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Armenia Artsakh Fund Delivers \$931,000 of Medicines to Armenia

Glendale, CA – The Armenia Artsakh Fund (AAF) delivered to Armenia on February 11, 2024, a very special donation of much needed various kinds of medicines valued at \$931,000. The donation consists of life saving medicines as Almotriptan Malate, Telmisartan, Levothyroxine Sodium and many others.

“This shipment was donated by Catholic Medical Mission Board, a longtime partner of AAF and Armenia. We highly

appreciate the donation and our partnership with CMMB,” stated Harut Sassounian, President of AAF.

In the past 34 years, including the shipments under its predecessor, the United Armenian Fund, the AAF delivered to Armenia and Artsakh a grand total of over \$1 billion worth of humanitarian aid, mostly medicines, on board 158 airlifts and 2,581 sea containers. “AAF is proud of this unique achievement,” said Sassounian.

“The Armenia Artsakh Fund is regularly offered free of charge millions of dollars of life-saving medicines and medical supplies. All AAF has to do is pay for the shipping expenses. We would appreciate your generous donations to be able to continue delivering this valuable assistance to all medical centers in Armenia,” stated Harut Sassounian, the President of AAF.

For more information, call the AAF office: (818) 241-8900; Email: sassoun@pacbell.net.

Armenian Community of Jerusalem Files Lawsuit to Protect the Historic Armenian Gardens

Jerusalem -- The Armenian Community of the historic Armenian Quarter has filed a lawsuit to invalidate the lease between the Armenian Patriarchate and Xana Capital.

The Community’s legal action asserts that the property is held in trust specifically for the benefit of the Armenian Community pursuant to a waqf trust established more than 400 years ago. Under the waqf trust, which is legally enforceable, the property cannot be leased or sold by the Patriarchate if the transaction does not inure to the direct benefit of the Armenian community and if the transaction is not consented to by the Armenian community. Here, the transaction has neither been consented to by the Armenian Community nor does it inure to the benefit of the Armenian Community. The Armenian Community’s position aligns squarely with the stance of the Saint James Brotherhood. In 2021, seventeen members of the Brotherhood, a majority of the members of the supreme body of the Patriarchate, issued a statement

publicly opposing the deal and declaring that the Patriarchate lacked the requisite authority and conditions to execute the purported agreement. As such, the Armenian Community’s legal case underlines the Patriarchate’s lack of authority to enter into this specific deal. The Community’s lawsuit gives necessary legal voice and crucial legal strength to the objective of canceling the purported agreement and protecting the land—a goal the Armenian Community, the Armenian Patriarchate and the global Armenian diaspora share. The Armenian Community has specific rights that must be raised and must be protected by the Armenian Community itself. This land holds immense historical and cultural significance, symbolizing the Community’s and the Patriarchate’s enduring presence in the region, and the Community is committed to preserving the integrity of the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem and protecting itself from the existential threat posed by this purported deal with Xana Capital.

See Armenian Community... on Page 6

Blinken Meets with Armenian PM Pashinyan



The Spokesperson for the Department of State Matthew Miller announced: “Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken met with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to discuss strengthening bilateral ties and U.S. support for efforts to reach a durable and dignified peace

agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan.”

Secretary Blinken noted our ongoing efforts to support Armenia’s vision for a prosperous and democratic future for its people, as well as U.S. support for Armenia’s sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity,” Miller announced.

Azerbaijan Says Armenia Presented Eight New Maps on Minefields in Karabakh

Azerbaijan’s National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA) on Monday said Armenia presented eight new maps of minefields in the Karabakh region.

ANAMA told Azerbaijan’s state news agency Azertac that the maps it was provided mainly consist of notes on mined areas surrounding the Murovdag

mountain range in the country’s Kalbajar district.

The report further said the information in the newly submitted maps is “inaccurate, unreliable, and incomplete.”

“After analyzing and processing the forms, it was determined that the recorded data do not overlap with the real minefields,

and the coordinates of the reference points are incorrect and useless,” it said.

It added that the maps covered some of the areas along the former contact line, and that information has not yet been provided about the part of the former contact line passing through Azerbaijan’s districts.

Armenia’s Artur Aleksanyan Crowned European Wrestling Champion for 7th Time

Armenian Greco-Roman wrestler Artur Aleksanyan beat Russia’s Magomed Murtazaliyev in the finals of the European Wrestling Championships in Bucharest, Romania, becoming the champion for the seventh time.

Aleksanyan made it to the finals, defeating Belarusian Abubakar Khaslakhanav in the semi-finals with a score of 5 to 1. He started the competition, beating Beitula Kaisdagin of Turkey 9 to 1, and in the quarterfinals he won a 8 to 3 victory over Dutch Tyrone Stenkerburg.

Earlier, member of the Armenian national team Malkhas Amoyan was crowned European champion for the third time in his career, achieving a 7 to 0



advantage in the finals over the world bronze medalist, two-time European vice-champion, Turkish Yunus Basar.

Armenia Prepares to Sue Azerbaijan for War Crimes at ICC

Armenia is carrying out preparatory work for filing lawsuits against Azerbaijan at the International Criminal Court (ICC), Armenian Representative for International and Legal Affairs Yeghishe Kirakosyan told Armenian Public Television on Tuesday.

Kirakosyan explained that the lawsuits refer, in particular, to the forced displacement of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the war crimes

committed by Azerbaijan in September 2022.

At the same time, he refrained from presenting details and timelines of the first lawsuits. “There is quite a large body of evidence that is being evaluated,” he added.

On October 3, 2023, the National Assembly of Armenia voted to ratify the Rome Statute of the ICC. On February 1, 2024, Armenia officially became a full member of the ICC.

Russia Asking for Assurances from Armenia Regarding Putin's Possible Arrest on ICC Warrant if He Visits Armenia



MOSCOW — The Kremlin expects Yerevan to provide certain assurances regarding the possible arrest of Russian President Vladimir Putin under an International Criminal Court (ICC) warrant, Russia's Interfax news agency reported today. "Of course, it is very important to receive certain assurances from our Armenian partners. This issue is

to be resolved within the framework of bilateral dialog, which we intend to do," Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Peskov's words came after Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that he was not the one to decide on the possible arrest of the Russian president, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court, if he visited Armenia. In an interview with Britain's The Daily Telegraph on February 11, Pashinyan did not answer a direct question about whether Russian President Vladimir Putin could

be arrested and extradited to The Hague if he visited Armenia.

Such an obligation is stipulated by membership in the ICC, which Armenia joined on February 1 this year.

According to Pashinyan, the decision to join the Rome Statute "serves to enhance Armenia's security. As for the legal subtleties. I can't make a legal analysis at the moment, because this is the work of lawyers," he said.

Russia called the Armenian parliament's ratification of the Rome Statute for joining the ICC an "unfriendly" move.

Armenian Government Plans to Buy Former French President's Paris Mansion for Embassy

Armenia will spend €23 million to purchase a building in Paris to house the country's embassy in France.

The building, in the French capital's sixteenth arrondissement, once belonged to French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Mnatsakan Safaryan justified the expenditure by noting the expansion of Arme-

nian-French relations and the fact that the contract to use the building now housing the Armenian embassy comes due next year.

The embassy is now housed in a building donated to the Armenian government for free.

Last November, Armenia paid £16.7 million to purchase a building to house a new embassy in London.

Upcoming Documentary: 'The Black Garden,' About War in Nagorno-Karabakh

By Leo Barraclough

Toronto-based sales outfit Syndicado has boarded "The Black Garden," which will have its world premiere in the main competition section at documentary festival CPH:DOX. The film is directed by Alexis Pazoumian, a French-Armenian photographer-director based in Paris.

The film focuses on children Samvel and Avo, soldier Erik and lumberjack and veteran Karen, who live in the Armenian community of Talish, in Nagorno-Karabakh, a region plagued by a century-old conflict. Karabakh literally means "Black Garden," referring to the large dark coniferous forest covering the territory.

In 2020, a large-scale attack by Azerbaijan once again tips the region into chaos. Samvel and Avo's families find refuge in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. Erik is wounded, with one leg amputated. Karen flees and wanders the streets of Stepanakert, the capital of Armenian-controlled Nagorno-Karabakh.

"In a world steeped in patrio-

tism and military culture, I intended to portray these characters caught in the limbo of war. Even after the firing stopped, war cruelly affected our characters in their daily life, their mentality, their inner balance," says Pazoumian.

"A large part of the film takes place in Armenia since most of my characters are exiled today, but I also made their homeland exist by going back to Nagorno-Karabakh: what is left of it, the desolate and disfigured landscapes, its lost souls like that of Karen, who is a refugee in Stepanakert. This territory represents an open wound for the characters. It's their dark and beloved land, their black garden.

"I've been shooting over three years, going there at least twice a year, caught by the destiny of these young fellows, telling a tragic and universal reality." "The Black Garden" is produced by Clara Vuillermoz at Point du Jour-Les Films du Bali-bari in France, and co-produced by Vincent Metzinger at Naoko Films in Belgium.

Four Armenian Protesters Wanted for Alleged Hate Crimes Against Turkish Consulate Members

By CHRISTINA CHKARBOUL

USC Daily Trojan

The Los Angeles Police Department's Major Crimes Division is asking the public to help identify four suspects allegedly responsible for committing hate crimes against members of the Turkish Consulate who spoke at USC in September.

In a release Monday, the LAPD wrote that the suspects attacked three Turkish Consulate members on Sept. 29 as they were leaving USC's Annenberg Hall after a panel discussion. The suspects allegedly "pushed, punched, kicked" and threw water at the officials, according to the release.

A group of protesters gathered

outside the event, some entering the building, to demonstrate against the University's decision to host the Turkish officials amid an offensive by Azerbaijan against the majority-Armenian state of Nagorno-Karabakh the same week. Protesters condemned the timing of the event, citing the Turkish state's denial of the Armenian genocide.

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Armenian Genocide Survivor Photos

We are requesting photos of survivors of the 1915 Armenian Genocide for an art book designed to keep their memory alive. We understand each family may have a number of survivors. For the sake of cataloguing, please include only one (1) survivor per email with: their name; the place they departed from to escape the genocide; where they lived afterwards; and one photo.
armeniangenocidesurvivors1915@gmail.com

Andrew Goldberg's "Armenia, My Home" Documentary to Air on PBS

Alexa Alfano

Directed by So Much Film's Andrew Goldberg and narrated by Andrea Martin (Only Murders in the Building), the upcoming documentary Armenia, My Home explores the storied country's past and present.

Through interviews with familiar faces from the diaspora, archival photographs and rich footage of the nation known for fusing the East and West, the

doc delves into the modern-day Republic of Armenia's unique cultural tapestry, which spans thousands of years.

TV Real Weekly spoke to Goldberg about what prompted the film, sifting through mountains of history for what shines through, the partnership between So Much Film and PBS and more. Armenia, My Home is set to show on PBS stations on February 23.

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Ex-Minister Put Under House Arrest

Naira Bulghadarian
RFE/RL

A court in Yerevan allowed law-enforcement authorities to put former Economy Minister Vahan Kerobian under house arrest on Friday one day after they indicted him in an ongoing corruption investigation criticized by him.

Kerobian, who spent the night in custody, denied the accusations of abuse of power leveled against him and said he will appeal against the court's decision when he spoke to journalists in the courtroom. He said he is not allowed to comment on details of the high-profile criminal case.

The accusations stem from a procurement tender organized by the Armenian Ministry of Economy last year. Another Armenian court invalidated in June the ministry's decision to declare a major software company, Synergy International Systems, the winner of the tender. The decision followed a lawsuit filed by another bidder that set a much smaller price for its services.

Armenia's Investigative Com-

mittee said late on Thursday that Kerobian and four other ministry officials rigged the tender in a bid to grant a \$1 million procurement contract to Synergy "at any cost." It said nothing about the reasons for the allegedly privileged treatment of the U.S.-registered company. None of the five indicted officials, including Kerobian's former deputy Ani Ispirian, has been charged with bribery or embezzlement of public funds.

Kerobian openly defended his subordinates before resigning from his post on Wednesday. During a cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian last week, he complained that the criminal proceedings have "paralyzed the work of the entire state system."

Kerobian was formally relieved of his duties a few hours after announcing his resignation. In a statement, he said that he disagreed with Pashinian and wanted to step down on numerous occasions during his more than three-year tenure. He did not elaborate.

Kerobian on Friday confirmed

media reports that the chief of Pashinian's staff, Arayik Harutiunian, told him to resign shortly before he posted the statement on Facebook. He claimed that Harutiunian gave no reason for the recommendation.

"They were not happy with my work," he said.

The ex-minister also said that he does not think the charges brought against him are politically motivated. Some Armenian commentators have suggested that Pashinian ordered this and a separate corruption probe involving another ministry official in hopes of boosting his falling approval ratings.

Kerobian, 47, was appointed as economy minister in November 2020 in the wake of Armenia's disastrous war with Azerbaijan. He was until then the chief executive of a food delivery company which he had set up with his wife and a friend. He previously managed an Armenian supermarket chain that went bankrupt before being purchased and rebranded by other investors.

By Sinan Ciddi
Washington Examiner

Since the Oct. 7 terrorist attacks against Israel, much of the international focus on Turkey has centered on its patronage of Hamas. Along with Qatar and Iran, Turkey provides the terrorist entity with safe harbor and material support. What is less widely acknowledged and reported is Ankara's emerging support of the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, a capable terrorist entity that threatens civilian shipping routes in the Red Sea, as well as militarily engaging and killing U.S. service members.

With an emerging track record of active support for purveyors of terrorism, Turkey merits being placed on the list of "terrorist sanctuary" countries monitored by the State Department. Instead, what we see is a persistent and desperate attempt by the Biden administration to explore ways in which we can reward Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and pursue avenues to "reset" the U.S.-Turkish bilateral relationship.

On Dec. 28, the U.S. Treasury Department designated Turkish company Al Aman Cargo for financing arms transactions to Houthi rebels on behalf of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force. In the same designation, Treasury officials also sanctioned a number of currency exchange houses located in Turkey and Yemen for their role in transferring millions of dollars to the Guard's Quds Force.

Al Aman was established in Turkey in 2014, following Erdogan's decision to terminate all investigations in Turkey centered on rooting out persons and entities working on behalf of the Guard. This was no mere decision to cease an investigation. Worse: Erdogan hunted down the team of law enforcement and prosecutorial teams that were conducting the Guard hunt in what can only be described as a bold effort to allow Turkey to become a permissive environment for the fundraising and weapons procurement activities for the Guard.

None of this is surprising, as Erdogan's championing of Hamas is not limited to verbal praise of the terrorist group, which he has referred to as a group of "mujahadeen" (freedom fighters). Turkey is reput-

edly one of the hubs, if not the major one, from which Hamas in Gaza has been able to procure approximately \$1 billion of its annual operating revenue, which it uses to finance its terrorism operations. Close to \$750 million is alleged to come from friendly governments, including Iran.

What's fascinating is that Turkey's financial system is turning a blind eye to the millions of dollars being trafficked through its banking system, currency, and crypto exchange networks and construction companies' building ventures. Kuveyt Turk bank is a mainstream financial institution in Turkey that is presently being sued in the United States "for aiding and abetting Hamas's terrorist activity." The Turkish government is one of the largest shareholders.

Trend GYO, a Turkish construction conglomerate estimated to be worth \$500 million, was designated in 2022 for "generat[ing] revenue for the terrorist group through the management of an international investment portfolio." It has gone about this by attracting investment from persons sympathetic to Hamas's cause, who invest in legitimate construction projects, the proceeds of which are then transferred to pro-Hamas "charities," ultimately finding their way to Hamas's accounts in Gaza. It is no exaggeration to reach the obvious conclusion that many Turkish banks not only turn a blind eye to terrorism financing but actively facilitate it, with no intervention from the Turkish government.

While the Treasury Department's actions to designate terrorist entities are crucial, sanctions alone are not sufficient to hold the Turkish government to account. We need a concerted government approach. While the Treasury highlights Turkey's egregious behavior in support of terrorism financing on a frequent basis, the State Department dangles carrots in an attempt to reward Erdogan.

Recently, Turkey finally (after 18 months!) ratified Sweden's bid to join NATO. This resulted in the Biden administration greenlighting the sale of F-16 fighter jets to Turkey. It was followed by Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland saying to her Turkish counterparts that if Ankara divested itself of a batch of Russian S-400 missiles

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Western Prelate Bishop Torkom Donoyan in Recovery



Western Prelate Bishop Torkom Donoyan (left) with Very Rev. Zareh Sarkissian

The Executive and Religious council of the Western Prelacy announced Friday that due to health concerns and under the strict orders of his physicians, Prelate Bishop Torkom Donoyan is in need of immediate convalescence to fully recover, thus he will be halting his ad-

ministrative duties.

During this period, Very Reverend Zareh Sarkissian, the Dean of the St. Mary's Apostolic Church in Glendale, will be the representative of the Prelate and the chief administrator of the Western Prelacy.

Armenia's Foreign Ministry Removed 'Nagorno-Karabakh' Sections from Website

Armenia's Foreign Ministry removed a section called "Nagorno-Karabakh Issue" from its website, coinciding with a top Azerbaijani official complaining about the "language" used on the website, which has been deemed unacceptable by Baku. While the section entitled "Nagorno-Karabakh" still appears on the Foreign Ministry's website under the foreign policy heading, the "Nagorno-Karabakh Issue" subsection is removed in all languages — Armenian, English, French and Russian.

The foreign ministry has also removed a section that included reports by the Artsakh Human Rights Defender's office.

Elchin Amirbayov, Azerbaijan's senior envoy for special assign-

ments who has been closely involved in the negotiations, had told RFE/RL's Joshua Kucera that in addition to Armenia's Constitution, there are several other instances where Armenia's claim on Artsakh appear in formal statements and legislation. Amirbayov specifically called attention to the language on the Armenian Foreign Ministry website saying that Nagorno-Karabakh is "an integral part of historic Armenia," and recent Armenian filings in the European Court of Human Rights that imply a claim on Azerbaijan.

He also said, when Armenia's legislature ratified the 1991 Alma Ata accords, which accepted Soviet republic borders as the borders of the newly

independent states, lawmakers added language saying that it did not apply to Artsakh.

"We have pointed the attention of the Armenian side to those facts many times, during our [in-person] negotiations, but also through different exchanges of comments," Amirbayov said. "And the Armenian side acknowledges that this is the fact, but nothing is being done..."

"When they try to cheat, if I may use the word, if they try to put all the blame and the responsibility on our shoulders, and at the same time in the back of their minds still having these territorial claims against us, it's not going to work," the Azerbaijani official added.

Publisher's views

Despite His Denials, Aliyev is Upset By International Criticism of Azerbaijan

By Harut Sassounian

Publisher, The California Courier
www.TheCaliforniaCourier.com

Pres. Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan repeatedly states that he ignores all international criticisms regarding his violations of the human rights of his own citizens, war crimes by his soldiers, and ethnic cleansing of Artsakh Armenians. Aliyev tries to cover up these violations and crimes through 'Caviar diplomacy,' by providing billions of dollars in bribes to various European officials.

Anytime Azerbaijan has a problem with a foreign country, Europeans institutions or international courts, he puts on a brave face and acts like nothing has happened. He repeatedly says, "I don't care who says what, I will do what I want."

I would like to cite a recent example of Aliyev being so bothered by such issues that, rather than ignoring them, has gone to unusual lengths to resolve them.

This example has to do with France. In recent months, Aliyev has been quite outspoken with his harsh criticism of French President Emmanuel Macron for supporting Armenia. Aliyev has refused



to meet with Pres. Macron and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to discuss the Artsakh conflict. Aliyev also complained about France selling a number of armored personnel carriers to Armenia. While spending billions of dollars to arm Azerbaijan with the latest Israeli and Turkish drones and missiles, Aliyev dares to complain about Armenia procuring a limited number of arms to defend itself.

Late last year, the Azerbaijan-France confrontation got more heated when Azerbaijan

expelled two French embassy officials from Baku and in return France expelled two Azeri embassy officials from Paris.

The Intelligence Online website reported that, according to its confidential sources, Azerbaijan's intelligence services asked Mossad, Israel's Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations, to intervene with France to resolve their outstanding conflicts.

According to confidential Mossad sources, Azerbaijan's Foreign Intelligence Service (KXK), led by General Orkhan Sultanov, asked his counterpart in Israel to intervene with the General Directorate of External Security (DGSE) of France to deescalate the tension between Baku and Paris. Azerbaijan indicated that it would not want to worsen the existing dispute.

However, the Azeri effort failed, as Mossad did not transmit the Azeri request to France, according to Intelligence Online sources. This was a delicate issue for Israel as it wanted on one hand to preserve its good relations with Azerbaijan, while on the other hand Israel's intelligence agency did not want to attempt such mediation at a time when it was preoccupied with the conflict in Gaza and other Middle Eastern hot spots.

Intelligence Online reported that Mossad enjoys a high degree of influence over Baku, since Israel uses the Azeri territory for its operations in Iran. When Mossad stole Iran's nuclear documents from Tehran in 2018, Israel's agents used Azerbaijan's border to flee from Iran. In return, Mossad greatly facilitated Azerbaijan's acquisition of sophisticated weapons from Israel, which aided Baku, the second largest buyer of Israeli arms, to score victories in 2020 and 2023 in Artsakh. Just before the attack on Artsakh in September 2023, Azerbaijan's security services informed the experts of Mossad and Unit 8200 (Aman) of Israel's Military Intelligence Directorate of their plans and sought their advice.

According to Intelligence Online, Mossad has in recent years brought its cooperation with the French External Security Directorate to a higher operational level, notably on Iran. The French Agency has also been mobilized over the situation in Gaza.

The new director of French Intelligence Agency, Nicolas Lern-

Armenian Sacred Music Project Announces Scholarship Opportunity for University Students

The Armenian Sacred Music Project announced that applications for the Kinarik Altinyuzuk Scholarship is now open to students pursuing a music degree with a Fall 2024 financial disbursement. The non-profit organization was established to promote the appreciation, teaching, and preservation of Armenian Sacred Music through workshops, masterclasses, trainings, physical and digital archives to sacred music enthusiasts, students, educational institutions, clergy, and to all those who wish to learn more about the project and sacred music.

The scholarship will provide

Ciddi... Continued from Page 3

it purchased in 2019, then "the U.S. would be delighted to welcome Turkey back into the F-35 family."

There is one enduring reason why multiple U.S. administrations continue to embrace Erdogan no matter what he

music students the opportunity to further develop in their collegiate studies and be connected with a network of sacred music enthusiasts, educators, and professionals under the patronage of our nonprofit. The scholarship will ensure that the precious Armenian sacred music will be preserved and promote through collegiate studies.

Scholarship Academic Requirements:

-Students must be enrolled in a four-year undergraduate or

graduate program at an accredited college/university;
-Students must be majoring in a musical studies program with a current grade point average of 3.0 or higher (on a 4.0 scale).

Scholarship Application Requirements:

-Students will complete an application, provide unofficial transcripts, and one-page essay explaining how Armenian sacred music has affected their personal or collegiate musical studies.

Vahan Keshishyan Arrested After Body Found in Glendale Home

By Aaratrika Bal

28-year-old Vahan Keshishyan has been arrested after a body was discovered at a residence in Glendale. Law enforcement officials stated that Keshishyan was arrested as a suspect after a hectic standoff. The area was shut down for quite some time after the incident for investigation purposes. At least two educational institutions were also shut down during that time.

Authorities are investigating the case and trying to discover the relationship between the suspect and the victim. Law enforcement officials have not revealed the identity of the victim. They are trying to find what possibly happened during events that led to the death of the victim.

Authorities made a horrific discovery at a house in Glendale after they responded there at about 2:15 pm local time on Wednesday, February 14, 2024. According to cops, they arrived at the scene on the 3300 block

of Reta Street after receiving a report of assault with a deadly weapon. The World Time Todays reported that after cops arrived at the house, they found shreds of evidence to prove that an assault had taken place but couldn't find either a suspect or a victim.

Meanwhile, three schools were shut down for safety purposes, and since authorities were conducting an investigation. Authorities discovered a suspect inside the house, later identified as Vahan Keshishyan. However, due to lack of cooperation, SWAT and a crisis negotiation teams had to be called for assistance. Eventually, after a lengthy standoff, Keshishyan gave up and surrendered to the authorities.

When the SWAT team arrested 28-year-old from La Crescenta, he was found barefoot and shirtless. He was arrested on suspicion of murder. However, cops have yet to reveal the vic-

tim's identity. They are reportedly awaiting a notification from the family.

CBS News reported that the suspect, Keshishyan, had barricaded himself inside the house and allegedly assaulted someone with a machete. Glendale Police Department issued a news release stating that they canvassed the entire residence to look for the victim after the arrest. Upon thorough investigation, they discovered the deceased victim, who also seemingly sustained some "unspecified injuries."

Among the schools shut down, Clark Magnet High School and Valley View Elementary School have been named as two of them. The lockdown has, however, been lifted as of now. The Glendale Police Department is currently investigating the case to unearth all possible details. The case is a developing story, and new updates are anticipated.

er, met with David Barnea, the director of Mossad when the latter came to Paris in the last week of January. Attending the closed-door meeting on the Israeli-Palestinian issue were Abbas Kamel, head of the Egyptian General Intelligence Directorate (Mukhabarat el-amma); Ronen Bar, head of Shin Bet, Israel's Internal Security Agency; William Barnes, head of the CIA; and Qatari officials.

Intelligence Online importantly reported that the CIA let Baku know that it was not pleased with Azerbaijan's conflict with French Intelligence, while France is trying to hinder Moscow in the Caucasus and needs Azerbaijan's platform.

Having exposed Aliyev's deception about ignoring international pressure on Azerbaijan, my advice to the international community is to continue pressuring Aliyev to stop his unacceptable behavior. Otherwise, he will go on with his multitude of ever-increasing violations and crimes, causing great harm to Azeris and Armenians alike.

Next week, I will expose another one of Aliyev's efforts to counter international pressures on Azerbaijan, despite his denials of not paying any attention to them.

Did Harut Sassounian's Column Strike A Chord?

Write A Letter to the Editor
californiacourier@gmail.com
Attn: Harut Sassounian, Editor

AGBU Distributes 14,000 Heaters to Artsakh Families in Armenia

Five months after AGBU launched its warm meal distribution effort for Artsakh refugees in partnership with World Central Kitchen (WCK), it has expanded its humanitarian outreach with a warm winter initiative. With the distribution of 14,000 portable space heaters in January alone, 60,000 displaced individuals can find added comfort in their new dwellings.

“Now, as the seasonal frost sets in, especially in the regions of Armenia, we are rushing to lend another helping hand to ease the day-to-day burdens of the Artsakh community,” explained AGBU Director of Humanitarian Programs Inessa Margaryan, based in Yerevan.

Margaryan went on to say, “When the humanitarian crisis started last September, we prioritized food insecurity by preparing over 400,000 warm meals and 28,000 food boxes for those who had endured dire living conditions and malnutrition for over nine months

prior to Azerbaijan’s final phase of ethnic cleansing in Artsakh. Now that many evacuees are situated in various types of shelters, many with inadequate heating, the need for supplementary sources of warmth is more acute.”

Distribution centers are organized in collaboration with local municipalities and town halls across Armenia, where beneficiaries can pick up the heaters on a first-come, first-served basis. Among the beneficiaries is 44-year-old Liana Israelyan from Stepanakert. She expressed her gratitude for AGBU’s efforts, saying, “We are a family of 12, and the new place is extremely cold. The heaters help us withstand the winter.”

Between November 29 and February 3, 25 volunteers from all around the world joined forces through AGBU ACT (Armenians Come Together), a service program that attracts diaspora Armenians who wish to help uplift Armenian lives through humanitarian expe-

ditions. The volunteers helped distribute some of the heaters during two sessions of ACT.

ACT participant Stacey Tertarian from the U.S. shared her thoughts: “It is deeply rewarding for me to have the chance to engage with these families, to hear their stories, and demonstrate to them that they are not alone during this critical time in their lives. I believe we provide them not just physical aid in the



form of tangible goods, but also the warmth of human interaction and compassion.”

The AGBU Global Relief Fund also provides free health care and mental health assessments, job placement assistance, adult education and skills training, plus therapeutic retreats for traumatized children and their parents at AGBU Camp Nairi.

Wings of Earth by Vivien Adamian and Natalia Sookias

Artists Vivien Adamian and Natalia Ira Sookias installation titled Wings of Earth will be on display at the Adams Square Mini Park Gas Station from March 25, 2024 to May 31, 2024. Wings of Earth transforms the Adams Square Mini Park Gas Station into a cultural “community sacred space” for reflection on land and loss.

Adamian and Sookias created a series of hanging objects inspired by decorative ceramics from ancient Armenian churches, and vessels whose naturalistic contours and folds recall peaks and valleys from lands lost, both literal and metaphorical. Drawing from ancestral and contemporary stories of hope and grief, the artists wish to offer viewers a space of reflection and awe.

The reflection space, occupied by ceramic eggs, wings, aghamans (Armenian salt jars), and other evocative clay objects, creates a dialogue about how we process loss and conceive of hope in diaspora communities.

Though Armenian culture is represented in the design of this installation, the artists’ aim is for the art to transcend cultural boundaries and remind the many communities in Glendale what it means to extend a hand during difficult times.

Vivien Adamian is an Armenian writer and visual artist from Glendale. She is currently working towards an MFA in Writing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Adamian organizes community art events in Los Angeles focused on collaborative art making and community building.

Natalia Ira Sookias is an Armenian ceramicist based in Los Angeles. She runs Sooki Studio, a ceramics and education space that aims to provide crafts education to support mental wellness and foster community. Her ceramics are a vehicle to both connect with her ancestors and create quality goods for her community. Her work is made with the intention to last generations.

This temporary art installation is sponsored by the Glendale Arts and Culture Commission through funding from the Urban Art Program, and support from Glendale Library, Arts & Culture, Glendale Community Services and Parks, and the Adams Hill Neighborhood Association.

The Adams Square Mini Park Gas Station is located at 1020 E. Palmer Ave, Glendale, CA 91205. The Project was completed by the City of Glendale to create a green space in the center of the business district for the densely populated Adams Hill neighborhood and to incorporate the historic 1936 Streamline Moderne Gas Station. The gas station is listed on the Glendale Register of Historic Resources.

Art installations at the Adams Square Mini Park Gas Station are sponsored by the Glendale Arts and Culture Commission and the Community Services & Parks Department.

Germany Extradites Fraud Fugitive to Armenia

German authorities have approved an extradition request filed by the General Prosecution of Armenia and a fugitive suspected of embezzling over 28,000,000 drams has been handed over to Armenian au-

thorities.

In a statement, the Armenian General Prosecution only released the initials of the fugitive M.M. The fugitive’s transfer to Yerevan was ensured by Armenian police officers.



Azerbaijan’s TV Spreads False Information on Yerevan

By Levon Hayrapetyan
Hetq.am

On January 2, the YouTube channel of Azerbaijani CBC TV posted a documentary entitled: “Elimination of Yerevan’s History: Part Two”, in which false information about Yerevan’s history is presented.

It shows footage filmed in Yerevan, which, according to the Azerbaijani channel, was carried out by their correspondents.

Director of Yerevan’s Erebuni Museum, Miqayel Badalyan, who appears in the film, issued a Facebook post stating that he did not give an interview to any Azerbaijani film crew. He says he was approached by documentary film director Seda Grigoryan, in order to create a film about Urartu within the framework of an American project.

Grigoryan, in social media posts, says the producer who contacted her presented an international project on ancient civilizations, a part of which would be dedicated to the Kingdom of Urartu.

The fact that a part of the filmed interview was shown in the film of the Azerbaijani television company came as a surprise for the Armenian

director.

Grigoryan states that she had a contract signed with the American No Frontiers Production LLC, which Hetq was unable to locate in the registry of organizations with American registration. According to the initial hypothesis, the Azerbaijani side probably fraudulently extracted video materials from the director from Yerevan, who, in fact, was not the only one involved in that mechanism.

Meanwhile there is no mention of Urartu in the CBC film. It touches on the history of the later period of Yerevan, the 18th-20th centuries, also pointing to some of the excavations carried out in the city. In the propaganda film, CBC shows many scenes filmed in Yerevan and Sisian, the authors of which are still unknown. According to public sources, the CBC television company belongs to the leading Azerbaijani oil extraction company SOCAR. Seda Grigoryan and Miqayel Badalyan decided to publish the filmed interviews, in several pieces, not only to prove that the scientist’s words were presented out of context and manipulated in the Azerbaijani film, but also to convey the complete content to the public, without manipulations.

109th Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide To Take Place in Times Square

NEW YORK, NY - The 109th commemoration of the Armenian Genocide will take place in Times Square, New York, on April 21, sponsored by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan and co-sponsored by a number of leading Armenian-American organizations.

The program, which will take place from 1:30 pm to 4:00 pm, will consist of remarks from elected officials who are supporters of Armenian-American issues and have continuously advocated for Armenian Genocide affirmation in the U.S., as well as scholars, and cultural musical performances.

The Commemoration will remember the 1.5 million Armenian lives lost during the first genocide of the 20th century, between 1915 and 1923, and will call for recognition from the Turkish government, which denies this crucial piece of history to this day.

“For almost four decades, our

community has had an impactful platform to meaningfully commemorate the Armenian Genocide,” said Committee Co-Chairs Haig Gulian and Christopher Artun. “Once again we gather this year in Times Square to raise our voices and show the world that we will not forget the 1.5 million Armenians who were massacred, while continuing our fight for global recognition.”

TURKS AND AZERIS GUILTY OF Ethnic Cleansing



ARMENIAN GENOCIDE
SUNDAY, APRIL 21, 2024 AT 1:30PM
THE ANNUAL COMMEMORATION IN TIMES SQUARE
43rd STREET AND BROADWAY (TIMES SQUARE)
NEW YORK CITY

Calendar of Events

LOS ANGELES

SATURDAY, APRIL 6—LADIES SOCIETY OF ST. GREGORY ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH 59TH ANNUAL FASHION SHOW AND LUNCHEON. Universal Sheraton at Universal City. 10 a.m., social hour & boutique 12 p.m., luncheon and fashion show. For information & reservations, contact Yn. Talin Petoyan (626) 616-1535; stgregoryladiessociety@gmail.com.

To place a listing, please email californiacourier@gmail.com

Book about Catskill Just Released

Just released the definitive book on the Armenian experience in America's first vacationland the purple Catskill Mountains protected as Forever Wild by the New York State constitution.

The enchanted Catskills brought healing energy to a people nearly destroyed in the 1915 Armenian Genocide where 1.5 million were slaughtered - half the population.

Armenian Community...

Continued From Page 1

Since the Community learned of the illegal lease, Community members had weekly demonstrations to vocalize their stance against the deal. The Community has remained on the ground for over 100 days, camping in tents 24/7 to defend against physical threats and attacks on the land. The Community understands that its very survival hinges on protecting this land. It now presses forward to enforce its historic rights in the land itself and to confirm the invalidity of the lease in the District Court of Jerusalem. Importantly, the Community's lawsuit bolsters the Patriarchate's existing lawsuit with crucial arguments that are within the Community's rights in order to halt this attack on the Community's historic presence, heritage and existence in the Old City of Jerusalem.

The Armenian Community of Jerusalem stands as one united voice. It stands together for the principle that only justice will suffice. It stands firmly on the belief that the lack of transparency and collaboration with the Community is what has brought the Armenian Quarter to this existential moment—and that it is enough. The Community will fight until the end to ensure that the Armenian Quarter remains untouched, that it remains Armenian, and that it remains for the benefit of the Armenian people. These are the very principles that have united the global Armenian world—and our allies who understand

The Green Enchantments Catskills guide franchise is the longest continuous published book still in print on the subject. GREEN ENCHANTMENTS A CATSKILLS GUIDE AND COLLECTED ESSAYS by Michael Boyajian. Now in paperback hardcover Kindle and soon audiobook.

the value of that unique mosaic that is the Old City of Jerusalem — to save the Armenian Quarter.

The Community has been committed to carrying out this powerfully unifying mandate on the ground, and it is now establishing its legal rights in the courts. Hundreds of community members have signed in support of the legal fight to protect their historic rights and to protect this crucial property that has served the Armenian community for generations over the centuries, from a place for sustenance and social life, to a refuge to house Armenian Genocide survivors, and to providing access to the people to their schools, churches, and community institutions. The Armenian Community will stand in defense of its rights on the ground and in the courts. The Community insists that the parties to the lawsuit, and those under their direction, refrain from any and all retaliatory measures against Community members. To this end, the people ask the international community to remain vigilant, to stand with the Armenian Community against any such threats, and to continue to voice their support for the Armenian Community in its unwavering commitment to protect the Armenian Garden, to protect the rights of the Armenian Community, and to protect the very future of the Armenian people in Jerusalem.

Portantino & Archuleta Urge Azerbaijan to Immediately Release Armenian POWs



Sacramento, CA – Senate Joint Resolution 11, authored by Senator Anthony J. Portantino (D – Burbank) and Senator Bob Archuleta (D – Pico Rivera) was introduced today, calling on President Biden to take immediate steps to address the ongoing illegal detention of Armenian POWs, civilians, and government leaders by Azerbaijan. The resolution is particularly personal for Senator Portantino, as several of those being held are friends and associates with whom he has met and socialized with, both in Artsakh and in his Glendale District Office. Senator Portantino had recently hosted former Artsakh Foreign Minister and Advisor to the President David Babayan in Glendale, after being briefed in Artsakh by Babayan shortly after the 44-Day War. Minister Babayan is one of the government officials being illegally held by Azerbaijan. Senator Portantino was invited to go to Artsakh after the 44-day war by the Human Rights Ombudsman Artak Beglaryan.

“It is unacceptable that we are

allowing Azerbaijan to continue their genocidal policies and illegally hold and detain innocent Artsakh residents,” stated Senator Portantino. “It is beyond sad that concrete steps have yet to be taken to address the ethnic cleansing of Armenians and the continued illegal detention of Armenian POWs, civilians and leaders. Azerbaijan and the Aliyev regime must be held accountable for these atrocities and the US and the international community should and must be more strident in its defense of Artsakh and Armenians being illegally held.”

Currently, dozens of Armenian prisoners remain in Azerbaijani custody, with over 80 Armenian soldiers and civilians still missing. Additionally, Azerbaijan has held eight former military and political leaders of Artsakh captive since September 2023. According to the Third Geneva Convention, to which Azerbaijan is a signatory, the release of POWs and captured civilians upon the cessation of hostilities is required. Azerbaijan has still not fulfilled its international legal obligations.

SJR 11 calls on the Biden Administration to urge Azerbaijan to immediately return all Armenian POWs, hostages, and other detained persons. It also calls on Biden to impose Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act violations on Azerbaijan for the illegal detention, torture, and extrajudicial

killing of Armenian POWs and hostages.

SJR 11 calls on the Biden Administration to suspend all United States military and economic assistance to Azerbaijan and to collaborate with the international community to ensure the protection and preservation of Armenian cultural heritage sites now under Azerbaijani control.

Senator Portantino chairs the Senate Select Committee on California, Armenia, and Artsakh Mutual Trade, Art, and Cultural Exchange, which was first established in 2017 at his request to expand business opportunities through trade, economic development, cul-



tural awareness, and education between California, Armenia, and Artsakh. California has the largest population of Armenian Americans in the country, with the 25th Senate District having the largest concentration. In 2014, the California State Legislature adopted AJR 32, which recognized the Republic of Artsakh as a free and independent nation.

Knights and Daughters of Vartan Announce Writing Contest in Conjunction with Times Square Armenian Genocide Commemoration

The Knights and Daughters of Vartan are holding their annual writing contest in conjunction with the 109th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide and its subsequent commemoration in Times Square, New York, on April 21.

High school students (grades 9-12) can participate in a writing contest to enhance awareness of the Armenian Genocide.

All submissions should be received by April 8, and winners will be announced in Times Square on April 21, and in the Armenian media on April 22.

“The Knights and Daughters of Vartan, continuing with their annual tradition, will sponsor a writing contest for high school students, where they will reflect on the Armenian

Genocide and the importance of historic and cultural preservation,” said Time Square Co-Chairs Haig Gulian and Christopher Artun.

Prizes:

First prize: \$300;
Second prize: \$200 and Third place: \$100.

Topics: as descendants of Armenian Genocide survivors, why do you feel the responsibility to share your family's historical accounts and stories, and how will you carry your family's story into the future? If you are not a descendant, why do you believe it's important to recount the history of the issues Armenian Genocide to the

public? Overall, how does transmitting stories from one generation to the next help preserve and retain historical facts?

Writing requirements:

-Responses must be between 750-1000 words typed in Times New Roman 12-point font and double-spaced.

-Please include the applicant's first and last name at the top of each page along with contact information.

-Accepted file formats include .doc, .docx, .pdf

-Please note your essay will be judged on its originality, clarity, historical accuracy, and understanding of the essay contest theme.

Please Share Your Opinions and Comments!
californiacourier@gmail.com
Harut Sassounian, Editor

The Power of Small and Smart states

By Armen Sarkissian

The publication of my book, *The Small States Club: How Small Smart States Can Save the World*, has provoked a much-needed discussion on small states. In the course of my life as a scientist and diplomat, businessman and politician, I have increasingly marveled at the tenacity of small states. Their survival has always been predicated on overcoming insuperable odds.

When the modern state came into existence with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, there were 400 small states. Hundreds of them were extinguished by the antecedents of today's great and middle powers. Today, there are roughly 150 small states — a sevenfold increase since the establishment of the postwar order in 1945. But their survival can scarcely be taken for granted in an increasingly multipolar world whose order, institutions and norms are being torpedoed by the velocity of political, geopolitical, social and technological transformation.

If there is an overwhelming priority or a paramount preoccupation common to all small states, it is survival. The world has never been structured to facilitate the survival of small states and treating small states as disposable has been the norm through most of recent history. Survival, therefore, has largely depended on the will and skill of small states themselves.

To preserve themselves, small states must be agile, adaptable and adroit. Internally, as

Aristotle said of the city-states of the 4th century B.C., they must train their populations to be jacks of all trades. Externally, they must exert themselves to mobilize an international order reinforced by institutions and equipped with the means to uphold its rules. In short, small states must also be smart states. In international relations, as the Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye argues, there are three kinds of power: hard power, which involves coercion; soft power, which flows from a nation's cultural output; and what I would call "smart power." The last of these amalgamates components of both hard and soft power but also, crucially, makes an effort to bolster itself by leveraging technology intelligently.

Unlike conventional approaches, smart power actively embraces and harnesses emerging tools such as artificial intelligence, aiming not only to adapt but also to derive significant advantages from these innovations. The essence of smart power lies in its ability to synergize traditional sources of influence with cutting-edge technologies, positioning itself strategically to navigate and capitalize on the ever-evolving landscape of power dynamics. We inhabit a world in which, for the first time, long-marginalized voices have acquired the capability to amplify themselves and be heard. An individual with a smartphone is possessed with the power to break news and shape trends. A small,

tech-savvy state can compete with large states. Technology has eroded the capacity of large powers to remain the predominant centers of progress and achievement.

Eight of the top 10 nations on the Bloomberg Innovation Index are small states. Singapore, a consistently high-ranking state on the index, is a world leader in medical innovation. Despite being home to the equivalent of only 7 percent of Germany's population, it accounts for more patents in healthcare than its European counterpart. It has converted its curses — its location and limited resources — into opportunities to become one of the most prosperous countries in the world.

Sweden, home to fewer than 11 million citizens, has emerged as a captain in the fields of technology, research and development and innovation. It has more technology hubs per capita than any part of the world save Silicon Valley. Even the stars are no longer beyond the reach of small states. In 2021, the UAE, home to just over 9 million people, successfully orbited its rover around Mars — catapulting itself into an exclusive league once occupied by great powers.

Stability, constancy, the rule of law, peace and predictability are imperative for the success of small states. And a club of such states would help smaller nations exert greater influence in cultivating the climate essential for global security, progress and

prosperity. In doing so, it would also temper the aggression and destructive impulses of large powers.

"The Small States Club" tells the compelling story of eight small countries that dot Europe, Asia and Africa that would qualify as founding members of such a club. There are, of course, others that merit attention, but I selected these states because I have studied them closely and their travails and successes, individually and collectively, carry indispensable lessons for small (and even large) states operating in a world in flux.

Often, I have interacted extensively with the leaders and key figures in these nations. Not every country I have examined features every virtue prized by every society. But despite their shortcomings, they can teach us something valuable about surviving and succeeding in an inhospitable world.

As an Armenian diplomat and later as president, I often reflected on the need for a consortium of smaller states, a collective that might be nimbler and more effective than the sluggish giants that currently dominate international relations. This "S20," as one might call it, would be a club of nations — from Singapore to Switzerland and Botswana to Arab states — unburdened by the weight of empires, ready to learn from past errors and earnestly seek to arbitrate conflicts with fairness and foresight.

Small states live on the knife-edge of survival; peace is not a

luxury for them but the precondition of their existence. This is why small states tend for the most part to be averse to conflict: war imposes a disproportionate toll on them. There will always be exceptions to the rule, but small states generally tend to promote peace — or at least strive to create conditions to avert the outbreak of fighting. Therefore, minimizing, if not altogether eliminating, bloody conflict is not a noble ideal for them — it is a necessity. Even though a club of small states would take responsibility for their fates and help foster peace through collective action and mutual support, the idea of such a collaborative body has met with resistance from the larger states, whose preeminence depends on the status quo. They look upon any new institution that might affect the scales of influence with suspicion and skepticism.

But I am pleased to note that the publication of *The Small States Club* has stirred a discussion. Representatives of key small states have shared their enthusiasm for a so-called S20 grouping. There is much work to be done, but the idea is catching on. If peace and progress are to be more than impossible dreams, we must reduce if not cease our dependence on big powers and obsolete institutions and instead harness the survival instinct of small states to create a body that values dialogue over discord and collaboration and peace over conquest and perpetual conflict.

Meridian School Gala Celebrates Excellence, Philanthropy, and Legacy

More than 300 community leaders, alumni, educators, parents, donors and supporters attended the C. & E. Meridian Armenian Evangelical School's gala on February 10. The event raised more than \$200,000 due to the generous contributions from the community, which will go towards enhancing facilities, elevating teacher salaries, and enriching academic programs.

Held at the Jonathan Club in Downtown Los Angeles, the event began with a cocktail hour and a silent auction hosted by the Meridian Parent Support Committee. The official program and presentation of awards was kicked off by the Gala Committee Chairperson and Board Member, Dr. Tzoler Oukayan.

Then, Mistress of Ceremonies and Board member, Dr. Alexia Kevonian welcomed guests. The program started with the American and Armenian National Anthems sang by Meridian teachers Marta Hovhannisyian and Anna Zakaryan. Then, Rev. Hendrik Shanazarian, Minister to the Union of the



Armenian Evangelical Union of North America conducted the invocation.

Afterdinner, Board Chairperson and alumnus Nerses Aposhian (Class of 2006) took to the stage to reflect on his personal journey at Meridian. Fondly recalling his frequent visits to the principal's office and the patriotic and folkloric songs learned at Meridian, which still resonate with him today, the audience was captivated as he began singing "Kedashen."

The program continued with a video presentation highlighting the school's history, achievements, and enduring impact on the community.

Taking the stage, Principal Dr. Souzy Ohanian detailed

the school's accomplishments, highlighting the record-breaking number of students enrolled, with more than a hundred on the waiting list.

Siblings Nora Bardakjian and Kevork Bardakjian from the Class of 2005 and 2003, took to the stage to present the Excellence in Teaching Award to Meridian educator and their mother, Suzy Bardakjian.

In introducing the Phillips Family, Aposhian detailed the family's enduring support and significant contributions to the school's growth and success. He expressed gratitude to George Sr. and Suzie for passing along their "philanthropic genes" to their sons, Dr. Albert, Gary, and George Jr., and their respective wives Sue, Arsine, and Dina.

George Jr. Phillips, Vice Chairperson of the Meridian Board

of Directors, stepped forward to convey gratitude for the award on behalf of the family. Dr. Alexia Kevonian then took the stage to announce the official launch of the new Donor Wall, which will be prominently displayed in the school's Aram & Anahis D. Boolghoorjian Hall. The "Planting of the Seeds" project features a wall tree generously donated by Dr. & Mrs. Vicken & Sossy Aharonian, where supporters can add the leaves to the tree, thereby permanently showcasing their support for Meridian and their commitment to shaping its future. Kevonian invited guests to contribute to the project by making a donation of \$250. Greg Hosharian and his band entertained the guests with Armenian songs.



By Levent Kenez
Nordicmonitor.com

The last audit report of the Turkey Wealth Fund (TWF), which was sent to parliament three months late by the presidency, revealed that many state-owned companies couldn't be properly audited in 2022 by independent auditors due to deficiencies in data or confidentiality issues. It was also found that some companies' audit findings did not align with each other.

The TWF was established in 2016 to manage state-owned companies. In 2018, through a presidential decree, the fund was placed under the authority of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who became chairman of the fund's board of directors. Opposition lawmakers argue that since the Presidential Inspection Board, which oversees the fund on behalf of the public, is also under the control of Erdogan, a thorough and independent audit is not possible.

The wealth fund currently encompasses 30 companies, 46 real estate properties and two gaming licenses. Among its holdings are some of Turkey's

Turkey Wealth Fund Led by Erdogan Restricts Audit to Hide Corruption

largest companies, including Turkish Airlines, BOTAŞ, PTT (Turkish Post), Türk Telekom, Turkcell, Türksat and state-owned banks. The fund's current estimated value is approximately \$300 billion.

At a parliamentary committee meeting on February 1, main opposition lawmaker Rahmi Aşkın Türeli said the audit report arrived on January 26 and was distributed to lawmakers on January 29, leaving them with just two-and-a-half days before the meeting. He pointed out the huge number of reports, spanning thousands of pages including attachments, covering various institutions. Türeli questioned how they were expected to adequately review and discuss such extensive documentation within such a limited timeframe. He expressed skepticism about the feasibility of exercising oversight and audit authority under these circumstances.

According to the report, the independent auditing firm states that a qualified opinion has been given regarding Turkey's natural gas company, BOTAŞ, due to the confidentiality of financial statements, making them unable to be disclosed. It was noted that sufficient and

appropriate documentation could not be obtained regarding BOTAŞ's other deferred receivables totaling TL 4.947 billion.

Furthermore, the report indicated that due to the confidential nature of BOTAŞ's purchase price, adequate audit documentation could not be obtained.

This limitation prevented alternative procedures for auditing cost details, ultimately leading to an unsatisfactory conclusion.

The government has refrained from sharing the cost of natural gas obtained from Russia with the public and parliament, citing it as confidential information.

The report highlights that BOTAŞ and the Electricity Generation Corporation (EÜAŞ) incurred a loss of \$88 billion in 2022. Russia postponed an approximately \$20 billion natural gas debt incurred by BOTAŞ until after 2023 since Turkey was not involved in the sanctions imposed on Russia by the West in 2022.

In the case of PTT, the report emphasized that sufficient and appropriate audit evidence regarding provisions for significant ongoing legal cases could not be obtained. It was stated that sufficient and appropriate audit evidence could not be

found for the TL 41 million in receivables, TL 7.157 billion in payables and TL 1.666 billion of revenue in PTT's financial statements.

The report also mentioned that during the independent audit conducted by both Deloitte and Any Partners for PTT in 2022, different conclusions were reached for the same accounts during the same period.

Regarding Türkşeker, a sugar refiner, which received a "qualified opinion," it was noted that no supporting documentation could be found for the TL 2.897 billion in inventory and sales of TL 7.657 billion in the financial statements. Similarly, it was stated that an audit of sales amounting to TL 3.254 billion for Türk Tarım, an agriculture company, could not be performed, leading to a "qualified opinion."

One of the main objections raised by opposition party members pertained to the inadequate coverage of the losses incurred by the TWF due to the purchase of Türk Telekom in 2022. The fund incurred losses due to loan repayments and currency fluctuation following its acquisition of 55 percent of Turk Telecom's shares from LYY Telekomunikasyon (LYY) for

\$1.65 billion. TWF CEO Salim Arda Ermut told lawmakers during the meeting that the necessity of the state acquiring the company arose to address issues in the country's internet infrastructure.

At the TWF, where Erdogan chairs the board, Erişah Arıcan serves as his deputy. Arıcan, an economics professor, was revealed in Wikileaks documents to have ghostwritten the doctoral thesis of Berat Albayrak, Erdogan's son-in-law and former economy minister, implying academic misconduct. Another board member of the TWF is businessman Fuat Tosyalı, who is closely associated with Erdogan. Growing his businesses through contracts awarded by Erdogan, Tosyalı acquired a 50.1 percent stake in armored vehicle manufacturer BMC at Erdogan's direction for \$480 million.

Rifat Hisarcıkıoğlu, who has been president of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges since 2001, was also appointed as a board member by Erdogan in 2018. Hisarcıkıoğlu, known as one of Erdogan's propagandists in the business world, has long been an Erdogan loyalist.

Antep Armenian Following in the Footsteps of His Ancestors in the City



By Cihat Ozturk

Hovig Keshishian, who traces the footsteps of his ancestors exiled from Antep in 1915, says, "If we hadn't left here a hundred years ago, we wouldn't have experienced a second exile from Aleppo."

Born in Aleppo, Syria in 1989, Keshishian identifies himself as a person from Antep: "I was born in Aleppo but I consider myself from Antep. When people asked where I was from in Aleppo, we would say 'we are from Antep.' I had other friends from Antep too. They used to say to me, 'You are 18 karat Antep, we are 24 karat!' because they were Antepi on both their mother's and father's sides. My mother, however, is from Sivas."

His grandfather, who shares the same name, was born in Antep in 1913. In his diary passed down from his grandfather, it is

written: "I was born in Eblahan, Antep. Somewhere near the Eyüboğlu Mosque."

Keshishian, who visits the city where his ancestors were born every year, despite warnings from his family to not go to Antep due to potential risks, met with us in an old Antep house. We talked to him about being from Antep and being Armenian. Keshishian and his family still speak Turkish at home: "This is a legacy passed down to us from Antep. We see it as a cultural richness. I first came to Antep in 2015. I feel like I belong here. I believe my roots and connection are here."

"Dad and grandpa used to say that the people of Antep have a rich and deep-rooted history," says Keshishian, recalling his memories:

"In Aleppo, you can find books and materials about Armenians from Antep. We have kept the spirit of being from Antep alive there too. If someone in Aleppo is awake, skilled, and clever, they ask, 'Is he from Antep?' This is my sixth visit to Antep. I met historian and writer Murad

Uçaner, and through him, I learned about the city's history. When I first saw Kurtuluş Mosque, which used to be Surp Asdvadzadzin Church, I felt drawn to it, psychologically feeling like I belonged there. Later, I learned that my grandfather was baptized at Surp Asdvadzadzin Church in 1914."

Keshishian, who says he feels a nostalgic melancholy with each visit to Antep, describes 1915 as follows:

"I say, if we hadn't experienced the events of 1915, we wouldn't have migrated to Aleppo. We wouldn't have experienced a situation like 1915 in Aleppo either. If it weren't for 1915, we wouldn't have suffered due to what is happening in Syria today. And every time I come here, I also get angry with our people. I wish our ancestors had converted to Islam so we could have stayed here!"

"Because we experienced trauma. We are now the fourth generation. We know my grandfather's father, but we don't know those before

him. My grandfather was born in Antep, my father and I were born in Syria. My son was born in Armenia. Four generations, three different countries... What does it mean to change three countries in 100 years? Every time I come here, I feel a pain."

Keshishian is the only one from his family that has been going back and forth to Antep. In fact, his mother worries every time he comes back, fearing that something might happen to him. She says things like, "Why are you going there, son? It could be dangerous. They might cause you trouble. Go to Europe instead, why are you going to Antep? It's all in the past. Don't reopen closed chapters."

He says, "Bey Mahallesi attracts me. The old Armenian Quarter. I love places that smell of history. Especially when that history belongs to my family, my ancestors, and my grandfather. I don't want to be separated from it. I would prefer to stay in Antep, to live here. I would like my son to have the spirit of Antep as well. I want him to live here just like his ancestors did."

New Zealand Soccer Player Joins Armenian Premier League Club

Logan Rogerson (25) from New Zealand joined the Armenian Soccer club FC Noah which has a squad drawn from many countries, including Portugal, Brazil, Netherlands, Uruguay, Slovakia, Nigeria, DR Congo, Serbia, Mozambique, France, Italy, Senegal and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Rogerson, who has represented New Zealand at U-17, U-20, U-23 and full international level, started his career as a youth player with Hamilton's Wanderers SC.

After making his All Whites debut in 2015, he has made nine appearances for New Zealand, scoring once.

He spent three seasons with Wellington Phoenix before moving to German third-tier club Carl Zeiss Jena.

He returned to New Zealand for two seasons with Auckland City and then left for Finland where he played for Klubi 04, HJK Helsinki and FC Haka who he joined in 2022.