

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932

Volume LXXXII, NO. 24, Issue 4716

JANUARY 8, 2022

\$2.00

Karabakh Leadership Rejects Pashinyan's 'Pro-Azeri' Statement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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A pair of the Berj Najarian cleats

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

By Angelique Fiske

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

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

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

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

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Remembering Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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Iran to Open Consulate in Strategic Armenian Region



Kapan, in Syunik province

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

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

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

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

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GYUMRI

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

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Exchange Students
Experience Life in
the US

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Community News

AAHPO 'Light Of Love' Holiday Candles Raise Funds for Artsakh Physicians

By Stephan S. Nigohosian

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

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



The Artsakh candle

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

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

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

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

see CANDLES, page 12



Exchange student Mariana

Exchange Students Experience Life in the US

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

see STUDENTS, page 7

Azerbaijani Ambassador Speaks at Princeton

By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

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

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

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

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

The Speech

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

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

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COMMUNITY NEWS

AAHPO 'Light Of Love' Holiday Candles Raise Funds for Artsakh Physicians

CANDLES, from page 6
cotton wick flame. The candles come with a cedarwood lid

"We are pleased to be able to offer such high-quality, environmentally-responsible

platform for people to fund continuing medical education, which will ultimately benefit Armenians living in Artsakh and aligns with AAHPO's core mission."

The CME Program was first created in 2005 by the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) and the FAR Fellowship Alumni Association to bolster the overall health of Armenia's people by improving the skills of Armenian doctors. FAR and AAHPO, through the vision of the late Raffy A. Hovanesian, MD, recognized the importance of this training and partnered to fund the CME Program for physicians from Artsakh. This program is vital to training physicians and nurses as tens of thousands of Armenians depend on their medical skills.

To view photos of the Artsakh and Yerevan candles and place an order, visit <https://aahpo.org/the-light-of-love-holiday-candles/>

For more information about AAHPO, visit www.aahpo.org.



The Yerevan candle

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

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

LOS ANGELES — In line with their continued support of the organization's mission, Chair of AGBU Council of Trustees Vatche Manoukian and his wife Tamar Manoukian announced a year-end contribution of \$1 million in support of the expansion of AGBU's programs and activities.

In response to the announcement, AGBU President Berge Setrakian remarked, "It is no secret that the generosity of the Manoukians is not only deeply heartfelt, as proud

Armenians and compassionate humanitarians, but also informed by strategic considerations. With their finger on the pulse of the times, they can assess what is needed and when to meet the moment and secure the future. We are grateful to the Manoukians and to all of our donors, without whose support AGBU could not successfully pursue its mission."

The Lebanese born multi-national business leader Vatche Manoukian inherited a genuine interest in philanthropy from his

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

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



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

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Happy New Year to All

Apet Torosian
Watertown, MA

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

Cynthia Kazanjian
Burlington, MA

Christmas Donations Received after December 15, 2021

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

Happy New Year and Merry
Christmas

Arek Torosian
Cleveland, Ohio

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

Harry N. Mazadoorian
Kensington, CT