkhasian graduated from the College of Education for Women at the University of Baghdad, and worked as secretary to the first female Minister of Higher Education in Iraq, Dr. Suad Khalil Ismail, who served in the Iraqi Cabinet from 1969-1972. (Beatrice moved to the US in 1980 where she worked for Gulf Data and upon retirement served as secretary to the Board of Trustees of the Ararat Home in Los Angeles for many years.) Malkhasian stresses that his paternal aunt, Dikranouhi Malkhasian, was a major support to the whole family including Aramice and Beatrice.

Earning his master's degree at the University of Baghdad in 1977, he then obtained a position working at the same university, where he remained for three years. During that time, he had the opportunity to work with the world-renowned Romuald Zalewski, one of the highest-honored and awarded scientists in Poland, who was working as a visiting professor in Iraq at the time. The two were able to have their study on acidity functions of organic molecules published.

In 1981, the Iraqi government granted him a scholarship to study in Canada, where he earned his Ph.D. in 1985 from Concordia University in Montreal. There, he studied with noted chemist Dr. Cooper H. Langford, who Malkhasian praised as "one of the great scientists," as well as Dr. Bryan Hollebone.

Returning to Iraq in 1985, he received a position at Salahaddin University in Erbil. (It should be noted that in 1981 the Iraqi Ba'ath regime had moved the University of Sulaymaniyah to Erbil and renamed it "Salahaddin University," fearing anti-government activity in the Sulaymaniyah region.) He taught chemistry and advanced chemistry for master's degree students. One of his stu-



Prof. Aramice Malkhasian, center, at his retirement gathering with faculty of King Abdulaziz University

dents from that era is now the head of all universities in Northern Iraq.

Malkhasian worked at Salahaddin University for six years. In 1987, he married his wife Elizabeth, an Armenian from Kirkuk, and they had two daughters, Nayree and Lena. When the First Gulf War started in 1991, Malkhasian took his family and fled the country, seeking political asylum in Canada.



Prof. Malkhasian displays his many awards and honors from Saudi Arabia in his Michigan home

A New Life In North America

Settling in Montreal, Malkhasian worked at McGill University as a postdoc. Working with Prof. M. A. Whitehead, he did computational calculations on the reaction of tin compounds on the surface of silicon dioxide (i.e. quartz, the primary component of common glass). He also worked with his former supervisor, Langford. "We were able to publish in the best journals in organic chemistry," Malkhasian recalled.

In 1999, the Malkhasian family moved to Metro Detroit, where they still reside in the suburb of Sterling Heights, which is home to many Chaldean and Iraqi-Armenian immigrant families who have fled turmoil in Iraq. In Michigan, Malkhasian worked on numerous research projects; at Wayne State University with Drs. John Petersen and John F. Endicott, where he published a paper on the effect of magnetism in inorganic complexes; at Oakland University with Drs. Ferman Chavez and Michael Sevilla, where he published five papers, including one on the ideation of nucleic acid; and at Michigan State University with Dr. John McCracken, where he learned new techniques on EPR spectroscopy. Although his work was published in the best academic journals, Malkhasian's career as a professor did not seem to take off in Michigan.

A Royal Invitation

In 2010 Malkhasian was invited to Saudi Arabia to teach at the university level. "They were the best years of my life," he said. Not only was he teaching, but he was also sent nine times by the Saudi government to London to participate in chemistry research in conjunction with British academics as well as to Oakland University in Michigan. He published about 22 papers while he was there and worked for 12 years teaching chemistry and biochemistry for five different universities, including King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, the largest in the country and one of the most prominent in the entire Middle East.

"They are very good people," he stated of the Saudis. "They [the students as well as staff] were even coming and kissing my shoulders and my forehead." Parents would come and shake his hand with thankfulness. He describes the reverence in which the Saudis held their teachers due to their valuing of science. "One of the best professors, Dr. Tarek al-Fadek, loved me so much. He loved the Armenians and the Armenian duduk, and he was a member of parliament." Malkhasian explained that Saudis were very aware of the Armenian Genocide and sympathized with the Armenians. They also viewed Armenians as intelligent, talented people who were good in science and all skilled areas; this is why they brought Armenians to Saudi Arabia to teach their people.

Among Malkhasian's students was Prince Faisal, son of Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal Al-Saud, the richest man in Saudi Arabia.

As for his frequent trips to London, one of his most

important research studies was done with Dr. Brendan J. Howlin of the University of Surrey, and published in 2019. Studying the mechanisms of enzymes, the researchers tried to find a way to make artificial enzymes that in the future could replace real enzymes. Using computer-generated models, the two scientists came up with a new way to design anti-cancer drugs. The research may be able to help those who are deficient in enzymes like cortisone and suffer from Myeloid Leukemia, which is one of the most lethal forms of cancer.

Another major study in which Malkhasian participated was with Clifford Kubiak of the University of San Diego. The team studied the conversion of carbon dioxide into a



Aramice Malkhasian as a young man with his mother (on left), his paternal aunt and father (on right)

hydrocarbon that can be reused. The project won Kubiak the highest prize from the American Chemical Society (ACS). Per the ACS website, Dr. Guy Bertrand of U San Diego stated: "With the tremendous global interest in carbon-based solar fuels, the Kubiak laboratory has become one of the most important centers internationally for studies of the reduction of CO₂. His most recent work defines the best and most advanced understanding of mechanisms of the catalytic reduction of CO₂ to higher energy content carbon-based fuels and fuel precursors." Malkhasian is proud to have been a part of this research team.

At the end of his career, Malkhasian was honored by the Principal of King Abdulaziz University. He retired in June 2022 and returned to his family in Detroit.

When asked how he enjoys retirement, Malkhasian has a typical "hardworking Armenian" answer: "It is very difficult. Sometimes I volunteer, I don't like to retire. I called Saudi Arabia and said 'please get me back!'" He taught 650 students in each year alone, who went onto dentistry, pharmacology, nursing and medicine in Saudi Arabia, and has published 35 papers to date.

As for Armenia, he has always been proud to represent his ancestral homeland and its people among Arab society, and he describes his visit to Armenia as "the most beautiful journey." He states that that "I am standing strongly with the Armenian cause and supporting Karabakh, and to bring justice to all Armenians for the Genocide."

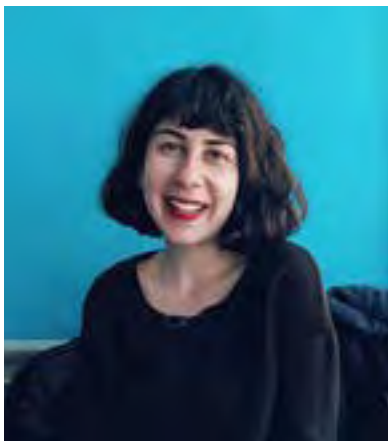
Arts & Culture

NAASR to Host Talk on 'Armenian Transatlantic Mobility At the End of the Ottoman Empire'

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will host an online program titled "They Vowed Never To Return: Armenian Transatlantic Mobility and 'Undesirable Subjects' at the end of the Ottoman Empire," presented by Hazal Özdemir, on Tuesday, March 28, 2023, at 7:30 pm Eastern / 4:30 pm Pacific. This program is co-sponsored by NAASR and the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS).

The webinar will be accessible live on Zoom (registration required) and on NAASR's YouTube Channel.

This talk will expand the category of anti-Armenian violence in the Hamidian era to contain the denaturalization of targeted populations and methods devised to control their movements, such as photo registers. It will focus on the Armenian mobility between the Ottoman Empire and the United States between 1896-1908. In 1896, the government of Abdülhamid II (1876-1909) encour-



Hazal Özdemir

aged Armenians who were bound to the United States to emigrate under the condition that they renounce their Ottoman subjecthood, vow to never return, and deliver their two photographs to the state.

Creating a bureaucratic apparatus for monitoring and policing the transatlantic mobility of Armenians, who had become undesirable subjects was a crucial phase of state-sanctioned violence. Armenian denaturalization was also a pivotal step in the transition from the empire to the nation-state and this ethnoreligious discrimination profoundly shaped Ottoman nationality and the formation of Turkish citizenship.

Hazal Özdemir is a Ph.D. Candidate in History at Northwestern University. Before coming to Northwestern, she graduated from Boğaziçi University's Department of History in 2017 and received her master's degree in the History of Art and Photography program at Birkbeck, University of London. Her dissertation project is funded by institutions such as the American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT) and the Society of Armenian Studies (SAS). Hazal is a Gulbenkian Fellow for the academic year 2022-2023.

For more information contact NAASR at hq@naasr.org.



Van Soghomonian (photo Armen Yengoyan)

Painter Soghomonian Repatriates from Germany And Exhibits in Yerevan

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — When artists Van Soghomonian and Nona Gabrielyan moved back to Yerevan in 2022 after thirty years' activity in Wiesbaden, Germany, some may have thought they were going to retire. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

From March 1-10, the Grand Hall of the Artists' Union of Armenia hosted a solo exhibition of Soghomonian's works, a "most joyful way to usher in the Spring," as his daughter Lilit put it. The 73 works displayed included all the paintings from his recent years, the collection brought from Wiesbaden and, which is most remarkable, the works created since his return to Yerevan. These most recent creations, Lilit said, "are saturated with special light and life affirming power, which, frankly speaking, makes us very happy." Although his works have been displayed over the years in the Armenian capital, this show takes on special significance, as it marks his return to the homeland. The concept behind the show was: "Each work is a unique story, a message, another opportunity to relate to the world."

continued on next page



"Beach," oil on canvas, 90x100cm 2022 (photo Armen Yengoyan)

UCLA Hosts Armenian Genocide Restitution Conference

WESTWOOD, Calif. — The Armenian Genocide Research Program at the Promise Armenian Institute of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), the Center for the Study of Law and Genocide at LMU Loyola Law School, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) have organized the first-ever conference pertaining to Armenian Genocide restitution.

Titled "What's Next?: Armenian Genocide Restitution in the Post-Recognition Era," this historic conference will be held in UCLA's Mong Learning Center on March 25.

If every genocide has its own peculiar character and afterlife, the afterlife of the Armenian Genocide has been the long-standing denial of its existence by successive Turkish governments. It has been of great importance for Armenians worldwide that the great catastrophe they experienced during and after World War I be recognized as what it was: genocide. At the end of the 1970s, especially in the United States, an Armenian Genocide recognition movement emerged with the principal aim of American legislative and executive bodies, both at the state and federal level, recognizing the genocide.

Decades later, this goal was finally achieved. In 2019, both houses of U.S. Congress recognized the Armenian Genocide, followed by President Biden's official recognition on April 24, 2021. Their goal achieved, Armenian activists and organizations were now faced with the question: "What's next?" This question has yet to be fully examined, much less answered by Armenian communities in the U.S. and elsewhere, and there remains an incomplete awareness and understanding of the possible steps following recognition.

The first session of the UCLA conference will feature Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat as the opening Keynote Speaker, who will discuss his critical efforts during the Clinton administration and those of several successive U.S. administrations in achieving some measure of justice for the post-Holocaust restitution movement.

The conference will then host panels examining past efforts at Armenian Genocide restitution through litigation and goodwill settlements, as well as the current landscape concerning looted art from the genocidal period and future avenues for redress.

Pre-registration is required for this hybrid event, which will offer remote online participation. The program starts at 8:45 AM and registration begins at 8:00 AM (Pacific Time). Lunch and refreshments will be provided for in-person participants. For event details and to register for in-person attendance or for participation via the Zoom webinar platform, please visit the event webpage at bit.ly/whatsnext03-25-23.

This conference is co-sponsored by the Armenian Bar Association, the Promise Institute for Human Rights at UCLA School of Law, and the Ararat-Eskijian Museum.



ARTS & CULTURE



from previous page

The exhibition was opened by Suren Safaryan, the President of the Artists' Union of Armenia, an association that Soghomon-
onyan and Gabrielyan have been members

Western Europe, and in 1992 moved to Wiesbaden, where they opened an atelier that was to become a meeting place for art lovers and a workshop for students. They continued to exhibit in Germany and other European countries. Soghomon-
yan gained recognition and awards for his sculptures, ceramics, and paintings. Many of his works reflect tragic and brutal developments of the 20th century, experienced by Armenians of his generation and others. In 2022, they moved back to Yerevan (<https://mirrorspectator.com/2022/02/24/armenian-artists-return-home/>).



Suren Safaryan, left, presents certificate to Van Soghomon-
yan (photo Armen Yengoyan)

of since 1971. Both were born in Tbilisi, Georgia, Soghomon-
yan in 1937 and Gabrielyan in 1944. They met as art students in Yerevan, and married in 1965. In the 1970s and 1980s, they exhibited in many countries of the Soviet Union as well as

the family. Daughter Lilit Soghomon-
yan and her husband Gagik Ghazanchyan are both artists, their son Guy as well. In a 2021 exhibition at the Modern Art Museum in Yerevan, Guy Ghazanchyan offered reflections on the brutalities of war

The tradition is being continued in



Three generations of artists, from left, Lilit Soghomon-
yan, Araqs, wife of Guy Ghazanchyan, Guy Ghazanchyan, Nona Gabrielyan, Van Soghomon-
yan with granddaughter Gabi, Van's niece Mariuna, Gagik Ghazanchyan (photo Armen Yengoyan)

in Artsakh, through a series of portraits of young combatants (<https://mirrorspectator.com/2021/12/16/pictures-at-exhibition-raise-profound-issues/>).

Colleagues, family members and visitors at Van Soghomon-
yan's return appearance

in Yerevan remarked on the optimistic mood pervading the atmosphere, especially emanating from his most recent paintings, full of light and life. This precious feedback is sure to inspire Soghomon-
yan to gain new strength for continuing his work.

ARMEN YENGOYAN PHOTO)



Under the Sun," acryl oil on canvas, 135x140 cm, 2013

ARMEN YENGOYAN PHOTO)



"On the Seashore," oil, acryl on canvas, 135x140 cm, 2013

ARTS & CULTURE

AMAA Child and Orphan Care Committee Luncheon, Fashion Show in Beverly Hills

By Eileen Keusseyan

Paramus, N.J. – On Saturday, March 4, 2023, the Beverly Hills Hotel ballroom was absolutely gorgeous, all decked out in “Toile of Armenia” drawings and designs created exclusively by artist Alyssa Bojenkova, representing our Armenian heritage and culture. This year, the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) Child and Orphan Care Luncheon and Fashion Show was dedicated to recognizing 30 years of caring for children and their families in Armenia, as well as in Artsakh, Lebanon and Syria. The luncheon and fashion show were an absolute success, supported, of course, by over 500 donors, supporters and guests, as well as 60 models who walked the double runway.

This year, the Luncheon Co-chairs were Lisa Karamardian, Nicole Nishanian and Leslie Shahinian. This talented and fabulous trio did a remarkable job and despite the endless planning, designing, organizing and hard work in the midst of their own busy professional, family and social lives, made it all appear seamless.

The mistress of ceremonies was Dr. Taryn Rose, an orthopedic surgeon by profession but more importantly,



Luncheon Co-Chairs Dr. Lisa Karamardian, Nicole Nishanian, Leslie Shahinian

a unique and delightful soul, who founded her first shoe company in 1998 and grew it from her garage to \$40 million in sales ten years later. Dr. Rose, before taking the stage, socialized with just about everyone in the ballroom, took many photos and with her warm smile and a glitter in her eye, not only bid on many items in the auction but also made sure to encourage sponsorships as well as encouraging others to bid.

Ani Zakari's devotional and prayer at the opening of the program was heartfelt and poignant. She reminded everyone of Romans 12:13 - “when God's people are in need, be ready to help them.”

AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian, greeted the guests and gave a message regarding the work of the Association in Armenia, Artsakh, and Syria, and the



Children's Fashion Show

humanitarian relief that is being provided to those in need.

The silent auction committee, led by Sandy McNutt and Houri Kassabian went above and beyond with so many valuable items, priceless adventures and trips as well as one-of-a-kind sports memorabilia, designer bags, and jewelry. As always, the bidding started the moment the doors opened, with the reception room buzzing excitedly and anxiously with the guests racing back and forth to place the winning sticker on the bid sheets before the auction closed.

The fashion show was partnered with Saks Fifth Avenue Beverly Hills this year for the first time. Ariana Dermendjian, Jacqueline Geragos and Aleen Oruncakciel were very meticulous in lovingly organizing the models who walked the magical runway created by Betty Balian, who is truly a visionary and a unique talent.

The program also featured Tina Segel's emotional video of some of the recipient families and children as well as their living conditions which brought a tear to each eye in the ballroom. It was such a relevant and poignant presentation which continues to encourage the Committee ladies to work harder each and every year to care for more and more children and families in dire need.

AMAA thanks also all the members of the behind-the-



Fashion Show Co-Chairs Jacqueline Geragos and Ariana Deirmenjian

scenes team, led by Sandra Kalemkarian. Without their precision and scrupulous attention to detail, an event of this magnitude would not be possible.

Proceeds from this event helps facilitate the sponsorship of over 1,600 children, support 4 kindergartens in Artsakh and Armenia, support 6 “Shogh” Day centers located in Yerevan, Vanadzor, Gyumri, Askeran, Stepanakert and Shushi (after the 44-Day War the Shushi “Shogh” Centers began operating out of Stepanavan), provide summer and day camp experiences for nearly 12,000 children and youth, provide 95 Christmas programs in 24 towns and villages throughout Armenia and Artsakh, offer various art, sports, theater and tutoring classes for 1,500 children,



AMAA's LA Child and Orphan Care committee



Fashion Show hosts Aleen Oruncakciel and Dr. Taryn Rose



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Jenan Zammar’s Lebanese Saffeh Salad

“Saffeh is basically a parsley salad - since there’s no lettuce in it. What sets saffeh apart from tabbouli is the chickpeas and bulgur. Coarse bulgur is used for saffeh, typically #2 and the chickpeas turn it into a protein packed salad. It’s a delicious side dish for backyard BBQs or picnics at the park. Pair it with grilled meats, burgers, wraps or even on its own. It’s a healthy salad that everyone enjoys particularly during the summer months,” says content creator and blogger Jenan Zammar.

“Chickpeas are one of the earliest cultivated legumes. Remains of chickpeas from the Middle East have been found that are roughly 7,500 years old. These remains were found in the aceramic levels of Jericho and Çayönü, Turkey, meaning that humans had been cultivating chickpeas since before they could produce pottery. Other samples have been found in Neolithic pottery in Hacilar, Turkey, and appear throughout history in Greece, France, and other areas of Europe,” says Tori Avey.

In fact, she adds, “They begin to appear in literature around A.D. 800 with Charlemagne’s Capitulare de villis. In that text, Charlemagne describes how chickpeas were grown in each imperial demesne, or area of a manor controlled by a lord” (See: <https://toriavey.com/the-history-science-and-uses-of-chickpeas/>).

How Do I Make Saffeh?

You’ll start by preparing the bulgur. It will need to be boiled for 5 minutes or longer to soften. While the bulgur is boiling, you’ll boil the chickpeas at the same time in a separate pot.

Next, chop the parsley, tomato, green onion and add to a large bowl. The cooled chickpeas and cooled bulgur go into the bowl then the dressing ingredients are mixed together then poured over the salad.

INGREDIENTS:

Salad:
1/2 cup coarse bulgur (#2)
1 large bunch parsley, chopped
3 medium tomatoes, diced
3-4 green onions, sliced
1 can chickpeas, washed and drained

Dressing:
3/4 cup olive oil
1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
2 tablespoons dried mint (or fresh, if available)
1 tablespoon pomegranate molasses
Salt to taste

PREPARATION:

Add the bulgur to a small pot and cover with water. Bring to a boil and cook for 5 minutes then drain.

In a separate pot, add the chickpeas and cover with water. Bring to a boil and cook for 5 minutes. Drain and rinse with cold water.

In a large bowl, add the bulgur, tomatoes, parsley, green onions and chickpeas, and toss a few times.

In a small bowl, mix the olive oil, lemon juice, pomegranate molasses, mint and salt. Pour over the salad and toss a few times.

Cover and keep in the refrigerator until ready to serve. Serve with fresh romaine lettuce hearts.

Serves 2.

@JenanZammar, Foodie & Baker | Content Creator | Wife & Mom of 3 | Lebanese-Canadian
<https://jenanzammar.com/>, 2022 Ottawa Foodie Influencer Award

“I’m a Lebanese mother of 3 and love to share all of my recipes,” says Jenan. “Years ago I had no idea what I was doing in the kitchen but with lots of trial and errors, I can now whip up a meal with little effort. I’m all about simplifying meals but still enjoying the delicious flavors food has to offer. From my kitchen to yours with love.”

Connect at: https://www.facebook.com/people/jenan_zammar/100063710430318/
https://www.instagram.com/jenan_zammar/
https://www.pinterest.ca/Jenan_Zammar/_created/
<https://www.youtube.com/c/JenanZammar/videos>
For this recipe, go to: <https://jenanzammar.com/saffeh-salad/>
For this YouTube video, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/10O041O48co>
Watch here: <https://www.pinterest.dk/pin/336784878391963365/>
For Jenan’s YouTube videos, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/c/JenanZammar/shorts>



Also see: <https://food-heritage.org/saff-tabbouleh-saff/>
Also check out Jenan’s Lebanese Beef Shawarma Salad. This salad is healthy, easy to make, and full of flavor, you won’t miss the bread at: <https://jenanzammar.com/beef-shawarma-salad/>
Note: Jenan is happy to work with your brand, too. She’s collaborated with many brands and has created great longstanding relationships. She can showcase your products in many ways such as recipe videos, recipe creations, Instagram story ads, and more. For more information, please contact her at jenan.zammar@hotmail.com for sponsored rates.

UCLA Hosts Armeno-Indica Conference on Armenian Diaspora in India

By Lucas Karamanoukian

WESTWOOD, Calif. — A two-day, multi-faceted conference entitled Armeno-Indica concluded on March 18, 2022 at the Fowler Museum at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The international lecture series was centered around the cultural and historical identity of the Armenian diaspora living in India from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century.

The conference was originally scheduled for 2021 to celebrate the bicentenary of the founding of the Armenian College (established 1821) in Kolkata but was postponed

due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The keynote address was delivered by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Distinguished Professor of History and Irving and Jean Stone Chair in Social Sciences at UCLA.

Sponsors of the meeting included the Fowler Museum, the Richard Hovannisian Endowed Chair in Modern Armenian History, the Promise Armenian Institute UCLA, the UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies, University of Southern California Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research.

Spanning two days of explorative lectures, topics of

learning included 1) Trade, Law, and Go-Betweens, 2) Language and Literary Revival, and 3) Armenian Historiography and Print Culture, and 4) History in the Present on Day One; and 1) Monuments, Patronage, and Indo-Persianate Identities, and 2) The Historical Imagination and the Circulation of Revolutionary Ideas in Late 18th Century South India on Day Two.

The event materialized with the participation of an international retinue of scholars encompassing studying the historical, cultural, legal, economic, and literary fabric of the Armenian diaspora in India over the last four centuries.



ARTS & CULTURE

Hrair Diarbekirian

“I wish that Armenians would love and help one another!”

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Hrair Diarbekirian is one of the prominent representatives of contemporary Lebanese fine art. Born in Beirut, in 1946, he attended the Academie Libanaise des Beaux Arts. A staple of the Lebanese art scene since 1961, Hrair has exhibited extensively in the Middle East, Europe, Asia and the Americas. He is the recipient of several awards, including gold medals from the Sursock Museum in Lebanon and the Sao Paulo International Biennial. Several of Hrair's paintings housed in the collections, of both statesmen and celebrities, most notably among the private holdings of Queen Elizabeth II of England, Prince Rainier of Monaco and actor Kirk Douglas.

Last January, Hrair visited Armenia for the first time. Our meeting took place in the hospitable and beautiful apartment of our common friend, Lucy Topalian, who has worked all her life as a gallerist.

Hrair, you are welcome, it is so good to meet you!

Thank you very much. This is my first trip to Armenia and I am very happy to be in Yerevan, in my capital!

Although your works appeared here already in the 1960s?

Yes, in 1967 or 1968, I donated my painting “Annunciation” to a Yerevan museum, but I don't know which one. I think it was the old museum [meaning the National Gallery – A. B.]. They sent me an album with my work in it. It was one of my first paintings, I drew it in miniature style. In the beginning, I was much influenced by Armenian and Byzantine art.

I have known your works for many years, and with the arrival of the Internet, I got to know them more. I am always delighted to see a lot of plasticity and movement in your works. The lines of your women and horses are very plastic. And since I love dance very much, I have always thought that this artist is not far from dance either.

You are right. I have danced. I did a little ballet with Ani Daba [Ani Daba-Odabashian was one of the founders of Lebanese ballet – A. B.], then I did a little modern ballet, but I did not continue. But I like to dance and feel the music profoundly. Dancing is also like making a painting. When you dance, it is like you are painting, and it is like you are dancing while painting.

Once French director René Clair said: “Today I saw the film on the ceiling. Only one easy thing was left to do: to shoot it.” Can we say the same about painting?

I also see the picture beforehand: before starting I know exactly what I have to do. I already have in my head the upcoming image, whether a tree, a human character, or a horse. The horse is also very close to me, it is very symbolic; it is a perfect one for me. You can find everything in the horse: beauty, strength, lines, movement, sun, life, death (if you fall from it, you die). Being professional, I know everything in the process. I work with no doubts. That is my world!

We have had many good Armenian artists in Lebanon. Some of them remain in the community while some of them are recognized in the world as Lebanese artists. You are of the second group. How did you manage to get out of the community circle?

I received offers from different galleries of the world. At the beginning of the 1970s, the first place was Paris, then Greece, then Brazil, and the USA. The Arabs became interested in me during the 1975 war. There had never been an exhibition in Saudi Arabia. They invited me and held my personal exhibition in the Hotel Intercontinental. It was opened by the current king, who was a prince at that time. There is something in my art that speaks to the hearts of different nations. The Arabs said that there is an oriental spirit in my works; the Russians said that they are very Russian, seeing a kind of romanticized Russia; in Brazil they said my paintings have their own colors.

And what do you say? What is your art, Armenian, Lebanese, or Lebanese-Armenian?

I am Armenian; if I was not Armenian, my work would not be what it is now. The Lebanese and Arab countries encouraged me a lot, until the Lebanese Armenians rec-



ognized me, because I was not in any party. I was the first Armenian to leave Lebanon and represent the country in different countries.

Have you had Armenian teachers?

I never had an Armenian teacher. I studied at the French lyceum of Beirut. But my parents sent me also to the [Nshan] Palanjian Djemaran [Lyceum], where I learned to read and write in Armenian. Then we would study Armenian twice a week.

I studied architecture for four years. It helped me a lot. I was busy with architecture classes in the afternoon until 4:00, then I studied drawing at the Lebanese Art Academy. An artist should have a base to be a professional. After that, you can do whatever you want. Now, anyone can put together colors and make some kind a painting, but if you ask him to draw a portrait, he won't be able to do it. Sometimes some great artists visited us at the Academy, like Paul Guiragossian or Jean Khalife, looking at our drawings, saying “not bad,” and walking away. But we had one French and one Canadian professor who taught us well how to look and how to draw. As an architect, I know how to draw a painting.

In the last year of the Academy, there was a competition for tapestry design with three subjects in the new presidential palace. The jury came from France. I don't know how many hundreds of people participated in the competition. I made three tapestry layouts: one with war and horses, one was a Lebanese landscape, and one for a dining room where there would be big dinners. At the end of one week, I received all three first prizes. I was still a student, but I became famous overnight. In the same year, I also received the first prize of the Sursock Museum. After this, people started to look after me. Thus I started, without much effort.

And is it possible to live only as an artist in Lebanon?

It is difficult. But I have lived well and live well, because

I succeeded. My grandfather was not rich, and my mother never gave any money to me.

Does your surname Diarbekirian have anything to do with Diyarbakir – historical Tigranakert?

Yes, my father was from Diyarbakir. He was an orphan, who has lost his family in the genocide. The family was scattered to France, USA, Egypt, Iran, Iraq and Argentina. There was a Diarbekirian foundation in New York, and a Diarbekirian rest house in Buenos Aires. And my mother was from Yozgat; she was also an orphan. Their family name was Vartanian, but later we found out that the real surname was Pehlivanian. She had three sisters; her brother and father were killed, while her sister Noemi was three years old and sister Isabel was nine months old. They must have been rich, because the Kurds who worked for them saved the girls. Such an Armenian story.

And now you just came to visit Armenia?

Yes. A month ago, I had an exhibition in the US, in Pasadena [California], and then I came here. From Beirut, I arrived just in one-and-three-quarter hours. I am so happy being in my fatherland and I love it very, very much. For me, Yerevan is Europe. Our Armenians have built many great buildings. And what a great weather: beautiful snow, but with sunshine and blue sky. I wish eternal peace for Armenia; the situation in Artsakh is very sad now, but Armenians always stand up. I wish that Armenia will move forward and that our capital city will be open for more tourists. I am very proud to be Armenian. Everywhere I say that I am Armenian, and Lebanese people love Armenians, they have made great contribution in Lebanon. And I also wish that Armenians love each other and always support each other, as we don't have another Armenia – this is the only one. And I always will visit Armenia!

I also hope that you will visit again this year, this time with an exhibition.

In Arabic they say: if God wills! Thank you very much!

COMMENTARY

Boston Area Concert Funds Preservation of Manuscripts

By Norayr Kherlopian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BEDFORD, Mass. — The friends and co-founders of Yerkir Nairi, a group of Boston-area classical musicians from the Armenian community, had organized a concert to raise funds to support educational publications and the efforts of the Armenian National Music Digital Library of the Komitas State Conservatory in Yerevan. The concert was held on March 18, starting at 6:00 p.m., at the First Parish Church of Bedford, MA.

The co-founders of Yerkir Nairi, Nune Hakobyan and Victoria Avetisyan had gathered most of the prominent Armenian musical performers of the Boston area to present a variety of compositions spanning a period of hundred years, of songs, instrumental and chamber music.

Any Hovsepien in her opening words described the need of the digitalization for the preservation of manuscripts and the growing tasks in that respect in the Komitas Conservatory. She also accompanied on the piano Armenuhi Hovakimian (*Nocturne for Violin*) and her son Haig (violin) in the presentation of Khatchaturian's *Uzuntara* and *Groong* by Komitas. Other piano performances were by Levon Hovsepien, Nune Hakobian, and Lilit Karapetian-Shougarian, the wife of the former ambassador Rouben Shugarian.

Victoria Avedisian, Yeghishe Manucharyan and Knarik Nerkararyan performed



Sarkis Karapetyan, Armenuhi Hovakimyan, Andrei Sonbchenko, Nune Hakopian, Lilit Muradian, Cherry Kim

the nostalgic songs *Yerkir inz Hamar*, *Siro Hasak*, *Pardzer Sarer* and *Hayasdan Yergir Trakhdavayr*. Instrumental duos, trios and quartets were performed by Armen Ghazaryan, Arpine Azatyan, Lilit Muradyan, Sarkis Karapetyan, Andre Sobchenko (sax), and Cherry Kim (cello). The highlight of the evening was *Nor Hayastan* of Stepan Lusikian performed by the Serini Singers of the Victoria Avedisian Voice Studio. It was interesting to hear the mixed voices of a mixed ethnic group singing an Armenian national song.

The funds raised through the concert will be used for the purchase of advanced digitalization equipment. The library's materials

are available via yksclibrary.arm. The conservatory's publication *Musical Armenia* is also available online at yerazhshtakanhayanastan.am.

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CONNECTICUT

APRIL 22 — The Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee of Connecticut will hold its annual program, on the 108th anniversary of the Genocide, on Saturday April 22 2023 at 11:00 am. The event will take place at the historic Connecticut House Chamber at the State Capitol, 210 Capitol Avenue, Hartford. The program will include the Martyrs' Service, which was created in 2015 on the occasion of the centennial of the Genocide and the canonization of the Martyrs. Clergy from Armenian Churches in Connecticut will participate in the service. The keynote speaker will be Aram Hamparian, Executive Director of the Armenian National Committee of America, (ANCA). A reception will follow the commemoration. For questions call Melanie at 860-651-0629

MASSACHUSETTS

MARCH 26 — Piano Recital: Blossoming Keys, Performers: Anahit Truzyan, Rebecca Lai, Timothy Lai. Works by Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt. Sunday, 5 p.m. Armenian Cultural Foundation: 441 Mystic Street, Arlington. 781-646-3090.

APRIL 16 — Annual Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture, Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. Sunday beginning at 7:30 a.m. Supported by the Park's Charles and Doreen Bilezikian Endowed Fund. Rain date: April 23. For details, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

OCTOBER 27-28 — **SAVE THE DATE.** Celebrating the 90th Anniversary of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, with two events, an evening panel discussion with journalists on October 27 and a reception and dinner benefit on October 28. Details to be announced.

NEW JERSEY

MAY 13 — Save the Date! The Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group will mark its 25th anniversary with a gala. Details to follow.

NEW YORK

MARCH 29 — The International Armenian Literary Alliance (IALA), the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), and the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center will host the second event of their reading series, Literary Lights, featuring Deanna Cachoian-Schanz, translator of *A Book, Untitled* – written by Shushan Avagyan. Cachoian-Schanz will be joined by Dr. Lisa Gulesserian, Preceptor on Armenian Language and Culture at Harvard University. 7:00 p.m. Eastern, at the Guild Hall of the Diocesan Center in New York City (No registration required). *A Book, Untitled* unfolds an imagined encounter between two early twentieth-century feminist writers, Zabel Yesayan and Shushanik Kurghinian, juxtaposed with a conversation between the author and a friend.

Send Calendar Items to the *Mirror-Spectator*: To send calendar items to the *Mirror-Spectator*, email alin@mirrorspectator.com or alin.gregorian@gmail.com. You can also visit our website, www.mirrorspectator.com, and find the "calendar" section under the heading "More." You can also mail them to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472. All calendar entries must be received by noon on Monday before publication. There is no fee for calendar entries.



Knarik Nerkararyan, Levon Hovsepien



Yeghishe Manucharyan singing

COMMENTARY

Gone, Where to?

By Esther Heboyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Until recently I had no inkling that Pope John XXIII (1881-1963), formerly known as Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, used to live on the very street where I spent my early childhood. Until recently I had no inkling that my street in the Harbiye neighborhood of Istanbul was renamed Papa Roncalli Sokak. I say *my street* because I lived there the first eight years of my life. Yes, I lived somewhere on that street during the crucial formative years, as they say. What did I see, what did I hear, and what did I do?

Do? I didn't do much, it seemed to me years later, and it still does today. Wasn't allowed to play outdoors. The city street was no playground at the time. Never owned a bike to rush up and down an alley as some kids, mainly boys though, did on the Prince islands. However, I remember strolling about the Beyoğlu neighborhood or going to the Turkish film matinees, my hands tightly squeezed in my parents' or my grandmothers' hands. Tightly squeezed as if a sudden whimsical urge would make me wander off. Where to? And how could I? My world was my family, was my neighborhood. Tightly squeezed as if a malevolent character out of a book or a movie would snatch me away. And then what?

Hear? Heard languages, Western Armenian (spoken mainly indoors), my maternal grand-mother's funky broken Armenian (a language no one else around me spoke at the time and would ever speak in my future life), Turkish (indoors & outdoors), funky peasant Turkish (from street vendors and apartment janitors), Greek (at an aunt's), American English (from Elvis Presley songs). All of those languages were music to me. Just like the doleful songs drifting from the radio, a relative's sad *saz* being tuned endlessly, someone's harmonica, someone else's accordion and home-made percussions – the clink of silver spoons, bare hands drumming on a table top, and the best of all, tongue popping, yes, a human tongue that produced short round clogging sounds and that I so wished to mimic. Heard songs performed after meal times. Those who had no ear joined in anyway, to be rebuked ruthlessly. Heard laughter and weeping, screaming and whisper. Heard silence.

See? Saw an ill-lit room on the first floor of a small building. Saw a dancing bear and the bear-keeper right in front of our window. Saw the ice-cream vendor rolling his cart that was bluer than the sea. Saw the classrooms of a grade school run by solemn nuns. A catholic school for girls in black uniforms. Austere as austere can be. Don't know why I took along and have kept to this day my school report card of 1962-63. The absurdity of it all. Halfway during the last term of Grade Two I was gone already, gone out of the country, I mean. The child of eight looks at two assessment rubrics left blank in the yearly average column, then scribbles down one perfect 5 (the highest mark then) for *Hal ve Gidiş* (Disposition and Conduct) and another for *Düzenlik* (Organization). A pair of 5s in blue ink aiming for muted perfection. Also: the parents having lost interest in daily matters, the child decides to sign the report card herself. Resisting the erasure of time and place.

Some sixty years later, I couldn't find *my street* on the Harbiye map. Kept flipping web pages, searching and searching. I know buildings get torn down, streets change names, for better or for worse. I know whole areas undergo urban renewal, and in some cases urban decadence, but this! I certainly wasn't ready for this. No sign of Ölçek Sokak, or Ölçek Street, in the Harbiye neighborhood of Istanbul. I felt cheated out of something. Why didn't anyone report the news to me? I couldn't travel back anywhere anymore, certainly not to what used to be *my street*. Even my imagination was under assault, let alone bygone reality tentatively surging up and down memory lane.

So more web page flipping, more searching. Until I spotted the picture of my old Armenian school, Anarad Hıgutyun. Indeed, it was almost the same frontal snapshot I had taken on my last trip to Istanbul in 2009. Same façade, door, windows. I could almost see myself behind that door, those windows, between 1960 and 1963 which enclosed my one and only preschool year plus two elementary years (minus one term). But the caption below the photograph said *Papa Roncalli Sokak*, Pope Roncalli Street. How come? Who was that Pope Roncalli? Did he ever converse with the catholic nuns of Anarad Hıgutyun, greet an ancestor of mine who happened to pass by, purchase half a pound of goat cheese at the grocer's round the corner? Did he pray for the Armenian people be they Evangelical, Catholic, Apostolic, non-affiliated or atheist? Did he vow to educate Armenian girls, all girls around the world, be they rich or destitute?

A web page provided scant information on the history of the Anarad Hıgutyun school. It opened on a Pangaltı street in 1903. But it didn't say where exactly in Pangaltı. The Catholic school aimed to instruct Armenian girls of poor background. So, not all of the Ottoman Armenian population was wealthy, as the myth goes. Educating girls – a noble and essential task to this day and most likely through tomorrows. The school moved to Ölçek Sokak in 1915. But which month of 1915? It didn't say. By the time I visited the Turkish lady who had been residing on Ölçek Sokak all her life (or so it seemed to me) and whose severely enfeebled yet still graceful mother had been a good neighbor to my paternal grandmother (she long gone, dead and buried in Marseilles), the school had closed down in 2004. "All of you gone, the school had to close down," said the Turkish

neighbor lady. After taking leave of my hosts, I loitered in front of that closed door for a while. No one stepped outside. Not a soul stirred behind the curtains. No need to ring the bell. Better move on, go one's way, as in the French expression *passer son chemin*.

Where had all the children gone? The little Armenian boys of co-ed preschool? The very young Armenian girls of early 1960s Istanbul? I couldn't remember any names although I remembered the sound of names, Nvart, Zvart, Verjin, Vartuhi. Where had all the children gone? I used to not like the heavy atmosphere of the place with its strict routine. I even hated nap time in kindergarten. It all felt like a series of required drills. No questioning allowed. No humor whatsoever. Life was a tragedy from the start, better get used to it.

After my last trip to Istanbul, I pulled out the only picture I had retained from my school days there. A group picture of girls and boys with one teacher (not a nun) in the middle of the last row. Uniforms were not black but white in preschool. In the foreground seven girls seated on a small oriental rug laid upon the stone tiles of the yard. Six of the students are huddled together, the one on the left, dainty, precautions, untrusting, has decided to sit on the cold stone. Eleven others, including three boys symmetrically distributed to the edges and the center, are seated on stools in the second row. Fourteen more are standing behind, with one boy to the left, one to the right. The last girl in this third row, shorter in height, seems puzzled as if she belonged to the group age of the second row. The thirteen pupils in the background were told to step on stools and surround the teacher. I stand in the fourth row, a silk seagull of a ribbon atop my skull.

No memories to cherish or to shake off. No joy, no bitterness. The 1960 or 1961 photograph was as void and inanimate as the Anarad Hıgutyun school building of 2009. A Throwback Thursday token, at best. The kind that would draw attention on social media and score "likes". Ten, twenty, fifty "likes"? What for? For decades gone by and never to be retrieved? For a schoolyard turned perhaps into a private patio? For time and place estranged? A gap was gashed between my older self and this picture, a gap as abyssal as between my language-wise self and the credit names scrolling down at the end of, let's say a Nuri Bilge Ceylan movie (since he's a regular at the Cannes Film Festival). Unacquainted, unschooled I had become. Where are all the *Ayşes* and *Hamdis*, the *Fatmas* and *Fikrets* gone?

A closer look at the Anarad Hıgutyun photograph brought back a name or two. Hilda? Could it be Hilda? The girl in the second row – cheerful, almost giggling, her ears adorned with seagull ribbons? Was the one standing next to the teacher in the fourth row Nadya? The girl with a flapper haircut, no seagull ribbon, aloof, poised, hardly a smile? As I stared again at the little girl curled up on the stone tiles, I was moved by her maturity. Like her comrades she had been instructed to sit properly with her legs aside. But unlike others she wouldn't let her body slump. Her right hand rested on her right ankle, her left hand had its fingers pressed on the carpet. She had given herself enough space to find her balance and stay upright, unbent. And the eyes, what profound eyes! I called her Hripsime. One of the boys, I thought, must be called Krikor. There was a Krikor in every group. Where had all the children gone? Gone to foreign shores? Gone to ashes? Who had stayed in Istanbul? Anyone still living in the Harbiye neighborhood?

Some years later when I studied the photo again I was struck by the tall French windows hidden behind iron bars. The bars rose from the window sills to the headers. Those iron bars were like books, trees, rivers. They had stories to tell. Stories of human frailty, weaknesses, faults, drama. Institutional buildings, trades and stores, entertainment venues, places of worship, private homes made use of iron bars to prevent intrusion, theft and destruction – all over the world. In Istanbul, Lisbon, Sydney, San Francisco, Tokyo, Paris or Montpellier in Southern France, iron bars were conceived to protect from aggression. Security bars looked ugly and made me cringe. Even those painted green or blue. Even those in wrought iron that seemed decorative. Windows barred with iron definitely canceled the idea of lightness. Life wasn't a matter of carefree ease as the preschool pupils of Anarad Hıgutyun were yet to learn. Again I wondered: Where have all the children gone? And also: What practical, ethical or theoretical knowledge have they gathered from a compulsory course called *Hayat Bilgisi* (Life Knowledge)? A rather pompous title, if you ask me.

And despite all the teaching and preaching, not one curriculum, neither there nor here, had prepared me for the loss of *my street*, I mean for the un-naming and renaming of Ölçek Sokak. The school was long gone, long emptied of children, teachers, administrators (one newspaper feature defined the years 1961-1964 as the highest occupancy period). But not the school building. The two-story structure looked renovated, still stood there on the old street now named Papa Roncalli Sokak. The signage said: *Anarad Hıgutyun Binası 128* (Anarad Hıgutyun Building # 128). And what is more, the façade now held two additional rectangular business plates, one designating the Armenian-Turkish weekly *AGOS* in red letters, another the *Hrant Dink Vakfı* or Hrant Dink Foundation with Hrant's profile as a logo. I knew then that on my next trip to Istanbul (had no idea when that would be) someone would answer the door, show me around the institution and take me to the interior patio on the second floor which used to be my schoolyard. The schoolyard, I thought, was what I missed most. A roofless haven that not only adjoined the terrace of my last home in Istanbul (see the white wall on the picture?) but also stretched out to the sky's infinite pathways.

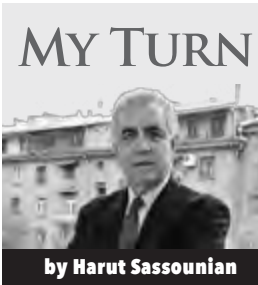
Esther Heboyan © 2023 ((Born in Istanbul to Armenian parents, Heboyan was a professor of American literature at the University of Artois, in Arras, France. Retired from teaching in 2021; published a travel piece, "Mississippi Blues," in 2022.)



Photo of students



COMMENTARY



Legal Experts Ask International Court to Probe Turkey’s Crimes against Humanity

Several newspapers announced earlier this month that a major complaint has been submitted to the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Turkey. A group of European legal experts compiled a massive file which included “witness testimonies giving details of torture, state sponsored kidnapping, and wrongful imprisonment” by the Turkish government of its 200,000 opponents.

Both the European Court of Human Rights and the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had concluded that a large portion of the imprisonments and detentions by Turkey were a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. They are considered crimes against humanity. The new complaint was delivered to the ICC prosecutor Karim Khan on February 9, but made public on March 1, 2023.

The 4,000-page dossier was prepared by the Belgian law firm Van Steenbrugge Advocaten, the Belgium-based NGO Turkey Tribunal, and the European judges association Magistrats Européens pour la Démocratie et les Libertés (MEDEL).

“Turkish officials have committed crimes against humanity against hundreds of thousands of opponents of the Erdogan regime,” the submission said. “These crimes amount to a ‘widespread and systematic attack against a civilian population’, meeting the threshold for the ICC to launch proceedings against high-ranking officials of the Erdogan regime.”

Even though Turkey is not a signatory to the Rome Statute that had established the ICC, the Court has jurisdiction to pursue these crimes since the Turkish government has committed some of the crimes on the territory of 45 ICC member states: Afghanistan, Albania, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Jordan, Kenya, Liberia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Peru, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Senegal, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The Gambia, Tunisia, Uganda, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, and Zambia.

The complaint states that there were 17 cases of enforced disappearance in which victims were abducted from Kenya, Cambodia, Gabon, Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Mongolia and Switzerland and taken back to Turkey. These abductees were accused of being followers of Fethullah Gulen, a US-based Muslim preacher. Pres. Erdogan supported Gulen for many years until their

relationship soured. Thousands of Gulen’s followers, including 9,100 police officers, were subsequently fired from their jobs and arrested.

Osman Karaca was seized on October 14, 2019, in Cambodia where he was a schoolteacher. “After being held incommunicado for four days, Karaca was handed over to Turkish authorities who flew him back to Turkey on a small government jet. He was convicted of leading an armed terrorist group in the 2016 coup attempt, despite the fact he had left Turkey for Cambodia in 2002,” the Guardian reported.

Karaca is one of many Turks abducted from overseas and charged for being a ‘terrorist.’ The legal claim filed against Turkey at the ICC contained statements on the torture of 800 abductees, describing “in detail how torture has been inflicted on a large and consistent scale.”

“This should be investigated,” said Johan Vande Lanotte, a former Belgian deputy prime minister and human rights law professor, who helped set up the Turkish Tribunal. He is leading the effort to persuade the ICC to open an investigation. “The universal basic principles of international law are being violated.... Important members of the (Turkish) government cannot deny they are responsible, because they proclaimed their responsibility proudly.”

The Turkey Tribunal stated that it documented “59 cases of extraterritorial and domestic Enforced Disappearance, relating to 109 persons. While the Turkish state has always denied involvement in domestic disappearances, authorities have consistently boasted about illegal abductions made overseas. Most recently, in July 2021, President Erdogan gave a press conference next to an image of a Turkish teacher proclaiming that he had been abducted from a foreign country. In an arrogant demonstration of impunity, the published image of the abducted person showed clear signs of torture, and he later underwent surgery to treat his broken arm.”

The Turkey Tribunal added: “Concerning the Imprisonments in Violation of Fundamental Rules of International Law, official Turkish statistics show that investigations into alleged membership of a ‘terrorist organization’ were launched against 2,217,000 persons in the period 2015-2021; 560,000 persons were put on trial and 374,000 persons were convicted, 270,000 of whom were found to be members of a terrorist organization.”

Furthermore, according to the Turkey Tribunal, “Official Turkish statistics show that 129,410 public servants have been dismissed and 19,962 teachers had their teaching licenses cancelled, since 2016. In total, 234,419 passports were withdrawn in relation to arbitrary investigations against the alleged members of the Gülen movement. Of these, 155,000 relate to persons against whom no judicial action was launched, such as, for instance, the spouses of the persons against whom an investigation or persecution was launched.”

Former Belgian Deputy Prime Minister Vande Lanotte concluded: “We had the United Nations Working Group on Forced Disappearances look into this, the UN Human Rights Committee, the European Court of Human Rights, and even judges in Turkey itself, and nothing has been done, so this is the last possibility for justice.”

Chinese Initiative on Iran and Saudi Arabia Presents Opportunity To Armenia

By Suren Sargsyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

In recent days, quite interesting developments have been taking place in the South Caucasus region and beyond, which may have a significant impact on Armenia. A few days ago, Iran and Saudi Arabia signed a historic agreement on the establishing of relations under the strong leadership and mediation of Beijing. Of course, this does not mean that an atmosphere of trust will immediately be formed in the relations between the two states. However, the Chinese mediation will definitely provide certain security and other guarantees for both parties. In turn, this is an opportunity for Iran to distribute its limited resources more effectively, particularly considering the growing appetite of Azerbaijan and Turkey against Iran’s interests in the South Caucasus, particularly in the Syunik region of Armenia.

Basically, with this new role, China is positioning itself not only as a global economic force, but also as a global mediator in such major conflicts as the Iran-Saudi Arabia conflict. Historically, acting as the main mediator for reconciliation processes of this level, especially in the Middle East, has always been the American prerogative. Not coincidentally, Washington was quite reserved about the current initiative.

It is clear that such an initiative does not help the policy of the US and Israel to isolate Iran. Moreover, Saudi Arabia is considered one of the most reliable US allies in the Middle East, specifically against Iran. It is worth mentioning that in some political science circles

in Washington, there is the fairly well-founded opinion that Iran is indispensable for a policy of more effectively counterbalancing China, so the US should regulate relations with Iran, taking into account these realities.

Let’s not forget that out-competing China is a global priority and challenge of the Biden administration as described in the national security strategy. With this initiative, China took several steps forward in this context, acting more quickly and effectively.

First, by bringing Iran and Saudi Arabia to its court, it complicated Washington’s plans to form a coalition against China on two different fronts. Of course, this does not mean that Saudi Arabia will lose its role and importance to Washington, or vice versa, but Riyadh

lishment of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia was not particularly commented on in Armenia and no statement was made by the government. However, it is obvious that Iran is trying to concentrate its attention on the South Caucasus region and to make sure that there are no significant challenges arising from Saudi Arabia at this point. This is a new opportunity for Armenia to regulate its own relations with Saudi Arabia as Armenia never had diplomatic relations with that country. Of course, there were some historical initiatives when, with the help of some mediators, including the USA, there were attempts to regulate relations between Armenia and Saudi Arabia but they were not successful. Now this seems a more doable process, especially tak-

CHINA IS POSITIONING ITSELF NOT ONLY AS A GLOBAL ECONOMIC FORCE, BUT ALSO AS A GLOBAL MEDIATOR IN SUCH MAJOR CONFLICTS AS THE IRAN-SAUDI ARABIA CONFLICT.

will have a different kind of positioning towards China and under Beijing’s guarantees towards Tehran.

As for Iran, there cannot be the illusion that Tehran has finally solved its problems in the Middle East and everything is going well in this region, but it is noteworthy that on the very same day when Iran and Saudi Arabia signed the agreement, an Iranian military aircraft took to the air, and according to Azerbaijan, violated the latter’s airspace. This was, of course, a demonstrative demarche, because Iran could have obtained intelligence information about those areas near its border in other ways instead of launching the flight. Instead, through this act, Iran is showing Azerbaijan and Turkey that it has additional diplomatic guarantees and more available resources to counter the latter tandem in the South Caucasus region.

Now let’s go to Armenia. The news about the estab-

ing into account Saudi Arabia-Turkey relations.

This is an opportunity for additional diplomatic efforts for Armenia, which should be used, because such an opportunity may not last long. It is obvious that there will be various attempts to defeat the Chinese mediation, but this window will be open for some time and if a more professional approach is adopted in Armenia, the situation can be played in our favor.

(Suren Sargsyan is an expert on US foreign policy, researcher and author. He is a graduate of Yerevan State University, American University of Armenia and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Suren Sargsyan is a founder of the Armenian Center for American Studies, a research center based in Yerevan.)



AUA Signs Agreement with ServiceTitan

YEREVAN — On March 14, the American University of Armenia (AUA) signed a research collaboration agreement with ServiceTitan, the world's leading and fastest-growing software technology company and the first Armenian-founded tech unicorn.

Within the scope of the agreement, AUA's engineering students from the Aki-an College of Science and Engineering will conduct research for the company. The goal of the research is to develop novel algorithms based on machine learning and artificial intelligence to solve problems that are highly relevant in the industry.

In his opening remarks, AUA Interim President Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian underscored the importance of such collaborations, stating, "I cannot overstate the importance of having means to engage our students in doing work that is related to their studies and also relevant for the industry. It is very gratifying to have this kind of opportunity, and we are thankful to ServiceTitan for providing this opportunity to our students as well as our faculty."

Dr. Der Kiureghian also mentioned that President and Co-Founder of ServiceTitan Vahe Kuzoyan and his wife Ruzan Kuzoyan are among the 200 AUA Changemakers. Together with his co-founder Ara Mahdessian, Kuzoyan has also established the ServiceTitan Endowed Scholarship Fund at AUA to support the "Yes, Armenian Women Can" campaign. The scholarship currently has two recipients. The Kuzoyans are also supporters of the "Build a Better Future with AUA" capital campaign, and so are Mahdessian and his wife Katherine.

In his turn, the Managing Director of ServiceTitan Armenia Ashot Tonoyan expressed his enthusiasm for the project, remarking that the company is committed to supporting education and science in Armenia. "One of the gaps that stands out in Armenia is the availability of actual data and work on real industry problems. That is why we decided to partner with AUA to give youth the opportunity to work with real data and solve actual industry problems," he remarked.

Then the floor was given to Arman Za-



Managing Director of ServiceTitan Armenia Ashot Tonoyan, left, signs agreement with AUA Interim President Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian

karyan (MSCIS '20; BSCS '18), AUA alumnus and data science engineering manager at ServiceTitan, who briefly in-

troduced the project. AUA Data Science Program Chair Dr. Habet Madoyan introduced the project team which includes data science students Gagik Khalafyan (MSCIS '23), Hermine Grigoryan (MSCIS '23), and Celine Hovannessian (MSCIS '23) led by AUA adjunct lecturer Aram Butavayan.

The official part of the event was followed by an informal reception during which the attendees had a chance to network with one another and share ideas.

West Accused of Trying To Drive Wedge Between Russia, Armenia

WEDGE, from page 1

rule out the dispatch of CSTO monitors to Armenia's border areas, saying that CSTO member states keep "working" on such a mission.

Lavrov sounded more optimistic on that score. He also indicated that a planned meeting of the Russian, Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign minister will take place soon after all.

The meeting was originally scheduled for the end of December. Mirzoyan cancelled it in protest against Azerbaijan's blockade of the sole road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

The blockade is another reason why Russian-Armenian relations soured in recent months. Yerevan has accused Russian peacekeepers in Karabakh of doing little to unblock the Lachin corridor.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said last week that if the peacekeepers are unable to protect the Karabakh Armenians against Azerbaijani military attacks Moscow should ask the UN Security Council to "activate additional international mechanisms." The Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, laughed off Pashinyan's statement.

Mirzoyan reiterated on Monday Yerevan's calls for the dispatch of an international fact-finding mission to the Lachin corridor. "We hope to cooperate with the Russian side on this issue," he said.

Lavrov did not back the idea. He again urged the conflicting sides to comply with the 2020 ceasefire that placed the corridor under Russian control and committed Baku to guaranteeing safe passage through it.

The top Russian diplomat was "sincerely satisfied with the results of today's talks" with Mirzoyan.

"We spoke frankly, as befits between friends," he said. "I am sure that this conversation will contribute to the further growth of mutual understanding and deepening of ties between Russia and Armenia."

