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News From Armenia

Meeting of Armenia and Azerbaijani Presidents was Hold in Bern



According to the Department of Public Relations and Mass Media of the Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia, president Serge Sargsian conducted a working visit to Bern, Switzerland on

December 18. He met with the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev in Bern on December 19. The meeting was mediated by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group.

Baku Has Illusion That it Can Negotiate By Use Of Weapons: Armenia Foreign Minister

The escalation of tension in the conflict zone due to Azerbaijani provocations ahead of each high-level meeting has become regularity. By such actions, Baku attempts to divert the negotiation process from the objective of establishing peace and settlement of the issue.

Republic of Armenia Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian said the aforementioned when responding to the question by Radio Liberty: "How would you comment on the issue connected with gross violations of the ceasefire by Azerbaijan ahead of the meeting of the presidents?" "We strictly condemn the unprecedented escalation of the situation by Baku resulting in a number of human losses in the line of contact with Artsakh ahead of the meeting between Armenia and Azerbaijani presidents initiated by the OSCE Minsk Group to be held on December 19. We extend our deepest condolences to the relatives of the deceased soldiers of the Artsakh Defense Army. The escalation of tension in the conflict zone due to Azerbaijani provocations ahead of each high-level meeting has become regularity. Baku has the illusion that it can negotiate



by use of weapons. Despite the numerous appeals made by the countries of the Co-Chairs on excluding use of force, Azerbaijan engages in new adventurism. By such actions, Baku attempts to divert the negotiation process from the objective of establishing peace and settlement of the issue.

In current situation specific steps aimed at the reduction of the tension have become an imperative: creation of investigation mechanisms of incidents, strengthening the observation mission of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson -in- Office, increasing the number of his field assistants at the suggestion of the Co-Chairs. We expect that the countries of the Co-Chairs will take practical steps in that direction

Regional News

Turkish Police Break the Doors of Armenian Church in Mardin



Turkish policemen have broken the door of Sourp Kevork (St. George) Armenian Church in Mardin, Turkey.

Hatun Jajur, who has voluntarily undertaken to clean the church, had left for a while and found everything turned upside down upon return. "Not only the main entrance, but also all other doors of the church were broken," Jajur said.

The Church is one of Europe's seven most endangered monuments. For 15 centuries the Church of St. George was the spiritual home of the large Armenian community in the Turkish city of Mardin. This Grade I registered historical building was founded in 420 AD and was in use until the Armenian genocide of 1915. In spite of its outstanding historical and cultural importance, this monument is currently in an advance state of decay.

Four Armenian Churches in Syria Destroyed by ISIS



The Assyrian International News Agency (AINA) has released the list of Christian churches and monasteries in Syria that have been destroyed by ISIS and other Muslim groups, including a total of three Armenian Churches.

Attacks on Christians in Syria began almost immediately after the Syrian civil war began. The attacks have targeted villages, churches monasteries and the clergy, and have been

perpetrated by Al-Qaeda, the Al-Nusra Front, ISIS and other Muslim groups.

On February 23 ISIS attacked the 35 Assyrian villages on the Khabur River in Hasaka, Syria, capturing 253 Assyrians. In the subsequent months it destroyed 11 churches and villages, rendering some villages uninhabitable.

According to the agency, four Armenian Churches have also been destroyed by

terrorists. The St. Rita Tilel Armenian Church in Aleppo was bombed by ISIS on April 28. The Armenian Genocide Memorial Church in Der Zor was destroyed by ISIS in September, 2014. The Armenian Catholic Church of the Martyrs in Raqqa was torched by ISIS and its cross atop its clock tower removed. In 2012 The Armenian church of the Holy Cross in Tal Abyad was torched by ISIS.

News from the world

State Department Welcomes Royce-Engel Karabakh Peace Initiatives

Amid an Escalation of Azerbaijani Aggression, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Calls for Concrete Action by the Obama Administration

The State Department has officially welcomed proposals by U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA), Ranking Democrat Eliot Engel (D-NY) and more than 80 of their House colleagues to check Azerbaijan's escalating aggression. The Department's support for the Royce-Engel peace proposals comes during a year that has already seen 40 Armenians killed by the Azerbaijani military – 4 just last week. On Tuesday, Azerbaijani Minister of Defense, Zakir Hasanov, publicly pledged renewed anti-Armenian aggression, stating "we are going to inflict even more devastating attacks."

In the November 12th State Department response to the Royce-Engel letter as the assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs Julia Frifield explained: "The United States supports proposals to withdraw snipers, expand OSCE's role via an OSCE investigation mechanism and

deploy sensors along the line of contact and the Armenia-Azerbaijan international border. [...] Without a mechanism to verify ceasefire allegations, or sensors to pinpoint the location of gunfire, it is difficult for the Co-chairs to make specific accusations against one side's use of force."

Armenia and the Nagorno Karabakh Republic have agreed to all three provisions advanced in the Royce-Engel letter. The Obama Administration and the OSCE also support these initiatives. Only Azerbaijan opposes their implementation.

At the December 9 Capitol Hill celebration of Karabakh freedom last week, Chairman Royce condemned Azerbaijan's attacks and urged concrete international action to ramp down regional violence.

"Why are the snipers not pulled back? [...] Why have we not deployed those special [gun fire] direction finders?" asked Chairman Royce, citing reports of unprecedented Azerbaijani tank fired shelling and high-powered rifle fire, which claimed the life of 24-year-old Garik Gurgun Avanesyan earlier that day.



Chairman Royce then announced a special Congressional briefing with U.S. Ambassador James Warlick – the State Department official responsible for the Nagorno Karabakh peace talks – to get concrete answers to his concerns. Chairman Royce concluded his remarks, noting "I retain hope that one day the people of Nagorno Karabakh will be able to live in peace, enjoying security and a flourishing trade with its neighbors in the region, and I give thanks to those of you here who are committed to that peace and who are committed to stay engaged to see that that happens."

Turkish-Belgian Parliament Member Expelled from Party for Refusing to Recognize the Armenian Genocide



Belgian "Humanist Democratic Centre" (CDH) has expelled a Turkish-Belgian politician Mahinur Ozdemir from the party for refusing to recognize the Armenian Genocide. "Armenpress" reports lecdh.be website informs about this.

The final decision to expel the Turkish member from the party was made by the ethics committee.

CDH leader Benoit Lutgen hailed the decision to expel Mahinur Ozdemir from the party, mentioning, "Political commitment requires clarity and full faithfulness towards the values embraced by us." Mahinur Ozdemir, who was the first to enter

the Belgian parliament with a head-scarf, boycotted the moment of silence dedicated to the memory of the Armenian Genocide victims last spring, announcing that "The resolution adopted by European Parliament is not mandatory."

Later she refused to sign the communiqué submitted by the head of her party, Lutgen, which assessed the incidents of 1915 as genocide, for which she was dismissed from the party. Afterwards, she appealed the decision of the party. She demanded "Humanist Democratic Centre" Party to renounce the decision of her dismissal explaining it as an illegal measure and discrimination.

"Aleppo Is My Birthplace, But Yerevan Is My Home..."

By ANUSH NERSISYAN

Aleen Maranian first visited her relatives in Armenia in 1995 when she was 14 years old and couldn't assume that twenty years later she would be a citizen of Armenia and would be living and working in her homeland with her Assyrian husband Mansur Hilib due to circumstances.

"They say something good comes out of all evil. The Syrian war became the reason for us to settle in Armenia. Our friend from Armenia invited us here this August. We lived at his house for a while and went on to rent an apartment. We found jobs and adapted to the lifestyle," Aleen said in an interview with womennet.am.

Aleen's ancestors, who were saved during the Armenian Genocide and had escaped from the Oril village of Aintab to Aleppo, could never imagine that one of their descendants would settle in Armenia, but this is the reality. Aleen and her husband say the news from their parents in Aleppo isn't assuring. They don't know when the war will end. "My parents haven't been living in their house for the past three years. They moved to a safer district, but there are still bombings." During their years in Syria, the young couple

worked by their profession. Mansour was a barber, and Aleen was a cosmetologist/manicurist. They have given their barber shop to someone for rent, and are now working at the cozy and exotic MS Beauty Salon located in the 1st Mass of Nor Nork District in Yerevan. If it weren't for the advice and heartfelt attitude of their friends, neighbors and hairdresser Angelina, it would have been hard for the young couple to adapt to the new environment.

"There are Syrian-Armenians who can't find jobs for months. We were lucky to meet good people and find jobs with their support. We are grateful to them for their great support. Through them my husband got to know the Armenians, and now he loves Armenia and the Armenians so much that he's even urging his relatives to visit Armenia," Aleen says. There are beauty salons at every step in Yerevan, but that didn't bother Aleen and her husband. After all, each person is successful, and they are too. Today, they have their own clients. True, they don't have as many clients as they did in Aleppo, but they are content. Aleen and her husband don't work like the local barbers, though there are many Armenians who prefer Oriental-style hairdos. Nevertheless, Aleen and her husband try to



please their customers with their variety of styles. They say it's too early to talk about future plans, and if they have problems, they will start looking for jobs in Dubai with the help of Mansur's friends. Mansur dreams of having a home in Armenia. For the lively and smiling Aleen, in addition to her knowledge of Armenian, Arabic and English, she wouldn't mind learning Russian, which would help her communicate with her Russian customers. Since she has free time during the day, she also cooks. Aleen's Ishli-Kufta dish is already in demand in the stores nearby.

"Aleppo is my birthplace, but Yerevan is my home," says Aleen, who has so many dreams.

Anahit Khalatyan: "The RA Ministry of Diaspora Also Contributed to My Repatriation"

Interview by Kevork Chichyan

Over the years, Armenian youth living outside of Armenia realize that they need to settle in their homeland and inspire their peers around the world with their example. One of those young Armenians is Anahit Khalatyan. Anahit moved from Moscow to Armenia three months ago. She says one of the reasons for her move was that she was no longer able to live far away from Armenia.

Hayren Aysor: Anahit, what is the story behind your move to Armenia?

Anahit Khalatyan: First of all, my family and I had moved to Moscow in the 1990s. After living in Moscow for 23 years, I could no longer come to grips with the thought that I was living far away from Armenia. The idea of repatriating was constantly spinning in my head, but I was never able to do what I had decided to do. After making the decision, I turned my longtime dream into a reality. I had set the goal to understand what I could achieve on my own.

I have been in the Homeland, my home for the past three months. As I arrived in Armenia, the first thing I did was breathe the clean air. It was an indescribable feeling.

Hayren Aysor: How did your parents react to your decision?

A. K.: When we would talk about repatriation at home, my parents wouldn't treat it seriously. They thought I was joking. However, when they understood the gravity of the issue, they didn't oppose it at all. Moreover, they have also planned to return to Armenia, and we are working on that. My father has health problems. I hope my parents join me after his recovery.

Hayren Aysor: How do you overcome your problems? You live here alone, right?

A. K.: Yes, living alone implies problems, but I never lose hope because I am the one who has chosen this lifestyle.

I mainly have domestic issues. Even if I can't solve a problem, I ask my friends for help. I can always ask them for help to solve any issue, and they will help me.

I don't have any difficulty with communicating

with people because I have good command of Armenian. I had managed to make friends during my visits to Armenia. There are 30 young Armenians like me who have repatriated from different countries. We gather, take walks and talk about issues that concern us.

To be rest assured, I also found myself a job before moving to Armenia. I currently work for a travel agency.

Hayren Aysor: Anahit, what were you doing in Moscow? What was your day like?

A. K.: I always had a busy schedule. I would work with the Armenian community of Moscow, the Armenian Diocese of Russia and New Nakhichevan and the Union of Armenians of Russia. For a decade, I was one of the active members of the Union. I was also an assistant to the First Vice-President of the Union of Armenians of Russia for three years. The members and I have organized different kinds of programs aimed at preserving the Armenian identity, and those programs helped reinforce the feeling of patriotism within me.

As I was living abroad, I really wanted to receive an education in Armenia. My parents paid heed to my request and would send me to Armenia for a couple of months. However, unfortunately, I wasn't able to finish school in Armenia. I had to continue my studies at School N 376 in Moscow, after which I got accepted to the Moscow Academy of Tourism and acquired skills in tourism management.

Hayren Aysor: How connected are the Armenian youth of Moscow to Armenia?

A. K.: The Armenian community of Moscow is large and multi-layered. Due to my job, I have had contacts with not only the Armenian community of Moscow, but also other Armenian communities across the Russian Federation. The Armenians of Russia are very different in terms of their temperament and their views on Armenia. There are Armenians who are patriots, and yet there are Armenians who are not very patriotic...

They try to do everything possible to help and contribute to Armenia's advancement. There is a student council adjunct to the Armenian community of Moscow. The council holds different programs aimed at helping them preserve their Armenian identity. Of course, families play a major role, and they need to do everything they can to provide their children with an Armenian upbringing.

Hayren Aysor: Anahit, it is safe to consider you one of the longtime friends of the RA Ministry of Diaspora since you always sincerely participate in all the programs of the Ministry of Diaspora. Tell us about that.

A. K.: I have been in active cooperation with the RA Ministry of Diaspora since the first days after it was established. I have participated in almost all the programs and am content. Through those programs, I have made many good friends from different countries, and I consider that a major achievement in my life. The RA Ministry of Diaspora also contributed to my repatriation, for which I am grateful. I assure you that I will continue to collaborate with the Ministry of Diaspora with the same vigor and not as a Diaspora Armenian, but as a full-fledged citizen of Armenia.

Azerbaijan's Guns Must be Silenced: Can't Negotiate Under Fire

By HARUT SASSOUNIAN



For over two decades, the international community, led by OSCE Minsk Group mediators representing the United States, France and Russia, has been trying to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the Artsakh (Karabagh) conflict.

The main obstacle is Azerbaijan's persistence in shooting while negotiating, and intensifying its attacks on the eve of every crucial meeting for settlement of the conflict. Such unconstructive behavior is totally unacceptable for everyone involved in the peace process. Azerbaijan intentionally escalates the violence on such occasions in order to pressure the international community to force Armenia into making unfair concessions on Artsakh.

To make matters worse, every time Azerbaijani forces launch attacks on Artsakh or Armenia, the Minsk Group mediators issue a routine statement urging both sides to stop firing, thereby equating the violator with the victim. In addition, the mediators cover up their irresponsible statement by claiming that they are not certain which side initiated the shooting.

In October, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) and Ranking Democrat Eliot Engel of New York, initiated a letter signed by 85 House members, to U.S. co-chair, Amb. James Warlick, urging him to take all necessary steps to withdraw snipers from the border, deploy gunfire locator systems along the Line of Contact, and increase the number of field monitors. These measures were accepted by Armenia, Artsakh, the US Congress, and the Minsk Group co-chairs, but rejected by Azerbaijan because of its intent to conceal and continue its warmongering initiatives. Under these untenable circumstances, the three mediators may consider placing gunfire locators on the Artsakh side of the border to record the source of incoming fire. If the mediators are unwilling to take such action, Armenia should go ahead and purchase gunfire locators from US manufacturer Raytheon and recruit independent NGOs to monitor and report the results to the international community.

Once the source of the shooting is identified, the mediators would then be obligated to condemn the perpetrator; otherwise, they would be encouraging Azerbaijan to escalate the attacks on Armenia and Artsakh.

Meanwhile, the mediators must warn Azerbaijan's autocratic President Ilham Aliyev that should he not cease and desist from making threats and shelling Armenia and Artsakh, they will be forced to submit Azerbaijan's violations to the United Nations Security Council, to mandate economic sanctions against his country.

The mediators could also temporarily suspend their peacemaking activities by announcing that they are prevented from seeking a negotiated settlement to the conflict, while Azerbaijan keeps on shooting. Surely, it is not possible to fight and talk at the same time!

Since Azerbaijan is not ready to go to war – if it were, it would have started it already instead of merely threatening – it has no choice but to heed the call of the mediators to cease firing and start negotiating in earnest. Freezing the negotiations would be a serious setback for Azerbaijan because that is the only way it can hope to reach some accommodation with Armenia and Artsakh. Armenians, on the other hand, have already accomplished their objective of liberating Artsakh from Azeri occupation and have nothing to gain from further negotiations.

Should the mediators decide not to freeze the peace talks, the Armenian government may decide to suspend its participation in these unproductive negotiations, thus sending a clear message to Baku that shelling Armenia and Artsakh undermines Azerbaijan's own interests.

If the negotiations are not suspended and Azerbaijan continues its attacks, the Armenian government may eventually respond with a "massive and asymmetrical retaliation," as it has repeatedly warned. While some may be concerned that such an action would further escalate the violence, in fact it would diminish, if not halt the endless border skirmishes, once Azeri leaders realize that they have more to lose by fighting than talking. It is unfortunate that Pres. Aliyev is exploiting the deaths of young Azeri soldiers on the frontlines to distract his people's attention away from massive violations of civil rights, corruption at the highest echelons of his government, and abysmal economic conditions due to diminishing oil revenues. I had the opportunity to discuss some of these issues last week with various officials in Washington, D.C., while Artsakh's Foreign Minister Garen Mirzoyan was in town to meet with members of Congress and US mediator Amb. Warlick. Two receptions were held to honor the visiting Foreign Minister at the Armenian Embassy and on Capitol Hill, the latter co-hosted by the U.S. Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, Armenian National Committee of America, Armenian Assembly of America, and the U.S. Office of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic. Several House members, Amb. Warlick, and other dignitaries attended the congressional reception to the chagrin of Azerbaijan's Embassy which had dispatched a small group of Azeris to protest the event. Chairman Royce announced during the reception that he had asked Amb. Warlick to come to the House of Representatives this week for a briefing on the Artsakh conflict.

A large number of ANCA activists from throughout the USA, including this writer, joined Foreign Minister Mirzoyan in Washington last week, to share a message of peace and democracy for Artsakh with dozens of House and Senate members, urging them to recognize its independence from Azerbaijan.

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100 LIVES Announces 'Amal Clooney Scholarship' for Women to Study at Dilijan School

100 LIVES launches the 'Amal Clooney Scholarship' – an annual scholarship for young Lebanese women to pursue a degree at the United World College (UWC) Dilijan in Armenia.

100 LIVES announced the launch of a new annual scholarship established in partnership with esteemed international human rights lawyer Amal Clooney. The new 'Amal Clooney Scholarship' is part of an ongoing effort by 100 LIVES – the organization behind the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity – to strengthen cross-cultural education and understanding through collaborative social and philanthropic projects.

"As a leading human rights barrister and campaigner, Amal Clooney is an inspirational role model for young women around the world. She exemplifies integrity, compassion and dedication – and typifies what it means to be a global citizen across all cultures," said Ruben Vardanyan, co-founder of 100 LIVES and UWC Dilijan College, an international

co-educational boarding school hosting students from 64 countries. "100 LIVES recognizes the need for future generations to have greater cross-cultural understanding. The college strives to make education a force for peace by bringing together aspiring young leaders from all over the world."

Through this new scholarship, 100 LIVES will send one female student from Lebanon to Dilijan each year to enroll in a two-year international baccalaureate program. Recipients of the Amal Clooney Scholarship will be chosen annually based on their exemplary academic performance and demonstrable interest in the promotion of human rights and international issues. The first Amal Clooney Scholarship will be awarded to Pamela Tebchran – a dedicated Lebanese student who graduated top of her class and is fluent in Arabic, French and English. She will be using the scholarship to pursue her interests in human rights and women's equality.

"This scholarship will give young women

from Lebanon the opportunity of a lifetime," Amal Clooney said. "Cross-cultural learning and studying abroad can be transformative. I am grateful to 100 LIVES for helping to open doors for these bright and talented young women."

Beyond this scholarship, both Mrs. Clooney and her husband, George, have philanthropic ties to 100 LIVES. Mr. Clooney is co-chair of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity – a new \$1 million global humanitarian prize recognizing those who put themselves at risk to enable others to survive. He will present at the inaugural Prize at a ceremony in Yerevan, Armenia on April 24, 2016. Mr. Clooney's Not On Our Watch foundation is also a partner of 100 LIVES – the two organizations share a commitment to focus public attention on the impact of genocide and work to prevent mass atrocities around the world.

The annual selection process is managed by a dedicated UWC National Committee in Lebanon and based on the UWC entry requirements and Amal Clooney Scholarship

criteria.

100 LIVES is a new global initiative rooted in the events of the Armenian Genocide, during which hundreds of thousands of Armenians were saved by the courageous and heroic acts of individuals and institutions. A century later, 100 LIVES seeks to express gratitude, to share remarkable stories of survivors and their saviors, and to celebrate the strength of the human spirit.

UWC Dilijan College opened in October 2014 in Dilijan, Armenia. It is the first international boarding school of the UWC education model to open in Eastern Europe and CIS countries and it accepts students from all over the world.

Today UWC Dilijan has 190 students from 64 countries studying a two-year IB programme. The college offers full scholarships to 48% of its students, and a further 50% of the student body receive partial scholarships (covering 67% of tuition fees on average).

UWC Dilijan was established by entrepreneurs and philanthropists Ruben Vardanyan and



Veronika Zonabend with the support of other Founding Donors. The construction of the campus was funded by large-scale philanthropic donations, and the admissions policy aims to make places available to promising young talent regardless of their socio-economic background, on the basis of demonstrated need.

Centenary of the Armenian Genocide

“The Armenian Genocide: 100 Years of Silence” Book Presentation in Rome

On December 16, the Embassy of Armenia in Italy hosted the presentation of the book “The Armenian Genocide: 100 Years of Silence” (Il Genocidio Armeno: 100 Anni di Silenzio) in Rome, reports the RA MFA press service.

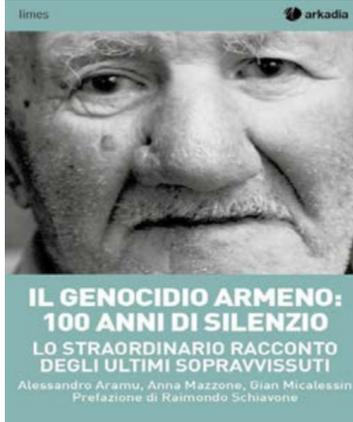
The book was published this year through the combined efforts of the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Italy and “Assadaka” Italo-Arab and Mediterranean Center. The book is by Alessandro Aramou, Anna Mazzone and Gian Micalessin.

The event was moderated by journalist and publicist Naman Tarca. President of “Assadaka” Italo-Arab and Mediterranean Center Raimond Schiavone; two of the book’s authors, Alessandro Aramou and Anna

Mazzone and photographer Romolo Eucalito presented the book and delivered speeches devoted to the Armenian Genocide.

They talked about their visit to Armenia and their meetings with last eyewitnesses of the Armenian Genocide and touched upon Turkey’s denial. They also attached importance to the implementation of educational programs devoted to genocides, including the Armenian Genocide at public educational institutions of Italy, considering it a necessary component for the prevention of future genocides.

Students, public and political figures, as well as members of the local Armenian community and mass media representatives were attending the event.



The Screening of George Jerjian’s “Daylight After a Century” Documentary at AGBU Yerevan Headquarters

Discover a remarkable collection of photographs taken in Eastern Anatolia during the early 1900s by the late Dr. George Djerdjian. Join us for a lecture presented by his grandson, George Jerjian, writer and speaker, who will showcase a selection of his favorite photographs.

“Every single shot is like a puzzle...and piece by piece they enable us to recover our full imagination about life in Western Armenia before 1915.”
— Dr. Hayk Demoyan
Armenian Genocide Museum, Yerevan

“The Jerjian collection is really a treasure trove of information. Each photograph is like a book. It is a life of that era.”
— Dr. Rouben Adalian
Armenian National Institute, Washington, DC

George Jerjian is the author of eight books and co-author of Arabkhi: Homage to an Armenian Community (2004)

Amazon: bit.ly/GJDaylight
georgejerjian.com
@GeorgeJerjian
#GJDaylight

Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) cordially invites you to the screening of George Jerjian’s “Daylight After a Century” documentary at AGBU Yerevan Headquarters on Thursday, December 17, 2015.

The documentary tells about the incredible collection photos taken in Western Armenia in 1912-1913 by George Jerjian’s grandfather, Kevork Jerjian. The photo collection, together with numerous other valuable documents, were donated to the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute.

Daylight After a Century has won Best Documentary at ARPA International Film Festival of Los Angeles and Best Short Film at Pomegranate Film Festival of Toronto.

AMAA Calls for the Return of the Total Grounds of CAMP ARMEN

On October 27, 2015 partial justice was realized in Turkey with the return of part of the grounds of “The Youth Home of Istanbul’s” CAMP ARMEN, a summer camp in the Tuzla District of Istanbul to its rightful owner, The Armenian Evangelical Church of Gedik Pasa. CAMP ARMEN was home to over 1,500 Armenian orphans, gathered from the depths of Anatolia and introduced to their faith and national origin by Hrant Guzelian. It was also where Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink and his wife Rakel met, grew up and were married. The Camp was being demolished. AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian recently wrote to Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey thanking him and the Turkish government for their role in the partial resolution of the seizure of CAMP ARMEN. Mr. Khanjian urged



the Prime Minister to attain total justice with the return of the whole camp grounds, legally acquired and paid for by the Protestant Church and built by the sweat of its campers.

Diaspora News

New York - USA

Eighth Annual AGBU NYSEC Concert Raises Over \$50,000 for Performing Arts Initiatives



On December 5, nine performers and hundreds of guests gathered at the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall for this year’s AGBU New York Special Events Committee (NYSEC) Performing Artists in Concert. The evening of music, entitled Melodies of Hope, was in commemoration of the Armenian Genocide centenary, and raised over \$50,000 for performing arts initiatives worldwide. The evening’s program featured musicians from Armenia, Australia, Canada, China, Germany, Macedonia, Portugal and the United States, all of whom were first-time participants in the concert series. The performers were all recipients of AGBU Performing Arts scholarships, which have allowed them to study at prestigious institutions like the Cologne High Institute of Music, Mannes School of Music, Monash University of Melbourne, Manhattan School of Music and the Shanghai

Music Conservatory. The performers composing this year’s international ensemble included: Arpine Azatyan (violin), Sona Barseghyan (piano), Vasko Dukovski (duduk and clarinet), Luke Ratcliffe Khachatryan (piano), Artur Mouradian (viola and violin), Talin Nalbandian, (mezzo-soprano), Astghik Poghosyan (violin), Tamara Sevunts (actress and poet) and Amy Tcheupdjian (cello). After the concert, Sevunts reflected on the importance of bringing young Armenians together: “I cannot express how tremendous it was to be with artists of similar backgrounds from all over the world on such a prestigious stage. I am beyond grateful for this opportunity and excited even more for what is to come. I think there is a profound understanding in the community now, and among our youth, that the arts and the love and passion with which we give ourselves to them will help pave the progress of the Armenian community.” Poghosyan also served as the artistic director for the evening and opened the concert with an explanation of the significance of the gathering: “This year’s concert is particularly special, as it is in commemoration of the centenary of the Armenian Genocide. Towards the end of this significant year, we are here to mark this anniversary together, bringing positive spirit, music, and of course, hope, in the essence of

all that unites us. Today, you will hear melodies of peace that each of us wishes for, melodies of pride that each of us carries out wherever we are in this world and melodies of hope that will take us to a brighter future.” The concert was composed of an eclectic selection of Western classical and Armenian music. It was also the Carnegie Hall premiere of the 2015 Sayat Nova International Composition Competition winning piece, “Flowers of Golgotha,” by composer Hovik Sardaryan. In addition, the evening featured readings of poems by Grigor Narekatsi and Daniel Varoujan, pieces by Sharafyan, Shostakovich, Rachmaninov, Saryan and Beethoven, and an interpretation of the traditional Armenian folk song “Tsitsernak,” arranged especially for the evening’s performance by Yang Yi, a student at the Shanghai Music Conservatory, as a gift and symbol of respect in honor of the Armenian Genocide. Hayk Arsenyan, the director of the AGBU Performing Arts Department (PAD), commented on the special theme of the concert: “This year, we wanted to introduce the audience to our ancient musical tradition, from the medieval period all the way up to the contemporary, to show the continuity of our thriving culture and encourage Armenians around the world to keep creating.”

Initiatives to Support Armenia

COAF Raises \$3.7 Million for Armenia’s Border Village Development



Ambassador John Evans, Garo Armen, Noubar Afeyan

The 12th Annual Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) Holiday Gala held on December 11th at New York City’s Cipriani 42nd Street raised over \$3.7 million to fund the organization’s first SMART Center being launched in Armenia’s Lori region. The COAF SMART initiative will consist of a SMART Campus currently being built on the outskirts of the Debet village. The SMART Campus will feature a state-of-the-art SMART Center which will offer the rural population of Lori a wide variety of educational programs such as English language, technology, art, music, organic agriculture, health, and athletics.

There will also be 40 technology-enhanced SMART Rooms established in the cluster of villages surrounding the SMART Campus. Attending the event were COAF Founder Dr. Garo Armen, Co-Chair Tony Shafrazi, Co-Chairs Khajak and Maryam Keledjian. Special guests included Paul Kaloustian, Henry and Patricia Hay, Giora Rachimov, Dan Liebrovici, Urs Fischer, Fab Five Freddy Brathwaite, Michael Holman, Sara Lundgren, George Pagoumian, Dorinda Medley, John Mahdesian, Lauren Taschen, Larry Feinberg, Ambassador John Evans and Donna Evans, Patricia Field, Scooter LaForge, Loris Diron.



The evening was emceed by actress Caroline Rhea and featured performances by Tony Award-winner Christine Ebersole, Harvard University’s a capella group The Harvard Callbacks, and a special performance by the Rakiem Walker Project. Clips of Conan O’Brien and Andrea Martin welcoming guests were shown during the program. This year, Martin Short, John Stamos and Sean Hayes had pre-filmed messages in support of the Gala which were posted on COAF’s social media outlets. Philanthropist and biotechnology entrepreneur Noubar Afeyan received this year’s Save a Generation Award for his continuous support for COAF and many other projects in Armenia. COAF’s SMART initiative will engage villages with professionals of national and international experts in multiple locations synchronously to inspire and propel dialogue and learning. SMART will offer world-class programs from global influencers

through interconnected virtual classrooms; meeting areas for student and youth clubs, an auditorium for performances and presentations, a library, and studios for language, arts and music. The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) is a non-profit, non-governmental 501(c)(3) organization. COAF uses community-led approaches to reduce rural poverty, with a particular focus on youth. Since the inception of its programs in 2004, COAF has funded and implemented education, healthcare, community and economic development programs serving more than 30,000 people in rural villages of Armenia. In 2015, COAF debuted SMART, an unprecedented model for delivering superior and regionally relevant holistic educational programs in rural areas, with an emphasis on technology, sustainability, the arts, health, linguistics, business and civic engagement. Learn more at www.coafkids.org.

Adopt-a-Village Project Kicks Off



The first Adopt-a-Village trial commencement took place at Areni, Vayots Dzor province of Armenia by the New Zealand Diaspora on December 11. Adopt-a-Village concept was initiated by the author of “Origins: Discovery” novel Len Wicks. Traveling across Armenian marzes and seeing the desolate state of the villages, he initiated the project which ties Armenian villages and their neighborhood to certain country where Armenian communities are represented. The project directly links the sides without any

mediatory and is controlled by the Diaspora. It is about micro-projects in the main, many not involving cash, and a direct relationship between the Diaspora and villages. Adopt-a-Village is aimed at beautifying and cleaning Armenian villages not only for the villagers but also potential tourists. Currently, the author of the concept Len Wicks works on a film-trilogy based on the novel which will be a unique commercial for Armenia featuring Armenia’s beauty, culture and history as well as the Armenian Genocide issues on a big screen.

Arts & Entertainment

Turkish Choir to Perform Songs of Armenian Composers in Ankara

The songs of Greek, Jewish and Armenian composers will be performed during a concert to be held at Leila Youth Center for Opera and the Arts in Ankara on the evening of December 23.

As reports Ermenihaber.am, the Turkish Sabah newspaper informs that the choir giving a concert, that is, the Union of the Turkish Music Conservatory, will perform under the direction of conductor Cetin Kiurkcu.

The choir was established in 1948, and Kiurkcu has been the director of the choir since 1973.



Komitas Choir of the London Tekeyan Trust Participated In Christmas Carol Concert



On December 9, in London, at St Cuthbert's Church, the annual "Christmas Carol Concert" was organized by Baroness Caroline Cox in support of Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART). The concert featured the Armenian Komitas Choir, the Ugandan Acholi London Choir and St Martin singers.

The Komitas Choir was founded in 2013 by the Tekeyan Trust London,

a registered charity since 1979, the backbone of the London TCA and the Tekeyan Centre Fund Armenia. The TTL has always been dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the national identity as well as to furthering links between Armenia and the Diaspora through various cultural, educational, community life activities.

The performance of the Komitas Choir at "Christmas Carol Concert" was the highlight of the programme, since 2015 is the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide, and December 9 has been announced the "International Day of Commemoration of Victims of Genocide and of its Prevention".

Once again to commemorate the victims of the Armenian Genocide and to raise the awareness of the British audience, honourable Baroness Caroline Cox delivered her impressive speech. She condemned the Genocide denial policy of

the Turkish government and mentioned historical injustice and deprivations of the Armenian nation.

At the concert, the Komitas Choir, conducted by Sipan Hakobyan and accompanied by pianist Ella Babayan, performed "Hymn of the Nativity" by Komitas, "Arpa-Sevan" by Edgar Hovhannisyan and "New Armenia" by Stepan Lusikyan.

The Choir Conductor and artistic director Sipan Hakobyan, as a soloist, performed Hymn of "Christ's Baptism" by Grigor Pahlavuni and Hymn of the "Blessing the Water" by Hovhannes Yerznkatsi.

Garen Arevian of the TCA London recited "The Sorrow of Armenians" by Z. Boyajyan.

At the concert, among the audience present were representatives of a number of organizations, politicians and clergymen.

Armenian Church of Diyarbakir Has Been Damaged Due To Turkish-Kurdish Clashes

The historic St. Giragos Armenian Church of Diyarbakir, which was reopened in 2011, has been damaged due to the Turkish-Kurdish clashes over the past couple of months.

As citizens of Diyarbakir told NEWS.am, the St. Giragos Armenian Church, which is located in the Suri District of Diyarbakir, has been closed for the past two months.

The clashes have damaged the windows of the church, and one can see the spots of fired bullets on the walls.

Citizens say they don't know how the St. Giragos Church looks like after the

intensive shootings of the Turkish armed forces since stepping out to the street is still prohibited in the Suri District.

Let us mention that the St. Giragos Church, which is one of the largest churches in the Near East, was reopened and consecrated on October 22, 2011, and the first Holy Mass was served on October 23.

The repair works in the St. Giragos Church were carried out with the support of the Armenians of Diyarbakir and Diyarbakir Municipality.

The St. Giragos Church has been reopened as an operating church.



Varujan Vosganian Presents "Book of My Unwritten Poems" In Bucharest



On December 14, the Cantacuzino Palace of Bucharest hosted the presentation of the book "The Book of My Unwritten Poems" (Cartea poemelor mele nescrise, Ed. Polirom, Bucuresti 2015) by

Armenian writer and political figure Varujan Vosganian, who described his book as an autobiography, to a certain extent.

Among the guests at the event were President of the Senate of Romania Kalin Popescu-Taricanu; former Minister of Foreign Affairs Teodor Meleschkanu; Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Romania Hamlet Gasparyan; Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Romania, Bishop Tatev Hakobyan, as well as political figures and intellectuals. The presentation included poetry and musical performances, as well as speeches by poet Marian Dragic and literary critic Alex Stefanescu, who underscored Vosganian's humor and intellect. "Vosganian's main attribute is his great intellect. He is very smart and creative. It seems as though his books

contain a phosphor, something brilliant."

Stefanesku also appreciated the presence of Armenian culture in Vosganian's works and mentioned that "the forgotten folklore in Armenian traditions is appreciated" in his books. "Armenian traditions are not much appreciated in Romania. That is why I believe that the "Book of Whispers" deserves a Nobel Prize, without any exaggeration since it introduces something new," the literary critic added. According to him, Varujan Vosganian vitalizes cultural life in Romania.

The "Book of My Unwritten Poems" is about the generation of sad children born after the war and for whom the events of 1989 are still tragic. The book also underscores the state of the poet in a world where there is no authenticity.

Argentina's Racing Football Team has Refused to Sign Contract with Turkish Airlines due to Armenian Genocide

Argentina's Racing football team was negotiating with Turkish Airlines, but rejected the latter's sponsorship.

According to armfootball.com, the football team has posted the congratulatory message of the leader of the Armenian Youth Association in South America Alfonso Tabakian on its official website.

"There should not be any spots on a football

player's shirt and on the colors of the football team. For football fans, they are the logos of the team. That is why no football fan will want to see the team sponsored by a leadership that violates human rights," the message reads.

Let us mention that last year, Argentina's San-Lorenzo team also refused to sign a contract with an Azerbaijani company for the same reason.



"I would ask Santa Claus to make sure none of our soldiers is injured or killed"

"I have already grown up and don't want any gift from Santa Claus. I only want Santa Claus to make sure our country doesn't fight in a war. I want peace and solidarity to reign in our country. I want our country to always be strong, free and independent, as well as grow and prosper. I want our Armenian soldiers to be healthy, brave, independent, daring and courageous so that they can protect us. I would ask Santa Claus to make sure none of our soldiers is injured or killed so that they return to their homes safely and happily."

This is the wish that 5th grade student,



10-year-old Areg made to Santa Claus, as reports Hayern Aysor. His teacher has posted it on Facebook.

Turks tried to interfere DiKran Mansurian's Requiem to sound in Mexico

Turks tried to interfere DiKran Mansurian's Requiem to sound in Mexico. Favorite composer mentioned about this in the interview with reporters on December 17.

"Requiem was to be performed in Mexico, but it turned out that Turkish embassy made a big pressure not to declare it as a creation dedicated to the memory of victims of the Armenian Genocide. It sounded in the result of serious opposition for which Armenian embassy and Armenian figures put their efforts," Tigran Mansurian informed, as "Armenpress" reports. He stressed that the creation was, however, introduced in Mexico. "I was explained that Turkey has trade ties with Mexico and used the trade as means of pressure. I have other creations dedicated to what happened in 1915. Köln orchestra ordered from me "Where is your brother Abel?" concert. The mentioned work and Requiem sounded in



Germany this year. It was always declared that they are dedicated to the Armenian Genocide victims. Germans are doing it with great highlights. And it impresses me," maestro mentioned. Tigran Mansurian, generally has three songs dedicated to the Armenian Genocide. "I dreamed for my three works to be introduced during one evening. I would like to have a concert like this," he said. Tigran

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Armen Gevorgian, "Eternal Game", 2015, oil on canvas, 89x116cm

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