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ARMENIAN GENERAL BENEVOLENT UNION FEB. 2017



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Mission

To preserve and promote the Armenian heritage through worldwide educational, cultural and humanitarian programs

Annual International Budget

Forty-six million dollars (USD)

Education

24 primary, secondary, preparatory and Saturday schools; scholarships; alternative educational resources (apps, e-books, AGBU WebTalks & more); American University of Armenia; Armenian Virtual College (AVC); TUMO x AGBU

Cultural, Humanitarian and Religious

AGBU News Magazine; the AGBU Humanitarian Emergency Relief Fund for Syrian Armenians; athletics; camps; choral groups; concerts; dance; films; lectures; leadership; library research centers; medical centers; mentorships; music competitions; publications; radio; scouts; summer internships; theater; youth trips to Armenia. **Armenia:** Holy Etchmiadzin; Arapkir, Malatya and Nork Children's Centers and Senior Dining Centers; Hye Geen Women's Centers; Sevan Theological Seminary; Ultrasound Center. **Nagorno-Karabakh:** Chamber Orchestra; AUA Extension—AGBU NKR Program

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Editorial

Last September Armenia commemorated the 25th anniversary of its independence—a quarter of a century during which Armenians struggled through the most dire, most restrictive and most acute social, economic and security conditions, and yet not only persevered, but progressed, successfully evolving as an independent nation intrinsically linked to a vast and thriving diaspora around the world.

We have worked hard to reach this day. There are some who see only the successes and achievements, dismissing the deficiencies and failures, while others refuse to see anything positive, stressing only the shortcomings and mistakes. We should neither take what we have for granted nor be satisfied with our accomplishments thus far. Our people deserve credit for what they have endured and at the same time, they deserve better.

The Armenian Nation today is at a critical turning point. Both within Armenia and throughout the diaspora efforts are being undertaken to better understand and learn from the past two decades in order to forge ahead in the fast changing global environment.

At the same time, the broader region is also experiencing rapid change. Our neighbors are advancing at a much faster pace; political, economic and security alliances are being formed around us while transportation and energy routes are being constructed. Armenia risks being left behind if it is excluded in the long term from such regional growth and development. These are serious challenges that we must confront carefully, along with the unforeseen

and undesirable consequences of the continuing conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

One thing is certain: to successfully address these challenges, ensure our viability, remain competitive and find our rightful place in the region and the world, we must mobilize our entire intellectual and financial resources around a well-articulated vision of our nation.

The diaspora must participate in the creation of a strong Armenia, and do so wholeheartedly—not with conditional or partial use of its potential—but by rallying all its resources in the realization that it is doing so as much for its own survival as for that of Armenia. These two entities, Armenia and the diaspora, can either amplify and reinforce each other's strengths and legitimacy or they can undermine and weaken any attempt at collaboration and cooperation.

Today there is an inarguable conflation of interests between Armenia and the diaspora: Armenia seeks stability, democracy and prosperity. The diaspora needs a stable, democratic and prosperous Armenia through which it can envision and assure its continued growth and success. The young generation's sense of identity is tied not just

to an ancient Armenian homeland, but to a modern, democratic and prosperous Armenia as much as it is linked to an inclusive and engaged Armenian diaspora.

In this issue of the *AGBU News Magazine*, we look back at the pivotal moments of the past 25 years, examine the impact of constitutional and electoral reforms leading up to April's parliamentary elections and, in our *Newsmaker* interview, address the state of minority rights in Turkey with Garo Paylan. ■



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Setrakian', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Berge Setrakian
President

AGBU

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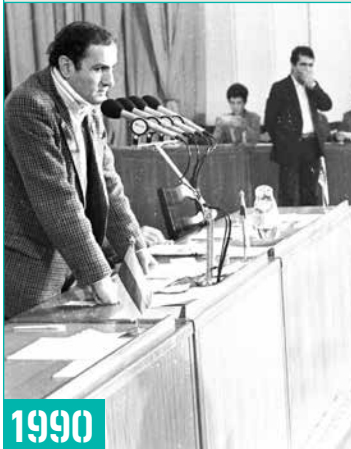
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Armenia's Independence: Looking Back

The moments that defined, challenged and celebrated independent Armenia over the past 25 years

August 23, 1990: As Communism began to fall in the former Soviet Socialist Republics, Armenia proclaimed its sovereignty by rejecting the USSR Constitution in favor of the Armenian Constitution. Levon Ter-Petrosyan, a popular academic who was involved in the Karabakh Committee, was elected Chairman of the Armenian Supreme Council.



1990

1991 October 17, 1991: The first presidential elections in Armenia were held, resulting in a victory for Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who won 83% of the vote with a voter turnout of 70%.

1991 September 21, 1991: A referendum on the question of independence from the Soviet Union was held throughout the Republic of Armenia. With approximately 95% participation, an overwhelming majority of 99.5% of voters cast a ballot in favor of independence, realizing a decades-long dream to re-establish an independent Armenian nation. Shortly thereafter, the sovereign Republic of Armenia was accepted as a full member of the international community.

In achieving its independence, the Republic of Armenia also became the national homeland for the diverse and vast Armenian diaspora, dispersed throughout the world. In the following years many diasporan Armenians elected to move permanently to Yerevan and throughout the country.

1992

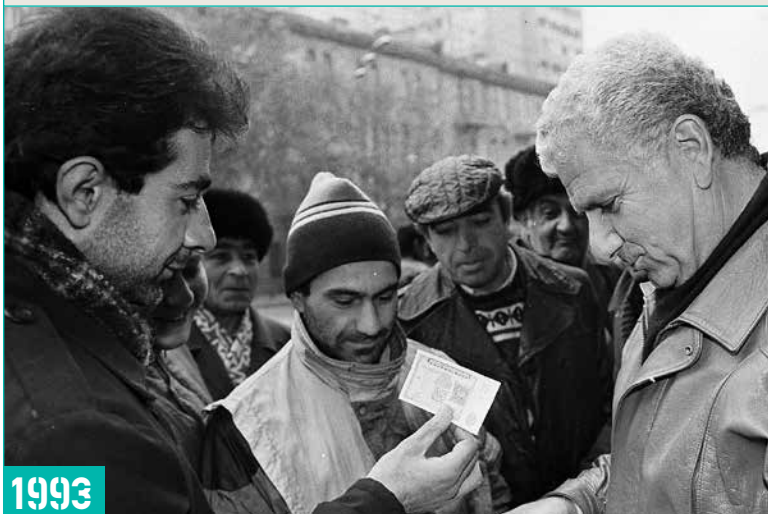


January 6, 1992: The recently established Parliament of Nagorno-Karabakh officially declared independence, sparking outrage in Azerbaijan and an escalation of fierce fighting between Armenians and Azeris.

At first led by volunteers in loosely formed para-military units, the Armenian side later became organized into an army that eventually freed Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan. Reclaiming Shushi was seen as a turning point in the conflict for its geographical advantage, but also in claiming Nagorno-Karabakh's most prized city, renowned for its arts and culture. By the spring, Karabakh fighters also seized control of the Lachin Corridor, the overland link with Armenia.

In the summer, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) established the Minsk Group to try to mediate a peace agreement. Co-chaired by France, the Russian Federation and the United States, more than a quarter century later, representatives have failed to negotiate a lasting solution to the protracted conflict.

March 27, 1993: The Central Bank of Armenia was established and within one year launched a new currency, the *dram* (a denomination that had also existed in the 12th-14th centuries). Russian rubles continued to be the national currency until November 22 when the *dram* officially went into circulation.



1993

25 Years of Independence



May 5, 1994: After nearly four years of war, a Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement was signed between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Over the course of the fighting, nearly 30,000 people were killed and approximately 1.5 million more were displaced.



April 4, 1995: His Holiness Karekin I was proclaimed Catholicos of All Armenians, pursuing the path of rebuilding the faith that began under his predecessor Vazgen I. His Holiness Karekin I oversaw several reforms designed to strengthen the Church's presence in the newly-independent state and throughout the diaspora. During the first two years of His Holiness Karekin I's ministry, five new dioceses were created within Armenia and three were created in the former Soviet Union (two in Russia, one in Ukraine). He also led the re-opening of the Gevorgyan Theological Seminary building at Holy Etchmiadzin in 1997, which had been closed for 80 years.

August 18, 1994: A state funeral was held to mark the passing of His Holiness Vazgen I, the beloved Supreme Patriarch of All Armenians. Born to a humble family in Romania, the former philosopher became Catholicos in 1955 and for four decades served as the leader of the Armenian Apostolic Church. He is especially remembered for his role in the delicate diplomacy during the Soviet period, when the Christian nation was officially forbidden to celebrate its religious tradition. After independence, His Holiness Vazgen I sought to restore religious practice and preserve a heritage that had been mostly dormant for 70 years.



July 5, 1995: Parliamentary elections were held in Armenia's first major election since the presidential election in 1991. The Republican Bloc (comprised of four parties) won 88 out of 190 seats to claim victory. The election itself however was marred by controversy, with several irregularities reported by various international observers, including intimidation of media and the ban of the Dashnaksutyun Party on the part of then President Levon Ter-Petrosyan.



November 5, 1995: Seven years after the 1988 Spitak earthquake forced its closure, the Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant was reactivated, supplying 40% of Armenia's electricity.



September 26, 1996: President Ter-Petrosyan issued a decree against public demonstrations and called in the military to barricade parts of Yerevan, including Freedom Square, while soldiers guarded the Parliament building. A state of emergency lasted until October 10.



September 22, 1996: Armenia's second presidential election was marred by voting abuse against incumbent Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who was alleged to have rigged the process that resulted in him winning 52% of the vote, just enough to avoid a runoff against Vazgen Manukyan who garnered 41% of the vote. Outraged, Manukyan supporters stormed the National Assembly on September 25, assaulting both the Speaker of Parliament and Deputy Speaker. Ter-Petrosyan's loyalists retaliated by attacking members of the opposition.

25 Years of Independence

1996



November 24, 1996: Robert Kocharyan is elected the first President of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh.

1997



March 20, 1997: President Levon Ter-Petrosyan selects Nagorno-Karabakh President Robert Kocharyan to serve as Prime Minister of Armenia. The appointment came in the wake of the resignation of Armen Sargsyan, who served just four months in the role. Kocharyan would become the sixth prime minister in six years, enabling his ascent to the presidency a year later.

1997

April 7, 1997: His Holiness Karekin I led ceremonies consecrating the ground upon which would be built Armenia's largest house of worship, Saint Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral in central Yerevan. The family of AGBU Honorary Life President Alex Manoogian donated funds for the construction of the 1,700-seat main church. Two chapels, Saint Trdat and Saint Ashkhen were funded by Nazar and Artemis Nazarian and Kevork and Linda Kevorkian, while the belfry was the gift of Eduardo Eurnekian. The complex would officially open on September 23, 2001 in an ecumenical liturgy attended by Pope John Paul II as part of ceremonies marking the 1700th anniversary of Christianity as the state religion of Armenia.

1998



February 3, 1998: President Levon Ter-Petrosyan announces his resignation following strong public and political opposition including bitter disputes with Prime Minister Kocharyan (shown here in their last public appearance) over Ter-Petrosyan's position in favor of accepting a proposed internationally-mediated resolution to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh that called for a phased settlement that would return some of the disputed territories to Azerbaijan. Ter-Petrosyan had argued that the plan would strengthen Armenia's economy by lifting the blockades against Armenia imposed by Azerbaijan and Turkey.

1998



March 16, 1998: Presidential elections were held in Armenia and observed by more than 200 international monitors who concluded the process was not "free or fair." Neither acting President Robert Kocharyan nor Karen Demirchyan, the former First Secretary of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (shown voting), won a majority in the first round, forcing a runoff two weeks later, in which Kocharyan was declared the winner. Demirchyan would later join forces with Minister of Defense Vazgen Sargsyan to form the Unity Alliance, which would successfully contest the May 1999 parliamentary elections.

1998

July 19, 1998: The re-consecration of Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi is seen as symbolically significant in the recovery of Armenian life in Nagorno-Karabakh. The 19th-century church had been inactive since 1920 and was used as a munitions storage warehouse by Azeri soldiers during the Karabakh war, until the city was liberated in May 1992 by Armenian forces.

1999



October 27, 1999: A group of five men armed with automatic weapons hidden under their coats entered the National Assembly in Yerevan, plotting to overthrow the government. The men opened fire during the question-and-answer session, killing nine people including Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan and Speaker of the Parliament Karen Demirchyan. The terrorists held 40 people hostage until early the next day before being taken into custody and eventually sentenced to life in prison. The National Assembly shooting significantly changed the course of the country's political future and remains the subject of numerous conspiracy theories. The deaths of Sargsyan and Demirchyan diminished the prominence of their reform-focused majority coalition in Parliament, enabling President Robert Kocharyan to reassert his leadership in what has been criticized as an authoritarian tenure. Sargsyan and Demirchyan were posthumously bestowed with National Hero of Armenia honors.

October 27, 1999: While the impact of the deadly attack on the Parliament was unfolding in the capital, at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, clerics were voting to appoint Ktrij Nersessian as the successor to His Holiness Catholicos Karekin I. Nersessian would become Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, helping to lead the further recovery and growth of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Immediately into his tenure, His Holiness Karekin II would oversee preparations for the 2001 celebration of the 1700th anniversary of Christianity as Armenia's state religion. Since, his ministry has consistently worked towards the recovery of Church traditions that were dormant during 70 years of Communism. During the first year of his pontificate, His Holiness Karekin II founded a theological-Armenological center on the grounds of the Mother See in the Alex and Marie Manoogian Treasury-Museum. While the facilities of the Holy See have expanded under Karekin II, so too have the numbers of students availing themselves to the service of the Church, strengthening the outreach of spiritual life in Armenia and the diaspora.



1999



2000

March 22, 2000: Nagorno-Karabakh President Arkady Ghukasyan became the target of an assassination attempt when the car in which he was traveling came under fire. Ghukasyan was seriously wounded but survived while his bodyguard and driver were also seriously wounded in the attack. Former Minister of Defense Samvel Babayan, who had been fired the previous August by Ghukasyan, was found guilty of plotting the assassination attempt. Babayan was sentenced to 14 years in prison, but was released on grounds of bad health in 2004, and in 2005 formed a new political party in Nagorno-Karabakh.



2001

September 14, 2001: Russian President Vladimir Putin becomes the first Russian head of state to visit Armenia since its independence. His visit would underscore the close relations between the states that, over the years, would also see more Russian investment in Armenia, as well as Russian control of Armenia's major communications and natural resources.



2001

Summer 2001: Development in Yerevan begins on a project to build a pedestrian thoroughfare that would link Republic Square with the Opera House in Yerevan, initially conceived in the early 1900s by architect Alexander Tumanyan. Hundreds of residents along Buzand and Koghbatsi streets were bought out by the government at prices far lower than market value, sparking protests, arrests, legal battles and condemnation by Armenia's first Ombudsman against the displacement of citizens against their will.



2001

September 25, 2001: Weeks of celebration commemorating the 1700th anniversary of Christianity as Armenia's state religion culminated with the visit of Pope John Paul II to Yerevan. The Pope visited Armenia's Dzidernagapert Genocide Memorial and participated in a liturgy christening the Saint Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral.

July 17, 2002: Armenia and Russia finalize the Equities for Debt deal that saw major industry holdings of the Government of Armenia transferred to Russian ownership as Armenia's struggling state economy could not afford the \$20 million annual burden required to service approximately \$97 million debt to Russia. Armenia relinquished five properties including three research institutes that had been part of a USSR military-industrial complex, the Mars electronics factory, and most significantly, the Hrazdan Thermal Power Plant (shown here) with an approximate net worth of \$100 million. As part of the agreement, Russia transferred ownership of the plants to private entrepreneurs.



2002

25 Years of Independence

December 28, 2002: Tigran Naghdalyan, Chairman of the Board of Armenia Public Television, was assassinated. It was widely believed that Naghdalyan was in possession of a videotape that would shed new light on the October 27, 1999 killings in parliament. Armen Sargsyan and the alleged shooter, John Harutyunyan, were arrested along with 11 other accomplices.



2002

2003



March 9, 2003: Robert Kocharyan claimed a decisive victory for President with 67% of the votes in a contested run-off election against Stepan Demirchyan. The election however was judged by local and international observers as blatantly unfair in favor of incumbent Kocharyan with the Demirchyan-led opposition refusing to recognize the outcome in a dispute that carried over into the May parliamentary elections.

April 13, 2004: Protests led by opposition candidate Stepan Demirchyan outside the Presidential residence on Baghramyan Avenue, calling for the resignation of President Kocharyan, turned violent when police clashed with demonstrators, dispersing the crowd of thousands with water cannons and stun grenades before forcing their way into several opposition headquarters and arresting opposition leaders. While the police actions were widely condemned by international human rights groups, the opposition was effectively silenced for more than three years until it reunited behind Levon Ter-Petrosyan in late 2007.



2004

June 14, 2004: Following six years of renovations and restructuring, Yerevan's Hotel Armenia reopened as the Armenia Marriott Hotel. The official branding of the old hotel by the prestigious Marriott chain was the result of efforts by a group of Boston-based members of the Armenian diaspora who bought the former state hotel and transformed it from a run-down Soviet landmark into modern accommodations consistent with the standards of the famous hotel chain. The 225-room hotel in the heart of Yerevan's Republic Square remains a focal point for many tourists and international conferences held in Armenia.

2004



July 2004: The sailing ship Cilicia, a replica of a 13th century Armenian merchant ship (shown here leaving Yerevan), began a voyage that would take it to several European ports over the next two years. A floating ambassador for Armenia, the ship and crew would showcase Armenia's history at stops from the Georgian port of Poti to Amsterdam.



2004

2005



May 28, 2005: Armenians attempted to gain international attention by creating the "world's biggest circle-dance." Organized by Prosecutor-General Aghvan Hovsepyan, the event was intended as a show of national unity after a year of opposition protests and political unrest. Citizens gathered at the foot of Mount Aragats to join hands and form a ring around the mountain before dancing the traditional shurj par (circle dance). The turnout, however, was less than expected and the unity chain fell short by more than nine miles.

June 5, 2006: The Armenian Men's Chess Team won the World Chess Championship in Turin, Italy. The team featured 23-year-old Levon Aronyan, who would go on to win several world titles. Two years later in Dresden, Germany, members of Team Armenia repeated their success to be crowned World Champions in 2008.



2006



2006

July 2006: After 14 years of inactivity, rail service between Armenia and Georgia was restored following the replacement of worn out rail tracks and refurbishing of Soviet-era cars and engines. The Yerevan-Batumi route has since become a favored means of transport for budget-conscious Armenian families who during summer months rely on the overnight train to reach Georgia's Black Sea, popular for its affordable seaside accommodations.

April 4, 2007: Serzh Sargsyan (shown in a 2007 meeting with His Holiness Karekin II), who had served as Armenia's Minister of Defense since 2000, was appointed Prime Minister, following the sudden death of Andranik Margaryan.



2007



2007

July 19, 2007: Bako Sahakyan is elected President of Nagorno-Karabakh with 85% of the vote. Sahakyan succeeded Arkady Ghukasyan who served in the post for 10 years.

February 19, 2008: Serzh Sargsyan is elected President of Armenia, defeating former President Levon Ter-Petrosyan. Amid reports of fraud, loyalists of Ter-Petrosyan protested the results in Freedom Square, unsuccessfully demanding re-elections.



2008

March 1, 2008: President Robert Kocharyan ordered police to break up the peaceful opposition encampment at Freedom Square. Dozens were injured and arrested in the early morning mêlée that sparked a day and night of unrest in Yerevan. In the ensuing standoff, military troops were called into the capital. By the time it was over, eight civilians, one policeman, and one soldier were dead while more than 100 others were arrested and unknown numbers were injured.

September 6, 2008: The national soccer teams of Armenia and Turkey were scheduled in a draw to play against each other in the UEFA qualifying round. The first match, held in Yerevan, heralded soccer diplomacy as the President of Turkey, Abdullah Gül, accepted an invitation from Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan to attend the match, won 2-0 by Turkey. The match marked the first time a Turkish head of state had visited Armenia and was hoped to signal improved relations between the two nations.



2008



2008

October 10, 2009: Armenian Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandyan and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu signed the Zurich Protocols that would open the closed border and establish diplomatic relations between the two countries. The protocols—controversial in Armenia, Turkey and the diaspora—were ultimately not ratified and the normalization process has since stalled.



2010

August 20, 2010: President Sargsyan and Russian President Dmitri Medvedev signed an amendment to the 1995 Russian-Armenian Defense Pact, which regulates Russia's right to establish military bases in Armenia. The pact extended Russia's rights until 2044 and allowed Russia to act in conjunction with the Armenian armed forces to deflect threats to Armenia's security. The pact also committed Russia to supplying modern weaponry and military hardware to Armenia.

2011



February 2011: Inspired by the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions, Armenians launched a series of demonstrations to voice their opposition to political corruption, repression and unemployment. The protests continued throughout the year and resulted in the government releasing activists imprisoned during the conflict in the wake of the 2008 presidential election and reopening official investigations into 10 deaths.

May 6, 2012: Elections to the National Assembly took place under a new electoral code adopted in response to protests against election fraud after the presidential election in 2008. The Republican Party won the election with a clear majority.



2012



July 2012: As the conflict escalated in Syria, the Republic of Armenia began adopting a series of special measures to help Syrian Armenians seek refuge in Armenia. It authorized consular offices in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon to issue citizenship and passports free of charge to Syrian Armenians and accelerated their travel procedures. Syrians in Armenia were able to use their Syrian drivers' licenses, obtain free medical care and pay local tuition at universities. The government and civil society organizations also established dozens of programs to help Syrian Armenians find affordable housing, social services, schooling and employment in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.



2013

February 18, 2013: Serzh Sargsyan was elected president for a second term. His main opponent, Raffi Hovannisian (pictured above) of the Heritage Party, claimed victory and election fraud, sparking protests in the country that were dubbed Barevolution, culminating in his public hunger strike in Freedom Square in March.

April 13, 2014: Hovik Abrahamyan was appointed prime minister after the resignation of Tigran Sargsyan. At the time of his appointment, Abrahamyan was confronted with a controversial pension reform act, which inflamed the Armenian public and led to many protests, including the dem.am demonstrations.



2014



2014

October 10, 2014: After years of talks with the European Union, President Serzh Sargsyan pulled away from strengthening ties with Europe in favor of joining the Eurasian Customs Union, a Russian-directed economic pact. This decision marked a major foreign policy shift for a country that had sought to cement institutional connections with Europe.



2015

April 23, 2015: His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, and His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, officiated the canonization of the more than 1.5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide. This sacred rite marked the first instance of canonization in the Armenian Apostolic Church in more than four centuries and represented a great moment of unity throughout Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and the diaspora.

April 24, 2015: Armenians the world over commemorated the centenary of the Armenian Genocide with vigils, demonstrations and quiet reflection in memory of their ancestors. In Armenia, thousands of Armenians gathered at the Tsitsernakaberd Genocide Memorial to pay tribute to a painful moment of their history.



2015

December 6, 2015: For the third time in its history as an independent republic, Armenia held a referendum to amend its constitution and transform the country from a semi-presidential to a parliamentary republic. The government proposed the amendments as a further step toward democratization and the peaceful transition of power.



2015

June 24 -26, 2016: His Holiness Pope Francis made an official visit to Armenia on a personal invitation from His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, and President Serzh Sargsyan. Pope Francis urged the world never to forget the Armenian Genocide and visited the Tsitsernakaberd Genocide Memorial and the Khor Virap Monastery near the Turkish-Armenian border, releasing white doves into the air as a gesture of peace between the two countries



2016

July 29, 2016: Protests broke out in Yerevan as thousands took to the streets to voice their discontent over the country's political leadership. The catalyst for the July demonstration was the deadly storming of a police station in Yerevan by armed militants—the Daredevils of Sassoun—who called for the overthrow of the government and the release of their jailed leader in exchange for the police officers and ambulance medics they were holding hostage. The Daredevils of Sassoun—including a number of veterans of the 1988-1994 Nagorno-Karabakh War—also demanded the government to take a harder line in the protracted conflict with Azerbaijan and protesters joined in to support the group.



2016



April 1-5, 2016: The Four-Day War in Nagorno-Karabakh was the largest military offensive since the first war of the early 1990s and claimed the lives of more than 100 Armenian soldiers, including a handful of civilians. The war also resulted in the loss of some three square miles of land along the heavily militarized line of contact between the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. It was a stark reminder that the long-standing, largely forgotten, conflict in the South Caucasus remains a volatile powder keg where peace remains elusive



September 21, 2016: Armenians celebrated the country's 25th anniversary of independence from Soviet rule with a military parade, performances on Republic Square and fireworks that lit up the night sky in Yerevan. Throughout the Independence Day festivities, Armenians also commemorated their countrymen who crusaded for freedom. On September 21, 1991, Armenia held a referendum on independence from the USSR after seventy years of Soviet rule. Two days later the former Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic officially proclaimed its independence as the Republic of Armenia.

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Standing up for Justice

Garó Paylan vows to continue his brave struggle to protect minority rights in Turkey

On January 14, Garó Paylan was temporarily banned from Turkey's National Assembly after he referred to the Armenian Genocide during a debate on constitutional reform. It was not the first time the Armenian member of the pro-minority People's Democratic Party (HDP) used the term in Parliament and the outspoken activist and human rights defender says it will not be his last, despite being physically attacked by members of the ruling Turkish party AKP. Paylan's suspension is the latest assault on freedom of expression since a failed coup attempt last year was met with an opposition crackdown, increasing persecution of religious minorities and ongoing prosecution of journalists and dissidents. In the run up to April's referendum on constitutional reform that would give wide-ranging executive powers to the President and further endanger democracy, Paylan speaks to AGBU about his concerns for the future.

Q On January 14 you were suspended from the Turkish Parliament for three sessions for referring to the Armenian Genocide during a debate about the upcoming referendum on constitutional reform. What does that say about the state of free speech and human rights in Turkey?

A These are very dark times in Turkey. The environment has completely changed from just two years ago when there was great

hope that Turkey would become a majority Muslim democratic nation that is inclusive and tolerant toward minorities. At the time, as much as 80% of the population was in favor of the peace deal (between the Turkish government and the pro-Kurdish PKK party), now 80% supports what has become a cruel and repressive regime in which minority Kurds have become the targets of deadly attacks; journalists are stifled; and parliamentarians stripped of their immunity are being arbitrarily detained and imprisoned. All the progress and openness we achieved during the last two years has been lost. Turkey has reverted to the policies of the 1980s and 1990s. And where once people could speak freely and commemorate the Armenian Genocide on the streets, they are now afraid and have lost any hope for the future.

Q In terms of the context of the constitutional reform debate, what message were you attempting to convey about the Armenian Genocide?

A I wanted to warn my friends and colleagues in parliament that we are about to make a big mistake. The proposed amendments will condemn dissidents to silence and establish a fascist regime. By calling it the Turks' constitution, they are excluding Armenian, Kurdish, Assyrian and Greek minorities who will not feel like they belong and we will be condemned to reliving the past. I reminded them that Armenians made up 40% of the Turkish population and now only constituted 0.1% because of the genocide. We must draw lessons from the past and move on, but they became enraged and refused to listen to my warning. In this new reality using the term "geno-

As a member of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) in Turkey, Armenian lawmaker and activist Garó Paylan is an outspoken defender of minority rights and democracy.

cide” is again being perceived as a crime, but I will not stop saying what I believe in.

Q What has been the most troubling aspect for you over the past two years watching your country spiral toward autocracy?

A The night of November 4, 2016 when they raided our offices and came for our deputies including our co-chair in the HDP and accused them of “making propaganda for a terrorist organization.” That night I felt like it was April 24, 1915 all over again when they arrested Armenian intellectuals before unleashing the genocide. Seeing so many people despair for the future and continue to be silenced is hell for anyone like me who believes in peace and democracy. I believe unpunished crimes lead to new crimes and the Turkish government never paid a price for the Armenian Genocide. They are committing the same crimes today against Kurds one hundred years later. I warned them and after the massacres of 8,000 young Kurdish militants, the world witnessed the cruelty the Turkish state is capable of. We have the blood of 8,000 bodies on our hands.

Q A referendum on proposed constitutional changes, which seek wide-ranging new executive powers, is scheduled for April. What is your greatest concern if it passes?

A Our goal in the HDP is to support change but we want to see a constitution

that includes not only us, but everyone in Turkey and promotes equal rights for all. So we are committed to working to achieve a *no* result to prevent the current situation from becoming even worse. I am deeply concerned about what may happen over the next two months as the ruling AKP party has a majority after the June elections and might attempt to perpetuate this vicious circle of violence with more provocation, intimidation and violent attacks to ensure the vote passes.

“In this new reality saying the term ‘genocide’ is again being perceived as a crime, but I will not stop saying what I believe in.”

Q In May, you were physically attacked by AKP parliamentarians, and with this latest suspension, Armenians around the world are even more worried about your physical safety. Why is it so important for you to remain outspoken in defense of human rights given the risks?

A I have buried so many young bodies in the last two years. I am 45 years old and of course I don’t want to be attacked but when you see young people dying you don’t have the right to think about yourself so much. Sure, I am in danger but everyone is at risk in Turkey. I love my country and whenever I go abroad I miss my country and my land so much. So many young people look to me and ask what they

should do and whether they should leave and I can’t let them see hopelessness in my eyes. For all those reasons I will never stop saying what I believe in. I don’t know how to do anything else and I simply can’t give up or entertain defeat so I will continue to struggle against a fascist ideology.

Q What would you like to see the international community and the European Union do to send a strong message to the government of Turkey?

A They have to stop lending legitimacy to a dictatorial regime and hiding behind Angela Merkel’s refugee policy that allows Turkey to be a buffer zone while the rest of Europe turns a blind eye to human rights violations inside Turkey’s borders. Again, it is reminiscent of the genocide a century ago when everyone was aware of what was about to happen, in Europe and the U.S., but refused to stand up for democracy and allowed it to happen. Dealing with dictators whether in Syria, Egypt or Turkey will not make Europe more stable or America more safe. The world needs a Muslim majority democratic nation, and despite everything that has happened over the past two years Turkey is still a candidate. The West should do everything possible including implementing sanctions to support democratization in Turkey, but unfortunately Western leaders won’t even criticize President Erdoğan. Half a million people were killed in Syria and Turkey could be next.

Q What can Armenians in the diaspora do to support free speech and the rule of law in Turkey?

A There are millions of Armenians around the world with roots in Anatolia and just as they care for Armenia, they need to do the same for Turkey. Our land is Anatolia, for Western or Eastern Armenians, Kurds and others. This is our common land and we all need to care because it is still bleeding. I would say to them that we are close to achieving recognition and justice with regard to the Genocide in Turkey, and it is within reach if all those millions of Armenians support Anatolia as their own land. **A**



Garo Paylan addressing the Turkish Parliament on April 21, 2016 when he called for an investigation into the killing of Armenian members of the Parliament during the Armenian Genocide.



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Campaign for Change

Can proportional representation propel democratic governance?



On April 2, Armenia will hold parliamentary elections for the first time since voters endorsed constitutional reforms to transition the nation from a semi-presidential to a parliamentary political system. The two-year process will see the power of the

president considerably reduced while strengthening the role of the prime minister and the parliament. Elected for a single seven-year term, the president will perform a largely ceremonial role as head of state, while executive power will shift to the prime minister, who will be nominated by a parliamentary majority. Current President Serzh Sargsyan just-

fied the new political structure as a path towards a more accountable government and an increase of public influence on policymaking. But much of the Armenian population remains skeptical, believing the electoral changes were engineered to extend the president's hold on power beyond the end of his term. The forthcoming parliamentary elections will be a critical test of



the effectiveness of Armenia's constitutional reforms and will set the stage for the transfer of power when Sargsyan's term expires in 2018.

April's parliamentary elections could also be more unpredictable than expected. Under the revised constitution, the Armenian Parliament will now be elected based on the principle of proportional

representation. The number of seats that a party wins will be proportional to the amount of its support among voters. For instance, in a ten-member district if a party wins 50% of the vote, the party would be allotted five seats. Advocates of proportional representation argue the system tends to be more representative, reduces partisanship by promoting more

Thousands of Armenian citizens in Freedom Square in Yerevan during a rally in support of democratic reforms on February 22, 2013.

collegial cross-party decision-making, increases voter turnout, and boosts the representation of women and of marginalized groups in parliament. It is the preferred voting method among the

majority of European nations, and has been successfully adopted in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Critics of proportional representation contend, however, that it can also result in shaky coalition governments plagued by decision-making paralysis in a hung parliament, where no single party has a majority of seats. Israel is often cited as the model of what can go wrong. Successive governments in the Israeli Parliament, or Knesset, have often paid a steep price for forming

“The precondition for marginal parties to enter the parliament is to agree to playing a proxy role for any major party prior to the elections, which is what is actually taking place now in Armenia”

coalitions with radical minority partners who then wield a disproportionate amount of power, hampering the efforts of a prime minister seeking compromise and concessions—a precarious situation that has led to a mid-term collapse of the government and early elections.

Majority Rule

Could Armenia face such a scenario? On April 2 voters in Armenia will elect 101 members (reduced from 131) through a complicated mixed, or two-tiered, proportional system comprised of both a national list and 13 district lists of candidates. For the first time, four additional seats will be reserved for national minorities: Russians, Yezidis, Assyrians and Kurds. In order to form a stable majority government, a party or alliance must win 54% of the seats. If no party or alliance obtains a stable majority, six days are allotted to form a coalition government that reaches the majority threshold.

During the last parliamentary elections held in 2012, the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) won 44.78% of the vote in proportional districts. Compounded by growing public dissatisfaction with the government over the past five years, the party cannot hope to win a majority without a coalition partner. Accordingly, the RPA struck a deal with the oldest Armenian party, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, or Dashnaktsutyun. In exchange for its support, the Dashnaktsutyun were rewarded with three ministerial offices and three governorships, a disproportionate allocation of positions compared

to the limited number of its members in the parliament.

While it is expected that the Republican Party will win a majority, how the political structure will take shape and who will lead the party after 2018 is unclear. As Senior Carnegie Fellow Thomas De Waal has noted, the Parliamentary elections could be “a lot livelier than anticipated. The new constitutional change frees the opposition from a straitjacket in which it has been struggling for years: its

lack of a credible individual who could be its presidential candidate in 2018. Now, the opposition’s challenge is slightly less daunting: to build a proper party machine capable of taking on the ruling Republican Party in two years’ time.”

The main opposition parties currently comprise Prosperous Armenia, Armenian National Congress, Rule of Law party (RLP) and Zharangutyun (Heritage). In December three other opposition parties, Civil Contract, Bright Armenia and Republic, partnered in an alliance to jointly challenge the government in this spring’s parliamentary elections. According to their memorandum, the parties will strive for “a European model of the democratic rule-of-law and social state” in Armenia. Former Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian’s Hamakhmbum (Consolidation) Party together with the Third Republic Party and the Democratic Party of Armenia (HDK)—also both headed by veteran politicians—announced their own coalition, pledging to work toward “systemic changes in political and socioeconomic areas.” The new opposition bloc may also be joined by the Heritage Party.

Cooperation or Chaos?

Will Armenia’s system of proportional representation result in a more democratic system of governance marked by greater power-sharing between political parties? Or will the country suffer from a lack of unity that defines the Israeli Knesset? Neither scenario is likely in the short term according to political scientist Stepan Danielyan, who notes that despite the socio-economic conditions in Armenia and widespread popular

discontent, the governing party enjoys full control over local politics while the opposition remains weak, lacking the financial and human resources to consolidate their power. “The precondition for marginal parties to enter the parliament is to agree to playing a proxy role for any major party prior to the elections, which is what is actually taking place now in Armenia,” he told AGBU. “The struggle for power is happening within the governing parties, while marginal parties are simply observers.”

Following the constitutional amendments, the president will be weaker but many political observers have cautioned that the tradition of a single-party regime will remain in force as long as President Serzh Sargsyan is able to retain control over the party. “I do not see sound grounds for real change in 2017,” affirmed Heritage Party Member of Parliament and Executive Director of the International Center for Human Development, Tevan Poghosyan. “The functioning of the Armenian Parliament and politics generally depends not so much on the model of its formation, but the people who are in the Parliament. Are they going to implement their election programs? Are they going to take all the opportunities provided by the Rule of Procedure?”

In order to break with the past’s single party regime marred by allegations of abuse of administrative resources and electoral fraud, Poghosyan believes Armenia will have to wait until the 2022 elections, by which time he expects a generational change will positively influence Armenian politics. For now he is hopeful that the spring elections can at least sow the seeds of political development towards an effective power-sharing parliamentary model.

Proportional representation is not a guarantee of fair elections. It will likely take more than one election cycle to realize meaningful democratic change and accountability. However, regardless of the political motivations underpinning Armenia’s transition toward a parliamentary republic with proportional representation, the shift is an important potential step toward a future where different visions for the development of Armenia can compete in the political arena. In the long term, Armenian civil society—which, with the exception of a few concessions, won by protest, has spent the past 25 years largely as bystanders in the political process—will benefit. The path forward is gradually emerging for a strong civil society for whom expectations of effectively participating in the democratic process will only grow. ■



A Society of Single Men?

The worrying consequences of gender inequality in Armenia

By **DANIEL HALTON**

In the villages scattered throughout Armenia's rolling countryside, school teachers and mayors sounded the alarm several years ago. They were startled to see so few girls in their first grade classes compared with the more equal gender balance in the later grades. A closer look revealed that, as ultrasound or sonogram technology became more widely used throughout the country in the late 1990s, women were being increasingly pressured to have abortions when they discovered they were expecting a baby girl. By 2012, there were 115 boys born for every 100 girls, according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Armenia today has the third highest rate of sex-selective abortions in the world, behind only China and Azerbaijan.

At stake is the future of Armenia. With less than three million inhabitants, the country is already facing a demographic crisis due to a decline in the overall birthrate and continued migration. Approximately 7,200 sex-selective abortions were performed in the last five years alone. At that rate, within twenty years,

Armenia will become a society mainly of single men.

Anahit Sahakyan has studied the phenomenon of gender discrimination since 1997 in her capacity as the President of the Association of Women of Dilijan and as Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Sociology at Yerevan State University. She says the decrease in the number of young women will inevitably affect the country's so-called "marriage market," acting as an additional incentive for men to migrate and in turn increasing the number of mixed marriages with women from outside Armenia. "We already have a problem of preserving our identity as a small nation dispersed around the world," she says, "and that risks being further jeopardized when mixed marriages occur."

Recent efforts to raise awareness and educate families on the part of several women's health organizations and documentary filmmakers, greater supervision of medical institutions and calls for legislative changes, together with pressure from the international community have led to some positive developments. In

Armenia today has the third highest rate of sex-selective abortions in the world, behind only China and Azerbaijan.

2016 researchers observed a 1% decrease in the number of sex-selective abortions, reducing the birth ratio to an average 113 boys for every 100 girls.

To date the Armenian government has been slow to act, taking up to a decade to pass a law in August 2016 that outlaws sex-selective abortions. The legislation also requires that a woman seeking an abortion must attend a counseling session with her doctor and wait three days before undergoing the procedure.

Women's rights advocates, however, contend that the law will do little to curb sex-selective abortions and only increase the number of unsafe illegal procedures. For Lara Aharonian, co-founder of the Women's Resource Center in Yerevan, the misplaced law is a band-aid solution that focuses on the symptoms instead of tackling the root causes of gender inequality. "We need to break gender stereotypes," she says, "and teach children from kindergarten that girls are not less valuable in society but right now the government is not doing this."

Cultural Stereotypes

The pressure on women to undergo sex-selective abortion is rooted in traditional patriarchal values and ingrained cultural stereotypes and prejudices that are more pronounced in rural parts of the country. In the Tavush valley and the province of

Gegharkunik in Eastern Armenia, where the sex ratio runs as high as 130 boys for every 100 girls, the problem is compounded by poor socio-economic conditions. Traditional Armenian families expect their daughters to move in with their husband's family, while the eldest son assumes the role of the provider, passing on their name to the next generation and ensuring any property inheritance stays within the family. As more men are increasingly moving abroad for seasonal work, the favored male children become "the men of the house" at an early age, reinforcing the perception of boys as workers. A common refrain in the countryside is that "without a boy, the family is incomplete."

According to Professor Sahakyan, changing such deeply held cultural stereotypes is a complex challenge. "Any change in patriarchal and conservative society, which is aimed at changing cultural values, is seen as a crime against the whole culture," she says. "And the results won't be visible for a few generations."

Eradicating the phenomenon of sex-selective abortions will require both more global attention and government-scale solutions aimed at prevention to educate the population, support social workers, psychologists, medical professionals and increase engagement and accountability.

Collective efforts undertaken by several women's health and rights organizations within Armenia, including the Women's Resource Center and Women's Support Center in Yerevan, AGBU Hye Geen centers in Talin, Vanadzor, Yeghvard and Yerevan under the auspices of the Support for Women project and the Association of Women with University Education in Dilijan, together with research and assistance from the United Nations Population Fund Armenia, UNICEF, the World Bank, and World Vision among other international NGOs, are starting to shift cultural stereotypes that undervalue the role of women in Armenian society toward greater recognition of gender equality.

The challenge, adds Lara Aharonian, also represents an opportunity for the Armenian diaspora to play a valuable role by using its long history of advocacy, fundraising and communications skills to partner with civil society and women's groups to help empower young Armenian women. ■

A Promise Fulfilled

After a long and challenging road, The Promise is set to be released April 21

By **DANIEL HALTON**



When was the last time you were overcome with sorrow, empathy, rage or joy in a movie theater? If you cannot remember, you are not alone. Sweeping historical dramas

and epic struggles for survival such as *Dr. Zhivago* or *Schindler's List* that can at once provoke a fury of rage and move audiences to tears have become virtually extinct. Hollywood, meanwhile, has become the home of the blockbuster action movie, synonymous with superheroes and comic book villains, at the ex-



pense of serious drama and historical fiction.

In the current risk-averse climate, major Hollywood film studios and movie producers would not consider even looking at a script about a love triangle set against the backdrop of the Armenian Genocide. Further complicating

any distribution deal, studios with commercial interests in Turkey would balk at the risk of repercussions from the Turkish government. As a result of the tenacity of the late philanthropist Kirk Kerkorian however, and the dogged pursuit of producer and AGBU Central Board member Eric Esrailian, whom

The Promise is directed by Academy Award winner Terry George (Hotel Rwanda).

Kerkorian entrusted to realize his life-long dream, the Armenian story one hundred and two years in the making will finally be told as never before in a major motion picture.



Scheduled for release in theaters on April 21, 2017, *The Promise* is directed by Academy Award winner Terry George (*Hotel Rwanda*) and along with Esrailian, co-produced by renowned Hollywood mogul Mike Medavoy, Ralph Winter and William Horberg—all of whom were well aware of the extent to which the history of the Armenian Genocide has been suppressed by successive governments in Tur-

key. “Our job was to make a good movie that will engage and entertain everyone who sees it,” Medavoy tells AGBU. “The fact that it sends a powerful political message is even better. Frankly, it is high time those that seek to deny the truth admit what happened and move on from there.”

Shot in Spain, Portugal and Malta, the film features an outstanding international cast including Golden Globe

nominee Oscar Isaac (*Star Wars: The Force Awakens*), Academy Award winner Christian Bale (*The Fighter*), Charlotte Le Bon, Angela Sarafyan, Shohreh Aghdashloo, Jean Reno and Marwan Kenzari. The production team intentionally sought out a diverse ensemble of talent, including from the Middle East, but ultimately only succeeded in hiring two Turkish actors as many others refused, admitting they were afraid for their jobs and future careers.

The Turkish government continues to deny the massacre of nearly two million Armenians took place and has funded a very well-organized campaign to discredit attempts to recognize the genocide in film, dating to the 1930s when MGM was pressured into abandoning a planned adaptation of Frank Werfel’s novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, starring Clark Gable.

Musician and activist Serj Tankian, who contributed a modern rendition of the Armenian folk song, Sari Saroun Yar, to the soundtrack, served as the film’s executive music consultant, providing input from the very first draft of the script years ago to the final cut. “It’s been an honor to be an impartial ear and



Left: Musician and activist Serj Tankian served as the film’s executive music consultant. **Right:** Chris Cornell of the band Soundgarden composed the theme music for *The Promise*.



eye to the film,” Tankian told AGBU. “The best way to counter high budget disinformation campaigns by the Turkish government is to move people with the truth via the arts. I’ve been doing it for years with music and wanted to help do it through film somehow.”

While the film’s producers expected obstacles and resistance to *The Promise*, they likely may not have anticipated the lengths to which denialists would go even before the official release. The official trailer for the film on YouTube has already been the target of internet trolls, receiving three times as many dislikes as likes, suggesting a concerted PR campaign against the movie is already underway. On the Internet Movie Online Database (IMDb) website, 93,000 users supposedly reviewed the movie—including nearly 60,000 who gave it a one star rating—despite the fact *The Promise* has only been screened a handful of times to small audiences at Toronto’s International Film Festival (TIFF) and throughout the U.S. where the film garnered high praise from each group. As Mike Medavoy noted, “on the same day

Actor Christian Bale and Co-Producer Eric Esraïlian on the set of The Promise.



we showed the film at a venue with maybe 2,000 seats, 60,000 people said they didn’t like it. There’s nowhere close to that many seats in the theater. The fact that they were stupid enough to attack the movie before even seeing it is ridiculous.” Such transparent efforts at suppression if anything may only succeed in generating more attention and interest in ways that will actually benefit the production.

On the eve of its worldwide release,

Shot in Spain, Portugal and Malta, the film features an outstanding international cast.

there is hope *The Promise* will help people come to terms with the past, and remain vigilant in the future. “I hope people realize that genocide is a man made disease that still occurs today,” Serj Tankian remarked. “And unless we deal with it head-on and honestly, we will be continuing to spiral into chaos as humans on this planet.” ❧





AGBU Looks Toward the Future

AGBU establishes strategic partnerships to raise the caliber of its work in Armenia and the diaspora

With 110 years of successes and goodwill to its name, AGBU is now setting its sights on making the organization's next 110 years equally as fruitful. Gone are the days when tragedy and loss marked Armenian experiences. Gone are the days when isolation and insularity defined Armenian lives and gone are the days when scarcity and deprivation describe Armenia and its future. Shaking off these qualities once and for all, AGBU has begun establishing strategic partnerships with re-

nowned international organizations to expand its reach, bolster Armenian society and raise the caliber of its work in Armenia and the diaspora.

United States Agency for International Development and the Smithsonian Institution On October 21, the AGBU Armenian Virtual College (AVC) officially partnered with My Armenia—a program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by the Smithsonian Institu-

tion—to boost tourism and cultural preservation in Vayots Dzor by publishing an e-book on the region. The Vayots Dzor e-book—to be launched in spring 2017—will be part of AVC's multi-platform media product series and will cover the history and geography of the region with a range of information on local cuisine, architecture, archeology, festivals, events and trips.

“Tourism is one of the many dynamic developing sectors in Armenia. Committed to its mission of supporting Armenia's socio-economic progress, AGBU is actively

Left: AVC partnered with My Armenia to boost tourism and cultural preservation in Vayots Dzor by publishing an e-book on the region.

engaged in the development and promotion of innovative products, such as e-books and apps like Im Armenia, to increase awareness and promote Armenia as a unique touristic destination attractive for people of all age groups and diverse interests,” said AGBU Armenia president and AGBU Central Board member Vasken Yacoubian.

This is AGBU’s first partnership with the Smithsonian Institution, the world’s largest museum and research institution in the United States, attracting more than 30 million visitors per year. It also has an overseas presence in 130 countries, promoting cultural resilience, conserving biodiversity, and supporting cultural and natural heritage. The Smithsonian My Armenia program aims to enhance and increase cultural heritage tourism in regions outside of Yerevan through a combination of research, scholarship, support for artisan craft, capacity building, and a strong focus on fresh thinking for tourism development. Together Smithsonian and Armenian researchers work with local communities to identify and document their cultural expressions, including food, crafts, music, dance, and traditional knowledge. The information collected will then be used in the AGBU AVC e-book and other platforms to promote and share stories about Armenia’s cultural, historic, and artistic riches with visitors from around the world.

“Through USAID and Smithsonian joint efforts, the My Armenia program will aim to demonstrate the productive relationship that can occur between culture and economic development. Enhanced and diversified cultural heritage tourism developed by experts and the efforts of My Armenia, in close cooperation with key partners such as AGBU AVC, can drive sustainable economic growth in rural communities and support them in improving the sustainability of Armenian cultural heritage,” said Olivier Messmer, chief-of-party of the Smithsonian My Armenia program.

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

In an effort to bring Armenian history into comparative perspective, AGBU Lebanon partnered with the United Nations Office

of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to organize a seminar on the occasion of the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and the Prevention of this Crime on December 9. The seminar—entitled *The Crime of Genocide and the MENA Region: Lessons Learnt for Prevention or Protection*—was also held in collaboration with the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut (AUB), the Foundation for Human and Humanitarian Rights in Lebanon, and the Lepsiushaus Potsdam Research Center for Genocide Studies in Germany.

Bringing together experts for a day of panel discussions on the theme of geno-



The Smithsonian My Armenia program aims to enhance and increase cultural heritage tourism in regions outside of Yerevan.

cide in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), AGBU sought to illustrate the responsibility Armenians have—as the victims of the first genocide of the twentieth century—to those who have suffered subsequent genocides past and present. The day’s panel’s centered around three themes: MENA and Gross Human Rights Violations: Realities in the Past: Case Studies, Failures and Successes; The International Protection System: Its Contributions and Shortages to Prevent and Punish the Crime of Genocide; How to Prevent Genocides? and What Is Next for MENA: Final Discussion and Conclusion.

The seminar was instrumental for

AGBU in that the Armenian Genocide was not the sole focus, but rather served as the impetus to examine other genocides in a spirit of shared trauma. The speakers also focused on examples of institutional mechanisms in the prevention of genocide and contemporary acts of mass violence, including cases in present-day Iraq and Syria. One of the speakers, Dr. Nidal Jurdi, of the OHCHR and AUB, investigated why genocide continues to occur today despite international laws and conventions: “Still there are challenges in the MENA region because there are impunities; conventions are not incorporated into domestic law and there is a culture of impunity. I hope this will end soon, but we need to continue the fight.”

The mark of the success of the day came at the conclusion of the seminar, when participants developed recommendations for the prevention of genocide, including basing rules on the principle of justice; questioning, regulating, and holding politicians accountable for their actions; looking for the root cause of radicalization; developing alternatives, such as capacity-building awareness sessions to prevent radicalization; and further activation of the role of civil society. “The fact that there is no justice by the international system will affect the future of these cycles of violence. It boils down to the pressure that civil society puts on the government and bold individuals who make major decisions at their own risk. We must continue to document these crimes and these incitements to hatred as they happen. It is our role to question and continue to build pressure to send the message that it is the responsibility of the state and judiciary to be addressing these questions, creating laws to prevent these crimes and holding the people who commit them accountable,” said Lynn Maalouf, the Deputy Director of Research at Amnesty International. Through its partnerships and engagement in the wide community, AGBU plans to be at the forefront of these efforts.

The European Union and the Eurasia Partnership Foundation

The development of Armenia has always been at the heart of AGBU programs and activities. On December 15, the organization took a major step in ensuring the continuation of this growth by collaborating with the European Union Delegation to Armenia. The project—Armenian Civil Soci-



Above: Hoa-Binh Adjemian, head of section at the European Union's Delegation to Armenia.
Below: AGBU Lebanon partnered with the OHCHR to organize a seminar on the crime of genocide in the MENA region.



ety Organizations (CSO) 2.0—is financially supported by the European Union and designed to build the capacities of CSOs to respond to the needs of citizens in Armenia. AGBU will implement the project in collaboration with the Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF), a leading non-profit organization in Armenia that creates opportunities for civic and economic participation; builds capacity for evidence-based research to improve policy-making; and fosters a culture of corporate and community philanthropy.

Civil society—composed of organizations that fight for the interests of specific groups and act independently from the government—has been evolving

since Armenia's independence 25 years ago. CSOs have grown in number, yet their influence has not been significant in promoting democracy and making Armenian society more responsive to its citizens. To remedy this situation, in December 2016, the Armenian National Assembly enacted an amendment to an existing piece of national legislation to create a better environment for CSOs in Armenia. “This new piece of legislation will allow CSOs in Armenia to have tools for diversifying their funding sources and to become more self-sustainable, actively engaging volunteers, and representing interests of their member in courts. It is a critical time to utilize this new legaliza-

tion to provide Armenian CSOs with knowledge and skills to enhance their delivery capacity and better serve the needs of their members and beneficiaries. The partnership between the European Union and AGBU comes at a very fortuitous time where the objectives of both institutions have coincided in trying to support Armenia in its efforts to build a more democratic and prosperous society,” said Talar Kazanjian, executive director of AGBU Armenia.

Understanding the essential role civil society plays in Armenia's development, AGBU is finding ways to help support this sector's growth. In an effort to engage more substantially with civil society in the country, AGBU Armenia will take charge of this three-year, € 2.2 million program to implement an approach that aims to support the development of a wide variety of civil society organizations working on a range of issues: from education to healthcare, culture to sports, human rights to youth participation. In addition to supporting registered and active nonprofits, the project will also develop the skills of 200 people through tailor-made trainings to build a pool of local and international professionals.

One of the unique dimensions of Armenian Civil Society Organizations (CSO) 2.0 is the special focus it puts on forging ties between experts in the diaspora and local CSOs in order to facilitate an exchange of knowledge, know-how and expertise and encourage more active involvement of the diaspora in the inner-workings of civil society in Armenia. AGBU and its partner EPF will assess thematic needs of Armenian nonprofits and reach out to diaspora professionals working in education, culture, sports, chemistry, astronomy, public health or other areas to utilize professional expertise for community-based or national nonprofits in Armenia.

The overarching goal of the program is to increase trust toward civil society throughout Armenia and raise awareness of the connection between a strong civil society, a strong government and a strong country.

Through these influential partnerships and those to come, AGBU will continue to play an indispensable role in orienting the Armenian community toward a future brimming with promise and growth, inextricably linked with the dynamic world around it. ■

HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND FOR SYRIAN ARMENIANS

We need your help now more than ever

to continue to deliver emergency aid in war-torn Syria and to provide relief programs to those who face new hardships as they restart their lives abroad.

*Together we can help save lives
Please give generously*

This devastating war has killed close to 500,000 people, uprooted millions of families, and affected over 90,000 Armenians. Ancient cities like Aleppo are in ruins, and thousands of schools, businesses, hospitals, and churches have been destroyed.

Your donation will be put to work right away to offer **immediate relief to tens of thousands of Syrian Armenians.**

HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY

 **ONLINE**
Donate today at donate.agbu.org


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Mon - Fri
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AGBU
55 East 59th Street
New York, NY 10022

 **WIRE TRANSFER**
Email
agbuny@agbu.org
for instructions

HOW YOU CAN HELP

IN SYRIA

 **\$35** buys 1 winter coat for a child

 **\$600** provides milk to 2 children for 6 months

 **\$90** provides clean drinking water to 2 families for 1 month

 **\$1,500** covers 5 families' electricity bill for 1 year

 **\$360** feeds 1 family of 4 for 3 months

 **\$4,000+** funds an emergency heart operation

IN ARMENIA


 **\$5,000** helps cover the cost of tuition for 4 Syrian Armenians enrolled at university

YOUR IMPACT TO DATE

 Emergency aid provided to **nearly 5,000 people** on regular basis

 Financial support covers exorbitant electricity fees

 **40,000+** food baskets distributed to Syrian Armenian families in need

 AGBU schools remain open and full scholarships are offered to any Armenian student

 AGBU schools and centers coordinate distribution of food, clean drinking water, butane gas, generators, blankets, medicine and winter supplies

 Financial relief to widows and orphans of war

 AGBU centers provide shelter to families who have lost their homes

 The elderly, sick and wounded receive home deliveries

 Significant funds were allocated to rebuild homes damaged in the Nor Kyugh district of Aleppo



Celebrating 110 Years of AGBU

The 89th General Assembly in New York and the 110th Anniversary Celebrations in Yerevan honor a successful past and prepare for the road ahead

In 1906, two inspired individuals—Boghos Nubar and Yervant Aghaton—driven by a shared passion for their Armenian culture, a desire to advance socio-economic development in their homeland and an overwhelming need to address humanitarian issues created the Armenian General Benevolent Union. In 2016, 110 years of extraordinary successes were celebrated by AGBU chapters around the world and culminated in two major celebrations in New

York and Yerevan that will set the tone for the next 110 years to come.

The 110th anniversary of AGBU coincided with the year of the AGBU 89th General Assembly. Held in New York from October 27-29, the assembly welcomed hundreds of AGBU leaders, delegates, members, young professionals, donors and friends from Australia, Europe, North America, Russia and South America. The weekend was devoted to strengthening the Global Armenian

Nation; honoring Armenians who bring pride to the Armenian community through their outstanding achievements; reinforcing the link between Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and the diaspora; and acting as one nation.

A highlight of the weekend was the day-long series of talks and break-out sessions where participants discussed moving AGBU forward through empowerment: “AGBU can take three bold steps: it can realign its vision to address



current realities; secure human capital, financial resources and strong partnerships to ensure a sustainable future for the Global Armenian Nation; and rebalance the AGBU platform to bolster it,” said AGBU Central Board member Noubar Afeyan.

This approach was discussed in relation to AGBU’s four program pillars in four strategic breakout sessions: culture and identity; education; humanitarian relief; and socio-economic development in Armenia. The small groups enabled participants to develop and exchange proposals that will help AGBU leadership continue to explore these themes in shaping programs and policies in the future.

“Grassroots participation has always been at the heart of any successful AGBU initiative and the workshops provided a

key opportunity for enthusiastic brainstorming and candid discussions. Recognizing the importance of evolving with the needs of our Nation has been a successful driving force within AGBU’s leadership for over a century. Our current leadership continues on this path by providing a forum for exchange and growth. This meeting in New York serves as a launching pad for AGBU communities around the globe to continue organizing discussions and events building on similar themes,” explained AGBU Central Board Member Central Board Member and Chair of the 89th General Assembly events Ani Manoukian.

As part of its interest in the development of Armenia, AGBU hosted a panel discussion moderated by Lara Setrakian, the founder of News Deeply, on human

Clockwise: AGBU 89th General Assembly at the Harvard Club; AGBU 110th Anniversary Gala; Premiere of HOKIS; human rights panel at the Pratt House.

rights in Armenia. Organized in collaboration with Human Rights Watch, panelists included Rachel Denber, deputy director of the Europe and Central Asia Division of Human Rights Watch; Giorgi Gogia, South Caucasus director of Human Rights Watch; Sheila Paylan, legal officer at the United Nations Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals; and Serj Tankian, singer, songwriter and activist. The experts discussed topics ranging from the prevention of domestic violence and the assurance of basic health services to securing social and economic justice in the country.



Eric Esrailian

Eric Esrailian is the co-chief of the Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Division of Digestive Diseases at the David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and is the Lincy Foundation Chair in Clinical Gastroenterology. Dr. Esrailian is involved in strategic planning and engagement between UCLA and partners to promote health, education, social impact, and human rights. He is also on the board of several nonprofit organizations including the Hammer Museum, Fulfillment Fund, XPRIZE, and the Motion Picture & Television Fund (MPTF) Foundation Board of Governors. He is also the co-manager and producer for Survival Pictures' The Promise. Esrailian attended the University of California, Berkeley and graduated with a major in integrative biology and a minor in English. He subsequently graduated from the Loma Linda University School of Medicine. He ultimately completed his gastroenterology fellowship at UCLA where he earned a Master of Public Health.



Armen Sarkissian

Armen Sarkissian is the founding President of Eurasia House International in London, which fosters critical dialogue and cooperation among political and business leaders, and was the former Prime Minister of Armenia from 1996-1997. He also established the first Armenian Embassy in the West in London in 1991 and served as the Armenian Ambassador to the United Kingdom for multiple terms. Sarkissian is also Vice Chairman of the East West Institute and holds honorary and executive positions in numerous international organizations, including the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University; the Harris School of Public Policy Studies, University of Chicago; International Economic Alliance; and the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, among others. Additionally, he is the founder of several significant investment companies, which invest in major business projects, especially in the energy, high technology, telecom and real estate sectors.

Board (see inset). During the formal session of the General Assembly, the AGBU Central Board reaffirmed its commitment to the development of Armenia, its unwavering support for the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin and its gratitude to its many donors and members. President Setrakian followed in the AGBU tradition of addressing the AGBU membership with a speech that touched upon the historical triumphs of the organization over its 110 years and the strong, united future he envisions for it: "AGBU must engage in strategic alliances as a unifying entity; strengthen its volunteer network; reinforce collaboration with the Armenian Church; initiate relationships within the Armenian world and establish relationships with international multilateral institutions. To achieve all this, AGBU must rebalance its platform to support its overarching goals of both bolstering identity and creating prosperity for the Global Armenian Nation... Each and every one of us has to strive to be a Global Armenian. This is how AGBU views each of you."

The General Assembly came to a close with an address by His Holiness Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians, who asserted the inextricable link between AGBU and the Mother See and congratulated AGBU on its 110th anniversary. "It is gladdening for us to once more reflect with words of appreciation upon the work of AGBU that has been carried out for more than one century. Today it stays faithful to its values by continuing its important mission. AGBU has always been at the epicenter of the imperatives of our national life. It has appropriately met the needs of the times by supporting the sons and daughters of our nation by dedicating itself to the education of the new generation and by caring for the prosperity of our national life with its institutions established in all corners of the world." At the close of his speech, His Holiness Karekin II praised President Setrakian for his tremendous service and commitment to AGBU and to the Armenian Nation by bestowing him with the Knight of Holy Etchmiadzin Medal.

The success of the AGBU 89th General Assembly Weekend was celebrated with the 110th Anniversary Gala at the renowned Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall with over 500 guests from 24 countries. During the gala, AGBU recognized the achievements of five Armenians with awards

IN AN EFFORT TO showcase the remarkable talent of youth in Armenia, AGBU delegates and friends along with members of the wider Armenian community of New York gathered at New York City Center for the sold-out debut of the musical spectacular HOKIS. Under the artistic direction of French Armenian producer Patrick Malakian, HOKIS showcased the talents of over 70 young dancers, musicians, acrobats and technology students from two AGBU partner programs in Armenia: the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin & AGBU Nork Children's Center and the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies. Invited to New York especially for the performance, the students represented some of the most cutting-edge talent in digital and performing arts in Armenia,

pushing the limits of what is conventionally understood as Armenian art. "I wanted to put on an Armenian performance, that wasn't about genocide. With HOKIS, we strove to give proof of life within the Armenian community and the best proof of life we have is our children. These young artists are remarkable and it was time to shine a spotlight on their exceptional talent. It was time for their New York debut to showcase their undeniable abilities to an audience of Armenians and non-Armenians alike," said Malakian.

The following morning, AGBU 89th General Assembly took place at the Harvard Club of New York. During the delegate session of the AGBU Central Board of Directors, Eric Esrailian and Armen Sarkissian were elected to the Central

from the AGBU Central Board for their tremendous professional accomplishments, elevating pride in being Armenian as well as the collective profile of the Armenian people as a nation. Spot-lighted for his exceptional achievements, the evening paid tribute to George Avakian, one of the twentieth century's greatest American record producers, who over his 60-year career at Columbia Records and Warner Brothers Records, redefined the music industry. The evening also honored four individuals who embody Inspiring Global Armenians: designer Michael Aram; financier Nigol Koulaian; human rights lawyer Sheila Paylan; and singer and activist Serj Tankian.

The evening also paid surprise tribute to President Setrakian, who was saluted for his tireless commitment to the organization. A lifelong active member of AGBU, Setrakian has served the organization in various leadership positions, first in Lebanon, and then in the United States, where he settled in 1976. In 1977, he was elected to the Central Board of Directors, the youngest to be elected, and served as secretary and vice president at various points until his election to the presidency in 2002.

AGBU 110th Anniversary Gala at the renowned Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Ross Hall in New York.

“He is probably one of the most effective and objective and one of the strongest advocates and partners for the Global Armenian Nation: Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and the many diasporas that make up what we consider the diaspora, but we are really one entity. He has transformed the vision of AGBU to reflect the needs of that evolving global Armenian Nation,” said AGBU Central Board member Arda Haratunian

with a Partner Appreciation Day that fostered the sense of togetherness that permeates all aspects of the AGBU community. The days honored this century-old value by inviting partners—including the Deem Communications, Fruitful Armenia and the Luys Foundation, along with other pioneering organizations—for an evening of music and camaraderie.

“AGBU Armenia organized special events that highlighted the unique role AGBU plays in the country.”

in one of the two tribute videos debuted during the gala celebration in which AGBU Central Board members reflected on Setrakian as a friend and as a leader.

A LITTLE OVER A month later, the same spirit of celebration was taken up in Yerevan during AGBU Armenia's Week of 110th Anniversary Celebrations from December 1-6. In addition to events that mirrored those held in New York, including the Yerevan premiere of HOKIS and its own 110th Anniversary Gala, AGBU Armenia also organized special events that highlighted the unique role AGBU plays in the country.

In the spirit of collaboration, AGBU Armenia opened its series of events

A press conference followed the next day to announce the start of the 110th anniversary celebrations and the publication of the latest AGBU-Armenian Virtual College (AVC) e-book, *The Armenian General Benevolent Union: One Hundred Years of History*. The comprehensive, two-volume book—written by historians Raymond Kévorkian and Vahé Tachjian on the occasion of the centennial of AGBU in 2006—has recently been digitized and made available for free download on the AVC website and for Apple and Android devices. The book chronicles the foundations of AGBU, its post-war relief work, its rebuilding of Soviet Armenia, its efforts in the Middle East, its earthquake relief





and all other phases of AGBU history until 2006.

The press conference was followed by the announcement of the results of the #SNAP-SHOT110 photo exhibition which was launched by AGBU Armenia a month earlier. The photo exhibition, organized jointly with PicsArt, showed the geographic coverage of AGBU's social impact. Through PicsArt's editing tools the photographers used their creativity to outline AGBU's contribution to education; culture; community development; protection of national identity and heritage; and other sectors. The 20 best photos, selected by a jury of art experts and select members of AGBU and PicsArt, were exhibited at the AGBU Armenia Headquarters. Sandrine Demir of France won first prize; Saro Tatios of Armenia won second prize and Ruzan Sakanyan of Armenia won third prize.

The AGBU Armenia 110th Anniversary Gala was yet another opportunity to emphasize the new vision, initiatives and strategy that focus on the development of Armenia. Raising funds for AGBU cultural, educational, development and humanitarian programs, the event was attended by numerous dignitaries and AGBU board members as well as President Serzh Sargsyan, who commended the organization on its laudable work: "Exemplifying the true sense of benevolence, AGBU never expected thanks or personal gain in exchange for charity. Nor have they ever looked for reasons or causes to limit or divert their work, which has been so vital to us. Lastly, their readiness to work with authorities has been essential to improving advocacy."

This close relationship with the government manifested itself in a highlight of the series of events: a live discussion with Republic of Armenia Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan on his vision for Armenia's long-term social and economic development and the role of the Armenian diaspora. "Reshaping Armenia and engaging the diaspora through unity opens a channel for a constructive conversation, so that Armenians in Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and the diaspora may set, implement and evaluate our objectives together, bearing in mind our shared responsibility." The prime

Clockwise: AGBU Armenia opening press conference; Partner Appreciation Day; Yerevan premiere of HOKIS; opening of the Claudia Nazarian Medical Center; AGBU 110th Anniversary Gala in Yerevan.

minister also addressed the economic, judicial, social, scientific, educational and cultural spheres and answered questions from a worldwide audience from a live Twitter and Facebook feed that expanded the reach of the event.

The Yerevan premiere of HOKIS also brought together Armenia and the diaspora and was a testament to the vitality of Armenian arts and the importance of encouraging the creative potential of Armenian youth. The students of the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies and the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin & AGBU Nork Children's Center once again took the stage for an encore performance that showcased a kind of talent that assured the Armenian people that their culture would prosper artistically well into the future. "The creative team managed to delicately combine and juxta-

try of Defense to talk with servicemen undergoing treatment and test the newly received medical equipment made possible by AGBU, including mobile recovery beds and x-ray machines that enable more efficient medical care. As part of the visit, Setrakian and Yacoubian also met with Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia Vigen Sargsyan, who emphasized that AGBU has been one of the most important partners of the Ministry of Defense.

Healthcare took center stage during AGBU Armenia's final event: the opening of the Claudia Nazarian Medical Center at the AGBU Vahe Karapetian Center. This new health facility—part of the AGBU Syrian Armenian Relief Program—offers Syrian Armenians free access to medical care, including gynecological, cardiologic, ophthalmological and pediatric services. The opening also served as an opportunity



Armenian Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan participates in a live discussion on his vision for the diaspora's role in Armenia's development.

pose the old and the new, the national and the universal. HOKIS involves everything AGBU has been involved in throughout its 110 years of service to the Armenian Nation," said Tamar Hovhannisyan, writer and gallery owner, who attended the acclaimed performance.

From the artistic to the humanitarian, AGBU Armenia's series of events also took a look at the results of the HelpArtsakh campaign. After the Four-Day War in April, AGBU launched the campaign and has since raised over \$325,000 through individual donations and special allocations from the AGBU Central Board for the wounded and families of fallen soldiers. As part of the events, President Setrakian and AGBU Armenia President Vasken Yacoubian visited the Central Military Hospital of the Minis-

try to recognize seven Syrian Armenian doctors who have volunteered their services for three years and will continue to work in the new health facility, improving the lives of the thousands of Syrian Armenians who have found refuge in Armenia.

THE AGBU 110TH Anniversary series of events in New York and Yerevan reflected a consistent focus on the organization's original mission, while adeptly evolving as needed to pursue new strategic initiatives and partnerships to achieve that mission. The common thread has been perseverance and an unwavering spirit, remaining true to the core values established in 1906. As AGBU enters a new period, these values will continue to lead the way forward. ■



LAURE MARCHAND GUILLAUME PERRIER

HRANT DINK

AGBU
WebTalks



ISRAEL CHARNY
PSYCHOLOGY OF DENIAL

AGBU
WebTalks

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Vahé Tachjian
AGBU WebTalks Armenia 1922-1937

AGBU
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Raymond Kevorkian
The Events of April 24, 1915

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ZULAL FOLK TRIO
ARMENIAN WOMEN: VOICES THROUGH SONG

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SAHAN ARZRUNI
ARMENIAN INFLUENCE ON THE MUSIC OF ALAN HOVHANNES

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NEERY MELKONIAN
ARMENITY: ARMENIA AT THE 2015 VENICE BIENNALE

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BILGIN AYATA
A CHANCE FOR RECONCILIATION IN DIYARBAKIR

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AGBU WebTalks

Expanding education on Armenian history and culture with videos by dynamic thinkers

By **NATALIE GABRELIAN**

Today's generation of students is increasingly learning and communicating online, through social media and with mobile app technology in ways that have virtually eliminated the need to set foot in a library. The unprecedented growth of technological development has propelled not only the ease in which people can now access information, but its global reach. For an Armenian diaspora struggling to preserve its cultural heritage amidst a wave of globalization, the technology revolution represents a lifeline, a critical opportunity to rescue a largely forgotten history, rediscover ancient roots, reclaim a rich heritage and expand its sphere of influence.

AGBU is committed to enhancing education through innovation, creating innovative multimedia platforms that reach new audiences as it realigns its strategic priorities in the digital age. Among several new initiatives to expand its online presence and impact, AGBU recently launched its WebTalks online video series, an easily accessible tool that provides a clearinghouse of knowledge from influential thinkers around the world on a wide range of Armenian topics that encourages audiences to learn more about—and engage with—Armenia's rich history and culture.

"Every generation has its own approach to dealing with questions of identity and community. This multigenerational sharing and learning platform focuses on access, dissemination and preservation of the knowledge and insight of scholars, intellectuals, artists and many others on topics pertaining to the Armenian reality. The curated content allows individuals to navigate and explore their Armenianness through different perspectives shared by leading experts and opinion makers," says Lena Sarkissian, AGBU Central Board member, co-liaison to the Alternative Education Department, and director of program development at the Zoryan Institute's International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights.

With the increasing popularity of online seminars, podcasts and other digital learning resources, AGBU WebTalks is part of a broader global trend toward more accessible online education. Whether it is academic instruction from leading universities such as MIT OpenCourseWare, insights from industry leaders on Ted.com, or lifestyle advice with Oprah's Master Class, audiences are increasingly relying on digital technology to expand their horizons. AGBU WebTalks is intended for a general audience; its format is conversational and designed to engage the novice yet still interest the expert. The video segments range from two to eight minutes in length and have been broadcast in a variety of languages, including English, Armenian and French.

As an invaluable repository of knowledge and reliable information, the online video series is not only devoted to providing Armenians with an archive of their history, but also promoting

Armenian subjects to be used in non-Armenian universities and schools. AGBU encourages professors of art, architecture, history and linguistics to incorporate the Armenian story into their syllabi, providing a new platform to integrate Armenian history and culture in classrooms around the world.

Professor Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, Darakjian Jafarian Chair in Armenian History, recently sat down with AGBU for a soon-to-be-released series of videos examining the role of Armenians in New Julfa. "AGBU's Webtalks are very insightful," she says. "I have shown a number of the videos in my class at Tufts University."

Among the broad range of inspired thinkers AGBU WebTalks has featured to date, renowned British civil rights barrister and author Geoffrey Robertson discusses the subject of Free Speech vs Genocide Denial Laws; late art historian and critic Neery Melkonian examined the role of art in reflecting identity with an exclusive tour of the contemporary modern Armenian art exhibitions held at the 2015 Venice Biennale; and French journalists and authors Laure Marchand and Guillaume Perrier reflect on the life and legacy of courageous murdered Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, whom they befriended while working as foreign correspondents in Turkey.

"The WebTalks series provides a unique repository of our distinguished minds as well as a living archive of our community activities. It is all about making connections—to knowledge, to leading experts, to one's history, to one's culture, to one's identity, to being Armenian. In so doing AGBU is helping forge the future of the Armenian world," adds Sarkissian.

Stay Tuned

Upcoming WebTalks to watch for include a look at the various phases of Armenian history from ancient to modern times, Armenia along the Silk Road, the life of pioneering woman writer Zabel Yessayan, the contribution of Armenians in Syria, ancient Armenian architecture, the Armenians of New Julfa and the Western Armenian language.

AGBU WebTalks is part of a larger movement to enhance Armenian education with groundbreaking technology. AGBU Education Innovation transforms learning by harnessing new technologies to excite and encourage students of all ages to explore history, embrace language and discover identity in new ways. Having identified a gap in quality Armenian e-products, AGBU is actively working with experts, institutions and organizations to make innovative educational resources readily available to all. With new apps, e-books, travel tools, online language courses, AGBU WebTalks and more, the evolving landscape of Armenian education has never looked so promising. **■**

NIGOL AND ELEONORE KOULAJIAN

Bringing Peace and Clarity to the World

Nigol and Eleonore Koulajian have built their lives based on the mental, physical and spiritual benefits of yoga and meditation. Drawn to the personal transformations that have occurred by making yoga and meditation part of their lives, the Koulajians have also been guided by an essential tenet of their practice: bringing greater peace and clarity to the world through the development of the individual. Through their NOK Foundation, they are contributing to spreading this philosophy with generous donations to AGBU, helping to develop individuals in Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and across the diaspora in the process.

Nigol and Eleonore came to Eastern religions and philosophy from two unlikely paths. Nigol was born into the Armenian community of Beirut in 1967 and came to the United States at the age of sixteen. After earning his BS in electrical engineering from Notre Dame University and his MBA in finance from Columbia Business School, he embarked on a career in finance that ultimately led him to establish his own quantitative investment firm in New York, Quest Partners LLC, where he currently serves as chief investment officer.

Eleonore (née Mangin) was born in London and lived in Geneva and Paris, before moving to New York to continue her career in international development at the United Nations. Working as a consultant with non-governmental organizations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, she saw firsthand the importance of a grassroots approach to development and the great social impact of investing in individuals: “I was looking to help people first and foremost and was frustrated that, at a large organization like the UN, it was difficult to see the results of action. I slowly began to see that so much change hap-

pens internally and decided to devote my efforts to teaching yoga and meditation to serve people at a deeper, more personal and transformative level.”

To this end, the Koulajians founded the NOK Foundation in 2002 to cultivate the study of Eastern religions, philosophies and yoga. A principal aspect of these practices is to promote ethics and values as a self-sufficient means to quiet and purify the mind and bring integration, creativity and efficiency to the individual and to the society

at large. The foundation also seeks to encourage the pursuit of self-inquiry and meditation to achieve these goals.

The couple sees their donation to AGBU as a way of furthering their foundation’s mission and showing gratitude for their successes all the while strengthening the Armenian community—in part for their two sons, Theodore, age six, and Soham, age four. “It has impressed me the way AGBU supports Armenian culture and traditions, which is exceptionally important in the diaspora. The transparency and efficiency of the organization as well as its focus on the development of Armenians the world over enables it to bring about real social change in the Armenian community—starting at the individual level,” says Nigol.

The Koulajians’ donation allows AGBU to expand its general programs around the world—from internship programs and summer camps to young professionals groups and sports teams. These activities—big and small—all touch the lives of each individual participant, helping to bring purpose, clarity and peace to their lives. For the Koulajians, the benefits of the integration of the Armenian community as modeled by AGBU is an inestimable wealth that they would like to see at large throughout all cultures. ■





DIKRAN AND HAIGANOUSH DIRADOURIAN & IRA AND LILLIAN DORIAN

Over a Century of Commitment to Education

The Diradourian family can trace their commitment to education all the way back to the late nineteenth century. As a young boy, the patriarch of the family—Dikran Diradourian—was identified as one of the brightest students in his small Anatolian town of Agn (modern-day Kemaliye) and was sent to study at the prestigious Euphrates College in 1895 at the age of eleven. Euphrates College was an American missionary school in the city of Kharpert where young Dikran thrived and received a scholarship to study theology. Restless after graduating during a period of political uncertainty in the Ottoman Empire, Dikran followed the advice of his American teachers and set off to continue his education in the United States.

In 1908, the 23-year-old arrived at the Hartford Theological Seminary in Connecticut with a dollar and a half in his pocket. Alone in the United States and without the means to pay for his education, it was only through a scholarship that Dikran was able to continue training to become an ordained minister in the Protestant tradition of his father and grandfather. But the course of his life soon shifted.

In 1912, Dikran married Haiganoush Tufenkjian, another Euphrates College graduate who had also left in search of a better life

in the United States. Born in Kharpert in 1886, Haiganoush—an example of academic success in her own right—graduated from Euphrates College in 1906 and worked as a teacher before she and her family arrived in New York on the Fourth of July 1907.

Together the young couple moved to New Jersey where Dikran—who had had doubts about a future in the priesthood—found a job as an accountant at the A & M Karagheusian Rug Mill, a company owned by brothers Arshag and Mihran Karagheusian, who had, at the mill's peak in the 1930s, employed half of the town of Freehold, New Jersey. Dikran spent his entire career with A & M Karagheusian, and through his ingenuity, worked his way up the ranks to become the manager of the mill. "I remember my father telling me that, as a child, his house would always be filled with people. As Armenian immigrants arrived in the region, they would always land at the Diradourian household, which was like a revolving door. I think they were so welcoming because my grandparents could understand what the new arrivals had been through and wanted to help however they could," said Karen Dorian, Dikran and Haiganoush's granddaughter.

Dikran was introduced to AGBU through Arshag Karagheusian, who—along with being Dikran's boss—was also the president of AGBU from 1942 until 1953. During Karagheusian's

presidency, Dikran served as secretary of the AGBU Central Board of Directors, during which time he and the organization worked to undertake an extensive overhaul of AGBU schools in the Near East, laying the groundwork for the pillars of academic excellence the schools would become in the 1960s. When Dikran passed away in 1954, Haiganoush established an AGBU endowment in his honor to provide scholarships to needy Armenian students.

The family's dedication to education and AGBU, however, long outlived Dikran and Haiganoush, who passed away in 1977. Their three children, Richard, Ira and Margaret—who all went by the name Dorian—continued their parents' spirit of generosity and community involvement. But it was Ira and his wife Lillian who would enable the Dikran A. and Haiganoush Diradourian Scholarship Fund to expand and come to the aid of even more students for many generations to come.

Ira—born in 1917—inherited his parents' love of learning, graduating from Princeton University in 1937 and Harvard Law School in 1940. His stellar academic pedigree made him essential during World War II, during which time he worked with the United States Judge Advocate General (JAG) Department in India and retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Air Force Reserves in 1976. After returning to the United States after the war, he practiced law in New Jersey, including before the State

Supreme Court. Besides law, he was also drawn to politics and was active in local government, serving as the mayor of his hometown—Cranford, New Jersey—in 1959 and 1960 as well as on the Cranford Township Committee for many years.

His wife, Lillian Dorian (née Dishian), was no less impressive in her educational and professional accomplishments. Attending William Paterson University at a time when few women pursued higher education, Lillian became a sales promotion director for the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) in New York in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and in addition to raising her late daughter Carol, was a writer of humorous verse that appeared in numerous publications, including *Family Circle*, *The New York Times* and *The Saturday Evening Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*. “When cleaning out the attic, one thing I’ve learned is this: to figure half the time for work, the rest to reminisce,” she wrote in a 1973 issue of *Good Housekeeping* in her classic wry tone.

When Lillian passed away in January 2016, she bequeathed a significant portion of her estate to the Dikran A. and Haiganoush Diradourian Scholarship Fund, which provides students with great potential with the support they need to succeed in their education—much in the same way her father-in-law Dikran was able to do more than a century ago thanks to a couple of life-altering scholarships of his own. ■

Y. GLADYS BARSAMIAN

A Trailblazer Ahead of Her Time

Y. Gladys Barsamian was a champion of women's rights and a defender of troubled children—with a famously sharp sense of humor. Whenever anyone asked her what her first initial stood for, the venerable judge would

smile slyly and snap, “Your Honor,” with a dry wit beloved to everyone who knew her. In reality, the “Y” stood for Yerchanig—the Armenian word for “glad,” which she later turned into the name she went by professionally: Gladys. It was a name that not only connected her to her Armenian heritage, but would come to define her outlook on life all throughout her long, successful career.

Gladys was born in Detroit in 1931 and was the oldest of five daughters born to newly arrived immigrants from Yozgat in rural Anatolia. Strong-willed and determined even as a child, Gladys excelled in her studies and developed an interest in law, thanks to her strong belief in defending those who could not defend themselves.

After graduating from Wayne State University in Michigan with a law degree and passing the Michigan bar in 1957, Gladys spent 17 years in private practice in Detroit as an immigration attorney, often doing pro bono work for new Americans like her own family. When a seat opened on the Wayne County Probate Bench in 1975, she decided to run for the

post, dismissing all those who told her that her last name and her gender would work against her. She ultimately won the election and continued helping the disadvantaged through her work in the juvenile division. “In the beginning, when she would go to court,” her dear

friend Rose Berberian said, “people would often mistake her for a secretary. She was one of only six women in her graduating law class at a time when it was still uncommon to see women judges and attorneys in court.” Gladys also encountered opposition in her greater Detroit community, especially from other women who questioned her decision to pursue a high-powered career rather than a domestic life as a wife and mother.

But Gladys had a strong sense of self and was always confident in her choices, which had a major impact on the world around her. As the first woman elected to the probate court, she ruled on many cases that received national attention, including a landmark decision that determined the rights of surrogate mothers—the first of its kind in the United States. During her tenure on the bench, she

helped develop a countywide juvenile justice plan that included an intensive probation program, a recidivism predictor, a youth assistance program and formed a citizens' advisory committee, leaving an indelible mark on the justice system in Michigan.



GARO DJEGHELIAN

An Eternal Flame for the AGBU Armenian Youth Association

The epitome of enthusiasm, hard work, good humor and optimism, Garo Djeghelian was a pillar of AGBU and the Armenian Youth Association (AYA) community in Lebanon and made a lasting impact that will continue to shape the lives of young Armenians around the world.

His greatest impact came through AYA. In the 1930s, upon the request of Catholicos Papken I of the Holy See of Cilicia, AGBU took charge of the AYA. Founded as the Near East Relief's Youth League, the AYA promoted national cohesion through cultural, sports, scouting and social activities and flourished throughout the Middle East, producing men and women who would proudly go on to lead Armenian communities worldwide later in life.

Garo—born in Lebanon in 1953—was one of these leaders and the AYA became his second family. As an only child growing up in difficult circumstances, the AYA—as well as the AGBU Yervant Demirdjian Elementary School and the AGBU Hovagimian-Manoogian Secondary School—gave Garo



countless lifelong friends who became the siblings he never had. As an AYA scout and supporter of the AYA theater and choral groups, Garo brought his infectious joy and sense of perseverance to everyone around him.

In 1973, Garo joined the ranks of AYA and diligently served the organization in various roles, including as a member of the AYA Antelias Executive Committee, the chair of the AGBU-AYA Central Committee and the vice chair of the AGBU Lebanon District Committee. During his 43 years at the helm of the organization, he was sometimes jokingly referred to as the unofficial Minister of Sports because of his active involvement in AYA sports teams and his close ties to major sports leagues in Lebanon.

During the 1970s and 1980s, when civil war ravaged Lebanon and tested the resolve of the few valiant leaders who remained in the country, Garo reached out to all sides of the conflict—with a great deal of personal charm—to help people caught in the power struggle among warring factions. Once the war came to an end, Garo was instrumental in the negotiations to regain the property of the former Ahramjian School, renovating it and turning it into an active Armenian community center in the heart of Bourj Hammoud, a densely populated Armenian district.

His exceptional character and humility, in addition to his clear vision for the future, made a profound impression on his friends and colleagues. When AGBU took the initiative to purchase land in the Lori region of Armenia to establish a scout campsite and bring AYA scouts in the diaspora closer to Armenia and to one other, Garo was one of its most enthusiastic supporters. The project soon grew into the AGBU Antranik Scout Camp. Since 2008, the camp—the first of its kind in Armenia—has welcomed hundreds of young Armenians each year—from Uruguay to Iraq, from the United States to the United Arab Emirates—for a summer of adventure and friendship.

In his devotion to the Armenian community, Garo and his wife Seta set an excellent example for their two children, Hagop and Ani, who followed in his footsteps both into the AYA and into the family business. In 1959, Garo's father, Karnig, started a textile factory in Bourj Hammoud, and in 1973, Garo transformed it into Anitex, one of the major manufacturers and distributors of school and company uniforms in the Middle East—another mark of his determination and resourcefulness.

When Garo unexpectedly passed away in March 2016, his family established an AGBU endowment in his memory. "Creating the Garo Djeghelian Endowment Fund for AYA is like an eternal flame, which for us is more than an honor and privilege since it will forever keep my father's name and legacy alive in the Armenian community," said his son, Hagop, a member of the AGBU-AYA Central Committee. The Garo Djeghelian Endowment Fund will now enable AYA to host cultural activities, organize events and undertake projects that will create pillars of the Armenian community just like Garo. ■

When Gladys retired in 1993, she stayed active in her community by serving on several boards that dealt with the issues that concerned her most, including Downtown YMCA, Michigan Committee on Juvenile Justice, Women Lawyers Association of Michigan, Boys and Girls Club of Southeastern Michigan as well as the boards of numerous Armenian organizations, such as St. John's Armenian Church, where she taught Sunday School for many years. She was also a founding member of the International Women's Forum of Michigan, a group that advances leadership across careers, cultures and continents by connecting the world's most preeminent women of significant and diverse achievement.

Gladys had a special place in her heart for the advancement of the Armenian community, devoting her time to mentoring Armenian men and women running to be judges and serving on the AGBU Alex & Marie Manoogian School Board to ensure an excellent education for young Armenians in Michigan. When she passed away in January 2016, she had arranged to continue to support the development of the Armenian community with a major donation to AGBU. She believed most ardently in the work of the AGBU Senior Dining Centers in the Yerevan suburbs of Arapkir, Malatya and Nork, which provide nutritious meals to over 600 senior citizens each day. These centers are a lifeline for retired professionals who often must rely on minimal state pensions to cover their expenses.

After an entire career helping those who needed it most, Gladys is continuing her legacy of goodwill by improving the lives of others at the AGBU Senior Dining Centers in Armenia. ■

AGBU Partnerships



FRANKFURT, GERMANY

HAIK Spearheads Career Development Symposium for German Armenian Students and Professionals

On September 24, AGBU HAIK spearheaded its first symposium for students and young professionals at Goethe University in Frankfurt, entitled Key Success Factors for Students and Young Professionals in German-speaking Regions. The symposium gave participants the opportunity to attend lectures and presentations by successful business leaders and experts in the fields of politics, economics, medicine, science and art. The symposium was structured around three panels: Key Features for Successful Leaders, Challenges for Targeted Career Planning and Economic Opportunities in Armenia. It also offered participants the chance to broaden their professional network and gain insight into professional success stories. A portion of the proceeds from the event went to the AGBU Humanitarian Emergency Relief Fund for Nagorno-Karabakh.

BARCELONA, SPAIN

Asociación Cultural Armenia de Barcelona (ACAB) Hosts Book Launch for the Catalan Translation of *The 40 Days of Musa Dagh*

On October 8, AGBU partner Asociación Cultural Armenia de Barcelona (ACAB) hosted a book launch for the Catalan translation of *The 40 Days of Musa Dagh*, a 1933 novel by Franz Werfel, and its translator Ramon Monton. *The 40 Days of Musa Dagh* tells the story, based on real events, of the Armenian community of Musa Dagh that resists deportation during the Armenian Genocide. The event began with an introduction by María Ohanesian, professor at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, who emphasized the literary and historical importance of the translation of the book into Catalan. The evening continued with a talk by Monton, who explained the process of translating the book. In 2015, Monton received a prize from the city of Barcelona for the best translation of the year.



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Second Session	July 15 - July 29
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AGBU Summer Programs



ANDES, NEW YORK

Camp Nubar

This year, Camp Nubar, located in the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York, welcomed over 380 campers and counselors from Armenia, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Monaco, Thailand, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and across the United States for its fifty-third season. While campers return year after year to enjoy camp activities such as Armenian dance, ceramics, sports, swimming, tennis, horseback riding, hiking, and waterskiing, Camp Nubar continues to introduce new activities based on the interests of its campers. In 2016, the camp added a new music activity where campers learned to play the ukulele and dumbek. This summer, campers also participated in a workshop and performance led by international artists from the Argentina-based New Docta Festival and Foundation.

“I can only imagine how proud Camp Nubar’s great founders would be if they saw the camp’s evolution over the past 53 years,” said Camp Nubar director Jennifer Omartian. “Thanks to their foresight, today’s campers share in many of the same pastimes as the earliest campers. It amazes me that the Camp Nubar community successfully preserves so many traditions while embracing the changing interests of today’s Armenian youth. 2016 was a wonderful year for Camp Nubar, and the staff is excited for an even better 2017!”



BEIRUT, LEBANON

AGBU AYA Antranik Antelias and Sevan Scouts

The AGBU-AYA Antranik Antelias and Antranik Sevan Scouts in Lebanon held their annual camping season, gathering more than 600 members for 15 days of scout activities. The season concluded with the traditional campfire ceremony at the Qornayel and Chweit campsites. Scout leadership, butterflies, brownies, cubs, boy scouts, girl scouts, caravelles and rovers all prepared for the campfire ceremony programs, which were composed of dances, songs, poetry recitations and skits. The ceremonies were attended by the AGBU-AYA Central Committee chairman and members, overseas guests, chairmen and members of the executive committees, representatives of various AYA committees and a large number of parents and friends.



PLOVDIV, BULGARIA

Camp HayLer

Camp HayLer celebrated a fifth summer full of exciting programs for the Bulgarian Armenian community. The camp was attended by 21 children from Burgas, Pazardjik, Plovdiv and Varna, ages three to fifteen, who came together in the middle of the picturesque Rhodope Mountains.

In between sports competitions, Armenian Virtual College (AVC) classes, religion classes and a carnival night organized by teenage students at the AGBU Plovdiv Saturday School, the campers also met important leaders of the Armenian community of Bulgaria, including AGBU Plovdiv chapter chair Rupen Chavushian; His Reverence Archimandrite Isahak Boghosyan, the archbishop of the Armenian Diocese of Bulgaria; scout leader Melik Dzhamdzhiyan, who taught the campers outdoor survival skills; dancer Lilit Hayrapetyan, who taught the campers to dance the kochari; and director Simon Hachmanyan, who helped the campers put on an Armenian children's play.

SOFIA, BULGARIA

HayLer International Summer Youth Camp

At the HayLer International Summer Youth Camp, thirty-eight campers, ages seven to seventeen, from Sofia, Russe and Vienna as well as three Armenian children originally from Syria—now living in Austria—took part in the fifth season of the summer camp in central Bulgaria. The campers learned Armenian songs and dances and welcomed special guests, including Gevorg Garibdjianian, councilor at the Armenian Embassy in Sofia; Bedros Papazian, AGBU Sofia Chamber Orchestra director; and Archimandrite Isahak Boghosyan, who blessed all the children. Campers were also treated to a Skype conversation with AVC teacher Arpineh Tavakalian, who taught them about Armenian festivals.

“Having grown up as an Armenian in America and the United Kingdom, it's a very special experience to have been able to be a part of the HayLer International Summer Youth Camp. It's wonderful to see smiling children keeping Armenian traditions alive in these wonderful surroundings here in the forests of Gabrovo. I've enjoyed every minute of it and I hope to return again next year,” said photographer Raffi Youredjian, a special guest at this year's session.



PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

Pasadena Scout Program

In 2016, AGBU Pasadena-Glendale Annual Scout Summer Camp took place at Camp Arev in Frazier Park, California where 60 scouts participated in outdoor activities, merit badge work and advancements as well as prepared for the Parent Day and Award Ceremony during which 150 parents and family members joined the scouts for a traditional kebab lunch and a sunset award ceremony that recognized scouts for their achievements. Y. Ara Bourian was recognized with his Eagle Award for his efforts in renovating the parking facility and repainting the handrails at the Armenian Brotherhood Bible Church and K. Loreni Yeterian received the Gold Award for her work collecting toys, hygienic supplies and crafts for the Trchoonian Orphanage in Armenia with AGBU Vatche & Tamar Manoukian High School's 11th grade class and created a tradition of carrying out these donations for years to come.



AGBU Summer Programs



BEIRUT, LEBANON

Demirdjian Summer Day Camp

This year, the AGBU Demirdjian Center Summer Camp set a record, bringing together more than 190 campers both from Lebanon and overseas. Along with its sports, arts and cultural programs and weekly educational fieldtrips, this year also marked the introduction of new activities, such as artistic gymnastics, “healthy mind and healthy body,” app development and a new, special program for campers ages 13 and over.

AGBU Lebanon wrapped up the Demirdjian Center Summer Day Camp with its end-of-season fiesta during which the students performed famous folk songs and dances dedicated to this year’s theme: Tribute to Lebanon. During the fiesta, the campers also celebrated the **110th anniversary** of AGBU, the 85th anniversary of AGBU-AYA and the 20th anniversary of the AGBU Demirdjian Center, directing all of the proceeds from the celebration to the AGBU Emergency Humanitarian Relief Fund for Syrian Armenians.

Community awareness has always been integral to the mission of the AGBU Demirdjian Center Summer Day Camp. This year, campers fundraised through bake sales for different charitable organizations (e.g. Children’s Cancer Center, Birds’ Nest, Zvartnots Center for the Mentally Ill, etc.) and volunteered at the Faqra Club Race organized by the Beirut Marathon Association to benefit MySchoolPulse, an organization that brings schools to hospitals in Lebanon for children undergoing treatment for life-threatening illnesses.

“If school teaches science, history and languages, then the AGBU Demirdjian Summer Day Camp introduces the secrets of fun, lifetime friendships, cooperation, group work, culture, art and Armenian identity,” said Ararat Djeredjian, coordinator and dance instructor at the AGBU Demirdjian Summer Day Camp.

YEREVAN, ARMENIA

Musical Armenia Program

For the past five years, the Musical Armenia Program (MAP) has been uniting talented musicians and music lovers in Yerevan and fostering the Armenian musical tradition in participants from various backgrounds. This year, 10 participants from Argentina, the Netherlands, Russia, Sri Lanka, Syria, and the United States traveled to Armenia and were brought closer to the artistic heritage of the Armenian people.

The three-week program included a diverse array of activities for these high-caliber musicians. Musically, participants perfected their craft through one-on-one lessons with renowned professors from the Komitas State Music Conservatory, studied the repertoire of Armenian music on their own instruments and gave a final performance at the AGBU Yerevan Hall during the Gala Concert at the end of the program. Each year, MAP offers 14 lectures on the ancient Armenian notational system [khaz] in addition to Armenian musical history from medieval to contemporary. In addition to the final Gala Concert, participants performed regularly at various local venues and festivals, attended several auditions, and participated in master classes by renowned musicians.

Renowned Sri Lankan violinist Dinesh Subasinghe was part of the 2016 MAP cohort and gained a new appreciation for Armenian music: “MAP is an enormous and practical program, because if you want to learn the music, you have to learn the culture and history of the country. I was lucky to have such exceptional teachers, who cared about us and gave us affection. I really loved this program and want Armenian music to develop, because Armenia has something deeply touching in its soul.”





HAUTE-SAVOIE, FRANCE

Colonie de Vacances

In 2016, AGBU France held the thirty-third season of its Colonie de Vacances in the mountains of Haute-Savoie last July. For three weeks, 110 campers, counselors and directors from Armenia, France, Switzerland and the United Kingdom enjoyed a wide range of activities, indoor and outdoor games, and sports, including football, tennis, swimming and rafting. One of the highlights of this year's season was its Open House, which welcomed nearly 200 parents and friends for a performance prepared by the campers. Colonie de Vacances was also treated to a visit and presentation by Ara Khatchadourian, an AGBU alumnus who reached the top of Mount Everest this spring and dedicated his achievement to the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

"The key to the success of the camp that has been offering unforgettable experiences to several generations of diasporan Armenians is staying true to its goal of passing our rich heritage to campers from a very young age by giving them a chance to experience life in an Armenian atmosphere, creating a small Armenia in the French Alps," said Colonie de Vacances director Herminé Duzian.



YEREVAN, ARMENIA

Discover Armenia

In its thirteenth year, Discover Armenia brought 21 high school students to Armenia for a three-week program as both volunteers and visitors. The young adults arrived from Belgium, Canada, France, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States to reconnect with their ancestral homeland and participate in different projects aimed at local development, all while having fun and making memories that will last a lifetime.

Throughout the program, Discover Armenia participants visited sights in all regions of Armenia as well as Nagorno-Karabakh, spending three days constructing a house for a family in need in the village of Varsar in partnership with Fuller Center for Housing Armenia and visiting an orphanage in Vanadzor to entertain children with games and sports competitions. They also visited the AGBU Armenia headquarters and served lunch to retirees at the AGBU Nork Senior Dining Center. Another highlight of the program was climbing Mount Aragats with Ara Khatchadourian, who reached the top of Mount Everest in April to commemorate the Armenian Genocide. All participants received 40 hours of community service credit that they can now present to their high schools and universities.

Discover Armenia participants all left the country feeling more attached to Armenia and their Armenian culture: "I couldn't have asked for a better trip. I feel I have accomplished so much in such a short period of time, from climbing a mountain to singing a solo in a language I don't even know. I'd like to thank all the staff who helped organize this trip for making it one of the best holidays ever," said 16-year-old Berge Schembri of the United Kingdom.

AGBU Summer Programs



LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

London Summer Internship Program

2016 was the second year of the London Summer Internship Program (LSIP), which placed 13 students from Argentina, Armenia, Canada, China, Greece, Lebanon and the United States in internships at leading companies and organizations, including Amber Capital, Backes & Strauss, Gumuchdjian Architects, HantecFx, OTS Solicitors, Tateossian Group and Tufenkian Artisan Carpets.

In addition to their daily work schedules, the AGBU LSIP interns took trips to iconic landmarks in the United Kingdom, such as the London Eye, Big Ben, the Tower of London and St Paul's Cathedral. They also spent a day at Oxford where they learned about the history of the city and visited some of the university's colleges.

For Grace Torossian, a student at the University of Michigan, LSIP proved to be a transformational summer: "This program has been one of the best experiences of my life. Aside from the work experience, the friendships I have created with this group of Armenian young professionals will surely last a lifetime. I am honored to have been able to be a part of AGBU's renowned program, especially in its early stages. This internship has made me a more well-rounded individual, which will help me in all aspects of life."



NEW YORK, NEW YORK

New York Summer Internship Program

In 2016, the New York Summer Internship Program (NYSIP) was comprised of 32 interns who spent their summer gaining professional experience and connecting with their Armenian heritage. As the first of the organization's cadre of internship programs, NYSIP empowers young Armenians to achieve success by providing meaningful, purpose-driven professional opportunities.

This year, interns arrived from Canada, France, Lebanon, Russia, the United Kingdom and throughout the United States to spend the summer contributing to their professional development and enhancing their involvement in the Armenian community. During the eight-week program, participants worked in various fields at prestigious companies and organizations, including Cushman and Wakefield, Lincoln Center, Merrill Lynch Private Wealth Management, Mirrorball, Near East Foundation, NewsDeeply and Slalom Consulting.

Andre Amirsaleh, a student at Bucknell University, interned at the web development company 1over0, where he learned about the inner-workings of web design: "My favorite accomplishment this summer was building a website from the ground up. I was able to understand the whole process, from fundamentals to design details, and I can now even teach someone else. My internship with NYSIP has taught me so much more about the industry than I ever imagined, and because of my internship, I know I want to begin my career in this industry."



YEREVAN, ARMENIA

Yerevan Summer Internship Program

The Yerevan Summer Internship Program (YSIP) welcomed 18 diasporan Armenians for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build their resumes, while immersing themselves in a full schedule of educational, cultural and social activities throughout Armenia. The program provides students with an edge in a new global market by offering them hands-on, international work experience in their field of study, while giving them the opportunity to develop closer ties with their heritage and a professional network of peers in the worldwide Armenian diaspora.

In its tenth year, YSIP gave participants from Armenia, France, Italy, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States exposure to an international setting that helped cultivate a cross-cultural perspective for interns, who worked in a number of premier state and private institutions and organizations, including the Arabkir Medical Center, Deem Communications, Interpol Armenia, KPMG, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UN Kolba Lab and Storaket Architectural Studio.

Summer 2016 also marked the establishment of the Dikran Knadjian Medical Internship at Queens' College in Cambridge, England, which will allow one medical student a year to pursue a fully-funded internship in Armenia. The program's first student, Benjamin Devoy, did his internship at the Heratsi Hospital Complex N°1 under the supervision of Dr. Hamayak Sisakyan: "The past six weeks have been priceless. I've learned so much, both about medicine and about Armenia, especially the differences between hospitals in Armenia and the UK. I'm so glad that I was given the opportunity to come to Armenia and experience a whole new world. I'll always have a place in my heart for Armenia," said Devoy.

AGBU Young Professionals

The AGBU Young Professionals (YP) is a growing network of YP groups and supporters around the world who preserve and promote the Armenian identity and heritage for Armenians between the ages of 22 and 40. The YP movement began in 1995 with the first group in Los Angeles. Since then, the network has expanded to include chapters and partnerships in North America, South America, Europe and the Middle East.



HOUSTON, TEXAS

YP Houston Launches the First YP Group in the Southern United States

On October 15, the AGBU Young Professionals Network officially founded a YP group in Houston, Texas. In celebration of the founding, 30 Armenian young professionals gathered to mingle, play games, share stories and learn more about one another. The launch of YP Houston was spearheaded by chair Anais Babajanian and steering committee members Irene Alvarez, Taleen Asadourian, Sofia Mnjoyan and Nicole Sabbagh, who came together to establish the first YP group in the Southern United States. In the past decade, Houston—the fourth largest city in the United States—has developed a number of industries, most notably medicine and energy. It is home to a growing Armenian young professional community, a mix of both natives of Houston and new transplants exploring personal and professional opportunities in Texas. YP Houston hopes to encourage members and the community through career development, fairs and counseling; networking within the local Armenian group, greater Houston community, and global YP network; and promoting business development in Armenia.

LYON, FRANCE

AGBU Young Professionals Organize First Summit for European YP Leaders

On September 30 and October 1, AGBU Lyon and YP Lyon hosted the first European summit of YP leaders, gathering nearly 50 participants from 15 different countries. The summit—conceived by Viken Kojakian (President of YP Lyon Rhône-Alpes) and supported by Camille Mesrobian (Chair of AGBU Lyon) and Haik Khanamiryan (Executive Committee Member, YP Amsterdam)—aimed at initiating new synergies between the YP groups across Europe. The agenda included presentations on AGBU's global and European strategies; AGBU Armenia's programs; brainstorming sessions to explore ways to collaborate; discussions on ways to overcome shared challenges and cultivate new ideas and initiatives for the future. The summit's highlights included talks by Eric Dadian, co-founder of WikiPME, president of the French Association for Customer Relations, and founder of the Cercle des Professionnels Arméniens (CPA); Gautier Cassagnau, co-founder of the Lyon-based start-up Geolid; and Armen Verdian, co-founder of GA Partners and president of Hye Tech Europe. The event was sponsored by the ONLYLYON Ambassador's Network, dedicated to promoting the city of Lyon abroad.





LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

YP Los Angeles Holds its First Mural Crawl Through East Hollywood

On September 22, YP Los Angeles held its first Mural Crawl, a walking tour of East Hollywood to see the murals of Artoon Gozukuchikyan with the artist himself. Gozukuchikyan—an LA-based artist originally from Armenia—paints murals inspired by Armenian history on the sides of buildings in Little Armenia. During the tour, YP Los Angeles members and friends saw four of his murals and listened to the artist explain his inspiration behind each piece and the difficulties he faced as he was working on them.

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

AGBU YP Buenos Aires Holds its Third Annual Professional Development Conference

On November 24, YP Buenos Aires held its third annual professional development conference. The event offered an opportunity for young professionals in the Armenian community of Buenos Aires to network and learn from the expertise of specialists in various fields. The theme of this year's conference was entrepreneurship. Participants were divided into groups and asked to devise entrepreneurship ideas to help develop Armenia in the food service, technology, energy and tourism sectors. During the first section of the conference, a presentation was given on the theory of entrepreneurship, and in the second section, participants presented their innovative project ideas for Armenia, which were evaluated by a jury.



ATHENS, GREECE

YP Athens Welcomes Directors of 1915: The Movie with a Screening and Discussion

On November 13, YP Athens welcomed the directors of *1915: The Movie*, Garin Hovannisian and Alec Mouhibian, for a screening and discussion at the AGBU Athens Hrant and Louise Fenerdjian Hall. Over 130 young professionals, AGBU members and friends came together for the premiere of the film in Greece and the directors' first visit to Athens. *1915: The Movie* follows a mysterious theater director in present-day Los Angeles as he stages a controversial play to bring the ghosts of a forgotten tragedy back to life.

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

The AGBU YP Network Launches New Group in Detroit

In January, the AGBU YP network officially launched a new group in Detroit, Michigan. For the past year, young professionals in the Detroit metro area have been gathering for numerous events in anticipation of the official launch of the group. These events have included a fundraiser for the Detroit Zoo, a mixer, an after-church brunch and two distillery tours. The chair of YP Detroit, Shant Korkigian, hopes that the foundation of the group will bring people together for social, cultural and professional networking and has plans for the group to host a bowling night fundraiser and happy hour networking events in Detroit and its surrounding areas in the months to come.



AGBU Chapters



NEW YORK, NEW YORK

AGBU Welcomes Member of Turkish Parliament Garo Paylan to its Central Office

On October 3, AGBU welcomed member of Turkish Parliament Garo Paylan to its Central Office in New York. As part of his tour of the United States, Paylan met with AGBU President Berge Setrakian and AGBU Central Board members Ani Manoukian and Vasken Yacoubian to discuss the role of the diaspora in supporting the democratic process in Turkey. This meeting was the first to take place between AGBU and Paylan and sets the groundwork for future interactions. Paylan was one of three Armenians elected to the Turkish National Assembly in June 2015. A founding member of the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP), he has a track record for defending minority and human rights in Turkey and has been vocal in calling for the country's recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Before his election to the National Assembly, he served on the central committee of the HDP and worked with Armenian schools in Istanbul to promote multilingual education.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

The AGBU Performing Arts Department Hosts an Evening of Six Short Films by Armenian Filmmakers

On November 17, the AGBU Performing Arts Department hosted its second annual Six Short Films screening at the Elinor Bunin Munroe Film Center at Lincoln Center. The evening showcased the work of six young Armenian filmmakers from Armenia and the diaspora: Viktoria Aleksanyan, Vatche Boulghourjian, Ophelia Harutyunyan, Anna Maria Mouradian, Jesse Soursourian and Martiros Vartanov. The evening marked the New York premiere of many films that had already been screened at prestigious film festivals around the world, including Cannes, Toronto and Sundance. The event concluded with a question-and-answer session moderated by Stephanie Ayanian, the director of the forthcoming documentary *A New Armenia*.



CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AGBU Chicago Hosts Family Dinner Night at AGBU Center

On November 18, AGBU Chicago held the latest in a new regular series of Family Dinner Nights at the AGBU Center. The gatherings have attracted a full house each month for an evening of good food, games and company. Veteran restaurateur Levon Demerdjian of Chicago's famed Sayat Nova restaurants prepared the meals with community members and a New Year's celebration was planned to cap off a year of successful gatherings and cultural events.



PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

AGBU Western District Welcomes Ara Khatchadourian for Series of Talks

On November 17, the AGBU Western District hosted climber Ara Khatchadourian at the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Center and—in collaboration with local AGBU chapters, the Armenian Hikers Association and the Armenian Hikers Society—organized six presentations around Los Angeles. In May, Khatchadourian climbed Mount Everest—the tallest peak in the world—and waved the AGBU flag atop the mountain. During his stay, he gave six presentations to the public, including scout groups from the Los Angeles-San Fernando Valley and Pasadena-Glendale chapters. He regaled the guests with stories from his adventure and a video documenting his trek.



PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

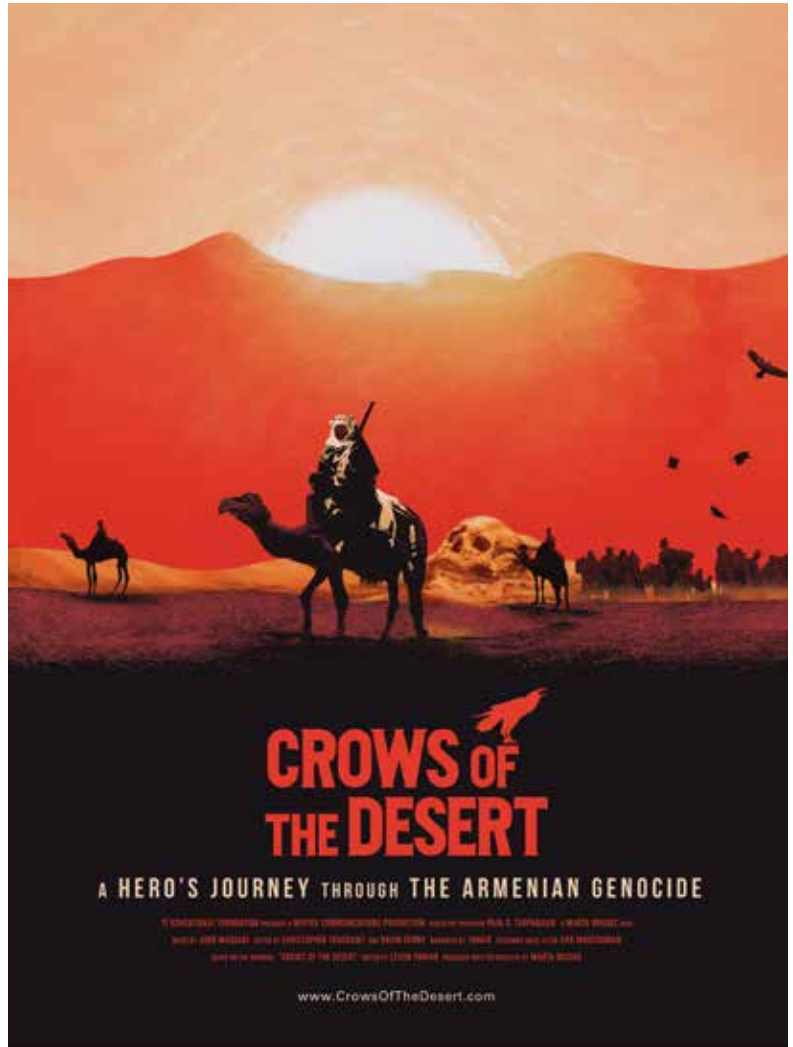
AGBU Glendale-Pasadena Holds its 2nd Annual Armenian Fest Three-Day Event

On September 30, AGBU Glendale-Pasadena held its 2nd Annual Armenian Fest Opening Night at the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Center with over 250 guests in attendance. The three-day series of events began with basketball games for boys and girls, a magician for young children and a dinner hosted by the Young Ladies Committee. It continued the next day with eleven basketball, volleyball and futsal games and an elaborate brunch and dinner. On the final day, the AGBU Tarouhy-Hovagimian Alumni Association hosted a breakfast for 150 people before more sports competitions and the closing ceremony in which the San Fernando Valley Scouts and Marching Band participated.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

The AGBU Western District Holds Film Premiere for *Crows of the Desert*

On October 23, the AGBU Western District premiered *Crows of the Desert*, a documentary about the heroic efforts of AGBU members, notably Levon Yotnakhparian, in the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide. The event brought a full house of over 250 guests to Woodbury University and a panel discussion followed the film, during which executive producer Paul Turpanjian and his colleagues discussed the history of the Armenian Genocide and described their experiences of working on the film.



PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

AGBU Hye Geen and Hye Geen Young Circle Host Lecture on Facing Realities in Armenia

On November 12, AGBU Hye Geen and Hye Geen Young Circle hosted a lecture entitled Facing Realities in Armenia. The event—which drew over 100 guests to the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Center—featured three panelists. Marzbed Margossian, an AGBU Hovagimian-Manoogian alumnus, scientist and journalist, discussed the patterns of unrest in Armenian history by uncovering the past struggles of the country and its diaspora. Levon P. Thorose, a humanitarian and innovator who introduced new sensor technology in Armenia, discussed the political situation in Armenia, mapping the current state of its military and the lack of resources along the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh. Harout Bronozian, who works closely with numerous schools in Armenia, spoke about the reactions and concerns of the greater diaspora. The speakers also engaged guests in a dynamic question-and-answer session about Armenia's history, future, and the role of the diaspora.





LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

The AGBU Asbeds Host Panel Discussion on the Present and Future of Nagorno-Karabakh

On November 18, the AGBU Asbeds focused its Evening with a Scholar series on the present and future of Nagorno-Karabakh, inviting Honorable John Evans, former U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, and Dr. Sergey Markedonov, Director of the Department for Problems of Ethnic Relations at the Institute for Political and Military Analysis in Moscow, to give their insights. Ambassador Evans explained the diplomatic and legal predicament in which Nagorno-Karabakh finds itself and emphasized the importance of Nagorno-Karabakh being at the negotiating table as well as strengthening its economy and defense forces. Dr. Markedonov presented the Russian approach to regional relations and conflicts following the collapse of the Soviet Union and stated that Russia's foreign policy and interests are the primary focus of the country's dealings in the region. Both panelists were in consensus that the future of Nagorno-Karabakh remains uncertain, with the maintenance of the status quo for now being the most likely possibility. The Evening with a Scholar series aims to bring together some of the brightest minds for dialogue on relevant and timely issues and create a platform to present ideas for analysis.



MONTRÉAL, CANADA

AGBU Montréal Debuts NOVA Summer School for Syrian Armenian Students

In the summer of 2016, AGBU Montréal debuted its new NOVA Summer School for Syrian Armenian students. While the AGBU Alex Manoogian School offers French immersion classes during the school year, the NOVA Summer School is a free program that allows students to practice their new language skills when school is not in session. The 2016 summer school—staffed by nine volunteers—focused on vocabulary and conversation as well as the importance of reading and comprehension and gave 15 students the chance to practice their French in a comfortable environment. This initiative, supported by the AGBU Montréal Executive Board, aimed at engaging youth and the younger generation in the life of the Montréal community.

MONTRÉAL, CANADA

AGBU Montréal Launches an Environmental Awareness Program at the AGBU Centre

On September 23, AGBU Montréal officially launched a program at the AGBU Centre to encourage environmental awareness and eco-sensitization. The program—which consists of building a garden and implementing a recycling program—was conceived of by three AGBU youth Nayiri Tokmanciyanyan, Shiraz Sevadjian and Mgo Khalafaghian and supported by the AGBU Montréal Executive Board. The garden will be maintained and used by local AGBU members and allow youth to understand the origins of food, promote healthy eating habits and increase appreciation of nature. Additionally, the recycling program will sensitize the community to the importance of reducing, reusing and recycling items and minimizing the quantity of waste. With this project, the program founders aim to raise awareness in the Montréal Armenian community about respecting the environment and to form responsible citizens who are mindful of their communities.



TORONTO, CANADA

AGBU Toronto Sports & Youth Committee Inaugurates Sports Hall of Fame and Inducts Armenak Alajajian

On November 5, the AGBU Toronto Sports & Youth Committee (SYC) held its 2016 Sports Alumni Gala to commemorate the **110th anniversary** of AGBU. The event brought together generations of the basketball club's players, coaches, volunteers and supporters. The club also inaugurated its own Hall of Fame and inducted Armenak Alajajian, the most decorated Armenian basketball player of all time who set the standard for Armenian basketball around the world. He was a member of the Soviet Union National Team, who earned the silver medal in the 1964 Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo and led his team to a combined three European Champions Cups and eight USSR National Titles. Arriving in Toronto in 1974, Alajajian became a great contributor to AGBU as an athlete, community leader and philanthropist, leading the AGBU Senior Men's team as a player and coach from 1974 to 1994. To induct Alajajian, the SYC assembled members of the 1980 Senior Men's team, which included five players who played at the university level in Canada. In attendance were also Rex Kalamian, Assistant Head Coach of the Toronto Raptors, and Varouj Gurunlian, a former member of the Canadian National Basketball Team. The new Hall of Fame will recognize individuals who have made profound contributions to the sports program. A plaque will be commissioned and will be permanently displayed in the Babayan Gymnasium at the Alex Manoogian Cultural Centre.



BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

AGBU Buenos Aires Celebrates the 75th Anniversary of the Liga de Jóvenes

On November 3, AGBU Buenos Aires celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Liga de Jóvenes, the AGBU youth association of South America. The event brought together members from the entire history of the association and welcomed AGBU Central Board member Ruben Vardanyan as well as one of the founding members of the Liga de Jóvenes, Bautista Kouyoumdjian. The current members of the association also presented about their activities in recent years and reaffirmed their commitment to work to maintain their Armenian identities.

AGBU Chapters



CÓRDOBA, ARGENTINA

The AGBU Córdoba Ararat Armenian Dance Ensemble Performs at City Festival

On November 13, the AGBU Córdoba Armenian Dance Ensemble participated in Festival Una Ciudad Todos los Pueblos (One City All Nations Festival), organized by the Municipality of the City of Córdoba. Along with folk dancers from a variety of countries, including Japan, Peru, Italy and Poland, the ensemble performed traditional dances and contributed to sharing Armenian culture with the larger Argentinean community.

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

The AGBU Marie Manoogian Institute Celebrates a Month of Armenian Culture

In the month of October, the AGBU Marie Manoogian Institute celebrated Armenian culture with a series of events and projects. The series focused on art, music, literature, dance and history. Over the course of the month, members of the community came to the school to read stories by Hovhannes Toumanian and present the work of Sergei Paradjanov, which the students used as inspiration for their own artwork. In collaboration with other Armenian schools, the students also participated in a recital of traditional Armenian dance.



SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL

AGBU São Paulo Elects a New Board during its Chapter Assembly

On September 25, AGBU São Paulo held its annual Chapter Assembly during which it approved new bylaws and elected a new board. The new bylaws, prepared in collaboration with the AGBU Central Board, have the goal of adapting to the new situation of the chapter. In a moment of transition, AGBU São Paulo elected seven alumni of the Paren & Regina Bazarian School to the board, who will implement an entirely different vision for the chapter as well as begin renovations on its headquarters. Three members of this new elected board—chairman Haig Apovian, treasurer Rafael Balukian, and relief and welfare member Fernando Takesian—participated in the AGBU 89th General Assembly in New York where they became acquainted with the concept of the global Armenian nation.



BERLIN, GERMANY

AGBU Europe Presents at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Conference on Tolerance and Diversity

On October 20, AGBU Europe presented its A Europe of Diasporas project to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) 2016 conference on tolerance and diversity. AGBU Europe director Nicolas Tavitian joined representatives of civil society groups and organizations to discuss current issues and priorities and prepare recommendations to OSCE participating states, institutions and civil society for the promotion of tolerance and diversity. In his presentation, Tavitian discussed the notion of a diaspora and emphasized the importance of integrating learning about the various European diasporas into school subjects across disciplines. He also advocated for a greater involvement of diasporas in politics, as they are currently dramatically underrepresented in that sphere in Europe. These proposals were incorporated into the final recommendations of the civil society segment of the OSCE conference. A Europe of Diasporas is a network designed to affirm the idea that diasporas have been part of the European story for centuries and are an asset to contemporary Europe.

ATHENS, GREECE

The AGBU Artaki Kalpakian School Organizes End-of-Year Celebration in Honor of the 110th Anniversary of AGBU

On June 13, the AGBU Artaki Kalpakian School in Athens held its end-of-year celebration in the presence of major figures from the Greek Armenian community, including church officials; Anna Hattaturian, the consul of the Republic of Armenia to Greece; board members of AGBU Greece; as well as teachers, parents and friends. The students honored the **110th anniversary** of the founding of AGBU by reciting poetry, performing skits, singing songs and performing traditional dances. The event came to a close with the distribution of diplomas to kindergarteners and sixth graders.



MILAN, ITALY

AGBU Milan Celebrates the Organization's 110th Anniversary with Two-Part Program

On November 11, AGBU Milan celebrated the **110th anniversary** of the organization with a two-part program. The event began with a presentation by chapter member Haig Alexanian, who introduced AGBU and presented its many projects in Armenia and the diaspora. He then invited Ara Khatchadourian to recount his expedition to the summit of Mount Everest with a pictures and a documentary film. The second part of the evening's program was comprised of a piano recital by Nouné Hayrabedian and a dance performance by Arshag and Arax Antanesian.



PARIS, FRANCE

The AGBU Nubar Library Launches Website for its Digital Collection

In December, the AGBU Nubar Library launched its website (www.bnulibrary.org), which offers a wealth of information, photos and documents about Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and the Armenian diaspora. The library's collection primarily concerns the nineteenth and twentieth century and is a vital resource in the preservation of Armenian cultural heritage. The website—which will continue to be updated with digitized materials—is already home to a photo collection of prominent Armenian leaders and of Armenian life in the Ottoman Empire and early diaspora; portions of the Andonian archive of Armenian Genocide testimonies as well as portions of the archives of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Armenian National Delegation and AGBU; digitized copies of the French-language Constantinople-based journal *Renaissance* published from 1918-1920; a virtual tour of the exhibit *Arménie 1915*, held in Paris in 2015; and a digitized collection of the library's journals *Revue d'histoire arménienne contemporaine* and *Études arméniennes contemporaines*.

PARIS, FRANCE

AGBU France Performing Arts Department Holds Concert at Renowned Salle Cortot

On October 15, the AGBU France Performing Arts Department held a concert at Salle Cortot in Paris in celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Republic of Armenia and the **110th anniversary** of the founding of AGBU. The concert, entitled Artists for Artists, brought together nine musicians from Belgium, France, Germany, Portugal and Switzerland to honor both momentous occasions and was composed of pieces by Armenian and non-Armenian composers alike, including Babajanian, Brahms, Dvorak, Gomidas and Schumann and Gomidas featured a special cameo appearance by Tigran Hamasyan, who performed songs from his upcoming album. The concert also provided the opportunity to distribute prizes to the winners of the 2016 Sayat Nova International Composition Competition. Dzovinar Mikirditsian (Lebanon-France) was awarded first prize (Special Prize of the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra); Alexandr Iradyan (Armenia-Germany) received second prize (Special Carnegie Hall Prize); and Joshua Marquez (Philippines-USA) earned third prize.



VALENCE, FRANCE

AGBU Valence Celebrates its 85th Anniversary

On October 22, AGBU Valence celebrated its 85th anniversary with a gathering that brought together 200 guests. The evening was attended by Levon Amirjanyan, representative of the Armenian ambassador to France; Hovhannes Gevorgyan, representative of Nagorno-Karabakh in France; Louciné Movsisyan, vice-consul in Lyon and Nadia Gortzounian, president of AGBU France as well as famed pianist André Manoukian and duduk player Rostom Khachikian. Local politicians from Valence also joined the celebration, emphasizing the importance of the organization to the city. The evening also featured performances by the Armenian Dance School of Valence. AGBU Valence was founded in 1931 and was central to the development of the Armenian community in Valence. Today it boasts an active youth group, an array of artistic and cultural events and free French classes for newcomers.





SOFIA, BULGARIA

AGBU Sofia Holds Art Exhibition in Honor of the Founding of AGBU

On November 7, AGBU Sofia held an art exhibition entitled Journey to Armenia in honor of **110th anniversary** of the founding of AGBU and the 25th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Armenia. The exhibition showcased photographs by Raffi Youredjian, a photographer for the Discovery Channel and a member of the Royal Geographic Society in London. The theme of the exhibition centered around the landscapes of Armenia with photos taken during Youredjian's 350-kilometer bicycle trip throughout the country. It also featured works by local Armenian artists, Gronika Kavafian, Lucia Medzikian and Stepan Sargsyan. During the event, AGBU Sofia also screened *1915: The Movie* and held a question-and-answer session with the directors Alec Mouhibian and Garin Hovannisian.

PLOVDIV, BULGARIA

The AGBU Plovdiv Erebuni Musical Ensemble Celebrates its 45th Anniversary

On June 11, the AGBU Plovdiv Erebuni Musical Ensemble celebrated its 45th anniversary with a gala concert in Plovdiv, which also commemorated the **110th anniversary** of the founding of AGBU and the 25th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Armenia. The concert program—made up of patriotic songs—also included a short history of the organization and the ensemble, which have both had a lasting impact on the creative and artistic life of the Bulgarian Armenian community.



ALEPPO, SYRIA

The AGBU Lazar Najarian-Calouste Gulbenkian School Holds End-of-Year Celebration for 23 Graduates

On June 26, the AGBU Lazar Najarian-Calouste Gulbenkian School held an end-of-year celebration for its 23 graduates. Despite difficult circumstances, these graduates excelled in their studies. The celebration was also in honor of the **110th anniversary** of the founding of AGBU, which students marked with a musical program for parents and guests.



KAMISHLI, SYRIA

AGBU Kamishli Welcomes 90 Children to its Annual Summer School

On June 6, AGBU Kamishli welcomed 90 children to the start of its annual summer school at the AGBU Karnig Yacoubian Hall. The school was organized on the initiative of the chapter's Ladies and Young Women's Committee with the goal of gathering the Armenian children in the community and creating a safe environment for them despite political unrest. Ten teachers and supervisors are volunteering their time to look after students from kindergarten to seventh grade, teaching Armenian, Arabic and English along with Armenian history, religion, music, dance, drawing and crafts.



AGBU Chapters

LATAKIA, SYRIA

The AGBU-AYA Aleppo Bedros Attamian Theater Group Performs in Latakia

On June 4, the AGBU-AYA Aleppo Bedros Attamian Theater Group traveled to Latakia to perform for the city's Armenian community. As a result of the war, the Armenian community of Latakia had been without performances for many years, which led AGBU Aleppo to make the dangerous trip for a performance of «Երբ չի մնում էլք ու ճւղ» (When There is No Way Out) in Latakia. This year, despite their difficult circumstances, the AGBU-AYA Aleppo Bedros Attamian Theater Group has given five performances for the Armenian community of Aleppo.



YEREVAN, ARMENIA

AGBU Armenia Acquires Two 110-Year-Old Documents Attesting to the Mission of the Organization

On December 21, AGBU Armenia acquired two 110-year-old documents that attest to the mission of the organization in its early years. The documents—a letter signed by AGBU founder and first president Boghos Nubar and an article titled Call to All Armenians—were found by Hayk Demoyan, the director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan, at a private archive in Moscow. Thanks to the financial support of Gabriel Chenberjyan, the president of the Pyunik Charitable Foundation, it was possible for him to obtain the documents and donate them to AGBU Armenia. The first document—dated May 22, 1906—is a handwritten letter sent less than two months after the founding of the organization, which encourages Armenians across the world to establish AGBU chapters in their countries. The second undated document announces the activities and objectives of the newly established AGBU. High-resolution scans of both documents can be found at www.agbu.org.



CAIRO, EGYPT

AGBU Cairo's HMEM Nubar Sports Club Unveils Renovated Basketball Court Before a Major Tournament

On October 7, AGBU Cairo's HMEM Nubar Sports Club unveiled its renovated basketball court and changing rooms before beginning a multi-day Egyptian Pan-Armenian tournament with teams and players of all ages. To inaugurate the renovated court, five Armenian sports clubs of Egypt participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Jirayr Depoyan, the chairman of Homenetmen Nubar Cairo, thanked the institutions that contributed to the realization of the renovation, including the Armenian Patriarchate, AGBU Cairo and the AGBU Egypt District Committee. Depoyan stressed that the state-of-the-art basketball court was another addition to the club's modern sports facilities that aim to serve all Armenians.

DAMASCUS, SYRIA

AGBU Gullabi Gulbenkian School in Damascus Holds End-of-Year Celebration

On May 21, the AGBU Gullabi Gulbenkian School in Damascus held their end-of-year celebration for students, parents and friends. Despite challenging circumstances, the school—which celebrated the graduation of their kindergarteners and sixth graders—has been a haven for students who not only follow the state curriculum, but also study Armenian language, religion and culture.



YEREVAN, ARMENIA

AGBU Yerevan Co-Sponsors International Conference on Women and Genocide

Between September 17 and 19, AGBU partnered with the non-governmental organization Women in War (Paris) and the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography in Yerevan to host an international conference entitled *After Genocide: From Trauma to Rebirth—a Gendered Perspective*. The conference brought together researchers and activists united in their commitment to documenting the gendered dimension of past and present genocides to study the particular experiences of women and their effects on the descendants of the victims and perpetrators. Presentations focused on the Armenian Genocide as well as the Holocaust and genocides in Bosnia, Cambodia, Central America, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Middle East, Nanking and Rwanda with the goal of building bridges between comparable experiences.



A screenshot of the AGBU WebTalks website. The main video player displays a presentation titled "The Foundations of AGBU" by Raymond Kévorkian. The video frame shows a historical document with the text "AGBU 1906" and "LA FONDATION DE L'AGBU". Below the video player, there are social media icons for Google+, Facebook, Twitter, and Email, along with the date "October 2016". A small portrait of Raymond Kévorkian is shown next to a bio: "Dr. Raymond Kévorkian is a French Armenian historian and author of The Armenian Question: A Century History. He brings and research focus on the events of the Armenian Genocide, he presided on the organizing Armenian committees across the regions and the formation of the Turkish state. For many years, Dr. Kévorkian served as the director of the AGBU Nahabedian Library in Paris. In 2016, Dr. Kévorkian received the Presidential Award from...". Below the main video, there are several "Other WebTalks" listed with small video thumbnails and titles, such as "Richard Hovhannesian: Leadership of the First Republic" and "Blign Ayala: A Chance for Reconciliation in Dersu Uzumi".

CELEBRATING 110 YEARS OF AGBU

AGBU 110 YEARS

IN UNITY IS STRENGTH • ՄԻՈՒԹԻՒՆԸ ԶՈՐՈՒԹԻՒՆ Է

In honor of the 110th anniversary of AGBU, historian Raymond Kévorkian looks back at the beginnings of the organization and the visionaries who started a legacy of public service that still thrives today.

AGBU
WebTalks



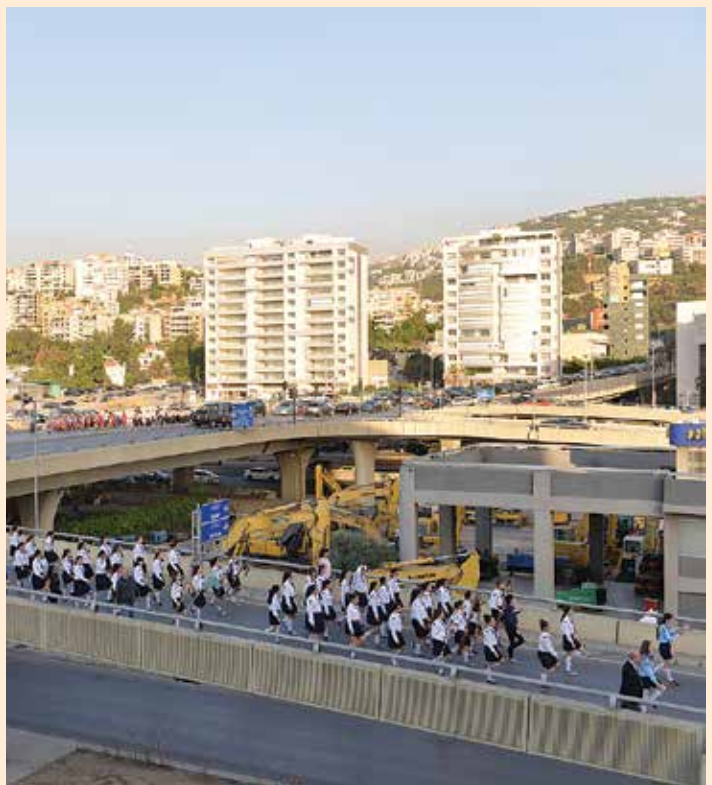
agbuwebtalks.org

AGBU Chapters

BEIRUT, LEBANON

AGBU Lebanon Celebrates the 110th Anniversary of the Organization with a Series of Events

Between November 9 and 13, AGBU Lebanon held four events to celebrate the 110th anniversary of organization and to fundraise for the district's schools. On November 9, it held a screening of *1915: The Movie*, a film that follows one man's controversial mission to bring the ghosts of a forgotten genocide back to life. More than 700 people supported the fundraising screening, which featured a question-and-answer session with the film's directors Alec Mouhibian and Garin Hovannisian. On November 11, AGBU Lebanon welcomed Ara Khatchadourian, an AGBU Yervant Demirjian School alumnus who reached the top of Mount Everest in May. The event brought together more than 200 veteran and new scouts, classmates, members and friends. After the screening of a short film about his trek, Khatchadourian shared with the audience his experience climbing in memory of the centenary of the Armenian Genocide. On November 12, the District Committee of AGBU Lebanon organized a fundraising Gala Dinner to celebrate the **110th anniversary** of AGBU. During the event—attended by over 200 local dignitaries, community leaders, AGBU members and friends—AGBU Lebanon chairman Gerard Tufenkjian was bestowed with the St. Nerses Shnorhali Medal, an encyclical from His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians. Minister of Diaspora Hranush Hakobyan also bestowed upon Mr. Tufenkjian the Boghos Nubar Pasha Award, presented by the Ambassador of Republic of Armenia to Lebanon Samuel Mkrtchyan. The final event in the series took place on November 13 when AGBU-AYA scouts took part in the Blom Bank 14th Beirut Marathon organized by the Beirut Marathon Association, the biggest running event in the Middle East with more than 47,000 participants. For the third year, the scouts ran, distributed medals and handled race arrivals.



BEIRUT, LEBANON

AGBU Lebanon Celebrates 85th Anniversary of AGBU Antranik Youth Association (AYA)

On October 16, the AGBU-Armenian Youth Association (AYA), under the patronage of the AGBU District Committee of Lebanon, celebrated its 85th anniversary at the Emile Lahoud Convention Center in Dbayeh. The celebration was attended by many distinguished guests including AGBU President Berge Setrakian; Armenian Ambassador to Lebanon Samuel Mkrtchyan; Prelate Bishop Shahe Panossian; Minister of Energy Arthur Nazarian; Minister of Tourism Michel Pharaon; deputies Simon Abou Ramia, Sebouh Kalpakian, Ghassan Moukhyaber, Jean Oghassabian, Hagop Pakradouni and Serge Toursarkissian; Armenian Missionary Association of America chairman Reverend Paul Haidostian; and members of the military, Lebanese and Armenian political parties, and municipal representatives. The AGBU-AYA Scouts marched along with the scouts marching band and sports teams from the AGBU Demirdjian Center to the Emile Lahoud Convention Center. During the celebration, the AGBU-AYA Marching Band played the Lebanese, Armenian, AGBU, and AYA anthems and a video summarizing the history of the AGBU-AYA was played for the guests. The main speakers were AGBU-AYA Central Committee Chairman Vicken Tchertchian and Central Committee Member Hagop Djeghelian, who both emphasized the important role played by the AGBU-AYA in the life of the Armenian youth. The event also featured performances by the Khatchaturian Trio and the AGBU-AYA Arine Dance Group. The AYA was founded in 1931, as a way to promote national cohesion through cultural, sports, scouting and social activities.

Explore Armenia

AGBU & OUR PARTNERS
OFFER EXCEPTIONAL YOUTH PROGRAMS
FOR ALL INTERESTS

ANTRANIK SCOUT CAMP

July 10 - 24 | Ages 13 - 17

For global scouts with a passion for adventure

DISCOVER ARMENIA YOUTH TRIP

August 5 - 23 | Ages 15 - 18

Perfect for teens seeking exploration & community service

JUST DILIJAN IT! SUMMER CAMP

June 7 - August 4 | Ages 10 - 16

"Edutainment" programs for international kids & teens at UWC Dilijan College

LINGUISTIC HOLIDAYS IN ARMENIA

April 11 - 23 | Ages 10 - 18

For inspired students seeking to travel & improve their knowledge base

MUSICAL ARMENIA PROGRAM

July 10 - 30 | Ages 18+

Giving budding artists opportunity to train with experts & take in rich musical heritage

TERRE DE VIE

July 29 - August 20 | Ages 18+

An active service trip for young adults wanting to make an impact

TUMO SUMMER CAMP

June 19 - July 29 | Ages 11 - 18

Bringing local and visiting teens together at the intersection of technology and art

YEREVAN SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

June 18 - July 29 | Ages 19 - 26

A cross-cultural immersive work experience for university students



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AGBU Chapters



SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

AGBU Sydney Celebrates the 110th Anniversary of the Founding of the Organization

On November 19, AGBU Sydney celebrated the **110th anniversary** of the founding of the organization by holding a dinner dance with special guest singers and musicians from Armenia: Ruzan Avetikyan, Armen Davtyan and Sergey Ayvazyan. Among the guests was Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, minister and treasurer of the State of New South Wales. Also invited from Armenia for the occasion was master chef Sedrak Mamulyan, who prepared the dinner menu for the evening. Long time AGBU supporters Avo and Jacqueline Tevanian were also both honored during the celebration and recognized as official AGBU Benefactors with a special certificate from the AGBU Central Board for their generosity to the AGBU Sydney chapter.



SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

The AGBU Alexander School Welcomes 1,000 Guests to its Armenian Food Safari

On November 13, the AGBU Alexander School welcomed over 1,000 guests to its Armenian Cultural Day program: the Armenian Food Safari. Invited from Armenia especially for the occasion was master chef, Sedrak Mamulyan, who gave cooking demonstrations for the audience. Also taking part in the event with the students were acclaimed musicians from Armenia—Ruzan Avetikyan, Armen Davtyan and Sergey Ayvazyan—and local Armenian dance groups, including the AGBU Tamzara Armenian Folk Dance Group. Guests were also treated to an exhibition hall filled with examples of traditional Armenian cuisine and live entertainment throughout the afternoon.



MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

AGBU Melbourne Welcomes Film Director Bared Maronian for Screening of the Documentary *Women of 1915*

On September 4, AGBU Melbourne welcomed director Bared Maronian for a screening of his documentary *Women of 1915*. The documentary highlights the experiences of women during the Armenian Genocide and brings to light new facts and stories of survivors. In addition to recounting the lives of Armenian women, Maronian also emphasizes the European and American women who traveled great distances to save lives and provide shelter in the aftermath of the genocide. The resilience and perseverance of all the women of 1915 were put on display in the documentary as was the generosity of the many individuals and countries that came to the aid of the survivors. Maronian set out to tailor *Women of 1915* to non-Armenian audiences as a means of instruction and to acknowledge the dedicated and unconditional support of the many non-Armenian women who rallied to help their Armenian sisters.

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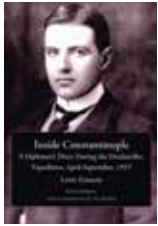
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NEW

Inside Constantinople

Item Number: 027 \$25.00



Lewis Einstein was the first United States official to publicly speak against the genocide of Armenians and his diaries foreshadowed much of what Ambassador Morgenthau wrote in his memoirs a year later. Both works supported each other in giving us invaluable insight into how, and how well, American officials were informed of the Armenian Genocide in 1915.

Author: **Lewis Einstein**

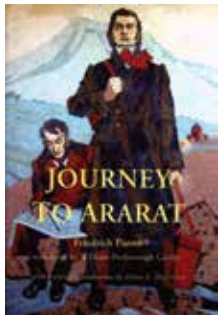
Publisher: **Gomidas Institute**

Format: **Paperback**

NEW

Journey to Ararat

Item Number: 029 \$30.00



In February 1828, the Russian Empire annexed the historical Armenian province of Erivan (Yerevan) from Persia. The province included Mount Ararat, a symbol of Armenian national and spiritual identity, considered to be the final resting place of Noah's Ark. The mountain had never before been scaled in recorded history. Explorer Friedrich Parrot of the University of Dorpat (now Tartu, Estonia) decided to take on the challenge of climbing Ararat. In 1829, he traveled to the Caucasus with an expeditionary team. Accompanied by Armenian writer Khachatur Abovian, he eventually reached the summit of the mountain. His memoir of the expedition, *Journey to Ararat*, was later published in German in 1834, translated into English by William Desborough Cooley and printed in the United States in 1846.

The content of Parrot's account is not just limited to Armenia and Mount Ararat. It also contains plenty of fascinating insight on the broader region in the late 1820s. These include impressions of Georgia, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kalmykia, eastern Ukraine, central Russia, and the German colonies of Transcaucasia.

This new edition of the Cooley translation includes a critical introduction by Pietro A. Shakarian, new maps, and historical documents from Estonia and Armenia related to Parrot's expedition. It also includes illustrations from the original English translation of Parrot's book, reproduced with the assistance of the Cleveland Public Library's John G. White Special Collection of Folklore, Orientalia and Chess and Digital Public Library. All of these new and restored elements provide a fresh look and understanding of Parrot's 1829 expedition to the Holy Mountain. The text itself is an engaging and often informative travel memoir of 19th century Russian Armenia and Transcaucasia.

Author: **Friedrich Parrot**

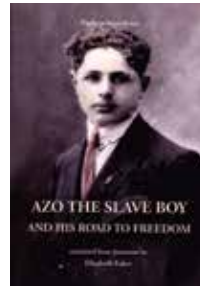
Publisher: **Gomidas Institute**

Format: **Paperback**

NEW

Azo The Slave Boy

Item Number: 026 \$20.00



Azo The Slave Boy recounts the painful and emotional journey of Papken Injarabian. The youngest of five children, he was born in 1906 in Amasia, Turkey. When Ottoman Turkey entered World War I, his older brothers were conscripted and the family never saw them again. The Turkish government then ordered the evacuation of Amasia and neighboring villages as part of the planned deportation and destruction of Ottoman Armenians. On June 21, 1915, nine-year-old Papken, his parents and two sisters had to leave behind their beloved home. They were forced to march for hundreds of miles across the treacherous mountains. After losing his parents and sisters along the way, he was taken in by Kurds as a slave. In order to stay alive, he had no choice but to become Muslim, and was renamed Azo. In vivid detail, Injarabian recounts his enslavement, which lasted more than four years, and multiple attempts to run away from the cruelty of nine masters and their families.

Author: **Papken Injarabian**

Publisher: **Gomidas Institute**

Format: **Paperback**

NEW

Komitas—The Artist and The Martyr

Item Number: 024 \$15.00



Komitas is the talented artist-priest who tours the remote villages of his homeland, collecting and transcribing folk songs. His long, scrupulous research work as an ethnomusicologist enables him to trace the pre-Christian roots of Armenian sacred music, and elevate its folk music to a high standard. He plays a crucial role in introducing the unique musical heritage of Eastern cultures to the West. Although he becomes a celebrity musician and his lectures and songs are widely acclaimed, his secular performances of sacred music in his homeland and abroad put him on a collision course with the conservative clergy of his church. On the night of 24 April 1915—known as Red Sunday—Komitas is arrested along with 200 Armenian intellectuals and community leaders and deported far inland by the Ottoman government as a prelude to a premeditated plan to annihilate the Armenian population of Anatolia. Though he is among the few who are reprieved, the terrible nightmare he has experienced, from which he never mentally recovers, takes him into asylums, where he spends the last twenty years of his life in seclusion, his complex inner world governed by the ineradicable images of his past. This compelling book, based on factual events makes the past and people come alive in an entertaining dialogue.

Author: **Serge Momjian**

Publisher: **Janus Publishing Company Ltd.**

Format: **Paperback**

NEW

My Father's Destiny

Item Number: 030 \$24.00



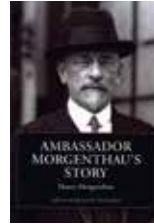
My Father's Destiny is one of few English-language accounts of the Armenian Genocide in Sivas, the province with the largest Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire. This work is composed of a translation of Aram Gureghian's memoirs written at the age of 16 following the Armenian Genocide; the Gureghian family's subsequent fate in exile in France and Soviet Armenia; and an account of the Armenian Genocide in Sivas the ancestral homeland of the Gureghian family. This highly readable work was originally published in French (1999), then in Turkish (2004) and is now available in English.

Author: **Jean V. Gureghian**
 Publisher: **Gomidas Institute**
 Format: **Paperback**

NEW

Ambassador Morgenthau's Story

Item Number: 028 \$28.00



These are the memoirs of the American ambassador to Constantinople between 1913 and 1916. Written in 1918, Morgenthau reveals himself as an astute observer who developed close contacts with the leaders of Ottoman Turkey, as well as their allies. His memoirs cover WWI in the Middle East, including the Turco-German alliance, the Allied Gallipoli campaign and the genocide of Armenians.

This new edition of Morgenthau's work includes a critical introduction by Ara Sarafian with reference to Morgenthau's private papers.

Author: **Henry Morgenthau**
 Publisher: **Gomidas Institute**
 Format: **Paperback**

NEW

MISAK—An Armenian Life

Item Number: 031 \$24.00



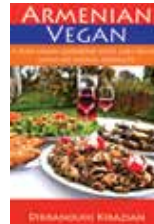
MISAK—An Armenian Life is a masterful translation of Karen Jeppe's biographical work on her adoptive son, Misak, and includes an 84 page introductory essay on Jeppe's legacy working with Armenians in the late Ottoman Empire and French-mandate Syria. The translation, introductory essay and annotations are the work of Jonas Kauffeldt, assistant professor of history at the University of North Georgia.

Author: **Karen Jeppe**
 Publisher: **Gomidas Institute**
 Format: **Paperback**

NEW

Armenian Vegan

Item Number: 025 \$30.00



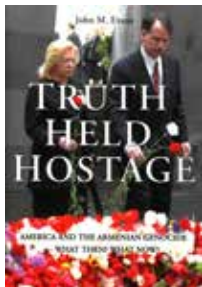
Need a break from hamburgers? *Armenian Vegan* is your delicious solution. With more than 200 entirely vegan recipes including all your favorite Armenian meals such as stuffed grape leaves, rice and bulgur pilaf, vegetable medleys and hearty breads, *Armenian Vegan* is loaded with delicious recipes with easy-to-follow instructions. In addition to all the classic Armenian vegan dishes, author Dikranouhi Kirazian adds her own delightful touches to these favorites—and many of her own new creations in this must have cookbook for anyone looking to expand their vegan diet.

Author: **Dikranouhi Kirazian**
 Publisher: **CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform**
 Format: **Paperback**

NEW

Truth Held Hostage

Item Number: 032 \$32.00



Ambassador John Evans's *Truth Held Hostage* is the most important work about the Armenian Genocide by a US diplomat since Henry Morgenthau's groundbreaking *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* in 1918. Evans writes with elegant clarity that allows us to experience his journey into a major personal and political ethical dilemma concerning the truth of history and the untruth of US government protocol in the name of foreign policy politics.

Author: **John M. Evans**
 Publisher: **Gomidas Institute**
 Format: **Hardcover**

NEW

Come Into My Kitchen

Item Number: 033 \$32.00



In *Come Into My Kitchen*, first-time author Dorothy Ajdaharian-Arakelian includes her favorite Armenian and international recipes, inspired by her family's culinary traditions. From suggested guides for an elegant dinner party for four or forty, to simple short-cuts for the busy parent, Arakelian transforms a wealth of culinary expertise into easy-to-follow instructions for the novice cook or seasoned home-maker, while encouraging readers to experiment with seasonings and flavors to adapt the recipes in her book to one's personal preference.

Author: **Dorothy Arakelian**
 Publisher: **Xlibris**
 Format: **Hardcover**

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AGBU orphans making socks at the Abroyan Factory in Beirut, 1920s.
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