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News From Armenia

President Sarkisian Presided over CSTO Collective Security Council Session in Moscow



President Serge Sarkisian, who was in the Russian Federation on a working visit, participated at the session of the Collective Security Council of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). As "Armenpress" was informed from the Department of Information and Mass Media of Republic of Armenia President's Staff, President of the host country Vladimir Putin at the beginning of the session welcomed the participants and wished them productive work. After that the session was presided over by Serge Sarkisian, President of Armenia which assumed the chairmanship of the CSTO. At the moment, the negotiations are being conducted in a restricted format with the participation of the Presidents of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and the Secretary General of the Organization. Later, the heads of the CSTO member states will continue the session in the extended format with the participation of the members of the delegations. At the plenary session of the CSTO Collective Security Council the parties will sign a number of documents, including the Declaration of the Heads of the CSTO on fighting international terrorism, drafts of the resolutions of the Collective Security Council "On the Secretary General of the CSTO" and "On the rotation of the officials - members of the permanent bodies of the CSTO." In the framework of the agenda, the leaders of the CSTO member states will exchange views on the current global situation and future activities of the Organization.

CSTO Council of Foreign Ministers Meeting Kicked by Chairmanship of Edward Nalbandian



CSTO Council of Foreign Ministers meeting was launched early this week by chairmanship of Edward Nalbandian. The foreign ministers discussed the issues of agenda of the upcoming session of Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Armenian President Serge Sarkisian was also present in the Russian federation who attended the session of the Collective Security Council with Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Russian leaders. Secretary General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization Nikolay Bordyuzha also attended the session. The heads of CSTO member countries exchanged views on the situation in the world and international security issues and the possible actions of CSTO over the mentioned issues during the upcoming session. During the period 2015--2016 the Co-chair of CSTO Collective Security Council is Armenian President Serge Sarkisian.

World Bank Loan to Improve Armenian Tourism Infrastructure



The World Bank has disbursed a new \$55 million loan to Armenia that will be mainly used for improving the country's tourism infrastructure and preserving its medieval architectural heritage. According to a statement released on Wednesday, the bank said the Armenian government will contribute \$13 million of its own funds to the same project designed to benefit communities that are home to some of the most famous Armenian tourist attractions. "As demonstrated around the world, with careful strategic planning and relatively modest public investments, tourism activities can be nurtured into a critical source of economic and employment growth at the local level," Laura Bailey, the head of the bank's Yerevan office, was quoted as saying. Much of the low-interest loan repayable in 25 years will be spent on upgrades in and around a dozen medieval monasteries and other historical sites in five Armenian provinces. Among them are the Garni pagan temple built in the 1st century AD and the Geghard, Sanahin and Haghpat monasteries recognized as UNESCO World Heritage sites. The World Bank will also finance the rehabilitation of the old towns of Goris and Meghri and three heritage villages also located in the southeastern Syunik province. "This includes restoration of public infrastructure, building facades and roofs, public spaces, museums, access roads, water and sanitation, drainage and street lighting," explained the statement. One of those villages is adjacent to the historic Datev monastery founded in the 9th century. The monastery overlooking a deep canyon has seen a sharp rise in Armenian and foreign visitors since the construction in 2010 of a 5.7-kilometer-long cable car leading to it. Most of an estimated \$50 million spent on the facility, the longest of its kind in the world, was provided by Rupen Vartanian, a Russian-Armenian philanthropist.

Russia and Armenia Unite Air Defense Systems in Caucasian Region

Armenia Defense Minister Seyran Ohanyan and his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu signed an agreement in Moscow on December 23 about the creation of a united regional air defense system in the Caucasian collective security region. The document was signed after the bilateral meeting of the ministers. The 2016 cooperation program between the defense ministries of Russia and Armenia was also signed. "Armenpress" reports the aforementioned referring to RIA Novosti. Currently Russia works with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan related to the creation of united regional air defense systems. The agreement on the creation of an air defense system was signed with Kazakhstan in 2013, and the air defense system of the RF has already been united with that of Belarus. As it was reported earlier, the CIS Defense Ministers Council considers integration of the CIS countries' air defense forces on regional basis the most important aspect of CIS united air defense system development. Photo by RIA Novosti



Levon Hayrabedian Sent New Year's Gifts to Soldiers on the Frontline



At the initiative of Russia-based Armenian benefactor Levon Hayrabedian, a group of freedom fighters from the Vank village of Martakert region, under the leadership of Executive Director of Eighty Vank Les Ltd., visited the N military unit stationed in Martakert, met with the commanders of the military unit, visited different parts of the frontline and wished the border guards a Happy New Year and Christmas. As reports "Armenpress", editor-in-chief of Jraberd newspaper (the official newspaper of the Martakert region) Lusine Zakaryan informed that the freedom fighters gave the soldiers gifts (pastry, fruits and other necessary items) on behalf of Levon Hayrabedian.

News from the World

USA is Determined About Peaceful Settlement of Nagorno Karabakh Conflict: Department Of State

The USA has clear determination over the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. "Armenpress" reports John Kirby, US Department of State Spokesperson, announced the aforementioned on December 21. He was asked to comment on the meeting of Armenia and Azerbaijani presidents - Serge Sarkisian and Ilham Aliyev - held in Switzerland on December 19. Kirby emphasized that the summit gave an opportunity to the heads of the two countries to meet face to face and clarify their positions for the first time during the year. According to the Spokesperson, the presidents accepted that the situation had got worse. Kirby emphasized Washington's assistance connected with measures aimed at the reduction of the number of human victims among the peaceful residents. He stated that the USA together with its Russian and French colleagues continues discussing all those means in the framework of the OSCE MG. The representative of the US Department of State stressed the importance of people's diplomacy especially among the communities of the Nagorno Karabakh, where people lived side by side from generation to generation and now must resume their trust towards one another.

Keep the Lamb for the Wolves or How Syrian Refugees Live in Turkey

By SOPHIA HAGOPIAN

The topic of the Syrian migrants in Turkey has been in the center of attention of the international community for a long time now. This became a bigger problem when the European community became directly linked to it. More than half of these migrants have been taking shelter in Turkey for over four years, and they move from Turkey to Europe. Syrian refugees officially began to enter Turkey in April 2011. Opening its doors for the migrants, Turkey showed its "hospitality" and "generosity", and of course, there was a price. The fact that the EU met the Turkish government's demands to set a free visa regime for the Turks and 3 billion Euros didn't come as a surprise at all, and the fact that in a couple of years Europe, which is trying to relieve itself of the burden of Syrian refugees, will face a more dangerous issue (greater "Turkification" of European cities) by issuing visas to the Turks, that is a problem that only concerns the Europeans.

What I want to discuss is whether Turkey, which accepts these great gifts, will be able to solve the issues facing so many migrants or not, or whether it solves these people's issues or not. First, let's try to understand if Turkey is so hospitable and generous towards these refugees, why are hundreds of thousands of refugees escaping Turkish harbors to Europe? Besides visas, the dollars and the Euros, in what other way are the Turks benefiting from the heavy situation that the Syrian migrants are in?

Based on official statistics, there are over 2,200,000 Syrian migrants living in Turkey. According to the Turkish government, it has spent 8 billion dollars on the migrants. While most of the citizens of Turkey complain about the Turkish government's decision to receive so many Syrian migrants in the country already in a poor economic condition, the Turkish-Syrian border remains open and continues to serve not only those who have escaped the war, but also Islamist terrorists who have been entering and exiting the border for years. As a matter of fact, the terrorists' offices are located in the heart of Istanbul, and the terrorists often receive free medical aid in Urfa and Aintab.

Before Erdogan's last negotiations in Brussels, Turkey has received over 400,000,000 dollars from foreign countries to take care of the expenses for Syrian migrants. During recent discussions on the issue with Europe, as is known, Turkey gained its last "large winning" in this game due to the 3 billion Euro agreement over the free visa regime between Turkey and the EU and "for the purpose of meeting all the needs of Syrian migrants and ensuring conditions for them not to leave their familiar region".

How is everything with those around whom this game is being played? Do they really want to stay in Turkey? Perhaps few are interested in this.

Our surveys and short study were devoted to finding the answer to the following question: Is the Turkish government really consistently performing its obligations assumed by law for war refugees?

Syrian migrants in Turkey have certain taxing privileges by law. They are also entitled to free medical aid and free education, but only very few migrants can benefit from these privileges. "We are nine people and live in one room. The living conditions are horrible. We don't have a bathtub or a separate bathroom. We have problems with registering our children at school. Other parents don't want their children to see Syrian refugee children in their classrooms, and the principals don't want to have any problems with the others. The children don't know Turkish well, and that's also a problem. There haven't been any language lessons organized for them. We really need food and winter clothes. We

came here for three months, but it turned into three years. If only we returned someday..." This was only one of the Syrian refugees we met in Turkey. In reality, most of the Syrian refugees in Turkey live in such dire conditions.

Most of the Syrian refugees moving to Turkey have initially come here with the idea to return to the homeland after a short while, and some to leave for Europe later. Most of the refugees are from Aleppo, Qamishli and Rubane, thought it is safe to say that these migrants from almost all parts of Syria.

Most of them live in the Turkish states of Hatay, Adana Gaziantep, Shanliurfa, Mardin, Malatya, Adiyaman, Shirnak, Batman and Elyazig, meaning the refugees often haven't gone too far from the border, with the purpose of returning to Syria, if possible. However, other refugees have settled in larger cities like Konyay, Ankara, Antalia, Izmir, and of course, Istanbul. Based on official statistics, there are 400,000 Syrian refugees living in Istanbul. However, this is only according to official data. These refugees moving towards the west of Turkey and having taken shelter in harbor cities are mainly the ones seeking opportunities to emigrate to Europe, as well as the relatively financially secure layer of Syrian migrants, who start their small and medium businesses in big cities.

As far as the refugees' ethnic belonging is concerned, they are mostly Arabs and Kurds, who mainly follow the Sunni branch of Islam, though there are also many Shiite-Alevi Arabs. There are also Yezidis, Armenian and Assyrian Christians among the migrants.

The number of Armenians having migrated from Syria and Iraq to Turkey is quite comparably modest and doesn't exceed 10,000 across the nation. Some of them live in Istanbul, Hatay, as well as in the territory of Western Armenia (Yozgat, Erzerum, Urfa, Mardin, etc.). The latter have found themselves in a not too favorable environment, to say the least, and they have to hide their national belonging and religious affiliation. It's needless to talk about education and employment. The Armenian migrants having reached Istanbul are in a more or less favorable condition. They received some support from the Armenians of Istanbul through the local Armenian Church. Many managed to register their children at schools within the Armenian community, though some of the children have the status of a guest student and don't receive a relevant certificate from the school to continue their future education at a university. The Armenian migrants having found themselves in Istanbul and in Western Armenia have come to Turkey with the purpose of moving to Europe or the USA.

Getting back to the common issues facing Syrian migrants in Turkey, let us mention that though some of them have managed to find jobs and have even found the paths to take to start their own businesses, the number of people in extreme poverty and those in special need of care from the government prevails.

According to a study by the International Refugee Rights Association (<http://multicihaklari.org.tr/turkiyede-bulunan-suriyeli-multicilere-dair-istatistikler/>), 63.3% of Syrian migrants having taken shelter in Turkey live in rented homes, 21.5% live in empty houses and houses in ruins, 10.3% live in tents, and the rest live in parks, on the streets, etc.

Nearly 36.7% are in need of medical aid, and 31.7% are in need of medicine.

According to 39% of patients, state hospitals don't provide them with the free drugs that they have to receive. Out of the refugees, 38.3% say the conditions of their dwellings are very bad, and 9.3% say they are in constant fear that they might be thrown out of their temporary dwellings at any moment.

Out of the Syrian refugees, 21% is in hunger in Turkey, and 46% almost always have difficulties with finding food. The facts also show that most



Syrian children can't receive an education in Turkey due to social problems and problems with language and integration. Perhaps it should be mentioned that often, even if possible, the children of families with financial difficulties can't go to school because they are forced to work.

The working conditions for Syrians in Turkey are a separate and quite intricate issue.

A large part of Syrian migrants in Turkey are exploited by several employers in private factories, at stores, and of course, at bridal salons and in the "begging business". Indeed, it would be wrong to claim that everyone is a victim in the last two sectors and that they have found themselves in those "businesses" whether they wanted to or not.

However, we must talk about the minor Syrian migrants working for 12 hours and earning 100 dollars in Istanbul and the ladies and women selling their bodies on the Turkish-Syrian border. Their exploiters are not illegitimate organizations and pay quite a lot of taxes to the government.

Every Syrian citizen with a passport is granted the permission to reside in Turkey for a year and may apply for the right to employment. However, there are also many refugees without any document, but according to several proofs, in spite of all that, they cross the Turkish-Syrian border without great difficulties. These illegal refugees are the most vulnerable group and are the ones who are most exploited in different fields.

Migrant adolescents and young migrants earn a living by working at textile factories where their salaries make up an average of 100-200,000 dollars (when local employees earn 350 to 500 dollars to perform the same job). Syrian minors in big Turkish cities very often work as janitors, truck loaders and mobile sellers very often. There are also many cases of physical assaults on the part of Turkish businessmen and average citizens against the Syrians. Unfortunately, the main occupation for these refugees is begging. They live in the eastern sector of Turkey where the standard of living of the population is five times lower than the average standard of Turkey and where there aren't many jobs.

While the leaders in the business of prostitution and begging gain big profits from the inflow of Syrian refugees in Turkey, average citizens complain more and more each day. They complain not only about the increase in the number of beggars and cases of theft, but also the sharp rise of prices of homes, the reduction of jobs and more (naturally, many employers have to prefer cheap labor and give preference to the Syrian refugees who can simply be paid coins.

Most citizens of Turkey say Turkey wasn't ready to provide so many migrants with shelter and feed them. Sometimes the tension against Syrian refugees reaches its climax within Turkish society. However, it seems as though the Turks screaming "I don't want to see Syrian refugees in my country" have chosen the wrong address to express their complaint since it seems as though the Turkish government doesn't intend to close the Turkish-Syrian border, and the Europeans having "imprisoned" migrants in Turkey in exchange of billions have acted in accordance to a Turkish saying, "Kuzuyu kurtlara emanet etmek" (Keep the lamb for the wolves).

Hayemaysor.am

Pres. Obama Should Dismiss Amb. Baer For Favoring ISIS Ally Turkey

By HARUT SASSOUNIAN

Even the most uninformed person on earth is aware by now that Turkey is a major accomplice of ISIS. There have been countless news reports in the global media documenting Turkish complicity. Amazingly, there is one American diplomat who seems to be clueless about Turkey's destructive role in the region, not only in Syria and Iraq, but also in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabagh)!

How could the U.S. Ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) be that ignorant to give a speech praising Turkey's "valuable" role in the effort to settle the Artsakh conflict?

In his December 17 statement to OSCE's Permanent Council, Amb. Daniel B. Baer had the audacity to praise Turkey's "constructive role as a Minsk Group member" in the Artsakh conflict. He went on to state that "Turkey has been a valuable member of the Minsk Group and has worked cooperatively with the Co-Chairs on finding a way forward in peace talks" between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Amb. Baer expressed his disagreement with Alexander Lukashевич, Russia's Ambassador to the OSCE, who had questioned two days earlier "Turkey's constructiveness as a Minsk Group member."

The Russian Ambassador had criticized Turkey for siding with "one of the parties of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict [Azerbaijan]," and described Ankara's position as "unacceptable" and "absolutely destructive." Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) Chairman Ken Hachikian denounced Amb. Baer's statement, calling it "reckless." Hachikian noted Turkey's long list of staunchly pro-Azerbaijan policies: "The Erdogan government actively supports Aliyev's virulent anti-Armenian positions, openly providing military aid and training to the Azerbaijani military, while, at the same time, blockading Armenia, contrary to international law, and seeking to isolate Yerevan in the international arena."

The ANCA Chairman wondered why "U.S. officials allow themselves to be used as props in Erdogan's farce, pretending that the Turkish government will — against all evidence — play the role of some sort of impartial mediator?" Hachikian concluded: "This Administration's shameful legacy of endlessly caving in to Turkish threats — at the expense of our own values and interests as a nation — is truly a national disgrace — an embarrassment beneath the dignity of the American people."

Several members of the U.S. Congress also condemned Amb. Baer's scandalous remarks. Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chairman Frank Pallone (D-NJ) said he was "troubled by the recent statement praising Turkey's role in the Minsk Group peace process made by our U.S. Representative to the OSCE. Turkey's active and overt support of Azerbaijan with regard to the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict has been apparent from the beginning. A statement like this will only serve to polarize the negotiations." House Select Committee on Intelligence Ranking Democrat Adam Schiff of California stated unequivocally that "given Turkey's behavior and longstanding support for Baku, they cannot be considered — in any way — a neutral broker in what has become an increasingly intense conflict along the Line of Contact." Cong. Schiff further suggested that "instead of stacking the table against Nagorno Karabagh, all nations should insist upon the deployment of monitoring technology along the border, a step that Armenia has readily agreed to but has been resisted by Azerbaijan, doubtless because it would demonstrate their unprovoked aggression."

This writer has yet to see a reaction from Armenia challenging Amb. Baer's ill-advised and inappropriate remarks. Silence would imply agreement with the U.S. Ambassador's unfortunate words. In fact, Amb. Baer should be severely criticized by everyone, Armenians and non-Armenians alike, for encouraging Turkey's detrimental meddling in the Artsakh conflict. Instead of praising Turkey's "constructive" and "valuable" role, the U.S. Ambassador should have followed the example of his Russian counterpart and lashed out at Ankara's sinister and destructive efforts.

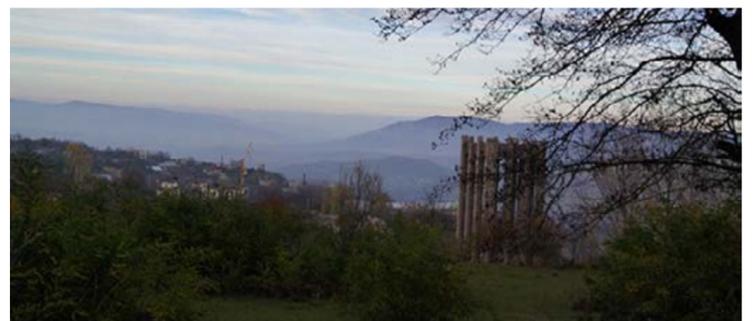
Two years ago, when he was sworn in as envoy to OSCE, Amb. Baer released a video in which he cheerfully announced: "My partner, Brian, and I, are excited to live in Vienna, along with our greyhound, Cleo. We look forward to exploring a wonderful city, and going skiing and hiking in Austria, and to traveling around the OSCE region."

Amb. Baer seems more interested in tourism at US taxpayers' expense than engaging in serious diplomatic work. If that is the case, Pres. Obama should relieve the Ambassador of his duties, so he can continue his sightseeing tour of Europe at his own expense!

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Press Release

Landmine Free Artsakh to Receive \$4 Million Pledge in Matching Funds



Artsakh has the highest per capita land mine, and unexploded ordnance civilian casualty rate in the world. A quarter of these victims are children. Beyond the physical danger, land mines and cluster bombs cripple the economy by denying farmers the use of their land.

Landmine Free Artsakh (LFA) is comprised of a group of concerned Armenians who have made it their mission to raise awareness and funds to help clear every village in Artsakh of this ever-present danger. The villages are in the Lachin, Hadrut and Martuni regions, where international government grants or funds may not be used. Only private funding may clear these areas. LFA is raising funds for The HALO Trust, the world's oldest and largest humanitarian landmine clearance organization and the only mine clearance operator in Artsakh. Mine clearance not only saves lives but also helps the economy by making farmlands safe. The HALO Trust creates jobs by hiring and training locals to do the de-mining and provides mine risk education in schools.

Since 2012, LFA has organized awareness campaigns and fundraising events in the Armenian Community. Among them, an art exhibition and auction in Glendale, presentations at Glendale Public Library, Glendale Community College, UCLA, Ferrahan High School in Encino, ARPA Institute in Sherman Oaks, Keyan Armenian Community School in Fresno, St. John's Armenian Church in San Francisco, St. Peter Armenian Church in Glendale, Zorayan Museum in Burbank, Pilibos Armenian School in Los Angeles, Homenetmen South Bay "Arakatz" Chapter in

Lomita, St. Mary Apostolic Church in Washington DC, St. David Church in Boca Raton, Florida, and Eskijian Museum in Mission Hills. LFA has had television interviews on Horizon TV-Right to Speak program, Shant TV, Barev TV with Nune Avedisyan and AABC TV with Vrej Aghajanian.

Landmine Free Artsakh, with the generous support of the Armenian Community, has raised \$61,000 and with the work of The HALO Trust has cleared three villages and directly benefited over 300 families. Now, over 3,500 villagers are able to cultivate their farmlands and herd their livestock without the fear of losing life or limb due to unexploded ordnances. Parents no longer fear for the lives of their children stumbling upon cluster bombs as they play or help their families. These villages, once again, are being inhabited by returning families, new settlers, and Syrian Armenians in search of a new home.

We are thrilled to share some exciting news with you and our community. The goal of having a landmine free Artsakh is now within reach. The HALO Trust has a pledge of \$4 million, in matching funds, from an anonymous US-based foundation. This will provide half of the \$8 million required to clear all of the remaining minefields outside of the traditional Soviet-era boundary by 2020, if we raise the matching funds. We hope every Armenian will join in donating matching funds so that we may all see a landmine free Artsakh! Please accept our heartfelt gratitude for your continued caring and generosity! Wishing you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year!

Page 01

Azerbaijani Army Makes Another Provocation, Killing An 18-Year-Old Armenian Soldier

Azerbaijan's armed forces disturbed the relatively calm situation that had been recently created on the Line of Contact between the Karabakh-Azerbaijan forces with another provocative operation.

As reports the press service of the Ministry of Defense of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, on

December 25 (at around 13:00), soldier of the Defense Army Karen Akulyan (born in 1997) received a fatal injury after being shot by the opponent's sniper in the maintenance station of one of the military units of the Defense Army stationed in the north.

Investigation is underway to clarify the details. The Ministry of Defense of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic shares the heavy pain for the loss and expresses its support to the family, relatives and fellow servicemen of the deceased soldier.

Regional News

Turkish Mejlis Speaker Talked About Artsakh Issue During Meeting With Azerbaijani PM

Speaker of the Turkish Mejlis Ismail Kahraman, who is on his first official visit to Baku following his election, had a meeting with Prime Minister of Azerbaijan Artur Rasizade. The issue of Artsakh was also touched upon during the meeting.

As reports ermenhaber.am, according to the Turkish Haber8, Kahraman mentioned that the issue of Artsakh is everyone's issue and said the following: "We accept this as our own issue. We will

continue our support to make sure that issue linked to Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity is solved in accordance with international law."

Kahraman mentioned that some demonstrative steps are being taken to solve the issue, but the final step hasn't been taken and there is more regression.

The Turkish official added that the solution to the issue is mandatory and that Turkey will continue to support the efforts being made in that direction.



Diaspora News

Beirut- Lebanon

Ambassador Kocharyan transmitted RA President's Congratulatory Messages and Contributions to Lebanese-Armenian Institutions



On December 24, the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Lebanon hosted a large meeting with the editors-in-chief of the Aztag, Zartonk and Ararat Dailies, as well as the heads of "Trchnots Bouyn" (Birds' Nest) orphanage and "Zvartnots" Center for Armenian children with mental problems, which is part of the union of social servants of the local Armenian community, reports the RA MFA press service.

RA Ambassador to Lebanon Ashot Kocharyan transmitted the congratulatory messages of RA President Serzh Sargsyan, as well as his financial contributions in light of the New Year and Christmas. The message of the RA President addressed to the Armenian dailies of Lebanon read as follows:

"I am certain that in the year marking the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide and in the future you will overcome all difficulties and will win the propaganda war with honor and triumph as you continue to shed light on the issues of

pan-national significance at a high level. I am confident that you will consistently present the issues of national concern by publishing materials devoted to the rich history, heritage and values of Armenia, Artsakh, the Diaspora and the Armenian people."

In his letters addressed to the leaders of "Trchnots Bouyn" and "Zvartnots", the RA President praised the dedicated and pro-Armenian efforts of the educators for the educational and physical development of Armenian children and youth and for the improvement of their state of mind. The President assured that "the Homeland is always by your side and proudly follows your successes." The heads of the presses, the "Trchnots Bouyn" orphanage and "Zvartnots" Center expressed their deep gratitude to RA President Serzh Sargsyan for his ongoing care and attention and assured that they wouldn't spare efforts to continue their activities for preservation of the Armenian identity, Armenian upbringing and the deepening of the Armenia-Diaspora partnership.

Germany

Central Council of German-Armenians Elects New Board Members, Jaclyn Khachadourian Elected Chairperson Of Board

On November 15, 2015, the General Congress of the Central Council of German-Armenians elected new board members for a three-year term in Meini Frankfurt. The session of the General Congress began with a speech by Doctor of Philosophical Sciences of the Ruhr University of Bokhumi, Professor Mihran Dabag, after which the attendees respected the memory of the victims of the latest terrorist acts in Paris with a moment of silence, reports the **board of the Central Council of German-Armenians**, according to Hayern Aysor.

Lawyer **Jaclyn Khachadourian** was elected chairperson of the board. The lawyer is actively involved in Germany's politics and has been fighting against the German society's denial of the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire for many years.

Sona Hakobyan took the office of vice-chairperson. The engineer/constructor, who has brilliant technical and analytical skills, has great experience in the cross-cultural sector.

Economist **Ohanes Altunkayan** took the office of treasurer. He has many years of experience in economic expertise, has managed different projects and has been involved in the political sphere.

Another member of the board is political scientist, PhD student and a lecturer of international political science **Ani Smith-Dagessian**. As a commissioner for youth affairs, she will be involved in increasing the political responsibility of the new generation and implementing cultural and educational programs in this sector.

Samvel Lulukyanb, who took the office of secretary, is the director of the branch of a large company. He has a precise working style, can negotiate brilliantly and has many years of experience in working with the community. The newly elected board will be consistent with the preservation of Armenian culture and recognition of the Armenian Genocide with great dedication.



The youth committee wants to contribute to the welfare of the society as a whole. "The Armenian Diaspora is a part of the German society, just like the history of the Armenian people is a part of German history. Taking responsibility for our common past and future, we see that our duties are to deepen the existing friendship between the two societies, which can be done by cooperating and overcoming the obstacles together. Only the sincere friendship between the Germans and the Armenians can help ensure the solution to the challenges facing us and engage our compatriots in a unified society that is loyal and in solidarity," the new chairperson of the board Jaclyn Khachadourian emphasized in her speech.

Centenary of the Armenian Genocide

Town of Mirano Recognizes the Armenian Genocide



On December 22, at the initiative of the Union of Armenians of Italy, the municipal council of the town of Mirano of Venice recognized the Armenian Genocide by a unanimous vote, report Hayern Aysor's sources in Italy. Let us add that in 2016, the Union of Armenians of Italy will be consistent with the implementation of the petitions submitted in three different cities for condemnation of the Armenian Genocide.

Ten Years Without Julfa: The Pain and Pride of Armenian Cultural Heritage



Armenian culture is a source of pride as well as a source of pain. Time and human intervention have been cruel to some of the greatest monuments of Armenian heritage. This month marks the 10th anniversary of the total obliteration of one of the Armenian nation's most revered historic and spiritual monuments - the cemetery of Julfa, reports Civilnet.

In December 2005, video evidence emerged of Azerbaijani troops wiping out what remained of the historic Armenian cemetery of Julfa.

Julfa was one of the oldest Christian cemeteries in the world; home to more than 10,000 ornately carved ancient tombstones and khachkars or stone-crosses dating back to the fifteenth century.

Though historically Armenian, Julfa is now located in the exclave of Nakhichevan (Azerbaijan); it also borders Turkey and Iran. French traveler Alexandre de Rhodes reported that the cemetery had 10,000 well-preserved khachkars in 1648. Only 5,000 were counted in 1903-1904 and despite the ravages of time, the cemetery was still standing in the late 1990s until Azerbaijan began its systematic destruction. By 2005, they had successfully destroyed the ancient cemetery.



After studying and comparing satellite photos of Julfa, the American Association for the Advancement of Science came to the conclusion that the cemetery was demolished and "leveled by earth-moving equipment." Today it is reportedly a shooting range for Azerbaijani troops.

In an interview with ArmlInfo, Armenian

Minister of Culture Hasmik Poghosyan points out that the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage can come to a deadlock in some cases. Especially when the preservation of the cultural heritage site in question would require the collaboration of countries with no diplomatic relations like Armenia and Azerbaijan.



Armenian complaints to international organizations back in 2005 yielded no results but shortly after the total destruction of the Julfa cemetery, UNESCO included Armenian khachkars on its list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The Armenian bread Lavash, national epic Sasuntsi David and duduk music are now also included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

In 2016, Armenia will submit an application to have "Kochari: The traditional group dance" on the list. The Armenian Ministry of Culture is also preparing to submit an application to include the Yerevan Blue Mosque in UNESCO's World Heritage list.



So far, the cathedral and churches of Echmiadzin and the archaeological site of Zvartnots, the monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin, monastery of Geghard and the upper Azat Valley are the only UNESCO Heritage Sites in Armenia.

The archaeological site of the city of Dvin, the basilica and archaeological site of Yererouk, the monasteries of Tatev and Tatevi Anapat and the Noravank monastery are on UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites.



Arts & Entertainment

“The Silence of the Master” Movie by Chaldranian May be Submitted for “Oscar”

“Sharm Holding” may submit the movie by Viken Chaldranian dedicated to Gomidas for “Oscar”. Coordinator of “Sharm Holding” Marina Vartanian informed the journalists about this on December 24.

“The film has a long way to overcome, including festivals. I do not want to open the brackets. There is an intention to submit it for “Oscar”, “Armenpress” reports, Marina Vartanian mentioned.

Director of the film Viken Chaldranian, as he characterizes, made it with an extreme sense of responsibility.

“I tried to speak less. I dealt with a person, who, according to the film, is the conscience of Armenia and that we have a task to return him. We have a task to return to values of Gomidas. I cannot assess myself”, Chaldranian said, stating that his talent is that he manages to unite talented people.



Viken Chaldranian hoped that the film will enjoy popularity not only among the Armenian audience, but also among foreign audience, making a deep impression on them.

“Anahit” Full Length Cartoon Will be Available For French Community



“Anahit” full length cartoon will be available for French community. David Sahagiants, Director, Animator and cofounder of “Robert

Sahagiants Production” animation studio, informed about the aforementioned during the meeting with journalists on December 24.

“Leaving the film’s original voice, it will be supplemented with French subtitles in order that French speaking and Armenian-speaking community at the same time will be able to watch it,” David Sahagiants mentioned, as “Armenpress” reports. “Anahit” full length cartoon was introduced in four cities of France, which is highly appreciated by the film’s creators as the opinion of Diaspora also interested them.

“It was important for us to know how the Armenian community living outside Armenia will receive it. Living in Armenia, we know what we’re doing and the internal opinion was expectable for us,” David Sahagiants said. Continuing to talk about the organization of showing “Anahit” full length cartoon, one of the co-founders of “Robert Sahagiants Production” added that it was also shown outside of cinemas this year; in various cities of Artsakh and Armenia.

“Conan in Armenia” is a Story of Friendship and Empathy: Paste Magazine

In the end, “Conan in Armenia” is more than just comedy abroad. It’s a story of friendship and empathy set in a country that gets very little exposure on American television. As “Armenpress” reports, Liz Ohanesian wrote about the aforementioned in pastemagazine.com, when commenting on Conan O’Brien’s and his assistant Sona Movsesian’s visit to Armenia.

“Like Sona, I’m of Armenian descent, but have never traveled to the country and call Los Angeles home. For those of us who share this heritage, Armenia is a destination, maybe not to live, but definitely to visit. It is a physical homeland for a people who were nearly wiped off the earth during the 1915 Genocide,” Liz Ohanesian writes, telling that “Conan in Armenia” essentially tells two, intertwined stories. There’s the story of Conan, who is entering both a culture and a place that is foreign to him, and the story of Sona, who has grown up with the culture, but hasn’t been to the place of its origins.

“Near the end of the episode, Conan and Sona visit the Armenian Genocide memorial. Conan briefly explains the Genocide, which



happened a century ago, before the camera follows Sona through the memorial. Sona tears up as she shares the story of her grandparents and finds the name of her family’s home village carved in stone. This

segment is crucial for contextualizing the trip. It explains why there is a diaspora, and why a trip to Armenia is something of a pilgrimage for ethnic Armenians across the globe,” Liz Ohanesian writes.

Kim and Kanye to Baptize Newborn Son in Armenian Church of Jerusalem: Israel National News



US reality TV star Kim Kardashian and her rapper husband Kanye West reportedly plan to baptize their son at the St. James Cathedral

in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem. “Armenpress” reports the information, citing Israel National News.

Keeping up with family tradition, Saint West will be the second Kardashian child to undergo Christian ceremony in Israel after North West was baptized at the St. James Cathedral last April.

Saint West, who is a quarter Armenian, was born earlier this month to the celebrity couple.

The announcement of the baptism was first reported in the London-based Daily Mail, citing an unnamed source. Reports claim that the celebrities and their entourage had initially planned to stay at the new Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Jerusalem, but supposedly switched to another hotel after their plans were leaked to the public.

An Israeli security firm that specializes in protecting VIPs reportedly was hired for the visit.

Photo by Reuters

Artur Aleksanyan – Armenia’s Best Athlete of the Year



Member of the Greco-Roman Wrestling team of Armenia, bronze medalist of Olympic Games, World two times and Europe three times Champion Artur Aleksanyan has been named the best athlete of Armenia of 2015. According to the results of the survey of Republican Federation of Sport Journalists, 10 best athletes of 2015 have been named.

As “Armenpress” was informed by the press service of the National Olympic Committee of Armenia, 34 sports journalists participated in the survey. They named World Champion, Greco-Roman wrestler Artur Aleksanyan as the best athlete of Armenia 10 best athletes are:

1 .Artur Aleksanyan - GrecoRoman wrestler, 339 points

2 .Mihran Harutyunyan - GrecoRoman wrestler, 267

3 .Harutyun Merdinyan - artistic

gymnastics, 265 points

4 .Tigran Martirosyan - weightlifting, 231 points

5 .Artur Tovmasyan - artistic gymnastics, 113 points

6 . Arman Yeremyan - taekwondo, 107 points

7 .Tigran Kirakosyan - sambo, 106 points

8 .Aram Avagyan - boxing, 101 points

9 .Andranik Karapetyan - weightlifting, 99 points

10 .Smbat Margaryan - weightlifting, 95 points

Men’s chess team of Armenia has been named the best team of 2015.

Names of another 4 athletes has been included in the questionnaire by sports journalists: Artur Davtyan (artistic gymnastics, 81 points), Levon Aronian (chess, 35 points), Henrikh Mkhitaryan (football, 31 points).

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

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