

# AGBU

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## Jerusalem: Reclaiming Our Inheritance

*What's at stake for the Armenian presence  
in the most hotly contested city on earth*



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# Editorial

**A**s we approach the end of a banner year for Armenians, the world is being exposed to Armenian culture and history as never before. This past October, presidents, prime ministers and foreign delegations from 84 Asian, African, European, North and South American nations landed in Yerevan for the Francophonie Summit, the largest international summit held on Armenian soil. All year long, record numbers of international tourists visited both the capital and Armenian countryside, providing a much needed boost to the local economy. At the world-renowned Metropolitan Museum in the heart of New York City, the *Armenia!* exhibition opened to much fanfare, as well as critical acclaim in the media. It continues to attract hundreds of thousands of visitors, many of whom are discovering Armenia's ancient identity and rich heritage for the first time.

The impressive efforts to bring the Armenian story to the attention of the world should be commended by all Armenians, but let us not forget a vital chapter in our collective history that is all too often overlooked. For this we must turn to the first and foremost platform for global exposure of the Armenian contribution to civilization, and that is the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem.

In this issue of *AGBU News Magazine*, we celebrate the pivotal role of the centuries-old Armenian presence in the Holy Land, a golden thread that has shaped our Christian faith and helped preserve our identity through the most turbulent times for our nation. After 51 years

under Israeli rule, unresolved territorial conflict and persistent challenges to its authority and lands, the Armenian Jerusalem community has sustained much collateral damage, leaving the future of a once-thriving community uncertain. Our feature profile of the community and its current challenges is followed by an exclusive and frank interview with the Armenian Patriarch, His Beatitude Nourhan Manougian.

In this issue, we also take stock of Armenia's cultural capital, the city of Gyumri, thirty years after the devastating earthquake in 1988. President Armen Sarkissian pens a heartfelt open letter to Gyumri, describing all the reasons why this city means so much to him personally and to the Armenian Nation collectively.

Thirty years have also passed since the founding of the Artsakh Liberation Movement. As part of the progress achieved over the past three decades, we focus on the rebirth of the region's agriculture sector as part of a winning strategy for a sustainable economy. The steady progress realized in both Gyumri and Artsakh is a powerful tribute to the indomitable Armenian spirit that continues

to triumph over tragedy.

With a new year upon us, the international spotlight will continue to focus on Armenia in the aftermath of the recent parliamentary elections. In the months ahead, we will be closely following the progress of this critical process that will determine the future prosperity of our nation.

Sincerely,



**Berge Setrakian**  
President





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*Artsakh's agriculture industry is on the upswing—one independent farmer at a time.*



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# Saving the Crown Jewel

*Why the future of the Armenian World's most  
coveted address hangs in the balance*

By **DANIEL HALTON**





**A**long the narrow stone-covered streets, winding alleyways and ancient chapels inside Jerusalem's walled city, one of the oldest Christian communities in the world sets out to observe a sacred rite, just as it has for the past 1,700 years. The procession of the Brotherhood of St. James, a monastic order of the Armenian Apostolic Church, solemnly marches past the gates of the Old City on its way to a fountain known as St. Philip's Spring. Beneath a Roman apse, the clergy gather before the very same pool of water in which it is believed the apostle Philip baptized an envoy of the Queen of Ethiopia as recounted in the New Testament, one of the seminal moments in the spread of Christianity throughout the world.

On this day, however, the public ceremony is also intended to convey a clear message. "This property belongs to the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem," declared Father Baret Yeretsian, head of the Patriarchate's real estate office. "This is why we are coming here, to perform the services, to keep the tradition alive and to make sure history will stay intact."

In a divided city in which every parcel of land is highly coveted and fiercely contested, such vigilance is not unfounded. According to the municipality of Jerusalem, St. Philip's Spring and the vast

expanse of land surrounding it hold archeological value and thus fall under the jurisdiction of the municipality. Under an agreement between the Jerusalem Development Authority, the Israel Antiquities Authority, and Israel's Nature and Parks Authority, and over the objections of the Armenian Patriarch, more than half of the church's 53 acres of land were appropriated by the municipality and declared part of the Jerusalem Park, which surrounds much of the city.

lly significant spring belonging to the Armenian Patriarchate is, at best, one more chapter in a decades-long saga of marginalization of the Armenian presence in Jerusalem. At worst, it is a cautionary tale as to what is at stake for the Armenian nation should this insidious trend continue.

#### **What's at stake**

Situated between Jaffa and Zion Gates in the southwest corner of the walled Old

***"Outside of the homeland, Armenian Jerusalem is inarguably the best advertisement for our ancient culture. Every year 3.5 million visitors to Israel are exposed to the marvels of Armenian art, religion and culture."***

Although the Mayor of Jerusalem and Israeli government officials stood beside members of the Armenian Patriarchate during the official ceremony to re-open the newly renovated spring, coverage of the event in the Israeli media made scant mention of the long-held Armenian ownership of the entire property. There was also no mention that remnants of an ancient Armenian church were recently unearthed by Israeli archeologists.

This recent appropriation of the bib-

City, adjacent to the Wailing Wall and the Al-Aqsa mosque, the Armenian Quarter occupies one-sixth of the city's 220 acres of land, equivalent to one quarter of a city divided along religious, cultural and historical lines. This disproportionately large area, compared with Catholic, Muslim and Jewish Quarters, has allowed the

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*A view of the Spring of St. Philip, locally known as Ein Haniya spring, in the Judean Hills on the outskirts of Jerusalem.*



Armenian community to occupy a unique and enviable position.

This is largely due to the fact that the Armenian Patriarchate is home to some of the most venerated religious real estate and priceless antiquities in the world. This includes the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the holiest place in Christianity where it is believed Jesus was crucified and resurrected. The heart of the community is the Armenian Patriarchate, located within the 12th Century Armenian Monastery of St. James, known as the St. James Cathedral, a repository of one-of-a-kind liturgical objects and artistic treasures, dubbed the “treasure chest” of the Old City. (Take a mini-tour on page 24.)

The Patriarchate also bears title to the Monastery of the Holy Archangels, the St. Thoros Church, Sts. Tarkmanchats High School, the Armenian Theological Seminary, the Gulbenkian Library, the Mardigian Museum, the Jinishian Clinic, a bookstore, and the oldest and still operating printing press in the Holy Land. “The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem is one of the richest and probably most significant living Armenian institutions in the world. The Patriarchate is the depository and custodian of an enormous religious and cultural heritage,” observed Hratch Tchilingirian, Professor of Armenian Studies at Oxford University.

Over the centuries, Armenian pilgrims—from peasants to princesses—have donated religious and cultural artifacts to the monastery. The Patriarchate holds the second-largest collection of ancient Armenian manuscripts in the world and remains an important center of Armenian learning and scholarship.

Renowned for their Christian faith and piety, the Armenians of Jerusalem are also recognized for many significant contributions to Christianity throughout history. Some of the oldest Christian hymns performed to this day are derived from 4th century traditions in the Armenian and Greek Orthodox churches. Over the ensuing centuries, Armenian monks and pilgrims built several monasteries, becoming the founders of desert monasticism in Palestine. During the Crusades, the first three Queens of Jerusalem—Arda, Morphia and Melisende—were born to Armenian royal families.

Throughout the ages, the faithful carefully transcribed every sermon, compiling an extraordinary collection of holy scriptures that continue to provide scholars and theologians with an invaluable source for



*Above: Armenian clergy perform a prayer service at the Holy Archangels Church in the Armenian Quarter. Below: A man takes cover from the rain as he walks past St. James Street.*



interpreting the Bible. The Patriarchate has also educated and trained thousands of clergymen who have not only served in the Holy Land but throughout the vast Armenian diaspora.

### Lessons of history

Armenians living within the walls of the Armenian Quarter and beyond claim that the story of the St. Philip Spring is one more sign of the mounting challenges that have put their once vibrant presence in jeopardy. However, to assess the extent of these challenges for the global Armenian identity, one

is reminded of similar crisis points over two millennia of conflict and conquest, persecution and hardship. At virtually each point, the Armenians of Jerusalem prevailed, successfully preserving a continuous and unshakable presence in the Holy Land.

For example, when other religious leaders fled foreign conquest during the Byzantine era, the Armenian Patriarch stood steadfast, much to the admiration from other Christian sects and Muslim leaders, including the first sultan of Egypt and Syria, Saladin, whose forces vanquished the Crusaders in 12th century



*Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem Nourban Manougian, and clergy members, lead the ceremony of the Washing of the Feet at the St. James Armenian Cathedral.*

Jerusalem yields mixed emotions. Inside many of the Armenian homes he visited, he says he was surprised to hear how much Hebrew and Arabic were spoken. "It is very sad to see that we are losing our beautiful language," he lamented. "And the community is lacking the necessary number of qualified teachers and resources to do much about it."

Armenians living in Jerusalem are also constrained by their lack of official status. Since the annexation of Arab East Jerusalem (which includes the Old City), Armenians are designated only as permanent residents. They are prohibited from accessing citizenship and from obtaining passports that are reserved for their Jewish neighbors. Instead they are issued residency permits or travel documents, despite being born in Jerusalem. The lack of official citizenship status leaves them at the mercy of the Israeli bureaucracy, which has in the past revoked permits or refused to grant re-entry to those who have emigrated.

Although the Patriarchate is the guarantor of the Armenian presence in the Holy Land, it neither has the mandate nor the capacity to maintain a vital lay community. Its primary mission is the

Palestine. "The Byzantine presence in Jerusalem was just as much Armenian as it was Byzantine," affirms historian Abraham Terian, Professor Emeritus of Armenian Theology at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.

### **Community at a crossroads**

Over the past seventy years, however, the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict and Israeli government policies aimed at expanding Jewish territory led to a gradual economic decline, rising unemployment and lack of security in the community. As a result, a steady stream of Armenians over the years has migrated to more secure and prosperous countries, including Australia, Canada, Europe and the United States, thereby threatening the viability of the Armenian Quarter.

Migration has taken a visible toll on the community. Factories and businesses once owned by Armenians have long since disappeared. Once thriving social clubs sit practically empty and are open for only a few hours a day. Young Armenians have very little prospects of building successful careers and raising a family if they remain. Even finding an Armenian spouse is problematic. Under Israeli law, non-Jews living in neighboring Arab countries are prohibited from immigrating to Israel, thereby severely limiting the potential for marriage partners among an already small pool. Isolated

from their fellow Armenians in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, the Armenian community of Jerusalem has witnessed increasing rates of intermarriage with Christian Arabs. At the St. Tarkmanchats school, nearly a third of the students are Arab-Armenians.

"Walking through the streets of the



*Ceramic art by Nshan Balian in the courtyard of the St. James Armenian Cathedral.*

Old City, breathing the air, you are just mesmerized and humbled by all the history before you," says Vartan Abdo, the founder and director of *The Armenian Radio Hour of New Jersey and Parev-TV*. Born and raised in Jaffa before moving to the United States, Abdo says returning to

custodianship of the Holy Places and the administration of the patriarchate to fulfill that responsibility. It requires skilled leadership and diplomacy, along with human and financial resources. “This is not an easy task by any means,” says Prof. Tchilingirian, who studied in Jerusalem as a teenager. However, he notes, “over the last 800 years, the Patriarchate has dealt with many rulers, empires, states and governments and has seen them come and go. As such, it has deep institutional experience and knowledge of the past.”

One of the Patriarchate’s more important responsibilities is to preserve the invaluable treasures and sacred objects within its walls. Necessary renovations such as the current work to restore the Mardigian Museum, require both resources and outside expertise. In particular, there are longstanding concerns about the condition of the priceless Armenian manuscripts housed in the St. Thoros Church, which have suffered from neglect and possible moisture from the well below the church.

At the same time, the Patriarchate is facing an onslaught of outside pressure, including aggressive property acquisition and harassment by hardline Jewish settlers



*The old Seminary Building overlooking the soccer field.*

and organizations determined to increase the Jewish presence in the Old City. In February, the Jerusalem City Council issued an unprecedented demand for nearly \$200 million in taxes from the Armenian, Greek and Roman Catholic churches, despite a long-held tradition exempting religious institutions from paying tax. In protest, the denominations closed the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for three days, during which thousands of Christian pilgrims were locked out. The closure was lifted after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to suspend the demand for taxes while

establishing a committee to study the issue. However, the dispute is far from resolved.

The Churches are also waging a battle against a proposed law that would allow the Israeli government to expropriate any church lands sold or leased on the commercial market. While Netanyahu temporarily suspended the draft legislation in the spring, the Israeli parliament is now reconsidering the bill that has the support of 40 members of the Knesset.

According to Church leaders, both the

## The Special Status of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem

**T**he Brotherhood of the Order of St. James dates back to the 7th century, when the Armenian presence in the Holy City was cemented with the appointment of the first Armenian bishop, later to bear the title of Patriarch. Over the centuries, successive ruling powers of the Holy Land have granted the Patriarchate certain rights and responsibilities, ultimately resulting in it holding a special status known in Eastern Orthodox tradition as *autocephalous*. This means that the Patriarchate is not subject to the authority of an external higher-ranking patriarch or archbishop.

At the same time, the Patriarchate, as a member of the Supreme Spiritual Council, the ecclesiastical governing body of the Armenian Apostolic Church presided over by the Catholicos of All Armenians, practices the same spiritual tenets and religious doctrines as the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin in Armenia. Recently, His Holiness Catholicos Karekin II, who has visited the Patriarchate on multiple occasions,



*His Holiness, along with His Eminence Abp. Nourhan, then Grand Sacristan (now the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem), during the Hrashapar (Welcoming) service at St. James Armenian Cathedral in 2010.*

spoke to its significance in the context of Armenian religious identity and heritage preservation.

“The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and St. James Brotherhood have for centuries carried out the mission of maintaining the Holy Sites and preserving the Armenian Christian identity in the heart of the Middle East.” His Holiness also described the connection between Jerusalem and Etchmiadzin as interwoven through their spiritual mystery and significance. “Etchmiadzin stands at the roots of our biblical heritage, extending its gaze from Mt. Ararat towards Jerusalem at Mount Zion, the City of God. Both are holy ground, both sanctified by sacred tradition, and both spiritual reflections of Divine presence. Just as it has throughout the centuries, Holy Etchmiadzin continues to support the unique mission of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. All Armenians of faith are encouraged to find ways to help ensure the perpetual Armenian presence in the center of the Christian world.” **A**

proposed law and demand to pay taxes are part of a well-established pattern of targeting Christians and their lands. They say their clergy are increasingly being harassed and intimidated by militant Jewish settlers. Armenian priests, like their Greek counterparts, have been verbally abused and spat at while church property continues to be vandalized. The Greek Patriarch, Theophilos III, recently told *The Guardian* newspaper: “We have witnessed the desecration and vandalism of an unprecedented number of churches and holy sites and receive growing numbers of reports from priests and local worshippers who have been assaulted and attacked. Where the authorities are concerned, this behavior goes largely unchecked and unpunished.”

Amidst growing concern the Christian presence in Jerusalem is gradually being eroded—collateral damage in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians—Armenians in Jerusalem are worried that without a vital community to defend itself, they stand to lose more precious territory, and with it, their Armenian heritage.

The present Patriarch, Nourhan Manougian, along with Pope Francis and other Christian leaders, has called for a commitment to maintain the Status Quo, based on a mid-nineteenth century agreement that protects and guarantees access to the holy sites in Jerusalem and



*The main square of the Armenian Quarter.*

elsewhere. The agreement also allows Christians to live and worship in peace despite ongoing conflicts.

“In the coming months and years, the situation of the Armenians in Jerusalem and the Patriarchate in particular might become even more critical, especially in view of the virtual collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and increasingly, unilateral steps taken by the sides on the conflict,” says Prof. Tchilingirian.

### **Rallying behind Jerusalem**

While the Patriarchate has grown accustomed over the centuries to operating

independently, it will need the active support of the Armenian Church, government, and diaspora around the world to overcome the myriad challenges ahead. The Patriarchate’s few dozen members are stretched thin providing religious services in the Holy Places. Its supporters are urging the Patriarch to seek reinforcements. Given that the institution cannot recruit from the Arab world, the majority of the clergy come from Armenia. As used by the Franciscan Order of Monks, a sign-up sheet for clergy around the world to serve a year or two in Jerusalem would attract talented priests, especially from Europe and North America. The help would relieve the burden on the current clergy and their presence.

Outside of the homeland, Armenian Jerusalem is inarguably the best advertisement to the world for our ancient culture. Every year over 3.5 million visitors to Israel are exposed to the marvels of Armenian art, religion and culture. This bestows an incalculable prestige upon a country of just 3 million people.

For its part, there is considerably more the Armenian government could do to take advantage of this golden opportunity to promote its culture and values on a global stage. In addition to financial support to help the Patriarchate maintain and preserve its historic real estate and invaluable collection of manuscripts and artifacts, it could also provide diplomatic and legal expertise to protect the legal status of the Patriarchate. That status is guaranteed by international conventions such as the Paris Peace Conference of 1856, the Congress of Berlin in 1878 and the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. As one of the three custodians of the Holy Places, along with the Greeks and Franciscans, the Armenian Patriarchate holds a semi-diplomatic

## **Jerusalem: The First Armenian Diaspora**

**T**he origins of Jerusalem’s Armenian community date to the early centuries of the Common Era, when Armenian administrators, merchants and artisans from historical Armenia reached Palestine during Roman times. By 355 A.D., after Armenia became the first nation to adopt Christianity as a state religion, Armenian pilgrims began establishing permanent roots in what is today the oldest living Armenian community outside the homeland.

The Armenian community of Jerusalem played a crucial role when it provided a haven for thousands of Armenian refugees and orphans after the 1915 Genocide. “When we were deprived of the cradle of our culture, Jerusalem was the place where much of that cradle was maintained when it was lost in historic Armenia,” explains Prof.

Terian, an authority on the Armenian presence in Jerusalem.

In the decades that followed, the Patriarchate provided spiritual nourishment while gradually establishing services to tend to the long-term needs of the lay community, including a school in 1929 to accommodate the growing number of youth.

During the Arab-Israeli wars beginning in the 1940s, thousands more Armenian refugees sought sanctuary in the Armenian Quarter. At its peak, the community was housed free of charge by the Patriarchate. Unlike conventional monasteries, lay people live alongside the monks in the 28-acre St. James Monastery. They participate in sports clubs, scouts, and social and cultural organizations such as Homenetmen, Hoyechmen and Paresirats. **A**

status with the election of its Patriarch being affirmed by the Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian authorities. Armenia could play a vital role in protecting and even enhancing the interests of the Armenian Patriarchate in inter-state relations and in the international arena.

For centuries, the global Armenian diaspora has supported the Patriarchate of Jerusalem with financial contributions and gifts. There is also, however, a wealth of legal, political, archeological, financial, and art history expertise available to help the Patriarchate maximize the value of its real estate, museums and libraries. Among many gains, the potential to greatly increase tourism to the Armenian Quarter is evident.

If more Armenian diasporan organizations sponsored pilgrimages and tours—not once every few years but on a regular basis—it would send a powerful message to the Israeli government that Armenians in the rest of the world have not forgotten this precious community. As Abraham Terian has argued, “the fact that this long-standing Armenian community, the oldest, earliest and most important diaspora, has reached this far, means that it is incumbent upon all diasporan Armenians to rally behind Jerusalem because as Jerusalem goes, so goes the rest.”

The sentiment is shared by many throughout the Armenian Quarter and among its former residents in the diaspora. “Many Armenians fail to realize or have forgotten that we have used the resources of the Patriarchate and benefitted from its unconditional support over the years, but in return we did not give anything back,” echoed Vartan Abdo. “It is very important for the small community that remains to see more Armenians in the diaspora visit and know that they are valued. And the Israeli government takes note.”

A pillar of Armenian civilization that has stood for nearly 1,700 years, the Armenian community of Jerusalem is a source of great pride for Armenians around the world. Over the centuries it has faithfully nurtured and preserved Armenia’s ancient Christian identity, helped the nation recover from the major setbacks and served as a vital stepping-stone for diasporan communities from Argentina to Australia. All Armenians have a vested interest in the preservation of this precious heritage. It is incumbent upon each and every one of us to lay claim to this crown jewel to ensure it continues to shine its light upon the world. **A**

## The Armenian Presence in Jerusalem

*Armenian Church and community property in and out of the Old City*



### Holy Sites

- St. James Cathedral
- St. Thoros Church
- Holy Archangels Church
- St. Savior’s Church
- St. Gregory the Illuminator Church
- St. Philip Church and Spring



### Shared Custodianships Under “Status Quo”

*(With Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches)*

- Church of the Holy Sepulchre
- Church of the Nativity
- Tomb of the Virgin Mary, Garden of Gethsemane
- Sanctuary of the Ascension, Mount of Olives



### Community Buildings

*(Within Patriarchate Complex)*

- Sts. Tarkmanchats High School
- Gulbenkian Library
- Bookstore
- Clinic
- Social Clubs (3)
- Sports Fields (2)
- Clergy Residence
- Lay Residence
- Seminary
- Museum
- Clergy Bakery/Restaurant
- Patriarchate Building
- Old Patriarchate Building
- Patriarchate Offices



### Commercial Retail Space

- Mardig Supermarket
- Sandrouni Ceramics
- Armenian Ceramics Gallery
- Boulghourji Restaurant
- Vic’s Armenian Art Studio
- Hagop Antreassian Armenian Pottery
- Gejegoushian Souvenirs
- Various office buildings and retail stores in West Jerusalem



### Parks and Gardens

- Cows’ Garden
- Christ Church Garden
- St. Savior’s Garden
- Baron Der



### Notable Antiquities

*(Partial List)*

- 4,000 Illuminated Manuscripts at St. Thoros Church
- Napoleon’s Tent (from Palestine Campaign)
- Sceptor of King Hethoum I of Cilicia (1215-1270)
- Prime Minister of Louis XV Letter to Patriarch Gregory the Chainbearer (1739)
- 5th Century Artavan Mosaic Pavement (on Mount of Olives)
- First World Map with Armenian Characters (1695)
- Throne of St. James the Lesser (1656)
- Carved Door to Secret Passage (Egyptian)
- Wrought-Iron Fences (1796)
- Wooden Doors of Kikhateer Chapel (1731)
- Ceramic Kutahya Lanterns (1740)
- Kutahya Tiles (1719)
- Gold Chalis for Patriarch Gregory the Chainbearer (1749)
- Cope of Patriarch Gregory Baron Der
- Filigree and Enamel Cross (1747)
- Crown and Miter of Patriarch Gregory the Chainbearer



### Independently Owned Armenian Businesses

- Photo Garo Studio
- Garo Photo Studios
- George and Dorin Sandrouni Ceramic Centre of Jerusalem
- Semerjian Souvenirs
- Hagop Shohmelian Jewelry store
- Sevan Jewelry and Souvenirs store
- Sevan Toy Store
- Manoogian Coiffure
- Hagop Demirdjian Souvenirs
- Darian Armenian Ceramics
- The Armenian Ceramics-Balian Ltd.
- Jerusalem Pottery

# Strength in Numbers

*Pilgrimages and tour groups send a powerful message that Armenian Jerusalem counts*

**F**rom the early centuries, the road to the Holy Land has seen a continuous flow of caravans of Armenian pilgrims in search of the cradle of their Christian faith. Nearly two millennia have since modernized the mode of travel, but the sacred tradition—a visible affirmation of faith—has remained virtually unchanged through the passage of time.

Inside the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, Armenian pilgrims celebrate the badarak in the grotto where Christ was born, just as their predecessors celebrated centuries ago. In the Shepherd's Field, where angels proclaimed the birth of Jesus, they participate in bible study. And in Jerusalem's Old City, as pilgrims retrace the steps of the Lord along the Via Dolorosa, or Way of the Suffering, into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where Christ was buried, history comes alive while they experience an intense spiritual re-awakening.

For Armenians, the Holy Land holds special meaning. As the oldest diaspora, it offers them an invaluable opportunity to connect with their influential history and Armenian identity, while laying claim to a precious shared inheritance. "There are two places every Armenian must visit at least once in their lifetime," says Father Mardiros Chevian, Dean of St. Nersess Armenian Seminary in New York. "One is Armenia of course and the other is Jerusalem. Every other destination in the world is secondary."

Over the past two decades, Father Chevian has organized numerous pilgrimages to Jerusalem in fulfillment of a promise he made to himself. In 1997, he signed up for a trip to Jerusalem as part of a seven-day promotional tour sponsored by the Israel America Foundation. On the sixth day, when he asked his Jewish guide why the magnificent St. James Cathedral in the Armenian Quarter was not on the itinerary, the guide replied: "Because it is not important." Appalled, Father Chevian abandoned the tour and the next day made his own way to the St. James Cathedral.

"Once I passed through the doorway of the St. James Monastery, I was in another world," he says. "Seminarists, surrounded by billowing incense, were singing sharagans, while Armenian boys and girls played in the courtyard. I realized then that it is a miracle that this

community survived against all odds. I vowed to return as often as possible to share the experience."

While, individually, Armenians have always been drawn to Jerusalem, following the earthquake in Gyumri and Armenia's independence, organized pilgrimages dwindled as the diaspora focused its attention and efforts on the homeland. The revival began in earnest in 2000, when the Eastern Diocese organized a 500-person pilgrimage for the new millennium. "Since then the number of tours have gradually increased year after year," says Father

hundreds of thousands of Armenians, given the wealth of its Armenian history and heritage. While the city is considered very safe and offers modern accommodations and excellent food, what has been lacking is publicity. Israeli officials are loathe to advertise to Christian pilgrims or invest in any non-Jewish tourism infrastructure, while the Armenian Patriarchate has not had the manpower to devote to the diaspora. Yet non-Armenian tourists, especially journalists and photographers, report that the Armenian clergy is not as welcoming to outsiders as a rule, perhaps



Norayr Kazazian, Principal of Jerusalem's Sts. Tarkmanchats High School and Director of the Gulbenkian Library. Today he estimates well over 1,000 Armenian pilgrims visit in groups annually, mostly from Armenia, North America and Europe.

The income generated from those pilgrimages helps sustain Jerusalem's small Armenian community that runs the market, hostels and souvenir shops. Increasing the number of organized pilgrimages—and not just during Orthodox Easter and Christmas—would ensure the continuation of the community, says Father Chevian. "I always instruct my tour groups to declare at the airport they are here to visit the Armenian community," he says. "The Israeli government must hear that over and over again because when many Armenians visit, it takes note. Numbers are very important."

Jerusalem has the potential to draw

*Three sisters on a pilgrimage organized by the St. James Armenian Church of Watertown, MA light candles in the Tomb of the Virgin Mary in Gethsemane.*

due the atmosphere of divisiveness and suspicion that permeates the city.

Father Chevian suggests that a committee—with a designated lead from Armenia, Europe and the United States—be created to work together to attract pilgrims to Holy land. "We must publicize it. I would love to see an Office of Tourism within the Patriarchate, and we need to replenish our ageing tour guides," he adds. "If we don't tell our own story, who else will?"

As the efforts to recount the story of Armenian Jerusalem are renewed, it is now up to the Armenian diaspora to heed the call, reviving a centuries-old tradition vital to the Armenian identity. **A**



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# The Gate Keeper

*His Beatitude Patriarch Nourhan Manougian shares his views on safeguarding the religious and cultural heritage of Armenian Jerusalem*

Interview by **JIRAIR TUTUNJIAN**

**S**ince 1900, Jerusalem has been presided over by four administrations—Ottoman, British, Jordanian, and Israeli. These sweeping changes in such a relative short time have caused major upheavals, wars and dislocation. Through each transition, the Armenian Patriarchate and the community had to mobilize their resources in order to overcome crisis, assert their authority to protect their territory and vigorously negotiate to the best of their ability to safeguard their interests and ensure their historic standing and status would not be compromised.

There have been periods of relatively successful transition and others marked by substantial difficulty, but in each instance the Armenian community and the Patriarchate have sustained some degree of collateral damage. With every transition, the governing authorities recreated a new administrative system, seeking to impose their own historical and religious legacy and most importantly, political agenda.

Over the past fifty years Jerusalem has occupied much of the international public spotlight over its flashpoints of conflict and unresolved issues regarding the future of the city, which has become increasingly polarized with each party determined to prove its legitimacy. There

is a constant need to assert oneself in a struggle not to be cast away by the current. Each side has its own narrative and definition, with a vested interest to question the status quo established in the 19th century during Ottoman rule. In the midst of this whirlpool of interpretations of daily reality, each party must be prepared to navigate up and down the stream.

It is only through a deep familiarity with this constantly changing landscape that one can better grasp the dynamics of this unique city.

**Q** Why is the historic Armenian presence in Jerusalem so important to the Armenian nation as well as world heritage today?

**A** The Armenian presence in Jerusalem is one of the most miraculous sagas of the Armenian people. Jerusalem is the oldest Armenian community outside Armenia. It has remained almost intact for almost 2,000 years. At the spiritual level, after the destruction of hundreds of Armenian monasteries during the Genocide of Armenians, it became the sole Armenian monastery which maintains, without disruption, the ancient Armenian monastic tradition in an international setting.

**Q** Speaking of heritage preservation, since any real estate in Jerusalem is a precious and contested resource, how challenging is it to maintain and protect the Patriarchate's lands from encroachment such as the St. Philip's Fountain

*His Beatitude Archbishop Nourhan Manougian, 97th Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, in his office within the Armenian Monastery of St. James.*



*Universally admired, the St. James Armenian Cathedral is one of the Patriarchate's most prized possessions.*

issue? Has that been resolved to your satisfaction?

**A** Most of our plots of land have been acquired around holy spots, such as the Garden of Gethsemane, Mount of Olives, Bethlehem (Nativity Church), and the Aceldama. In our recent political reality, there have been frequent master plans which have targeted our open plots of land. Often some of them are defined as Green Zone (meaning we have no right to build over it). Recently our land around St. Philip's Fountain was declared a national park. We lodged a strong

complaint and managed to guarantee that it does not lose its Armenian and Christian character.

**Q** We understand you are considering relocating the priceless Armenian manuscripts from the St. Thoros Church. Are they at risk of water damage or moisture from the well or any leaks?

**A** We have prepared a project to house the medieval illuminated manuscript collection of St. Thoros in ultra-modern conditions. The building will be within the premises of the Monastery of St. James. The present conditions at St. Thoros are not that reasonable and there is an immediate danger for their preservation. If St. Thoros manuscripts are moved, we have to

find alternative housing for some families currently living in the complex.

**Q** What about other priceless treasures such as paintings, mosaics and other antiquities? How are they being preserved and protected for posterity?

**A** The Armenian churches of Jerusalem have the biggest collection of sacred paintings numbering several hundred, and all need restoration. Other antiquity items receive constant attention including mosaics, one of which we are to move to the Mardigian Museum in order to save it. Also, the precious vestments need to be protected by moving them to safer location. For that reason, we are planning to have a new art gallery.



HADAS PARUSH

**Q** How important are tourism and pilgrimages for spreading the word about the Armenian Quarter and its contributions to history, religion and culture?

**A** Tourism and pilgrimage are two important channels that raise awareness about the Armenian presence in Jerusalem. In the last decade, there has been a marked rise in the number and quality of pilgrim groups. Once again, Jerusalem has become the destination of the Armenian faithful. Films, TV documentaries, books and magazines can play a big role to attract more visitors. The reopening and the refurbishment of the Mardigian Museum will be an important step in that direction. Visibility is one of our major goals.

**Q** What do you personally consider Armenian Jerusalem's most prized possession(s) and why?

**A** Our most prized possession in Jerusalem is the St. James Cathedral, a triumph of architecture which is universally admired. The next miraculous possession is the extensive Armenian Quarter—a spiritual fortress in the middle of an international city.

**Q** Given the well-documented conflicts among diverse stakeholders in Jerusalem, what do you see as the principal challenges and pressures facing the Armenian community in particular?

**A** It is no secret that we have been going through a long transitional period, which at times has been bumpy. In a conflict situation sometimes, you can be defined geographically. Our institutional and community interests sometimes face bureaucratic hurdles vis-à-vis the state ministries. The Patriarchate plays the traditional role of a mediator. Our job is to overcome administrative red tape and facilitate the dealings of the community with government offices as far as possible. Despite the volatility of the region, our priorities do not change although the emphasis may shift.

**Q** What is the state of relations between the Armenian Patriarchate and its interfaith community?

**A** We have cordial relations with the Latin [Roman Catholic] and Greek communities. Minor frictions do not impact our traditional good links. Muslims and Jews maintain a respectful relationship with Armenians as we have coexisted for centuries. We expect the Armenian world to look at us with legitimate pride, but in order to maintain such a presence we need support. That is why we founded this year the Order of St. James Knights to create an organic link with the Armenian people abroad.

**Q** Since 1948, the Armenian community in Jerusalem that once numbered 8,000 to 10,000 members has diminished considerably. How large is the community today and to what extent does that reduced size pose a risk to its ability to meet the challenges it faces and ensure it will prosper in the future?

**A** Our numbers have declined since 1948. Before 1948 almost 30,000 Armenians were in the Holy Land. Today, it is but a small fraction of that. Demography is a problem faced by most Christian communities in Jerusalem. We invest heavily to strengthen the infrastructure of the

community. We finance most of the institutions of the Armenian Quarter. There is no doubt that the gradual decline in the number of Armenian residents affects the functional life of the community. In the past, our numbers were replenished by newcomers from neighboring Arab countries but for the past 50 years that has not been possible for obvious political reasons.

**Q** Can you tell us more about other initiatives you are working on to improve the vitality of the Armenian community?

**A** In the cultural realm, we have resumed the publication of *Sion* journal which has attracted many scholars from abroad. We have organized Armenological conferences in the Gulbenkian Library. We are also reclassifying the archives. We plan to build a housing project for young Armenian couples on a plot belonging to the Armenian Patriarchate. We hope to be able to obtain a building permit from the Jerusalem municipality. Again, in the coming two years we will have a new Mardigian Museum and an art gallery in which only the works of Armenian artists will be displayed, so that visitors can become acquainted with the breadth of Armenian Art. We also hope to raise the number of Armenian pilgrims visiting the Holy Land.

**Q** How do you respond to general concerns in the Diaspora about the diminished size of the Armenian community and its unique position in Jerusalem? Do you feel enough is being done by the Patriarchate to meet these challenges and ensure the community will prosper in the future?

**A** As the fate of Jerusalem is not yet resolved internationally, we expect the Diaspora to closely follow developments (meaning political support for our challenges). It is not enough to be proud of the Armenian presence in Jerusalem. We expect follow up and lobbying for any future eventuality.

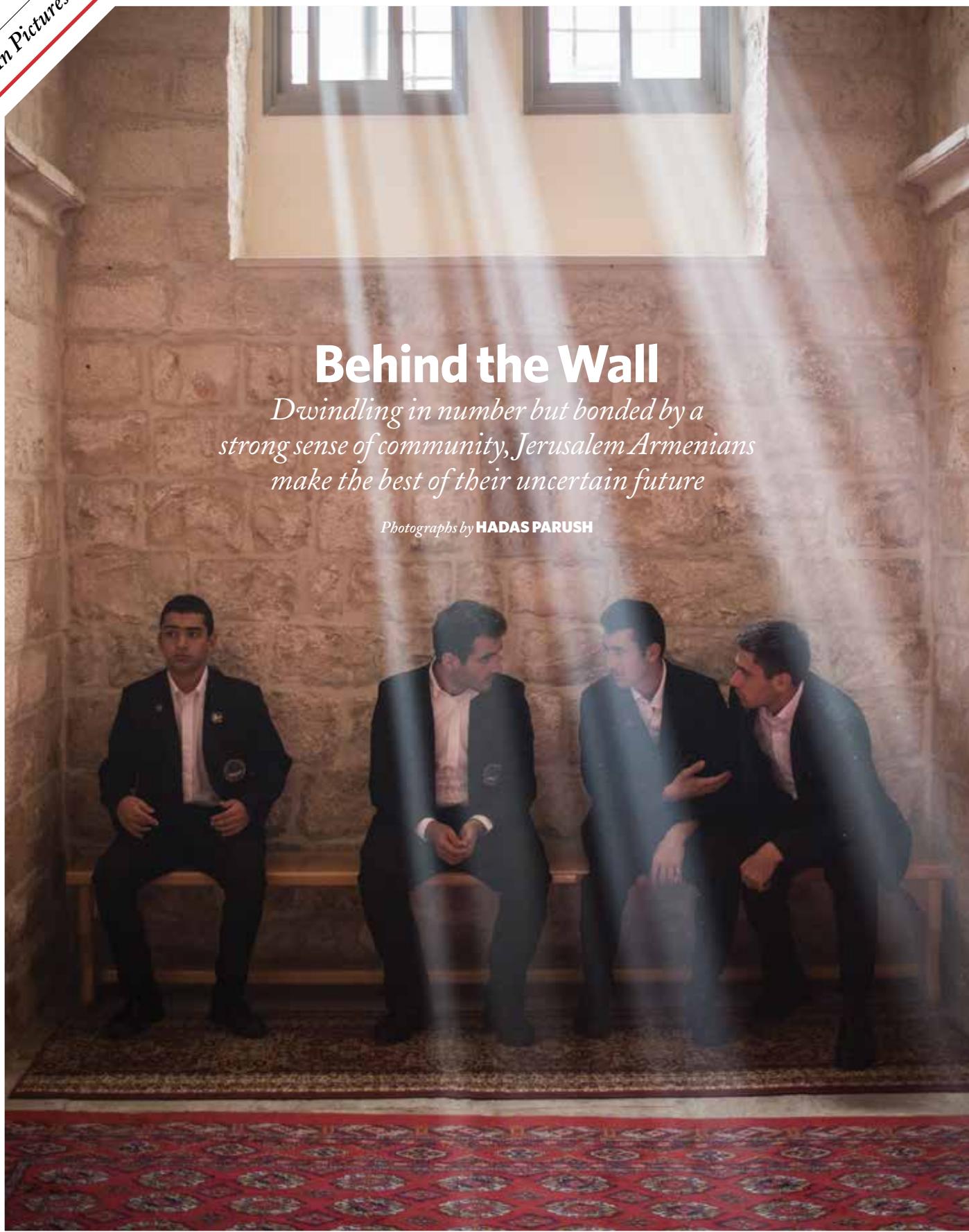
**Q** Is there anything the Diaspora can do to help address these issues?

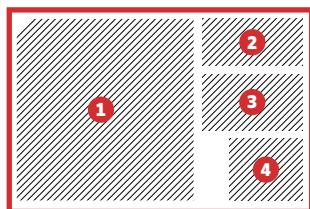
**A** As for the future we live in a legal limbo and relative vagueness. We need Armenia's and Diaspora's moral and political support. As we have a shortage of manpower, we would appreciate volunteers to lend a hand in different areas. Simply put, knowledge of our past isn't enough. We need heightened consciousness and vigilance on the part of the Diaspora to help keep our presence in the Holy Land inviolable. **A**

## Behind the Wall

*Dwindling in number but bonded by a strong sense of community, Jerusalem Armenians make the best of their uncertain future*

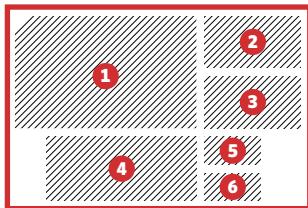
Photographs by **HADAS PARUSH**





**1.** Armenian seminary students seen after leading a prayer service at the Archangels Church in the Armenian Quarter. **2.** Armenians dance to Armenian beats during Easter Sunday celebrations at a community club. **3.** Armenian high school students prepare for their graduation ceremony at the Sts. Tarkmanchats High School. **4.** An Armenian tailor sews the black robes worn by Armenian priests in his workshop inside the convent.





- 1.** One-year-old Njteh Sevan is held by a priest during his christening ceremony at the Archangels Church.
- 2.** An Armenian seminary student receives a blessed orange from the Patriarch, a blessing symbolic for the New Year.
- 3.** Jerusalemite Armenian youth play music and sing together as they wait to meet visiting American Armenian youth at the school.
- 4.** Armenian Orthodox Christian worshippers take part in the Holy Fire ceremony at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
- 5.** Armenian men play Remmikub at the Hoyechman community club.
- 6.** School Principal Father Norayr blesses his students during their recess outside the school.





**Hadas Parush** is a photojournalist with Israel's leading photojournalism agency, Flash90. Based in Jerusalem, her documentary work explores themes of identity and belonging through the point of view of individuals as well as communities. Her photography is regularly featured in both Israeli and international media and has won numerous awards, including 2nd place in the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) Best Published Picture Story category in 2016. [A](#)

# Treasure Chest of Jerusalem

*St. James Cathedral inspires awe in all  
who enter its otherworldly realm*

By **JIRAIR TUTUNJIAN**

In the 18th century, French traveler Le Sieur Turpetin described the 12th century St. James Armenian Cathedral of Jerusalem as “one of the most beautiful churches in Levant” while British author W.H. Bartlett proclaimed it “one of the most sumptuous in the East and in many ways a repository of Armenian art.” Two centuries later, novelist-essayist Aldous Huxley wrote: “The

great church glows like a dim religious merry-go-round. In all of Jerusalem it was the only oasis of cheerfulness.”

Visitors from far and wide are drawn to this wonderland of historic, spiritual and artistic marvels secluded behind the gates of the Armenian Quarter. Here is a mini-tour of the priceless gems contained in what some consider the centerpiece of Armenian Jerusalem’s national inheritance.

- 1 Sourp Kikhateer Chapel.** Under the tiny chapel’s ornate altar lies the head of St. James the Major, the first martyr-apostle. He was beheaded in 44 A.D. by order of Herod Agripas. The shrine is covered by a red circular stone. Its 18th century wooden doors are inlaid with mother-of-pearl and tortoise shells.
- 2 Main Altar.** The vast and gilded structure stands atop the burial place of St. James the Lesser, brother of Christ and the first bishop of Jerusalem. The elevated altar is covered with paintings of saints and martyrs.
- 3 Oil Lanterns.** There are more than 300 olive-oil burning lanterns, mostly concentrated at the centre of the edifice. They were made by Armenian craftsmen and donated by pilgrims.
- 4 The Cruciform Edifice.** This fine example of medieval Armenian architecture stands at the center of the cathedral. Four square pillars rise to form arches which support the dome with intersecting ribs. The cupola is a replica of the 10th century Church of Haghpad in Armenia.

**5 St. Stephen North Chapel.** One of the dozen or so chapels within the cathedral, St. Stephen’s is located in the north side of the building. For generations, community members have been baptized here in a font dominated by the cross and chains that Patriarch Krikor Chainbearer (Shghtayagir) wore in the 17th century as he traveled across the Diaspora to raise money for the near-bankrupt Armenian Patriarchate. In 2015, the daughter of Kim Kardashian and Kanye West was baptized here.



**6 Ancient Oil Paintings.** A constellation of close to 100 paintings of saints, martyrs, demons, cherubs, Christ and God cover the walls. Due to oxidization caused by soot, heat, olive oil vapor, and perspiration, the paintings are very dark. With the help of Italian restorers, the Patriarchate is working to return these masterpieces to their original luster.

**7 The Throne of St. James the Lesser.** Facing the main altar is this engraved wooden canopy embedded with mother-of-pearl and turtle shells. Constructed in 1656, the throne is unoccupied year round except on St. James Day when the Patriarch officiates a special ceremony. ❧





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# Fascinating Facts About Armenian Jerusalem

By **JIRAIR TUTUNJIAN**

**W**ith a presence in Jerusalem spanning nearly 17 centuries, the depth and breadth of the Armenian community's contribution to Christendom has been obscured under the weight of recent history. Forgotten amidst the international focus on the unresolved conflict between its Jewish and

Muslim neighbors, the Armenian Quarter is an historic treasure and symbolic representation of the Armenian diaspora worldwide.

Here are but a few of the many hidden clues, curiosities and colorful characters that help bring the fascinating story of Armenian Jerusalem to life.



Maymar Sinan

## City Wall Built by an Armenian

Armenian architect Sinan (1489-1588) was responsible for building the wall of the Old City. As chief Ottoman architect, he oversaw the construction of more than 300 structures. He circled Jerusalem with a 4-km wall including thirty-four watchtowers and seven gates.

## Armenian Alphabet

The oldest (427 CE) copy of the Armenian alphabet is in Jerusalem.



## Caliph's Pick

When Caliph Omar Ibn Abd al-Khattab (634-644) conquered Jerusalem in 638, he installed Abraham as Patriarch of the Armenians. Abraham also became the leader of the Eastern Churches (Assyrians, Copts, Ethiopians, and Jacobites).



**James X 2**  
 For centuries, the name St. James (Jacques) Armenian Cathedral has been incomplete. It should be Sts. James because two saints named James are buried there: the head of St. James, brother of St. John; and St. James, brother of Jesus Christ.

**Christmas on January 18**

Armenians in the Holy Land celebrate Christmas on January 18 because two centuries ago, when they and Orthodox Churches celebrated Christmas on Jan. 6, Bethlehem's Nativity Church was crammed with Armenian, Greek, and Russian pilgrims. The simultaneous celebrations resulted in a cacophony of hymns. To resolve the problem, the Armenians delayed their celebrations to Jan. 18.



Bethlehem's Nativity Church



**The Unknown Soldier**

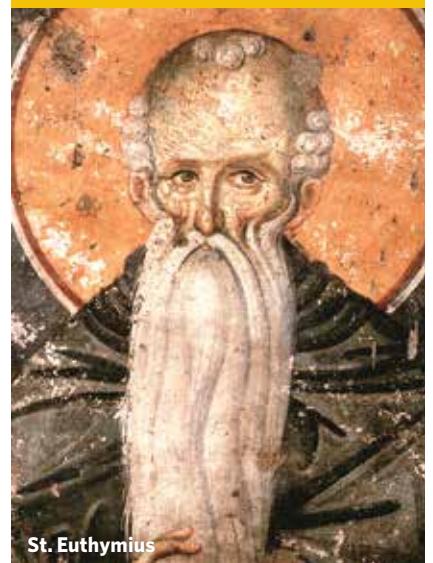
The first known monument to the Unknown Soldier was built by Armenians in the Musrara neighborhood, northwest of the city. It's in the chapel of St. Polyeucte, an Armenian officer of the Roman XII legion. The 6.30 meter by 3.90 meter mosaic features forty medallions which depict animals and flowers. The Armenian inscription reads: "To the memory, and for the salvation, of all those Armenians whose names are known to the LORD." The mosaic was made between 527 and 565.



**Jerusalem Cross**

The Holy Land's Catholic Patriarchate has a distinctive cross known as the Jerusalem Cross. It's a cross with four smaller ones around it. The "Catholic" cross is Armenian. Long before the Crusades, Armenians etched identical crosses on rocks and church walls in Armenia. The Crusaders saw the cross while passing through Armenian Cilicia. After conquering Jerusalem, they declared it their flag. Later the Catholic Patriarchate appropriated it.

**Head Hermit**  
 The founder of the monastic movement in the Holy Land was St. Euthymius (377-473), an Armenian hermit from Melitene/Malata.



St. Euthymius



# Artisan Dynasties

*Armenian master potters rule in Jerusalem's booming ceramics market*

By **JIRAIR TUTUNJIAN**

**W**herever you wander in the ancient streets of the Old City of Jerusalem you will come across exquisite street signs made of gleaming tiles. The blue on white signs, embedded in the walls, are in Hebrew, Arabic and English. The rectangular signs

have green leaf trim. The signs are the work of the Karakashian family—the legendary co-founders of the city's ceramics industry.

While the ceramic arts have been around for thousands of years, the industry is only a century-old in the Holy City. In 1918, the British, who had occupied Jerusalem the previous year, were looking for ceramic artists to repair the decaying

16th century tiles of the Dome of the Rock—the third-holiest shrine of Islam. Then serendipity dropped into the quest: a friend of Jerusalem's military governor bumped into master potter David Ohannessian in Aleppo. Ohannessian, a denizen of the ceramics centre of Kutahya, north of Istanbul, was a survivor of the Armenian Genocide. The



*One of Garo Sandrouni's magnificent plates.*

British authorities offered Ohannessian the contract to repair the Dome of the Rock tiles. He returned to Kutahya and hired ten Armenian ceramists and potters, including master painter Megerditch Karakashian and master potter Nshan Balian. For a variety of reasons (financial and political), the Ohannessian commission never took off. Instead, he opened a ceramics store in Jerusalem which operated until 1948. The Karakashians and the Balian formed a partnership and established Palestine Pottery. The partnership lasted until the mid-'60s when the offspring of the two pioneers went their separate ways but without rancor. The Karakashian brothers founded a workshop on Via Dolorosa, the path that Christ walked on while carrying the cross. (They've split since: Berj runs the Via Dolorosa store while Hagop owns Jerusalem Pottery in the Christian



Quarter.) The Balian have remained at their original location on Nablus Road. The business is run by Nshan Balian, the grandson of pioneer Nshan Balian.

While most of the "raw" ceramics and pottery are imported, Nshan Balian says his establishment is the only Jerusalem studio which produces its own ceramics and tiles "by methods handed down to us by our grandfather and parents." Nshan has studied mechanical engineering and ceramics engineering at Ohio University and a college in that state. An additional feather to the Balian cap is the achievements of his mother, Marie, who was a famous tile

*Master potter Nshan Balian standing in his studio/shop located in East Jerusalem.*

artist and had her work exhibited at The Smithsonian, in Alicante, Spain, and in Israel. Balian tile murals also decorate the lobby of Qatar's University Research Center.

Jerusalem souvenir store shelves are awash with Armenian ceramics. The Armenian ceramics are staple retail inventory, given their popularity among tourists. But the fact is 90 percent of the

*Artist Vic Lepejian in his shop located in the Armenian Quarter.*





*Self-taught artist Hagop Antreassian in his store located near Zion Gate.*

“Armenian ceramics” are not Armenian. They’re mostly made in Hebron—a town south of Jerusalem—by manufacturers who copy Armenian designs using screen, laser, and UV-printing to scan the image to the computer and then on the ceramics. The low-quality, mass-produced wares are lower priced than the hand-made Armenian creations. Because they’re machine produced, their colors

are dull, their lines not sharp, and they endlessly repeat the designs created by the Armenians. Lepejian says the imitations are “monotone block colors, sometimes not matching at all.” They also fade when they’re exposed to sunshine for long periods. To purchase the real thing, the discerning tourist has to head to the Armenian studio-workshops. “Tourists come to the Armenian Quarter especially for the ceramics, and usually the guide explains the difference between the fake and the original Armenian

work. The Armenians don’t sell their creations in other stores. We sell our products only in our studios.”

In the ‘70s and the ‘80s new blood was pumped into the Armenian ceramics industry when two young men entered the business. Vic Lepejian, who had an M.A. in fine arts from a university in Armenia, opened his workshop (Vic’s Armenian Art Studio) in 1975 on the Armenian Patriarchate Road. His designs were inspired by Armenian illuminated manuscripts, Armenian ornamental arts plus the traditional Kutahya images. In time, he diversified his work by doing portraits and ‘tapestries’ in ceramics. Lepejian has exhibited his work in Australia, England, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Spain, and the United States. His son, Bedros, and Irene Oerdegian, who each have twenty years of experience, work with him.

Self-taught Hagop Antreassian entered the business in 1980, investing two years to trial and error. While Armenian ceramic artists had been inspired by the designs in illuminated manuscripts, his inspiration came from childhood memories of visiting Armenian churches with his father.

*An assortment of vases on display in Nshan Balian’s shop.*





*Ceramics artist Garo Sandrouni working in his shop in the Armenian Quarter. His two brothers, Harout and George, also have their own ceramic establishments.*

He said he often adds his creative imprint to the illuminated manuscript motifs. Located across Zion Gate, his Armenian Pottery workshop-cum-studio displays ceramics which glow with cobalt blue, deep greens, and turquoise fauna and flora. One of the pleasures of visiting Antreassian's Armenian Pottery is watching him design and paint what will become part of his one-of-a-kind inventory. Antreassian also takes pains to explain what he does and how he does it.

In the early '80s three brothers (Garo, George, and Harout Sandrouni) joined the industry and now run their own establishments. The last person to join the industry was Arman Darian from Armenia. Since the Armenian artists go to the same source—illuminated manuscripts—for inspiration, they all feature birds and flora in wonderful compositions and in a variety of colors with blue dominating. Their creations also feature geometric designs.

The Sandrouni brothers, from the Gaza Strip, moved to Jerusalem in 1967.

Garo was a painter who in 1983 decided to enter the ceramics business and after two years of research and testing, opened his store (Armenian Ceramics Gallery), near the entrance to the Armenian Convent. Like the other Armenian ceramic artists, he and his wife, Sonia, design and paint ornaments, dishes, tiles, trays, vases, bowls, and hanging pieces. And like their Armenian colleagues, their inventory is 100 percent their own work. Forty percent of their creations are shipped to customers overseas. Their work has been exhibited in Israel, Jordan, and France. Garo has written a book in Armenian and in English about the Armenian community. He is busy now translating it to Russian for Russian-Armenian tourists. Garo's brother, Harout, has a studio-gallery (Armenian Art Centre) facing the entrance to the Armenian Convent while another brother owns the George and Dorin Sandrouni Ceramic Centre near New Gate. George and Dorin design, draw, paint, glaze and fire their products.

Some Armenian artists are annoyed by the copiers, but George Sandrouni doesn't mind. Their wall-to-wall presence has been beneficial to the promotion of Armenian ceramics, he says.

The Armenian ceramists have secure robust websites with access to online shopping. Customers can view and order pottery, tiles and other decorative ceramics for overseas shipping.

What's the future of the Jerusalem Armenian ceramics industry? Will the next generation continue the legacy? Lepejian, who is in his late sixties, has no plans to retire. He says, "When I retire, my son Bedros and Ms. Oerdegian will continue." Setrag Balian Jr., a fourth-generation Balian, is studying economics and management in Armenia. Two years ago, he was in Spain studying ceramics. He says, "My brother and I hope one day to take over the factory and continue the century-old family tradition...we hope to learn all the secrets of the trade." Antreassian, who has run his one-man operation since day one, says that his oldest daughter is interested in the business and would support her father by upgrading the marketing and branding of the workshop. Newcomers Berj Gejegoushian and his sons, who own several flourishing souvenir stores near Zion Gate, are taking steps to launch their own brand of ceramics. Lepejian says, "I hope we will find a way and continue. It's a mission." **A**

# The Lens of History

## *Garó Nalbandian's adventures as Jerusalem's most prolific photographer*

By **DANIEL HALTON**

**F**or more than half a century, Garo Nalbandian's camera has captured the heart and soul of Jerusalem. From celebrations of faith, conflict and politics, papal and presidential visits, archeological discoveries and ancient history, Nalbandian's catalogue of photographs is a chronicle of virtually every significant moment that has shaped the city from which he cannot part, enamored by the intersection of vibrant cultures and mystic beauty.

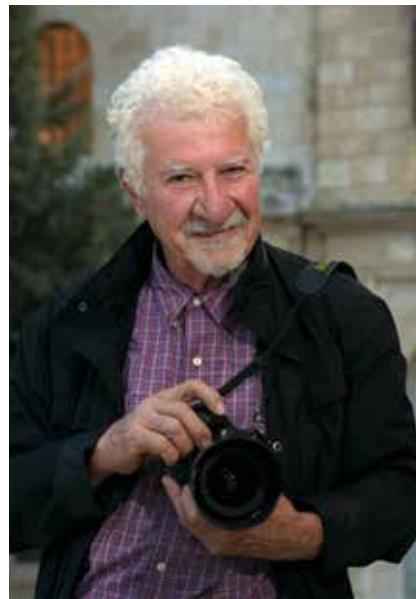
"I love Jerusalem," he declares enthusiastically. "As an Armenian, Christian Jerusalem is sacred, holy land and I am proud of my community and I want to share it with the rest of the world through my pictures."

Blessed with the energy and sense of wonder of a child, the gregarious photographer's white hair and beard are the only traces of six decades of experience. As a photographer, his natural talent and skill with a camera have carried Nalbandian to international renown, sought after by foreign news crews including from *CNN* and *ABC*, *Newsweek* and *National Geographic*, as well as from Armenian, Greek, and Muslim religious leaders alike. His work has also been featured in television documentaries, movies, and books, while filling the racks of scenic postcards in every souvenir shop in Jerusalem.

Born in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City in 1943, the son of Armenian refugees fleeing the Genocide, Garo began his photography career at the tender age of 13, as an unpaid apprentice at the Yergatian photography studio. His responsibilities consisted mainly of cleaning the studio and running errands, but he took advantage of every opportunity to assist the in-house photographers, eagerly teaching himself how to develop film and use a camera. Eventually his boss entrusted

Nalbandian to take over the residency at the studio, albeit still unpaid.

Nalbandian's first big break came not long afterwards when a journalist from the local Palestine newspaper called the studio urgently needing a photographer to cover the arrival of U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld. Despite being just 15 years old at the time, he picked up his cameras and went to the airport to cover the visit. Hammarskjöld noticed the



*Legendary photographer Garo Nalbandian has captured the history of Jerusalem for the past six decades.*

young photographer walking backwards in front of him among the throng of reporters and cameramen and stopped to ask Nalbandian whether his pictures would be any good. Garo confidently informed the Secretary-General of the United Nations that he would see for himself on the cover of the newspaper the next day! Of the dozen or more stills he took, indeed eight would be published. "Although my boss still didn't pay me, it

didn't matter because soon we had three times the number of calls and customers asking to do studio portraits," he recalled. "Soon other photographers began to recognize me and asked me to work with them. I remember I was making 8 dinars which was a lot at that time. I took 1 dinar for the whole month to pay for weekly expenses, sandwiches, and the cinema and I gave seven dinars to my father."

Within a few years, Nalbandian launched his own studio and became both a sought-after expert in processing and developing color film and a skilled photographer, recognized for the quality of his work. In 1961 he photographed the visit of the Russian Orthodox patriarch, publishing his pictures for the first time in *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines. Over the decades that followed, Nalbandian would be granted a privileged window on history, chronicling seminal chapters in the city's political, cultural and, especially, religious development. As the official photographer for the Catholic Custodian of the Holy Land, which together with the Greek and Armenian Patriarchates maintain the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Nalbandian's pictures of the historic visits of Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis, have been featured around the world.

He has also served as the Official Photographer for the Armenian and Greek Patriarchates and works closely with the Islamic Wakf or religious authorities in Jerusalem as well as the department of religious antiquities in Jordan. In each case, he is widely respected not only for his artistic portraits, but also his tact and discretion. When the Muslim Brotherhood wanted to record in pictures a closed conference, Nalbandian—a Christian Armenian—was entrusted over Arab photographers. "I take my job as a photographer very seriously," he says. "I am not there to listen and give away secrets and that is why they trust me." In the process,



1 A shepherd tends to his flock in Shepherd's Field, Beit Sabur. 2 Nalbandian's famed photograph of Bethlehem at dusk, the only known photo depicting the Moab Mountains in Jordan so clearly. 3 Pope Paul VI clasps hands with Patriarch Athenagoras of the Greek Orthodox Church in Istanbul.

Nalbandian has since amassed one of the largest individual archives of published photographs on Christian and Islamic ritual in Jerusalem—a treasure trove of historic material, some of which continue to be published in numerous books and journals around the world.

There is one constant that has motivated him throughout his career: his reputation for consistently producing the highest quality and most artistic

photographs. “Money does not matter to me. It has to be the best work,” he insists. “I could not live with myself if I took a bad photograph.” Even among award-winning pictures that have been featured in leading photography magazines, Nalbandian says there isn’t a picture of his where he does not think of some way it could have been improved.

The seasoned photographer is not only respected for the quality of his work, but has also been widely praised by news organizations around the world for his unparalleled connections, knowledge and instincts covering conflict and crisis as a photojournalist. Where other camera crews have been denied access, Nalbandian has always been able to persuade, cajole and negotiate entry to an otherwise closed meeting or

unique vantage point. He recalls following a protest during a visit of King Hussein of Jordan in 1967, Prince Hassan waving a machine gun at the press ordering them not to take pictures. Undeterred when the King walked by Nalbandian stood up and asked permission to take a photograph to which the King obliged.

Often at personal risk, where reporters have dared not venture, Nalbandian bravely sought to portray the often brutal reality of life in a war zone. “It’s important to me to reflect exactly the story as it happened, even it means taking risks. It is very difficult to witness the aftermath of an explosion up close when there are victims including women and children, images that television cameras don’t typically air, but it is important to show the true extent of the conflict.”



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1 *Prayer of the faithful rising to heaven inside the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.* 2 *Greek Patriarch Theophilos III presents Pope Francis with a gift inside the Church of Bethphage, Mount of Olives.* 3 *Bedouins ride camels at sunset in the Judea desert.*

While his Armenian background has helped open up many doors, as a photographer in Jerusalem, his job is perhaps more challenging than virtually anywhere else. Surrounded by communities in conflict and further complicated by official restrictions on non-Jewish residents, Garo had to wait close to 15 years to be issued an official press card. To this day, he is still not considered a citizen of the country in which he was born and has always lived. “I still don’t have citizenship

as an Armenian, I have a laissez-passez document and a Jordanian passport from 1967 that I keep renewing for foreign travel purposes.”

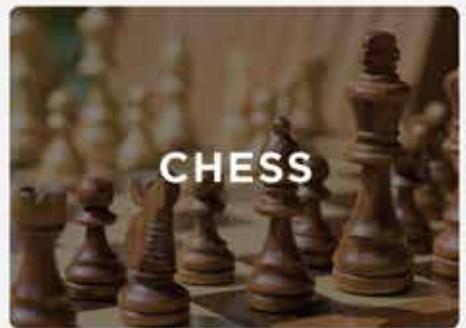
While he has watched with great sadness over the years his fellow Armenian friends and colleagues leave Jerusalem in search of a better standard of life in Europe and North America, Nalbandian has not once considered abandoning the community and city he loves, despite lucrative offers to work in the United States. When not on assignment, he can be found with his camera patiently waiting for just the right conditions to capture a stunning landscape of the city he calls home. Among his most famous photographs, there is one of Bethlehem clearly visible below the mountains of Jordan, bathed in the soft

glow of the late afternoon light when the haze that usually obscures the mountainous backdrop was momentarily lifted. He says he waited 8 years for just the right conditions and colors to capture the scene so vividly, a true labor of love.

After six remarkable decades behind a camera lens, capturing both the beauty and brutality of this ancient city, Nalbandian’s passion for his craft has never waned. Of all the historic events he has chronicled during that time, there is but one subject that has eluded his camera, one he dreams he will witness during his lifetime. “The most important thing for me that I wish is to see peace in Jerusalem.” Until then, this living treasure remains determined to make sure the history of his home is not forgotten. ■



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# The Gyumri I Know and Love



*President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian on a recent visit to Gyumri, known as the "City of Statues." To his left is a likeness of Armenian-American entrepreneur and philanthropist Kirk Kerkorian.*

December 7, 2018

## *An Open Letter to Gyumri from Armen Sarkissian, President of Armenia*

Dear Gyumri,

When you read these words, thousands of people, near and far, familiar and unfamiliar, will be paying tribute to the memory of the victims of that great tragedy that befell you, the earthquake of December 7, 1988. I will be among them, looking back intently on that horrific day when time stood still at exactly 11:41 am, changing your destiny forever.

But here we are thirty years later and one cannot look back without also looking forward. There can be no other way for you. You have too much to offer your country and the world. Too much old-world history to share with future generations. Too much pride and optimism with which to forge ahead into the future—renewed, restored and reinvigorated. I know this, not through the stories of others, but through my own experiences with you over the course of my life.

I was just a child when, in 1960, my father, a young but talented architect, introduced me to you. We explored the Akhurian River and the ruins of the ancient Armenian capital city of Ani just across your border. My father marveled over your distinctive architecture, from the black and red tufa stone arched buildings to yards, churches, and decorative details from both the good and bad Soviet times.

He wished me to know you, Gyumri, because his ancestors are connected to you. They originated in the province of Erzerum, from the town of Dsitogh. These are the same people that resettled on your lands in the 19th century, fleeing persecutions of Ottoman rulers on historical Armenian soil. He took me to your ethnographic museum Dzitoghtsyan House (Museum of Urban Life and National Architecture) which chronicles the life and times of a people from whom many of your inhabitants descend. They speak the language of our family's forebears—rooted in classic Western Armenian. This surely accounts for the disproportionate number of writers and poets that you have produced, like Avetik Isahakyan and Hovannes Shiraz. You are also home to the great sculptor Sergey Merkurov and Georgi Gurdjieff, the philosopher and composer. Even your traditional dress and folk dances can be traced to your position along the road from Erzerum, as a link connecting past to present.

My father also explained to me that you are a city of masters, an *Ustaneri Kaghak* he called you. To this day, you boast the finest of master craftsmen working metal, wood and stone. These *ustas* (proud masters) still use the traditional techniques and methods that add an authentic quality to your wares that cannot be found anywhere else—in or outside of Armenia.

How could I know then that, 28 years later, the Gyumri of my father would be overcome by disaster. It was a shock to the core that my father was spared, having passed away only four years after that first father-son bonding excursion that opened my heart to you.

Right after the earthquake, I, along with many of my colleagues, rushed to help you. We were not sure the government could do enough because of the scale of the disaster. There are no words to describe what we saw. But beyond all the destruction and tears, the beauty of Gyumri that I once saw in the eyes of my father somehow remained in my own mind's eye.

Eight years later in 1996, I returned to you, this time as your Prime Minister. Still, the remnants of your trauma were all around you. So I expected you to greet me with bitterness because our government, with its own setbacks due to war and the early pains of independence, had clearly fallen short of the attention you deserved. Yet, much to my surprise, you welcomed me with warmth and gratitude. Many of the survivors invited me to their porta cabins with a graciousness and hospitality I can never forget. Their offers of cake and drink, the songs they sang and poems they recited—against such stark and meager conditions—spoke volumes about that famous *Gyumretsi* generosity that will be your ultimate redemption.

Today, I am the President of Armenia, but Gyumri, I continue to think about you—first and foremost as an Armenian, as a person who knows well what Gyumri is, who the *Gyumretsi* is. Yes, I have had the privilege of visiting many of the world's old and new cities, all of which have their charms and attractions. But it is your unique character and purity of spirit that calls me back to you time and again.

This is why I challenge any foreigner who visits you—as well as our compatriots from Armenia, Artsakh and the Diaspora—to try and not fall in love with you.

I would like them to experience your tastes and smells, your distinctive customs and delicious cuisine, and the wit and wisdom of your people. I would suggest that they attend one of your churches in the morning, as I often do, followed by a visit to the market. I often stop for a cup of coffee in the café, discussing the good and the bad in the world with friends. When possible, I join them on the shores of the Akhurian River, a place that holds cherished memories of a young son and his father connecting with their ancestral past.

I also try to visit your old world craftsmen: blacksmiths, woodworkers, and potters. Then, of course, I am off to the old inns, where the language and conversation of Gyumri flourish, speaking the unique dialect and expressing your traditions and pride in the city.

Can you wonder why it is a source of pain and shame to me that less than 30,000 tourists visit you each year? That number should be tenfold! I believe it is everyone's duty here in Armenia and in the Diaspora, to do all we can to return you to your longstanding glory.

Of course, some would ask how you could accommodate as many as 300,000 tourists without first spending the money to create more restaurants, cafés and hotels. To that, I respond by suggesting day trips as a start. This alone will encourage investors to build, renovate and definitely restore your historic district. You see, it is your old-world authenticity that puts you at an advantage over Yerevan and other cities.

After all, the Yerevan of today has lost a large part of its history and heritage due to modernization. With the old city in Yerevan all but vanished, we must look to you, Gyumri, to fulfill our yearning to understand and appreciate our heritage. Many of your buildings are old, but they are historical-cultural buildings, each one very valuable, possessing its own specific attributes. I, for one, intend to take part in any building's reconstruction. I encourage others with the means and opportunity to join me.

These days, anyone from Yerevan can take a drive on the North-South highway, reaching you in as little as 45 minutes. So I ask myself, why on earth can we not take our children and family on a day or weekend excursion to Gyumri, when more than one million tourists from Armenia visited the Republic of Georgia last year alone? Consider too that a \$500 USD vacation in Georgia multiplied by one million people generates \$500 million in tourism revenues. Such ample resources could restore you, Gyumri, to greatness in record time.

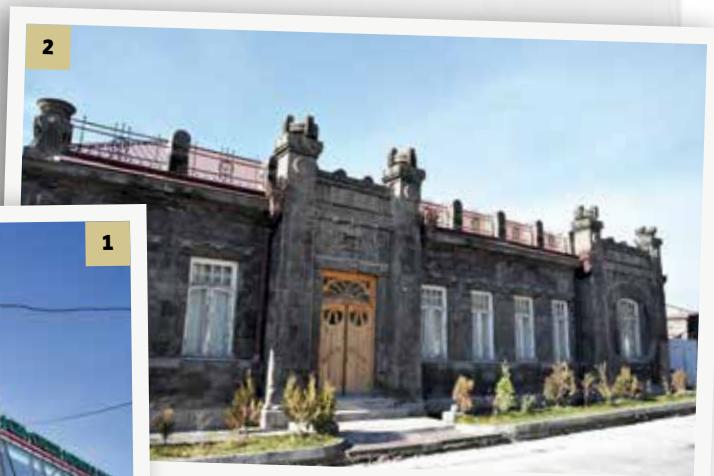
I believe that our fellow Armenians will not only experience great satisfaction exploring all your cultural attractions but also enjoy the inner gratification of having contributed to your rebirth, brightening your color, restoring your energy and changing your mood.

Yet today, you still carry a heavy burden—with 30 years' worth of wrinkles on your forehead to prove it. But paradoxical as it may seem, destruction always makes room for something new. Each time I return to you, I see something new in the faces of your young people, on your repaved streets, your new shops and cafés, restored landmark buildings, old theaters, and museums.

Your journey of recovery gets shorter with every passing year. And I intend to go the distance with you.

With Love,

Armen Sarkissian



Translated from Armenian  
by Natalie Gabrielian



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1 *Kino Hoktember (October Cinema)*. 2 *Villa Kars (Hotel)*. 3 *Small scale replica of the historic district (Dzitoghtsyan Museum of National Architecture)*. 4 *Entrance to the City of Gyumri*. 5 *A local 'old world' blacksmith*. 6 *Period Drawing Room (Dzitoghtsyan Museum of National Architecture)*.



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## History of Gyumri in Brief

### The Changing Name of Gyumri

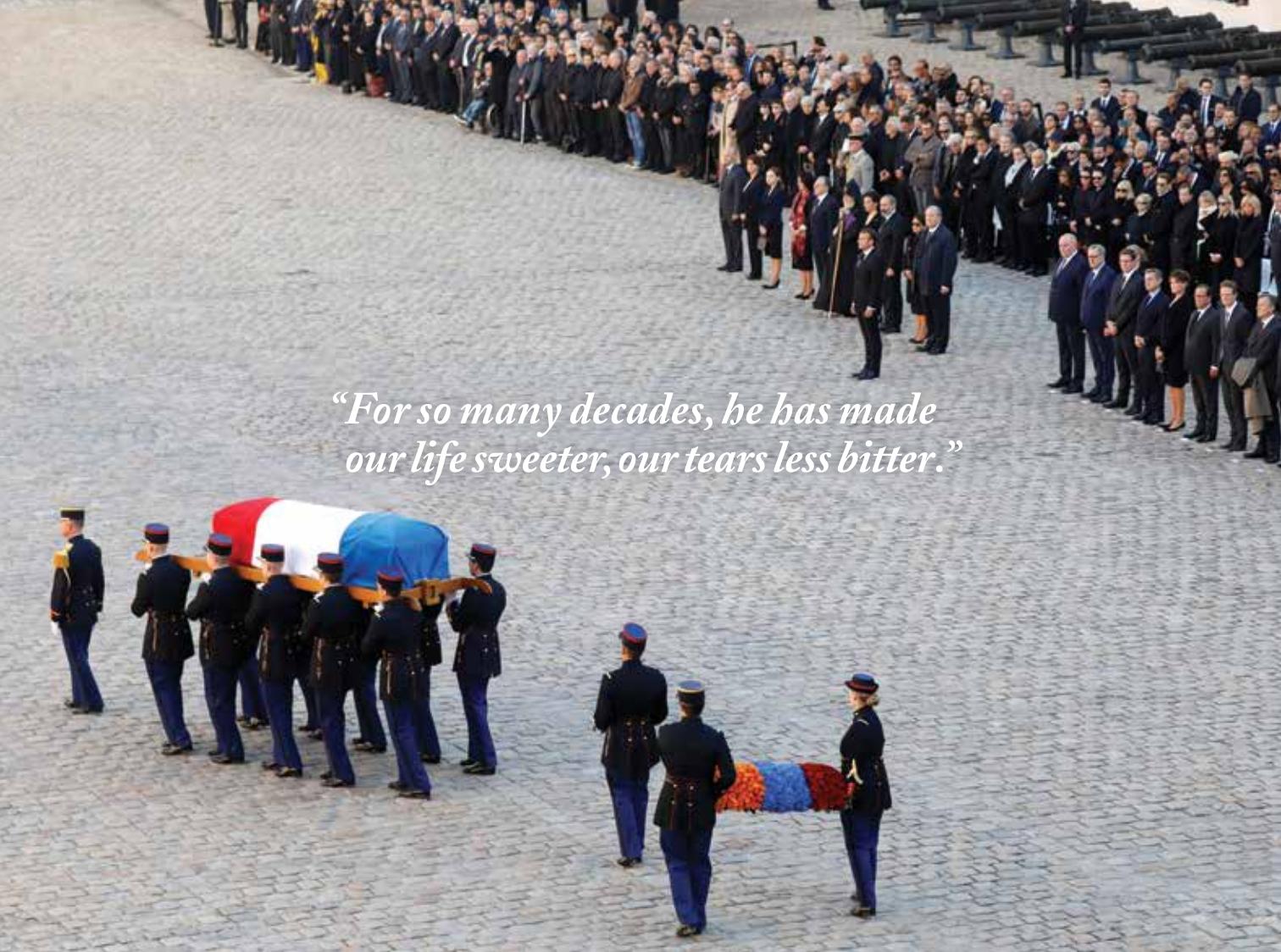
- Populated since at least the third millennium BC, the area was mentioned as **Kumayri** in the historic Urartian inscriptions dating back to the 8th century BC.
- In 1837, Russian Tsar Nicholas I changed its name to **Alexandropol**; it becomes one of the largest cities in Russian-ruled Eastern Armenia.
- Between 1924 and 1990 (Soviet era), the city was known as **Leninakan** in honor of Vladimir Lenin.
- After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the city was renamed **Kumayri** from 1990 to 1992.
- Post-independence, in 1992, it was renamed **Gyumri**.

### Cultural Figures from Gyumri (partial list)

- Avetik Isahakyan (poet)
- Hovannes Shiraz (poet)
- Emil Kazaz (sculptor)
- Sergey Merkurov (sculptor)
- Mher “Frunzik” Mkrtychyan (actor)
- Georgi Gurdjieff (philosopher and sculptor)
- Tsolak Shahinyan (artist-ceramist)
- Armen Tigranyan (composer/conductor)
- Tigran Hamasyan (jazz pianist/composer)

### Migration to Gyumri

- In 1829, in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War, there was a big influx of Armenian population, as around 3,000 families who had migrated from territories in the Ottoman Empire—in particular from the towns of Kars, Erzerum, and East Bayazid—settled in and around Gyumri.
- After the Russian takeover, most of the native Muslims left the area for the Ottoman Empire and in their place Christian Armenian refugees from Erzerum (Garin), and East Bayazid settled in Akhalkalak (Georgia).



*“For so many decades, he has made our life sweeter, our tears less bitter.”*

## “Poets Never Die”

*Two nations bid adieu to legendary cultural icon Charles Aznavour*

By **NANA SHAKHNAZARYAN**

**G**enuinely beloved poet and performer, Charles Aznavour passed away at his home in Mouriès, France on October 1, 2018. At 94 years old, he was fresh off a tour in Japan, vowing to live a century and perform until then. “I will continue to perform on stage as long as my heart beats,” he laughed in our last interview with him in *AGBU News Magazine* (August 2018). The truth is, he spent more of his life on stage than anywhere else, enchanting audiences with his lyricism and indelible talent for inhabiting the many characters of his songs.

Quintessentially French, Aznavour teased the French language to celebratory

heights and melancholic depths, creating anthems and ballads alike. He was fearless, using his poetry to expose the most tender tenets of the human condition, writing of prejudice, despair and redemption. Authoring 1,300 songs, selling 180 million records, he was a living testament to the grandeur of French art and showmanship through generations. As revered as he was in France, he was equally so in Armenia and by Armenians worldwide.

### **A public memorial for a national idol**

After the French Ministry of Culture announced his death, Aznavour’s voice drifted through the streets of Paris, inspiring tributes throughout France, as the Eiffel

Tower stood illuminated in his honor. On October 5, a state funeral at Les Invalides Military Complex in Paris was organized by the French government. President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Édouard Philippe were joined by former presidents Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande. President Armen Sarkissian, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, along with dozens of other dignitaries, were also present to express their condolences.

State funerals at Les Invalides, the final resting place of Napoleon I and other high-ranking military officials, are reserved for France’s greatest heroes.

*Republican Guards carry the flag-draped casket of late singer Charles Aznavour during a national tribute at the Hôtel des Invalides in Paris, France.*

Draped in the French tricolor, with a wreath of the Armenian tricolor steps away, Aznavour's casket was carried into the middle of the complex, accompanied by the sounds of the duduk. Pashinyan was first to approach the podium and eulogize Aznavour, who had voiced his support for the Velvet Revolution, eager to see Armenian democracy thriving. "This is a universal loss because Charles Aznavour shaped not only national, but universal values," Pashinyan declared. "These values warm people's hearts and will guide humankind toward love and solidarity for centuries to come."

When it was time for Macron to speak, he inherited Aznavour's poetic cadence as he said, "For so many decades, he has made our life sweeter, our tears less bitter." He praised his words as "a balm, a remedy, a comfort" for millions of people, acknowledging how Aznavour recognized the French language as a refuge, "a catalyst for freedom and hope." Just before the procession continued with Aznavour's own "Emmenez-Moi" (Take Me Away), Macron assured the crowd, and the rest of the world in mourning, "He will never leave us, because in France, poets never die."

### **A private farewell to a son of Armenia**

The following day, far from the public eye, Aznavour was laid to rest in his family crypt in Montfort l'Amaury Cemetery at a private ceremony of a hundred people. Eulogizing him in a service at the Saint John the Baptist Armenian Cathedral, was His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians. "Charles Aznavour was entirely inspired by his art, by his

## **From Humble Origins to International Renown**

Aznavour was born Chahnour Vaghgenagh Aznavourian, the son of Armenian refugees and artists. When speaking on his dual identity, he explained, "I often say that I am like coffee with milk, once mixed you cannot separate the two." Both French and Armenian, he used his unique perspective to navigate the world artistically, socially and politically, always promoting strength in unity.

Aznavour was not only an artist that crossed seas and transcended borders, he was an activist and a diplomat. During the Nazi occupation of France in World War II, his family sheltered persecuted people in their home, becoming closely linked to resistance groups of the time. When tragedy struck Armenia in 1988, Aznavour organized to support relief efforts through the country. For three decades he never ceased his humanitarian actions in Armenia which will be pursued by the Aznavour Foundation ([www.aznavourfoundation.org](http://www.aznavourfoundation.org)).

His activism maintained his reputation as an ambassador, a loyal citizen, and a man of two nations, claiming two cultures as his own. National Hero of Armenia and Commander of the French Legion of Honor, Aznavour personified a Diasporic consciousness. In life, he moved through the world as a Frenchman and as an Armenian. In death, he was honored as both.

enthusiasm to create, without which, he repeatedly testified, he could not live," His Holiness reflected. "In his art, he revealed the beauty and majesty of our shared humanity."



Aznavour married Ulla Thorsell at the same church in 1967 and she chose to gather their closest family and friends there in honor of their life together. They

were joined by President Sarkissian and Prime Minister Pashinyan and their wives, along with dignitaries from Armenia and the Armenian community of France. The entire ceremony was conducted in Armenian, save for "Ave Maria," which Aznavour loved to sing.

With the blessings of two nations, and the tributes from every corner of the world, Aznavour stands immortalized on a stage he built himself, with nearly nine decades of poetry and music. From Paris to Yerevan, his voice will surely echo on. **✶**

***Inset:** Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and French President Emmanuel Macron pay tribute. **Left:** Yuri Djorkaeff, Dany Boon, Paul Belmondo, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Christelle Bardet, Laurent Gerra and Eddy Mitchell attend the national tribute. **Right:** Charles Aznavour is laid to rest at the at Monfort L'Amaury Cemetery after a private funeral on October 6.*



# Tour de Force

*Armenia pulls out all the stops as host of the 2018 Francophonie Summit*

By **NANA SHAKHNAZARYAN**



Only months after the streets of Yerevan served as the staging ground for a peaceful people's revolution, the city transformed itself into a gathering place for the largest international conference ever organized in a former soviet state, with delegations from 84 countries, with 54 heads of state among them. Under the motto, “Vivre ensemble” (Live Together), representatives of different countries, creeds and cultures gathered to adopt resolutions on the advancement of human rights—from access to education to global health initiatives. The official summit ran from October 11-12, providing a milestone opportunity for Armenia to extend its hospitality to 3,500 visitors, along with as many as 600 registered members of the global media, and foster diplomacy and international strategic partnerships in the process.

Announced as the official host of La

Francophonie in January 2018, Armenia might have seemed like an unlikely place to celebrate the French language. Since 1970, when the Francophonie organization was first established, its mission revolved around the language as a lingua franca, and its first member states were former French colonies. Today, the vision encompasses much more.

*Thousands gather in Yerevan's Republic Square for the Gala Concert in honor of Charles Aznavour.*

and social—Armenia was awarded the high honor of host, responsible for creating the infrastructure and environment for a full agenda of workshops, lectures, conferences, a pop-up village and a gala

***“At this year's Summit, we made significant progress to advance our shared values of peace, democracy, inclusion, diversity, gender equality, and respect for human rights.”***

Inspired by the seminal democratic values of France, La Francophonie celebrates “equality, complementarity and solidarity” above all. With Armenia's historic ties to France—diplomatic, artistic

finale. La Francophonie may have had Yerevan teeming with French for just a couple of days, but the spirit of “Vivre ensemble” is Armenia's responsibility to sustain over the next two years with other



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1 L to R: Michaëlle Jean, newly appointed Secretary-General of the OIF, and her husband Jean-Daniel Lafond; Brigitte Macron and her husband French President Emmanuel Macron; Anna Hakobyan and her husband Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. 2 Celebrations at the Village de la Francophonie draw large crowds. 3 A view of the many booths in the Village de la Francophonie. 4 Ministerial Conference of the Francophonie in the center of Yerevan. 5 Mélanie Joly, current Canadian Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie participates in the Minister's Conference.





**1** Prime Minister Trudeau visits the Armenian Genocide Museum–Institute, making history as the first Canadian Prime Minister to do so. **2** President Sarkissian and Prime Minister Pashinyan toast to Prime Minister Trudeau’s arrival. **3** President Macron lays a wreath on behalf of the French people at the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex. **4** Prime Minister Trudeau receives another pair of socks and some Armenian brandy to add to his personal collection. **5** The IDeA Foundation honors Charles Aznavour in their booth at the Francophonie Village.





passed away on October 1, 2018, at the age of 94. “The singer who represented francophone culture across the world, we all knew him to be Armenian,” President Macron said while Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, Armenia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, described Aznavour as “an incarnation of the friendship between Armenia and France.”

Credited by many for making Francophonie in Yerevan a reality, Aznavour was set to perform at the Gala Concert in Republic Square, the culmination of the Summit. In his absence, the concert was a vibrant, multicultural celebration of his life’s work: unifying fans from across the francophonie and Armenian world through his art.

The evening also featured a stunning theatrical reenactment of Armenian history, awing the audience and receiving thunderous applause from thousands, especially as images of the Velvet Revolution were projected through the night sky. Star entertainers Angélique Kidjo from Benin and Melody Gardot from the United States performed. French singer-songwriter Zaz took the stage with a touching tribute to Aznavour, who had given her the opportunity to perform duets with him in the final years of his life. The performance ended with fireworks and a medley of Aznavour’s hits, his iconic voice drifting through the heart of Yerevan, surely not for the last time. 🇫🇷

*Fireworks top off the night in Yerevan at the conclusion of the Summit week.*

*President Macron visits the Aznavour Center, which will soon undergo reconstruction to feature an interactive museum.*

related activities and events until the next Francophonie host is named.

Despite Yerevan’s attention on internal politics over the past few months, La Francophonie was praised as a success by a number of visiting dignitaries. “At this year’s Summit, we made significant progress to advance our shared values of peace, democracy, inclusion, diversity, gender equality, and respect for human rights,” declared Prime Minister Trudeau. Demonstrating that idea was the full-scale Francophonie village erected to display the diversity of cultures represented. Visitors had a chance to liaise with diplomats, librarians, activists, educators and business people.

Official programs such as the Economic Forum allowed members of delegations

to delve into such topical presentations as “The Fourth Industrial Revolution: Technologies of the Future” and “Sustainability in Development: Towards Modern Economies,” to name a few. Armenian thought leaders also had the chance to facilitate these conversations and promote investment in the Armenian economy. Migration was also discussed in a parallel program for members of the press, called “Media and Migration.”

The Summit’s legacy with regards to diplomatic and developmental progress will be assessed in the coming years. But for a young Armenian democracy hosting a celebration of enduring humanistic values—especially after the Velvet Revolution—is truly historic.

### **An homage to Charles**

Amidst the celebration, one man was noticeably missing from the festivities. Beloved cultural icon Charles Aznavour





# The Art of the Surprise

*Armenia! at the Met disrupts established views on the Ancient World*

By **LAURA L. CONSTANTINE**

It was the highlight of the 2018 Armenian cultural calendar, the culmination of a life's work for a curator extraordinaire, and the pivotal moment when Armenian Art took its rightful place in the pantheon of ancient cultures that shaped the civilized world.

Hailed by the *New York Times* as a “show for the ages” that received the “blockbuster” treatment and described in the *Wall Street Journal* as a “celebration of beauty that is also a religious act,” the *Armenia!* exhibition at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art opened to the public this past September and will run through January 13, 2019 to include celebrations of Armenian Christmas. Yet within days, the show had already exceeded all expectations of its capacity to astonish and intrigue the millions of unsuspecting museum goers who pass through the world class institution every year.

Intricately carved colossal khachkars, radiantly-hued illuminated manuscripts, elaborate tapestries, ornately woven ceremonial garments, gem-encrusted reliquaries and decorative adornments wrought of precious metals, hewed stone or honed woods collectively elevated Armenian cul-

renewal that defines the Armenian spirit.

A minimalist-style installation bathed in the muted lighting and mystical shadows of a 5th century Armenian monastery and accentuated with the undertones of fervent Armenian liturgical chants, *Armenia!* transported visitors to a world

*“These relics and artifacts, all this beautiful art, make absolutely clear what we, the Armenians, have contributed to the world’s cultural heritage.”*

ture from historical footnote to bold exclamation point. The *Armenia!* logotype proved itself an apt expression for that moment of revelation when a vibrant and sophisticated culture emerges from the sands of time with all its lustre, brilliance and genius intact—a vivid case in point for the perpetual state of regeneration and

hitherto known mainly to Armenian historians, theological scholars, and private and public collectors of medieval antiquities. With priceless treasures drawn from across the globe and showcased together for the first time, *Armenia!* presents an advanced society inspired by a reverence for and connection to the Divine. Of the



Armenian PM  
Nikol Pashinyan

140-plus featured marvels crafted with meticulous intricacy, each item helped trace the development of a distinctive culture spanning 17 centuries and, at its height, wielding its influence along the



*His Holiness Karekin II presents Helen C. Evans with the distinguished St. Sabak and St. Mesrop award.*

great trade routes preceding the discovery of the New World.

Occupying eight dedicated spaces located on prime museum real estate

reserved for high profile exhibitions—*Armenia!* stood alongside the colossal halls of ancient Greece and Rome, unique in its sensibilities by virtue of its religion and location at the crossroads of East and West. Given the tumultuous history that was to follow this golden age of Armenia, the exhibition also speaks to the dedication of the Armenian Church to guard and preserve these exalted objects from plunder and oblivion over successive invasions, conquests and attempted annihilation.

By all accounts, the singular force behind this massive undertaking is Helen C. Evans, PhD, the Mary and Michael Jaharis Curator of Byzantine Art at the Met. The co-curator of the museum's 1997 *Glory of Byzantium* exhibition, Evans' dissertation on medieval Armenian art within the Byzantium context informed her appreciation for Armenia's unrepresented contribution to world art.

At a private opening reception attended by the museum's leadership, Armenian clergy, dignitaries from Armenia, as well as members of the Armenian-American community, His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians praised Evans as "a true bearer of the torch of art and culture among us" and presented her with the

highest award of the Armenian Apostolic Church bestowed upon laity. His Holiness also distilled the entire enterprise to its essential purpose: "All the items that we proudly display here reflect what we cherish, and they tell the story of our history and destiny. The relics and artifacts, all this beautiful art, make absolutely clear what we, the Armenians, have contributed to the world's cultural heritage." ❏

### Related Events at The Met Made Possible by AGBU

**Art Explore (Ages 11-14) \***  
*Teens discover and make art*

**Global Community (Ages 3-11)\***  
*Family fun related to exhibition*

**The Sound of Stone\***  
*Multi-media by Kevoork Mourad  
Music Composition by Vache Sharafyan*

**ETHEL and Friends: The Secret Trio\***  
*Ara Dinkjian and Ensemble*

**The Color of Pomegranates**  
*A film classic by Sergei Parajanov*

**Armenian Pop-Ups**  
*Axion Estin Foundation Chanters*

\*Included



# TUMO Goes Global

*The city of Paris adopts an Armenian original*

By **ANOUC DZAGOYAN**

**G**reat ideas have a way of transcending borders regardless of their origin. This fall, Armenia's very own TUMO Center for Creative Technologies gathered the momentum to do just that with the opening of the first TUMO Paris. It was a dream come true for its mayor Anne Hidalgo and a seminal moment for modern-day Armenia, as its most original intellectual property was adopted by one of the most advanced capitals of the Western world.

The genesis of TUMO Paris was indeed serendipitous. In 2016, Mayor Hidalgo visited Armenia. While TUMO Yerevan was not on her official itinerary, members of her entourage urged her to take a detour. It was a decision she would never regret. According to sources close to her, Hidalgo was impressed not only by the concept behind TUMO but by its implementation. She was also struck by the competence and dedication of the teaching staff and their confidence in the students to excel as digital innovators. "No system of this magnitude and ambition exists in the world," the mayor remarked, adding that she was determined to offer the same opportunity to new generations of Parisians.

The first step was finding the appropriate space and location. Forum des Images, a city institution dedicated to cinematography

and known for its 30-years as a digital pioneer was the obvious choice. Faithful to its spirit of innovation, it embraced the TUMO model of education with open arms. The next question, however, was how to raise the funds to accommodate teenagers from 12 to 18 years old at a rate of 2 to 4 hours per week, free of charge. The answer arrived one year later at a Web Summit in Lisbon, when Paris was elected a European Capital of Innovation city. It pledged to use the million

euros award to establish TUMO Paris, working with Paris City Hall to open the center by September 2018. This was an ambitious goal, given all the renovations involved (training rooms, film screening space and equipment) and convincing 70 employees on both teams to bring the project to fruition within the allocated budget.

Right on schedule, TUMO Paris opened its doors to accommodate a potential 4,000 young people from Paris and Greater Paris, including 1,500 youth taking the complete course and 2,500 taking introductory modules.

One month later, on October 16, AGBU France organized a private celebratory dinner in the Salons of Petrossian restaurant, attended by the Mayor of Paris, the Mayor of Yerevan Hayk Marutian, Her Excellency Hasmik Tolmajian, ambassador of Armenia in France, and the founders of TUMO Sam and Sylva Simonian. It was also an opportunity for the Mayor of Paris to meet her Yerevan counterpart to affirm mutual cooperation between the two cities. The Armenian Minister of Education and Science Arayik Harutyunyan also attended to reinforce the importance of the Franco-Armenian relationship in education. Many distinguished members of the local Armenian community were also present, from musicians and actors to journalists, politicians and members of the AGBU.

The TUMO centers of Paris, Yerevan, Gyumri, Stepanakert and Dilijan will now be inextricably linked to facilitate the free exchange of creative ideas that will foster fraternity, solidarity and innovation. **A**



# AGBU FUND FOR ARTSAKH

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Socio-Economic  
Development



# Eden in Artsakh

*Transforming a war-ravaged economy into a land of plenty*

By **LAURAL. CONSTANTINE**

If thirty years have revealed anything about the character of the 150,000 inhabitants of Artsakh, it's this: Never underestimate them to defy conventional wisdom—not just in the military realm, but also in the economic sphere. Today, Artsakh is winning battles on the economic front with positive signs of sustainable growth. In the first quarter of 2018, GDP was up by 16.4 percent. What's more, since 2017 foreign tourism to Artsakh skyrocketed by 60.8 percent, with visitors hailing from 15 percent more countries than a year ago. At the same time, the government of Artsakh recently declared the republic energy self-sufficient—a stark contrast from those darkest years in the 1990's when both Artsakh and Armenia were choked off by Azerbaijan's protracted fuel blockade. However, the best news is yet to come, as Artsakh steps up its efforts to optimize its once thriving agriculture sector—ground zero for eradicating poverty and driving economic self-sufficiency well into the future.

## **Food security comes first**

The connection between economy and national survival hinges on food security. This is especially the case for a landlocked terrain with limited exposure to outside goods and services. Access to quality, nutrient-rich food is indispensable for population growth and maintaining a healthy, active citizenry able to perform to potential in all spheres of endeavor.

*A typical offering of diverse produce at the farmer's market in Artsakh's capital city of Stepanakert.*

It may also be where the breathtaking scenery that accounts for Artsakh's robust tourism sector must bow to the agricultural potentials that lie deep within its earth and across its fertile fields. Such natural assets, combined with a visionary government strategy for a 21st century economy, raise the prospects for a sustainable agricultural base with the capacity to deliver from farm-to-table, creating job-generating sub-industries and opening new markets in the process. As the economy grows, so will the state revenues that can be reinvested in the other national priorities, including the military, education and infrastructure.

## **The politics of agriculture**

As with all developing countries, governance plays a vital role in addressing issues of food security and poverty. During soviet times, Artsakh was dubbed the “breadbasket” of the region, thanks to the fresh water sources and arable lands supporting what was then a mainly agrarian economy. According to Robert Avetisyan, Artsakh's permanent representative to the United States, “Viticulture and cattle-breeding were among the champions. For instance, the annual harvest of grapes in Artsakh was among the highest across soviet territory reaching around 2000 lbs. per capita. Unfortunately, the soviet state limited Artsakh's production to only supplying raw output for export to other republics for further processing. In effect, Artsakh was artificially prevented from achieving its full agricultural potential.” Avetisyan went on to describe how this economic



**Socio-Economic  
Development**

Cornelian Cherries

Ramson

Garlic Cloves

Wild Leek

Garlic Stems

Quince

*An array of locally produced delicacies sold at the Stepankert farmer's market.*

engineering impacted the population. "With fewer career options for many well-educated native Armenians, some found employment elsewhere. This was part of a grand design by Azerbaijan to

fill those vacancies with Azeris who were traditionally involved with cattle herding and field work. Avetisyan was quick to also point out, that "despite these demographic manipulations, the Armenians remained the majority, with a presence never lower than 75% of the total population."

**Policies that pay off**

After three decades of independence, the transition to a post-soviet, pro-business model is producing positive reports from local authorities. In 2017, GDP of the Artsakh's agriculture sector was the equivalent of \$69 million USD, with gross agricultural output at \$158 million USD and



**A Toast to Artsakh Wine**

Just when there was great progress in winemaking technology around the world, the war with Azerbaijan decimated Artsakh's vineyards and shuttered wineries, side-lining its centuries-old tradition. Yet today, Artsakh wines are not only being enjoyed in Armenia, but also are exported as far as the U.K., Czech Republic, Canada and the U.S.

Major local wine producers are Artsakh Alco (Askeran) and Karabagh Gold in Karmir Shuka village (Martuni). Among smaller producers are Kataro in Togh village (Hadrou), Vankasar in Khramort village (Askeran), and Asryan Wine Company in Khnabad village (Askeran).



crop production at \$79 million USD. For a population of 150,000, inhabiting an area of just 1,700 square miles, these are promising performance indicators that are likely to improve as local practices adapt to international industry standards.

These strong numbers can largely be attributed to the careful stewardship of the Artsakh government. It has established new policies that are pro-expansion, pro-environment and anti-waste. The goal is to increase the total sown areas of crops while taking legislative regulatory actions to protect biodiversity and consumer rights. Regulations preventing pesticides, veterinary residue, harmful organisms, algae, food additives and GMO organisms from compromising both imported and domestic produce are also under way. Furthermore, a new system of drip irrigation, under the Wastewater Technology Promotion Program, is being implemented to conserve water and cultivate crops more effectively and cost-efficiently. The Artsakh government has already installed such mechanisms across 343 hectares of land, out of which 86 are vineyards, 18 fruit gardens, 193 pomegranate gardens, and 2 walnut tree orchards. In addition, a 10-year strategy is in play to support rural economies.

Targets for major improvements include cattle breeding and the production of safe animal products, irrigation systems and raw product reprocessing practices to increase the variety of products and quantity of exports. Sites in which field crops, vegetables and perennial fruits are grown are of particular interest as well as the renewed attention on bee-keeping enterprises in the form of favorable lending terms and upgraded vocational training. This will set the stage for a projected 35% increase in the number of bee-keepers over its 2017 benchmark.

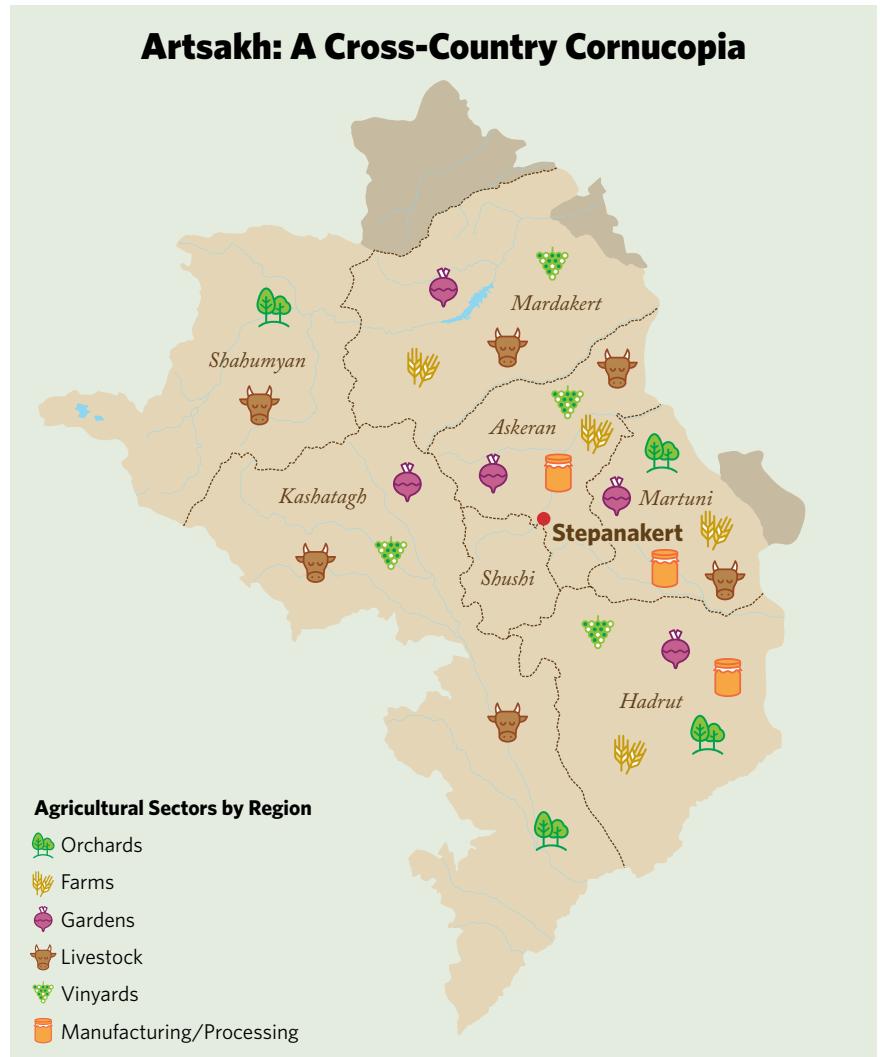
## Growth Opportunities

### Agricultural Output in 2017 (Tons)

Grapes	6,988
Pomegranates	3,085
Dates	664
Pome Fruits (apples, pears, pomegranates, quince)	557
Stone Fruits (apricots, peaches, cherries, plums)	385
Mulberries	878
Nuts (walnuts, hazelnuts, chestnuts, almonds)	304

DAVIT HAKOBYAN

## Artsakh: A Cross-Country Cornucopia



### The prosperity-security connection

A booming agriculture industry as a core pillar of Artsakh's economy begs the question: Can sustainable economic growth impact the outcome on recognition and peace? According to Avetisyan, "While international negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the remaining issues with Azerbaijan are still under way, Artstakh

country still must rely on trusted Armenian partners such as the AGBU to help break the isolation and rally Armenians outside the country to share their know-how, new technologies and expertise to accelerate progress. AGBU's involvement in Artsakh's nation building strategy is a success story of collaboration among multiple stakeholders."

*"AGBU's involvement in Artsakh's nation building strategy is a success story of collaboration among multiple stakeholders."*

continues to develop as a state, striving to ensure all the rights and benefits that its population deserves. Along with providing a better quality of life for our people, a strong economy helps promote a larger population. A growing economy also means a stronger military and, ultimately, a safer homeland."

Avetisyan acknowledged that "the

With an integrated approach involving government and private business, science and technology, a ready workforce and supportive donor and investor base from around the world, all the ingredients are in place to put Artsakh back on the map as a breadbasket for its people, a heartland for Armenia and a competitive player in the region. **■**



# AGBU Fund for Artsakh

## *A winning strategy for economic development*

With the collapse of the soviet system, the lesson of self-sufficiency came quickly and harshly to Artsakh. As an act of war, Azerbaijan effectively cut off then-break-away Nagorno Karabakh (the name was officially changed to Republic of Artsakh in 2017) from the outside world with an economic blockade that continues to this day. Since that time, AGBU has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to help the people rebuild their war-torn economy and help them move from chronic poverty to sustainable self-sufficiency.

After three decades, working in collaboration with the Artsakh government and local economists and industry experts, AGBU has developed a comprehensive nation-building strategy of its own called the AGBU Fund for Artsakh. Designed to help jumpstart Artsakh's economy on multiple fronts, the Fund puts special focus on agriculture with two agro-centered projects, AGBU Fields of Hope and AGBU Olive Tree Orchards. These initiatives underscore three essentials for overall success: cultivating a proficient farmer community; minimizing the inherent financial risk in agriculture ventures; and respecting the necessary time it often takes for such enterprises to yield profits.

For AGBU Armenia president Vasken Yacoubian, the last point is paramount. "Working with these independent

farmers reminds us that nature's cooperation isn't guaranteed," explains Yacoubian. "Many conditions must be met to achieve the desired yields that put affordable food on the table for consumers and deliver ample returns for independent farmers. This is a new class of entrepreneurs. They must first feed their own families, repay their loans and reinvest for increased output and expanded markets. Reinventing the agriculture industry in Artsakh demands time and patience. Clearly, though, the long-term gains are very well worth the wait."

Berge Setrakian, President of AGBU, agreed, saying, "The people of Artsakh are responsible custodians of a land which they, if not most Armenians, consider sacred. With a new generation of independent farmers, many with extensive experience and formally schooled in agrospecialties, the donations generated through AGBU Fund for Artsakh wind up in capable hands."

### **AGBU Fields of Hope**

This initiative was born out of necessity when Armenian refugee farmers fleeing the Syrian crisis found Artsakh's climate and soil conditions suitable for transplanting the successful farming enterprises they were forced to leave behind. Today, the Fund for Artsakh not only supports these promising businesses, but

*Participants in the AGBU Fields of Hope initiative enjoy access to a new tractor, free of charge.*

also welcomes participation from native farmers seeking to upgrade their output. Fields of Hope offers them seed loans, provides free use of up-to-date agro-equipment, and allows use of a seed storage facility. This supplements the land grants allotted by the government to farmers looking to establish or expand their business.

### **AGBU Olive Tree Orchard Program**

The clear advantages of olive trees are their strong resistance to cold weather and drought as well as the capacity to thrive for hundreds of years. This makes them a welcome addition to the numerous varieties of fruit-bearing trees that the Artsakh climate favors. The AGBU Olive Tree Orchard Program is a pilot initiative ready to break ground in Spring 2019 in the region of Berdzor. Thus far, the project is aimed at Syrian Armenian families looking to establish permanent residency within this very sensitive and strategic area. Many have benefited from the AGBU Fields of Hope program and are on board to become pioneers in this next potentially profitable enterprise, helping to position Artsakh as an olive center in the region. Each family is ready to allocate 1 hectare of land for this purpose. It is expected that in five years, 6,400 trees will produce 192,000 kg (192 tons) of olives. This will yield about 960-1280 liters of olive oil. **■**

*Olea europaea (Latin for European Olive) has a history in Artsakh. In 1949, olive trees were planted on 25 hectares of land in the Tavush region and remain fruit-bearing seven decades later. There is also reference to the Old Testament passage GEN.8.11, in which a dove brings an olive branch to Noah, thus lending credence to the probability that olive trees are indigenous to the Ararat Valley*



# Artsakh's Agro-Army

*A new class of independent farmers, horticulturalists and agronomists are on the front lines of Artsakh's agricultural rebirth. Here are the stories and shared wisdom of three of them.*

By **LAURAL CONSTANTINE**



*“Here both the climate and suggested land plots with their volumes are suitable.”*

## Sepuh Sanosyan

Sepuh Sanosyan is an experienced agronomist who emigrated from Aleppo for Armenia in 2005. When finding that land plots in Armenia didn't suffice for his plans, he eventually resettled in Kavsokan in Kashatagh province, joining a number of Syrian-Armenian refugees mostly from the

region of Mesopotamia. “Here both the climate and suggested land plots with their volumes are suitable,” explained Sanosyan. “At the end of 2012, AGBU introduced the “Tractor Project” here. They provided us with seeds, fuel and free use of the tractors. With that work now an on-going process, I intend to

expand my farm. Eight years ago, my brother also immigrated to Artsakh and was provided with a house and plot of land. Now we are working on growing olives just as we did back in Syria. For this effort, AGBU provided us with stems and wires. With such a favorable climate, together we'll succeed.”



*“I should proudly say that people from Armenia come to Artsakh particularly for our fruit, which shows that with courage, you can succeed.”*

### Hovik Asmarian

Hovik Asmarian is a Syrian Armenian refugee who is a horticulturist by trade. He moved to Berkadzor in Askeran province in 2012, joining a brother who had already established an orchard occupying 17 hectares. Their pride and joy is a hybrid species of fruit they introduced themselves. “We called it ‘Love Peach’ because of the love that we put into it”, claims Asmarian, noting that it also was grown from a root from

their native Syria. “Not only did the people here love it, but we had a good harvest and were able to export it to Armenia. I should proudly say that people from Armenia come to Artsakh particularly for our fruit, which shows that with courage, you can succeed.” He noted that, when starting out, they invested their own money, but when the time was ripe to buy a house, they took out a bank loan.

When asked whether Artsakh’s climate is favorable for horticulture in general,” Asmarian elaborated. “We have new varieties of almonds and except for citrus, we can grow just about everything. Horticulture is the sector for which you have to invest for years before seeing products,” noting that he and his brother are not displeased and are reinvesting income in the business. “Now we are thinking of opening a Syrian kitchen



## Aram Verdyan

Aram Verdyan, a native born agro-entrepreneur, explained that it was the renewed hostilities on the border in April 2016, that changed everything for him. “I wanted to be an accountant, but the April war convinced me that one of the ways to keep this land is to make it flourish. So I decided to stay in Martakert and registered as an individual entrepreneur.”

Today Verdyan holds a bachelor’s and master’s degree from the Agricultural University of Shushi specializing in agribusiness. He also completed postgraduate studies in Yerevan. Yet even with all his book knowledge, Verdyan is comfortable working the land directly. “I feel good in nature; it isn’t work for me, but a pleasure. This was the same land that my family started in 2014. We grow wheat, but my education plays a role in its success,” referring to his participation in a harvest festival that earned him a certificate from the the Artsakh Government. “I was inspired by the potential they saw in me and decided to take advantage of the loan program offered to farmers. It was a fertile year that yielded a good harvest, which compensated for the anthropogenic disaster of the April war. My work was assessed in the Pan Armenian Youth Awards ceremony and I was awarded the Best Young Man 2017 prize.

Verdyan also acknowledged that while knowledge is very important, human qualities factor greatly into the success equation. “One should be persistent and not be scared off by difficulties or discouraged in case of failure. We started by cultivating 10 hectares and reached 60.

We imported new crops. Our small farm has diversified. Now we produce six crops: wheat; barley; corn; buckwheat; soya; and sunflower. We are planning to produce green peas and peas. Artsakh is favorable for these crops. This will also solve the issue of food security. God forbid, if there is a war, having two crops, which are quite high in nutritional value and keep a human being sustained for a longer time, would solve the most important issue.” So far, Verdyan has already paid off previous debts of his

*“God forbid, if there is a war, having two crops, which are quite high in nutritional value and keep a human being sustained for a longer time, would solve the most important issue.”*

family farm. He is now thinking of investing in new technologies. “By leasing equipment, you cannot cultivate many land plots; 30 to 40 percent of the expenses go to equipment rentals.”

When contemplating the role of the Diaspora in developing Arstakh’s agriculture sector, Verdyan says, “the world is developing rapidly, we cannot keep pace. If specialists in the Diaspora are willing to transfer their own experiences to us from time to time, we welcome it.” 



for tourists visiting Artsakh. Our house is in a busy part of Stepanakert, close to the square and is very suitable for a fast food place.” Asmarian goes on to say that in order to succeed, there are three prerequisites: the will; the diligence; and the confidence. “Some say you have to be crazy to establish a business in Artsakh. But if you are a patriot and believe your country has a future, you can succeed here.”



# AGBU 90<sup>th</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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## NOTICE OF MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Central Board of Directors of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (the "Union") hereby gives notice to all the members of the Union qualified to attend, that the 90<sup>th</sup> General Assembly will be held on Saturday, February 9, 2019 at 10 A.M. at Les Jardins Saint Dominique, 49-51, rue Saint Dominique, 75007 Paris, France.

This is the only notice which will be given for the meeting of the 90<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. We therefore request the qualified members of the Union to attend the Assembly in person at the address and on the date given above, or, deliver or submit, on or before December 31, 2018, their respective proxies duly executed and certified according to the provisions of the Bylaws, to the Secretary of the Central Board at the following address:

Armenian General Benevolent Union  
Central Board of Directors  
55 East 59<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10022-1112, U.S.A.

## AGENDA OF THE MEETING

1. Consideration and approval of the Report on the Activities of the Union for the years 2016 and 2017.
2. Consideration and approval of the Union's Financial Reports for the years 2016 and 2017.
3. Election of Directors.
4. Election of a member of the Auditing Committee.
5. Consideration and action upon any matters incidental to the foregoing and any matters which may properly come before the meeting or any adjournments thereof, including amendments to the Bylaws.
6. Consideration of any recommendation and resolution of the General Assembly.

ARMENIAN GENERAL BENEVOLENT UNION  
CENTRAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sarkis Jebejian  
Secretary

Berge Setrakian  
President

November 12, 2018

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**IN MEMORIAM** - Boghos Nubar, Founder; Alex Manoogian, Honorary Life President

## Support for AGBU Global Programs Total \$16,957,436 in 2017

**W**e are grateful for the continued generosity of those who believe in our mission. The collaborative efforts of our communities around the globe, the commitment of our donors and the dedication of our volunteers and staff enable AGBU to enrich the lives of hundreds of thousands of Armenians.

The below contributions were made to the AGBU Central Office in New York in support of our various worldwide cultural, educational, humanitarian, religious and youth initiatives.

This report does not include contributions made directly to various local chapters around the world.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to the many individuals and families for their generosity and thoughtfulness in designating memorial gifts or special occasion contributions for the programs of the AGBU.

*Due to limited space, only individual gifts of \$1,000 are listed. For the complete list of donations, please visit [www.agbu.org](http://www.agbu.org).*

Jacqueline Shaldjian Estate, NJ	<b>\$3,220,033</b>	Mr. Ruben Vardanyan and Mrs. Veronika Zonabend, Russia	<b>\$ 50,000</b>
Mr. and Mrs. Vatche Manoukian, United Kingdom	<b>2,760,000</b>	John Kazanjian Family Foundation, NJ	<b>47,907</b>
Paula Bahador Trust, United States	<b>1,000,000</b>	Fondation Armenia, Switzerland	<b>40,273</b>
The Cpl. Paul S. Marsoubian Amvets Post 41, MA	<b>650,000</b>	Mr. and Mrs. Toros Mangassarian, NY	<b>40,000</b>
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AGBU Young Professionals of Boston, MA	<b>2,169</b>	"United Armenian Charities, Inc", NY	<b>15,000</b>
AGBU Young Professionals of Montreal, Canada	<b>1,000</b>	Mr. and Mrs. Berdj Tanielian, Canada	<b>14,583</b>
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## HASMIG BARSOUMIAN

### A Sweet Life of Serving Community

**“W**e looked at each other and she said, ‘Ara, let’s do it,’” Ara Barsoumian beams when describing Hasmig, his wife. “She was always so courageous, strong and decisive.”

Hasmig Barsoumian was born in Alexandria, Egypt in 1945 to survivors of the Genocide. The youngest of four, she was dedicated to the Armenian community she grew up in. She would ultimately settle her life an ocean away but she never severed her Armenian roots and would only continue to sow them in her new home. Her impact on the Californian Diaspora community, in which she was so beloved, lies in the care she showed her students through the years.

As a young graduate of Alexandria’s Saint George Business School, Hasmig was ever committed and ambitious. While working as an office manager for Alitalia, an Italian airline in Alexandria, Egypt, she frequently attended events in the Armenian community. In 1967, Hasmig attended an AGBU event that would change the course of her life forever. She would meet Ara Barsoumian, a chemist and geologist, who would become her husband in just a few years.

Forty-three years of marriage, two sons and four grandchildren later, Ara still recalls seeing her for the first time, “She was charming and warm, and my heart was beating so fast—in that moment, I said to myself, I will not let this girl go!” He continued to pursue her, getting pulled into AGBU events because she was so active in the community. At the time, Egypt was embroiled in regional conflict that introduced instability into everyday life. Despite this, the couple wed and in 1973 decided to move to the United States. Their love and ambition would take them across the world to Canoga Park in California, where they would begin their life as a young family.

Once in California, Hasmig began working as an executive secretary for Sunkist and although she was successful, it was still just a job. She felt she needed to be productive in the Armenian community, especially after the birth of her two sons, Levon and Paul.

Hasmig wanted them to have access to an Armenian education and fortunately, the Barsoumians settled in a neighborhood where an Armenian school was just beginning to be established.

A decade after the AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School was established in 1976, it officially moved to a permanent campus. Hasmig would drop off and pick up her sons from class daily and it wasn’t long before she was noticed by the director of the school and invited to participate in student life in a professional capacity, as Director of Student Affairs. From 1986 to 2006, Hasmig dedicated her energy to empowering thousands of students. “Besides their scholastic issues, they would come to

her with their personal issues,” Ara recalls, “She was like a second mother to them.”

Generations of Armenian youth were affected by her presence. So much so, when she decided to retire, the school officially established an endowment fund in her honor. By the time she retired, she had left a legacy of youth empowerment for new waves of Armenian leadership.

After two decades of service, Hasmig still had more to give. In 1989, the Barsoumians began a small local food business they called Amoretti. By 2006, they would move miles away from their home to a five-acre plot of land, to expand their manufacturing. Today, Amoretti, a purveyor of unique food goods that began with only four dedicated employees, boasts a team of 150 people and ships internationally. Hasmig was one of those four, there at the beginning, contributing to what was just a dream at first.

A woman whose life intersected so profoundly with AGBU, across generations, continents and communities, Hasmig passed away in September 2015. Her family’s success is a testament to her strong, courageous and decisive character as a dearly loved wife, mother, grandmother, as well as a trusted counselor and a passionate educator. The ways in which she inspired others are innumerable and the endowment fund in her name continues to uplift the Armenian youth she so loved. ❧



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### JEANNETTE KOUYOUMJIAN-ILLANJIAN

## A Gifted Voice Gives Back

**F**or soprano Jeannette Kouyoumjian-Illanjan, music is a lifetime passion. The lyricism of her voice and the richness of its timbre are the hallmarks of her beautiful renditions, captivating audiences throughout the world and inspiring music students across generations.

Born in Beirut shortly before World War II to Abisoghom and Drvanda (née Hannesian) Kouyoumjian, Jeannette grew up in an environment in which arts and culture were much appreciated. She developed an interest in music by listening to her older sister playing piano and her mother humming melodies on mandolin. By age 13, she was taking private piano lessons, playing and singing in the evenings, bringing immense joy to her father, a music enthusiast. As classical singing began to appeal to her more and more, Jeannette decided to attend the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music for formal voice training. She remembers how worried she was before her first class audition—only six months into the training. Over time, the feeling dissipated with practice and experience. “I was anxious before performances, but that feeling would go away right before I walked on the stage,” she says.

In 1957, thanks to a scholarship from the Lebanese government, Jeannette entered the National Academy of Santa Cecilia in Rome—one of the world’s oldest and most reputable music institutions—majoring in voice with a minor in piano. “I was shy then,” she admits. “I cried when I learned my entrance exam results. It was a great success.” Studying at the academy helped her grow personally and professionally. Soon after graduating, she continued her studies at the Chigiana Musical Academy in Siena, mastering her opera singing skills with celebrated Italian soprano Gina Cigna. “I was so lucky to have great voice teachers,” she says. While in Italy, she earned roles in two operas. Next, she moved to Armenia to hone her vocal skills in Armenian songs, later returning to her ancestral homeland three times for recitals.

Upon her return to Lebanon, she embarked on a new career with a teaching position at the National Conservatory of Music. For over 40 years, she trained students, revealing to them the secrets of vocal technique and passing down her knowledge and experience. Jeannette takes pride in the success of her students, one of whom is Rima Tawil, a well-known French-Lebanese soprano. Alongside teaching, Jeannette continued to perform solo recitals and toured in many countries, including Argentina, Armenia, Brazil, Italy, Iraq, Romania, and the U.S. Above all, she enjoyed performing works by Armenian composers, particularly Tigran Tchoukhadjian and Komitas.

Her appearance in the Baalbek International Festival in 1965 as a soloist of the Lebanese-Armenian Song and Dance Ensemble was a significant milestone. It was through the festival that she met Samuel Illanjan, her future husband, at the time, was instrumental in creating the ensemble. They married in 1966 and have three children together—Wanda, Talin and Sevag, and seven grandchildren.

It was through Samuel—the founder of the AGBU-AYA Vahram Papazian Theater Group in Lebanon and executive director of the AGBU Ardavazt Theater Company from 1997 to 2007—that Jeannette became involved with AGBU. The couple has remained committed to AGBU programs for decades. After moving with their family to the U.S. in the 1980s, fleeing the Lebanese Civil War, they continue to serve the Armenian community through various artistic projects.

These days, Jeannette wants to promote classical music among youth and instill in them an appreciation for it. “I would like the new generation to know and love music more,” she says. In 2013, she established an endowment, the AGBU Jeannette Kouyoumjian-Illanjan Fund, which contributes to the AGBU Performing Arts fellowship. Her gift helps young musicians master their skills at some of the world’s most reputable institutions so they may pursue their passions just as she did. **■**

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### HAROUTIOUN GURUNIAN

## A Master Craftsman with a Heart of Gold

**H**aroutioun Gurunian was a man invested in all of life's most beautiful trades: in music, in dance, in art. From a young age, he was committed to creating, committed to forming worlds apart from his own and sharing his incredible talent with those around him. He would travel across continents with his artisanship and artistry sustaining him and ultimately leave behind a legacy of excellence, passion and generosity.

Born in 1956 in Lebanon's Bourj Hammoud, Haroutioun was the youngest of five children in an Armenian family. He attended the Mesrobian Armenian Catholic School and although he would ultimately leave his formal education to pursue artisanship after middle school, he was a dedicated scout during his years there. As a scout, he would find creative ways to complete tasks, often making figurines out of the materials he was given: wood, clay and even soap. Soon his interest in his classes waned as his artistic ambition grew and it wasn't long before he joined his father to work in the family foundry business. There, a new world of materials was available to him: aluminum, copper, steel—and he could explore with them all. As he was delving into sculpting, carving and metalworking, he was also experimenting with other art forms.

Never one to limit himself, Haroutioun also began taking accordion lessons. It all seemed to be something innate to him, passed down ancestrally.

When the civil war broke out in Lebanon in 1975, Haroutioun left for Paris, France. A young, ambitious and talented artisan, he

was taken under the wing of an Armenian jewelry maker almost immediately. It was there that he would gain access to the tools that would marry his artistic passion with his technical skill. He was only 19 years old but this art form would take him to a new land in a few years and support him through his life.

As the war continued in Lebanon, Haroutioun decided to emigrate once again, this time to the United States. When he

settled in New Jersey, he joined the Antranig Dance Ensemble to maintain an active connection to his Armenian culture. At the same time, he found a way to put his craft to work. He began working for an established jewelry designer and manufacturer in New York City. In his decades working for the company, Haroutioun tried his hand at all different types of jewelry—bracelets, rings, earrings, brooches; they would give him designs and he would work enthusiastically to bring them to life. At this time, he also began working independently—formally creating his own designs with larger, idiosyncratic statement pieces. He focused on transposing the natural world into his pieces—tigers, alligators,

birds of paradise were all common motifs.

His good-hearted nature was noted by many and attracted a vibrant community of people around him. Haroutioun would marry later in life but after only six years of marriage, he was diagnosed with cancer. When he passed away after a two-year battle, a memorial fund was established in his name to honor his spirit of generosity. The purpose of the endowment is to provide access to medical support through the healthcare initiatives of the AGBU. **■**



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**Isabelle L. Tajirian**  
\$1,955

**Tenny Tatusian**  
\$5,000

**Hermine Varjabedian**  
\$2,275

**Samuel Vartanian**  
\$175

### **In Honor of**

**Saro Ayvazians**  
\$2,023.50

**Wedding—Elisabeth Istanbulli Hammer**  
\$1,400

**Carol Margossian**  
\$450

**Andrea Misk**  
\$4,125

**Birthday— Elizabeth Yacoubian**  
\$305

**Birthday— Ara Yeromian**  
\$1,197.56

**Yervant Zorian**  
\$20,600



LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

## Henrikh Mkhitaryan Honored at AGBU London Gala to Benefit TUMOXAGBU Centers

**W**hile matches with Henrikh Mkhitaryan, a midfielder at Arsenal F.C., draw many of his fans to the stadium, thousands of Armenians across the globe cheer for him on screen, simultaneously taking pride in his stellar athletic accomplishments. On November 3, “Micki’s” supporters and friends of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) gathered at The Dorchester in London to celebrate his achievements in football (soccer), thank him for his humanitarian outreach and raise funds for the two TUMOXAGBU Centers.

Born in Yerevan in 1989, Mkhitaryan grew up dreaming of playing football. His passion for the sport began by watching his late father Hamlet Mkhitaryan—a footballer who played for Armenia’s national team and the local Premier League in the



*AGBU Central Board Member Joseph Oughourlian—who, along with his wife Jenny, hosted the AGBU London Gala for the third time—introduces honoree Mkhitaryan.*

1980s. Starting in a senior club in Armenia at 17, Mkhitaryan embarked on an international career only four years later. His personal discipline, intelligence and talent landed him contracts with Borussia Dortmund and Manchester United F.C. Now, an idol for youth, Mkhitaryan has empowered thousands of Armenian children who look up to him, inspired by his drive and his love of his country. Involved in charity projects early on in his career, he was appointed UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador in Armenia in 2016, and has worked with the organization vigorously championing children’s rights and access to education and sports.

A convivial and festive atmosphere prevailed throughout the gala, with Master of Ceremonies Camilio Azzouz, who welcomed guests from across the globe, including Youri Djorkaeff, French-Armenian football star.

# AGBU Highlights

*Mkhitaryan's childhood idol French-Armenian footballer Yuri Djorkaeff joined Mkhitaryan to raise awareness and funds for the TUMOxAGBU Centers.*

Azzouz, a trustee of the AGBU London Trust, spoke on the importance of AGBU's strategic partnerships and the power of programs like TUMOxAGBU, which became a reality with the support of AGBU Central Board Member and CEO of Amber Capital, Joseph Oughourlian who was inspired to help expand the reach of the successful Tumo Centers for Creative Technologies (TUMO).

For Oughourlian, the night was one to highlight the work of AGBU and TUMO, and also an opportunity to note defining moments of Armenian national identity. "Growing up in France there was a palpable shift in pride as we watched Yuri and the French National Team win the country's first FIFA World Cup in 1998. With his talent, he brought Armenians to the world of football. And now, once again we beam with joy each time Henrikh Mkhitaryan takes the field and we hear his name cheered in the crowd. Henrikh has taken the opportunity to teach the world of football and its millions of fans about Armenia. They are our success stories and when one of us succeeds, we all succeed," Oughourlian stated on stage. This is the third time that Oughourlian, along with his wife Jenny, has successfully hosted the AGBU London Gala.

The highlight of the evening came when Mkhitaryan himself, arriving shortly after his Arsenal F.C. match, took the stage to accept the AGBU Global Excellence Award. "I would like to thank AGBU and its leaders for inviting me to be part of this great event organized to support the education of our Armenian youth. I would like to thank Yuri for being a role model to me when I was younger as I dreamt of playing professional football. We have to inspire our youth and focus on providing them with new life opportunities to encourage them to reach their goals. I am grateful to see the work of organizations like UNICEF, AGBU and TUMO," he said.

Since their inception in 2015, the TUMOxAGBU Centers have touched

the lives of 3,000 students. These state-of-the-art facilities offer bright, promising students access to free hands-on programs, helping them discover their talents, acquire new digital skills and boost their creativity. Building on its mission to make innovative and quality education accessible to more young people, AGBU continues to help shape the next generation of skilled and educated Armenians through various programs and initiatives, including the partnership with TUMO, which yielded the establishment of these centers.

The celebratory spirit of the event continued throughout the evening. AGBU President Berge Setrakian con-

cluded the Gala which raised over \$230,000, saying: "Each generation of Armenians must have their heroes—ones who embrace their identity and share it with the world, as well as ones who encourage us all to strive for excellence. From Aram Khachaturian to the late Charles Aznavour, this has always been the case. Today we have this wonderful role model for our youth. Henrikh, you exemplify all that we think of as a true citizen of the world. Thank you for continuing to bring pride to us all."

To learn more about the TUMOxAGBU Centers or to support this life changing program, please visit [agbu.org/education/tumoxagbu](http://agbu.org/education/tumoxagbu). **A**



**Above:** Henrikh Mkhitaryan presenting Joseph and Jenny Oughourlian with his signed Arsenal FC jersey. **Below:** Henrikh Mkhitaryan, with his family and friends, at the London Gala on November 3.





## ASIA

# AGBU Shares Centuries Old Armenian Music in the Far East

**A**s the ultimate universal language, music dissolves geographical borders and brings diverse cultures closer. This summer, Armenian and Asian music traditions effortlessly merged through a series of captivating concerts and stimulating lectures in China and Japan. Organized by the AGBU Performing Arts Department (PAD), these events expanded the reach of Armenian culture to the Far East and promoted artistic collaborations. The genesis of the collaboration began in 2014, continents away in Barcelona, Spain, when Arev Arts and PAD teamed up to perform at the city's Asian Film and Music Festival. "This tour was yet another demonstration of our mission to bring Armenian heritage to global audiences and support aspiring talents," explained AGBU PAD Director Hayk Arsenyan, an accomplished concert pianist in his own right.

The sold-out concert series, hosted by AGBU and the Cadillac Shanghai Concert Hall in Shanghai, China, opened on May 28 with "Sounds of the Silk Road: From Armenia to China" referring to Chinese-Armenian connections dating back to an ancient network of trade routes which linked regions of the

world in commerce. Armenia was a dominant player along the Silk Road during the middle ages, creating many opportunities for cultural exchange.

Virtuoso violinist Astrid Poghosyan, the concert's artistic director and assistant to the president of the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, remarked that "After living in Shanghai for years, I realized that Armenia and China have a lot of similarities. Both countries have ancient histories, a deep cultural heritage and distinctive traditional music."

Musicians from Armenia, China, France, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the United States collaborated to develop a unique program that fused Armenian and Chinese folk melodies, played either as separate pieces or mixes on western classical and traditional Chinese instruments. "It was the first time I used a traditional Chinese instrument to play another country's folk music," Liu Yu Xian, a guzheng player, remarked. "I am very happy and honored for this chance to learn about this culture."

The tour proceeded to Japan with a concert entitled "East and West Music" performed at the Tokyo's Tsunohazu Kumin Hall on June 1. Organized by AGBU and

*Armenian-Japanese ensemble Arev Arts performs traditional music in Tokyo.*

Arev Arts Ensemble and Foundation, the concert was part of the Week of Armenian Culture in Tokyo, hosted by the Embassy of Armenia in Japan over the past several years to introduce the rich Armenian musical heritage to a country in which Armenians historically do not have a strong presence. However, recently a new community of Armenians is in its formative stages. "This year, we were happy to have the AGBU Performing Arts Department as our valuable partner," noted Armenian Ambassador Grant Pogosyan.

The evening featured well-known musicians from Armenia, Japan, Spain and the United States who displayed their mastery of piano, violin and koto (Japanese harp). "I hope our cooperation with the AGBU Performing Arts Department will continue, giving us more opportunities to present Armenian culture in Japan," said Karen Israelyan, director and founder of Arev Arts Ensemble and Foundation.

The remarks were followed by a musical performance featuring Arsenyan who interpreted works of classical Armenian composers, while Yas Tarumi, a duduk player from Japan, performed traditional folk music.

Reflecting on the experience, Arsenyan remarked that "This was a great occasion to introduce our music and culture to the people in Asia through unique interpretations of our folk melodies." **A**



**YEREVAN, ARMENIA**

## **AGBU Puts Its Unique Stamp on Francophonie Themes**

**D**uring the official week of the Francophonie Summit, AGBU had the opportunity to express the spirit of the event in practical and inspiring ways. While visiting Yerevan, AGBU Montreal and AGBU France launched their respective projects while AGBU-Armenia Executive Director Talar Kazanjian served on a panel discussion at the Francophonie Media Conference called “Media and Migration”. Yervant Zorian, AGBU central board member and founder of AGBU Armenian Virtual College (AVC) introduced its e-book series on the history heritage and sites of Armenia. He also moderated a panel discussion on “The Fourth Industrial Revolution” at the Francophonie Economic Forum.

### **AGBU Montreal: Scholarships to French-Language Universities**

AGBU Montreal and the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF), a global network of French-language universities and research institutions, signed

a framework agreement creating new educational opportunities for Armenia’s francophone students. Each year, four students from Armenia accepted to Quebec’s French-language universities will be awarded scholarships to pursue their doctoral degrees. AUF will grant the short-listed candidates the exemption for tuition fees, while AGBU will oversee the selection process, provide recipients with some financial assistance and facilitate their integration into the global francophone community.

*Rector of AUF Jean-Paul de Gaudemar (left) shakes hands with Chairman of AGBU Montreal Chahé Tanachian.*

“This agreement creates better opportunities for Armenian students to pursue higher education in French, thus targeting the objectives of OIF of spreading French language around the world,” said Rector of AUF Jean-Paul de Gaudemar.

Chairman of AGBU Montreal Chahé Tanachian noted that the commitment to education is at the core of AGBU’s mission. “It is a special agreement that we signed with AUF on the sidelines of the Francophonie Summit. Having students from Armenia in French universities will enhance cooperation in the field of education between Canada and Armenia and will make French language more popular in the Armenian society,” stated Tanachian.

### **AGBU France: French Language Short Story Competition**

In partnership with the French Embassy in Armenia, AGBU France announced a contest of short stories themed “Armenia of My Dreams in 2050.” President of AGBU France and AGBU Europe Nadia Gortzounian explained that “AGBU France contributes to the promotion of French language in Armenia through this contest.” She added that it is “also a tribute to Charles Aznavour who skillfully used this language. We hope that the contest’s theme will inspire many applicants.”

*Nadia Gortzounian, President of AGBU France (left), with Zaroubi Odabashian, AGBU France, announcing the writing competition at the French pavilion.*





YEREVAN, ARMENIA

## AGBU Participates in International Art Show and Symposium

In an unparalleled artistic event of the 2018 fall season, Yerevan opened its doors to the contemporary art of over 70 established and reputable artists from 25 countries in a city-wide collaboration titled “International Contemporary Art Exhibition: Armenia 2018” (ICAE 2018). The exhibition spans seven major cultural venues throughout Yerevan, including the AGBU Gallery. The exhibition ran through October 25 and was listed as a coinciding cultural event of the Francophonie Summit 2018, hosted by Armenia.

The scope of the exhibition included an array of genres of the visual arts, including painting, sculpture, photography, video, installation of iconic pieces on loan from the world’s top galleries and collections, as well as commissioned works in situ which are produced specifically for the site in which they are on display.

*Writer Natalia Kochan, a founder at Curensa, an online platform for the global creative community, explored themes like cryptocurrency, millennial audiences, as well as how artists can make money online.*

“Our idea was to bring artists from as many countries as possible, let them interact with local talents and engage with the country, understand Armenian culture and traditions and then serve as its ambassadors,” said Fabio Lenzi, CEO of Shaula International, a Yerevan-based consulting firm which organized ICAE 2018.

ICAE 2018, a two-part exhibition, was curated by experienced curators Mazdak Faiznia and Marine Hakobyan. According to Faiznia, both were specifically designed for Armenia, “because the works that were selected and artists that came have a very specific exchange with this country.”

One exhibition, “The Soundlines of Contemporary Art,” explored themes such as cultural interaction, identity, mobility, presence and absence, demonstrating how Armenia’s contemporary art aligns with international trends. The other show, located at the Artist’s Union of



Contemporary Art, served as an opportunity for local artists to submit their artwork through an open call.

The high caliber of talent and the cultural significance of the exhibition attracted numerous patrons, including officials from the Canadian Government, the provincial government of Quebec, Armenia's Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities of Italy, the Italian Foreign Ministry project "Vivere all'Italiana" and the Embassy of Italy in Armenia. Institutional partners include AGBU, along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, the Armenian Tourism Agency and the EU Delegation in Armenia.

As an institutional partner, AGBU provided infrastructural support for the implementation of ICAE 2018 and in light of this year's Francophonie Summit, 50 percent of the works shown at the AGBU Gallery represent Francophone artists.

While tourists and locals were enjoying the contemporary art across Yerevan's cultural venues, AGBU and Shaula hosted The Art and Business Symposium—a major event of ICAE 2018—from October 23 to 24. A mix of panel discussions, speeches and presentations, the symposium launched a thought-provoking conversation about the business side of art, as well as the local and global art markets. It featured a broad spectrum of experienced speakers like brand strategist Thomai Serdari, art broker Chouchane Dourian, independent art conservator Gianlorenzo Pignatti Morano and Natalia Kochan, an innovator in digital platforms for art.

"Often, digital art spaces are left out of the conversation of the traditional art world, and this symposium showed great openness to the reality of how art is being consumed in our present digital age," said Natalia Kochan emphasizing that engaging discussion was held.

Speakers also explored ways to raise awareness of local artists and galleries among art collectors, lay the foundations for infrastructural groundwork for an art market in Armenia and identify the country's competitive advantage in the art economy. "From what I've seen here this last week, I have no doubt that soon Armenia will be a major player on the world art scene. The talent here is vast and inspiring," added Kochan. ❏



### YEREVAN, ARMENIA

## AGBU Extends Scholarships to Applicants Impacted by Closure of Luys Foundation

Just a few months after Armenia's Velvet Revolution, AGBU announced its decision to extend scholarships to top-performing Armenian scholars who had been counting on scholarships from the abruptly dissolved Luys Foundation. The scholarships would be extended in coordination with My Step Foundation, a new non-profit founded by Anna Hakobyan, the spouse of Armenia's current acting prime minister Nikol Pashinyan.

These extraordinary students with their acceptance letters from elite universities around the world in hand suddenly found their academic futures at risk due to the closure of Luys, a non-profit program founded by high ranking officials of the previous regime. With the mission of My Step Foundation to find solutions for issues that cannot be fully addressed by government, Hakobyan was challenged to come to the aid of these students who had little time left to meet their financial obligations for the 2018-2019 academic year. She promptly reached out to the international community and, shortly thereafter, AGBU responded with \$200,000 USD in scholarship funding and secured \$100,000 CAD through AGBU Toronto. It also assumed responsibility for administering the scholarships directly with the universities involved—Oxford University,

*Anna Hakobyan, founder of the My Step Foundation, holds a press conference to announce the scholarship initiative.*

Cambridge University, and University of Chicago, among others.

Berge Setrakian, president of AGBU, noted that AGBU's decision to make such an exceptional contribution this year was based on the reality that the academic fates of these exemplary scholars were on the line. "We cannot let the goals of these hard-working and intellectually gifted students be impeded because of circumstances beyond their control. We applaud My Step Foundation for reaching out so promptly and we are grateful to all our education-minded donors who make it possible for AGBU to extend the needed financial support."

Hakobyan thanked AGBU for stepping up. "Partnering with AGBU was a natural choice, given that it has awarded thousands of scholarships to Armenian students over many decades. We unanimously recognized the potential of this extraordinary pool of students to contribute their knowledge and skills to help transform Armenia into the competitive nation it aspires to be in the world economy. We are truly grateful that AGBU, among our other partners, was so quick to affirm its longstanding commitment to higher education in this unexpected way." ❏

# AGBU Young Professionals

**The AGBU YP is a dynamic and growing network of like-minded young leaders between the ages of 22 and 40 who serve their local communities and collaborate globally to uphold the Armenian heritage. 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. Today there are 36 YP groups across the globe including our two newest in Frankfurt, Germany and Seoul, Korea.**



## **MOSCOW, RUSSIA**

### **YP Moscow Hold Discussion on 2018 World Cup**

On July 28, YP Moscow hosted a breakfast and informal discussion featuring well-known sport journalists Pavel Tarakanov from the World Cup Broadcast Team and Karen Adamyan, a host and reporter at Match TV. The speakers shared their insights on the 2018 FIFA World Cup, live coverage of matches and how global scale events are organized. Along with local counterparts, members of YP Montreal and Amsterdam attended the event.



**PARIS, FRANCE**

**YP Paris Hosts Two Young Armenian Designers Based in France**

On July 4, YP Paris hosted Armenian designers Armine Ohanyan and Eddy Anemian. These young Paris-based designers talked about the fashion industry, shared their stories of success and disappointments, as well as the influence of their Armenian roots on their work. The winner of the E-Fashion Awards in 2016, Ohanyan found her niche in the world of haute couture through her brand Armine Ohanyan Paris. Born in France, Anemian won the H&M Design Award 2014 and released his first capsule collection in collaboration with the Swedish brand. He has since joined the prestigious Balmain fashion house.

**CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

**YP Chicago Fundraises for Children**

On June 13, YP Chicago held a silent auction at a local art gallery to raise funds for Chicago Children’s Charities and Syrian-Armenian children. The event generated over \$5,000, thanks to the generosity of the local community. Syrian-Armenian children in Armenia, Canada, Lebanon, and Syria are supported through donations to the AGBU Humanitarian Emergency Relief Fund. Children in the Chicago area are supported with funds to the Chicago Children’s Charities, which donates to grassroots organizations serving local children through summer camps, afterschool programs and fine arts education.



**BRUSSELS, BELGIUM**

**YP Belgium Donates to School in Gyumri**

This summer, YP Belgium raised 1,285 Euros for School N6 in the city of Gyumri through its “Armenia’s education: step by step,” charity project. YP Belgium donated school supplies to 70 first-graders along with a new stereo system for the school’s theatre. With its firm belief in the power of education, the YP Belgium Committee aims to initiate more projects for creating social impact.



### LUXEMBOURG, GERMANY

#### YP Luxembourg Holds First Networking Event

One of the newest groups in the global AGBU YP network, YP Luxembourg held its first networking event on June 13, attracting young professionals from Luxembourg and neighboring German and French cities.

The Armenian community of the Duchy of Luxembourg comprises just 150 people; half are in the 21-40 age range. Rafayel Gevorgyan and Gohar Hovhannisyan, two of five co-founders, emphasized the importance of creating a closer link between young community members, developing professional and personal connections as well as exploring new project ideas.



### LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

#### YPLA Strives to Maximize Impact Through Collaboration

Last July, the AGBU and AGBU Western District hosted a team-building workshop for AGBU Young Professionals of Los Angeles (YPLA). Around 30 members, old and new, representing different Armenian communities in the LA area, gathered to create a stronger and more active YPLA committee. In her welcoming remarks, AGBU Western District Chair Talin Yacoubian underscored the value of the workshop and the YPLA committee. YP Global Coordinator Heghine Musayelyan opened the workshop with an informative presentation on the worldwide growth of the YP network, followed by an icebreaker exercise that challenged each participant to answer a different thought-provoking question. “Our goal is to unite thousands of young Armenians across the globe to develop and implement innovative projects that make a positive impact—whether social, economic, cultural or environmental,” stated Musayelyan.



2019

# AGBU Discover Armenia youth program

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CULTURAL ENRICHMENT

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August  
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# AGBU Summer Programs

**E**very year, AGBU offers a diverse range of summer programs to youth from Armenia and the diaspora. These programs accommodate the needs and interests of young people of all ages, by helping them to expand their knowledge, develop new skills, connect to their peers and create lasting friendships, as well as deepen their understanding of Armenian heritage. In 2018, Armenian youth attended AGBU's scout gatherings, spent time at day and overnight camps, participated in internships, as well as musical and community service programs.

## Scouts and Camps

This year, AGBU's scout, day and overnight camps in Armenia, Lebanon, Bulgaria, France, and the United States hosted nearly 1,600 children and teenagers from as far as Thailand and Ireland. Campers engaged in a wide range of outdoor activities, as well as attended dancing and singing workshops. In 2018, Camp Nubar and Colonie de Vacances reached a significant milestone with their 55th and 35th anniversaries respectively.

## Internships

Since 1987, Armenian students have had an opportunity to build a solid foundation for their careers through the AGBU Summer Internship Program. This summer, around 90 students from across the world gained hands-on experience in some of the most prominent companies and organizations in six cities: Buenos Aires, London, Los Angeles, New York, Paris, and Yerevan. Internships are complemented by networking events, mentorship meetings, and lectures, as well as enriching cultural activities.

## Service Trips and Authentic Experiences

Forty-one diasporan teenagers arrived in Yerevan this summer to engage in community service projects through the Discover Armenia Program and travel across the country. In an Armenian village in Artsakh, participants helped build a home for a needy Armenian family. They also served hot meals to seniors and spent time at an orphanage in Vanadzor.

Designed for amateur and professional musicians, the AGBU Musical Armenia Program helped 22 musicians expand their knowledge of Armenian repertoire, perform in Yerevan's best venues and collaborate with local artists. **AK**



## HAUTE-SAVOIE, FRANCE

### Colonie de Vacances

In its 35th year, the AGBU Colonie de Vacances had another successful season in Haute-Savoie, France, with 86 participants from Armenia, France, Russia, Turkey, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.



## PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

### AGBU Camp Amaras

This summer, AGBU Camp Amaras hosted 100 children for an eight-week day camp at the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Center in Pasadena, California.



## BEIRUT, LEBANON

### Demirdjian Summer Day Camp

For its 21st season, the AGBU Demirdjian Center Summer Camp brought together over 180 campers from Bahrain, France, Italy, Lebanon Switzerland, Syria, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States.



## BEIRUT, LEBANON

### AGBU-AYA Antranik Antelias and Antranik Sevan Scouts

The AGBU-AYA Antranik Antelias and Antranik Sevan Scouts welcomed 470 scouts for their annual 15-day gathering in Lebanon.



## SOFIA, BULGARIA

### HayLer International Summer Camp

As many as 100 children and teenagers from Armenia, Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland, and the United States attended the AGBU Sofia HayLer International Summer Camp.



## ANDES, NEW YORK

### Camp Nubar

Camp Nubar made the summer of 2018 unforgettable with sold-out sessions totaling around 350 campers from 11 countries.



## YEREVAN, ARMENIA

### AGBU Antranik Scout Camp

The annual gathering of Antranik Scout Camp in Dilijan, Armenia brought together around 200 scouts from Armenia, Georgia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria.



## PLOVDIV, BULGARIA

### Camp HayLer

In its seventh year, the AGBU Plovdiv Camp Hayler opened its doors to 40 children, ages 4 to 14, from across Bulgaria for a week-long camping experience in the Rhodopes.

## AGBU Summer Programs

### LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

#### Los Angeles Media Internship

Seven students with interest in media had rewarding eight-week internships in Los Angeles—the heart of the world entertainment industry—to help them gain work experience and build a professional network.



### LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

#### London Summer Internship

Twelve participants of the AGBU London Summer Internship Program gained hands-on experience in London's well-known companies like Backes & Strauss, Newscape Capital Group, Brisqq, Chelsea Hospital, Temasek, Amber Capital, and Mossessian Architecture.



### NEW YORK, NEW YORK

#### New York Summer Internship Program

This year, 36 interns of the New York Summer Internship Program gained real-world professional experience in the fields of finance, business, technology, architecture, journalism, international relations, biology research, medicine, public relations, real estate, law, physical therapy, fashion, marketing, education, and dentistry.



### PARIS, FRANCE

#### AGBU Paris Summer Internship Program

Four Francophone students from Armenia, Canada and the United States arrived in Paris to broaden their professional skills and knowledge through placements offered by AGBU Paris Summer Internship Program.

### BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

#### Buenos Aires Summer Internship Program

In its second year, the AGBU Buenos Aires Summer Internship Program offered professionally enriching experiences to six interns and an opportunity to immerse themselves into Argentinean culture through diverse activities.



## YEREVAN, ARMENIA

### Yerevan Summer Internship Program

Twenty-four participants of the AGBU Yerevan Summer Internship Program acquired new skills in some of Armenia's leading organizations like Izmirlian Medical Center, Microsoft Armenia, National Instruments, Grant Thornton Armenia, Storaket Architectural Studios, and PicsArt. They also enjoyed opportunities to immerse themselves in the local culture.



## YEREVAN, ARMENIA

### Musical Armenia

The summer of 2018 was dynamic for 22 musicians from eight countries who arrived in Armenia for an intensive three-week training and cultural exploration, as well as collaboration and performing opportunities.



## YEREVAN, ARMENIA

### Discover Armenia

Forty-one diasporan teens spent the summer in the homeland connecting to their ancestral homeland by volunteering for community projects and traveling across Armenia and Artsakh.

AGBU

ARTS  
MARKETING  
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summer

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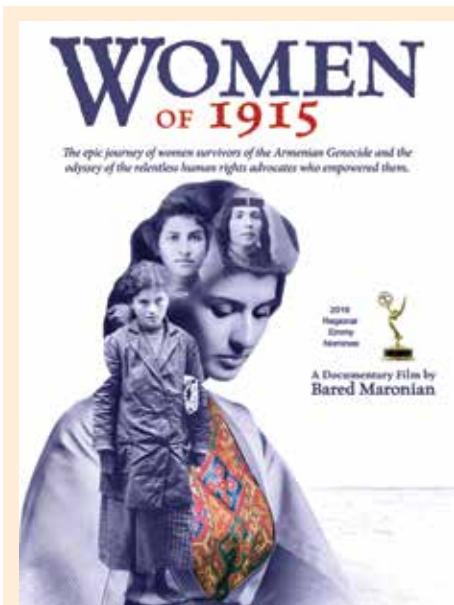
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## PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

### AGBU Mock Trial Program Officially Launched

On August 24, the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian High School (MHS) officially started this year's Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF) Mock Trial Program. The program launched three years ago when the Armenian Bar Association (ABA) and AGBU Western District collaborated to implement the program. The ABA supports the program by providing coaches and scrimmages between schools. Since its launch, the program has gained wide interest and has expanded to the AGBU Manoogian-Demirjian School (MDS).



## PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

### AGBU Pasadena-Glendale Hosts its 4th Annual Armenian Fest

AGBU Pasadena-Glendale hosted its 4th Annual Armenian Fest from September 28 to 30. The fest began with competitive sports with youth from various Armenian clubs and schools participating in the opening night games against the AGBU AYA Pasadena-Glendale Chapter teams. The highlight of the weekend was *The Big Bad Armo Show: Summer Vacation*, a comedy created by Lory Talouljian, an alumna of the AGBU New York Summer Internship Program. The show humorously portrays Armenian immigrants living in the United States. The final games were played on the day of the closing ceremony, Sunday, September 30, followed by the AGBU Los Angeles San Fernando Valley (LA-SFV) Chapter Marching Band leading the athletes to the gymnasium and performing inspiring renditions of the American, Armenian and AGBU anthems.

## PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

### AGBU Pasadena-Glendale Holds Special Screening of *Women of 1915*

On September 14, AGBU Pasadena-Glendale presented *Women of 1915*, a documentary produced and directed by Bared Maronian, to an audience of 150 AGBU members and friends at the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Performing Arts Center (PAC). Among the attendees were AGBU Western District Board Member Shahan Yacoubian; the Japanese Consulate's Advisor for Political and Community Relations Jennifer Usyak; and Fredrik Vartanians of the Ararat Foundation.

AGBU Pasadena-Glendale Chapter Chairman Krikor Demirjian opened the evening by welcoming guests and made introductory remarks Bared Maronian. The screening was followed by a Q&A with Maronian.



## ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

### AGBU Orange County Saturday School Holds its Annual Camping Trip

On September 8 and 9, the AGBU Orange County Saturday School held its annual camping trip to Newport Dunes in Newport Beach. Students and their families had a wonderful time camping at night by the water and swimming and boating by day.



## AGBU Chapters

### PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

#### AGBU Hye Geen Hosts Conference on Sexual Harassment

On August 18, AGBU Hye Geen hosted a conference at the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Center entitled “Sexual Harassment: Understand, Prevent, Respond.” Alene Tchekmedyan, a staff writer at the *Los Angeles Times*, provided statistics indicating an increase in sexual harassment and assault reports over the years. She also talked about the #MeToo movement which seeks to create awareness of the issue. Another featured speaker, Los Angeles County Deputy District Attorney Rouman Ebrahim, focused on the legal consequences of sexual harassment and assault cases. Following his speech, Shahshah Shabanian, a peer educator at California State University Northridge and a co-founder of Men C.A.R.E., a campus-based activism group that hosts workshops on rape culture, sexual consent, and gender-based violence, took the stage. Shabanian echoed Ebrahim’s message and stressed the importance of active voices in the society. The conference concluded with a Q&A with the panelists.



### TORONTO, CANADA

#### AGBU Toronto Celebrates Composer Aram Khachaturian's Anniversary with Dazzling Concert

On June 13, AGBU Toronto hosted a captivating concert at the Alex Manoogian Cultural Center in celebration of the 115th anniversary of the renowned Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian. Armine Grigoryan, director of Aram Khachaturian Museum in Yerevan, a professor at the Yerevan State Conservatory and a member of the famed Khachaturian Trio, attended at the invitation of AGBU Toronto. The event also featured gifted pianists Sona Barseghyan and Narine Mardoyan as well as saxophonist Ara Arakelyan. Grigoryan set the tone for the evening, recounting the influence of Aram Khachaturian’s Armenian roots on his music. The presentation was followed by a mesmerizing concert, after which the four performers received a prolonged standing ovation.



### TORONTO, CANADA

#### George Bournoutian Delivers Talk on Birth of Modern Armenia

On September 14, historian George Bournoutian delivered a talk at the AGBU Toronto Office, with over 100 guests in attendance. A question and answer session followed. Bournoutian, a visiting professor at Columbia University, outlined the dramatic changes in the history of the Armenian people over the past 160 years, preceding the birth of independent Armenia. Bournoutian’s last book, *Armenia and Imperial Decline: The Yerevan Province 1900–1914*, was published in 2018. It examines demography and socio-economic conditions in the Yerevan province during the first decade of the 20th century. It explains that, because Armenian residents were mainly peasants, they did not play a major role in the political, intellectual and economic life of the South Caucasus. The book also makes the case that these Armenians benefitted from living under the umbrella of imperial security because it enabled them to acquire professional skills.





### BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

#### AGBU Buenos Aires Hosts Artsakh's Representative in the U.S.

On June 12, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Artsakh in the United States Robert Avetisyan delivered a talk at the AGBU Buenos Aires Office. Around 100 guests gathered to receive updates on the recent developments in Artsakh and discuss its future prospects. Avetisyan elaborated on the historical origins of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the negotiation process.

### BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

#### AGBU Buenos Aires Welcomes Musicians from Armenia for Concert Dedicated to the Francophonie Summit

On August 16, AGBU Buenos Aires welcomed well-known musicians from Armenia for an impressive concert at the French Embassy in Argentina. The concert featured Levon Tevanyan (duduk), Hasmik Leyloyan (qanun), Armen Yeganyan (tar), Edgar Margaryan (duduk), Gagik Gasparyan (wind instruments) and Álvaro Hagopian (piano). The concert was dedicated to this year's Francophone Summit.



### MILAN, ITALY

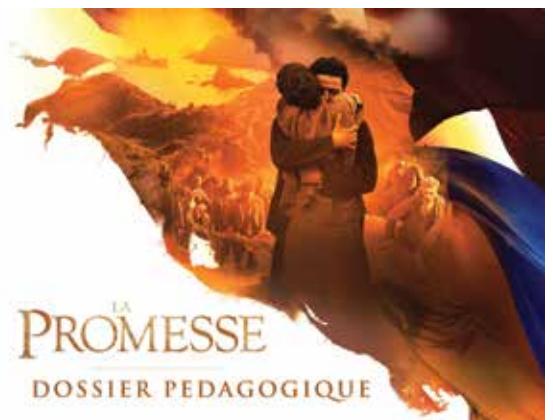
#### AGBU Milan Co-hosts Concert of Armenian Folk Music

On September 12, the Union of Armenians of Italy, Armenian Youth Association of Milan, and AGBU Milan hosted a concert featuring the Naregatsi Folk Instruments Orchestra. The audience was treated to a captivating program of Armenian folk songs. Composer and tar player Artem Khachatur is the artistic director of the ensemble of 28 musicians, aged 12-30. The orchestra was founded by Nareg Hartounian, the founder and director Naregatsi Art Institute (NAI), in 2008. It has toured in several cities across Europe. The orchestra strives to promote Armenian folk instruments.

### BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

#### AGBU Europe Introduces New Educational Guide on Teaching of the Armenian Genocide in Belgium

Building on AGBU's *The Promise to Educate* campaign, AGBU Europe, with the support of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, developed a new educational package on the Armenian Genocide for teachers and students of French-language high-schools in Belgium. The packages include a study guide for *The Promise* and four new AGBU WebTalks in French and three with French subtitles. Packages are available on demand at the AGBU Europe Office in Brussels and the official resource centers of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles in Belgium. AGBU Europe—in partnership with the Armenian Socio-Cultural Center of Belgium (CSCAB) and the Jewish Secular Community Center David Susskind (CCLJ)—has been working on genocide education guidelines for French-language Belgian high schools since 2016.



## AGBU Chapters



### SOFIA, BULGARIA

#### AGBU Sofia Participates in Solidarity Festival

For the second consecutive year, AGBU Sofia participated in the Solidarity Festival on June 24. Organized by Caritas Sofia, Multi Kulti Collective, and CVS Bulgaria, the event promotes solidarity among different cultures and ethnic groups. The AGBU Sofia booth displayed traditional Armenian costumes, showed visitors how to write their names in Armenian characters, and offered Armenian folk dance lessons.

### PLOVDIV, BULGARIA

#### Two Dance Groups of AGBU Plovdiv Participate in Festival in Armenia

On July 13, AGBU Plovdiv's Astghikner and Nreni dance groups, founded in 2014 and 2016 respectively, participated in the Happy Planet Festival in Armenia. The event was organized by the European Association of Folklore Festivals, an official partner of UNESCO. Both dance groups were recognized with awards.



### PARIS, FRANCE

#### AGBU France and Nouvelles d'Arménie host Ambassador Hasmik Tolmajian

On September 21, Nouvelles d'Arménie Magazine and AGBU France hosted Hasmik Tolmajian, Armenia's Ambassador to France, for the 12th session of "Les Rendez-vous des NAM." Held one week after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's visit to Paris, the discussion centered around Armenia's new diplomatic agenda. Tolmajian reflected on the meeting of Pashinyan and President of France Emmanuel Macron, the Summit of Francophonie in Yerevan, the diplomatic priorities of Armenia's new government and the new prospects of the French-Armenian cooperation.

### PARIS, FRANCE

#### AGBU Performing Arts Department France Holds Music Contest for Children

In June, the Performing Arts Department of AGBU France held a contest for students of Armenia's music schools who play string instruments. A distinguished jury of four—Lilit Kurdiyanyan, Sevak Avanesyan, Astrik Vartnanyan and Eduard Tatevosyan—auditioned students at the AGBU Armenia office. Winners received a certificate of participation and awards. The aspiring musicians were also loaned an instrument for one year, including double base, four cellos, two violas and 20 violins—as well as 40 bows—were distributed to children.





## CAIRO, EGYPT

### HMEM Nubar Cairo Holds Basketball Tournament

The HMEM Nubar Sports Club of Cairo held a basketball tournament from October 5 to 7. The Nubar Sports Club won the senior girls' cup and the senior boys' cup. The tournament was held under the patronage of Bishop Ashod Mnatsaganian, Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Egypt. Earlier, teams of boys and girls won the Homenetmen Ararat's 2018 basketball tournament.



## BEIRUT, LEBANON

### AGBU Lebanon President Gerard Tufenkjian Meet with H.E. Archbishop Nareg Alemezian

On September 8, AGBU Lebanon President Gerard Tufenkjian and members of the AGBU and AGBU-AYA delegation met with Archbishop Nareg Alemezian, new Primate of Lebanon. Archbishop Alemezian noted that community organizations, including AGBU, must work to strengthen the community. AGBU Lebanon delegation assured its continuous dedication to the Armenian Church.



## BEIRUT, LEBANON

### AGBU Lebanon Meets with Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan

On Sunday, October 21, 2018, AGBU Lebanon President Gerard Tufenkjian and distinguished members of the AGBU and AGBU-AYA delegation met with Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, accompanied by his wife Anna Hakopyan. The meeting was also attended by Samvel Mkrtychyan, Ambassador of Republic of Armenia to Lebanon. Mr. Tufenkjian welcomed the prime minister and spoke about the importance of his visit to Lebanon. The attendees discussed issues pertaining to Armenia, the Lebanese Armenian community, and the role of AGBU in preserving and supporting Armenia's government.



## BEIRUT, LEBANON

### AGBU Schools in Lebanon Recognize Contribution of Leila Al Solh Hamade

On October 1, the AGBU Schools in Lebanon honored Leila Al Solh Hamade, the vice president of Alwaleed bin Talal Humanitarian Foundation, for its generous donation. The event drew guests, including Armenia's Ambassador to Lebanon Samvel Mkrtychyan; AGBU Lebanon President Gerard Tufenkjian; Seta and Sarkis Demirdjian; Rita Avedis Demirdjian; Sonia Zavzavadjian; and members of the district committee of Lebanon. Al Solh Hamade appreciated the spirit of the Armenian nation and praised AGBU's work. "I am glad that your organization is accomplishing this, bringing joy to many here and elsewhere." Tufenkjian acknowledged the Foundation's hard work by presenting Al Solh with a token of appreciation.

## AGBU Chapters



### BEIRUT, LEBANON

#### AGBU Lebanon Recognizes Commitment of its Long-time Members

On June 10, AGBU Lebanon District Committee handed Veteran and Double Veteran Diplomas to individuals who have been an AGBU members for 20 and 40 years in recognition of their tireless dedication and support. Haig Messerlian, an active member of AGBU and a visiting lecturer in Manoogian Simone College of Business and Economics of the American University of Armenia (AUA). Among the attendees were MP Shant Chinchinian, AGBU Lebanon president Gerard Tufenkjian, AGBU-AYA Central Committee chairman Mr. Vicken Tchertchian and members of the AGBU and AYA leadership.



### ALEPPO, SYRIA

#### AGBU Lazar Najarian-Calouste Gulbenkian School Holds 2018 Graduation Ceremony

The 2018 graduation ceremony of the AGBU Lazar Najarian-Calouste Gulbenkian School in Aleppo took place on July 1. The leadership of AGBU Syria, community members and parents attended the ceremony. After welcome speeches were delivered, students took the stage to perform their favorite songs and recite poems in Armenian.

Established in 1954, the AGBU Lazar Najarian-Calouste Gulbenkian School has a network of alumni across the world, including Armenia, where its 60th anniversary was celebrated. In 2010, the school was the winner of the Best Armenian Educational Institution contest held by Armenia's Ministry of Diaspora.

### LATAKIA, SYRIA

#### AGBU Cilicia Dance Group Performs in Latakia

The AGBU Cilicia Dance Group gave a sold-out performance at the Latakia Culture Center on October 7. The event was attended by Fr. Mashdots Arabatlian, Vicar of the Armenian Prelacy of Aleppo. The AGBU Cilicia Dance Group performed a two-part program full of Armenian, Arab and European dances. Choreographer Raffi Nazarian is the artistic director of the group which comprises 50 dancers of three age categories.



### YEREVAN, ARMENIA

#### AVC Provides Language Training for Refugees and Migrants in Armenia

Based on a partnership agreement with Armenia's Ministry of Education and Science, the Armenian Virtual College (AVC) will now offer classes in Armenian language for refugees and long-term migrants in Armenia to promote their social integration. In September, the first group of 20 people—Armenians from Iraq and Syria among them—attended weekly classes, with two levels of proficiency. Half of the participants successfully passed the final exam and received certificates.



## YEREVAN, ARMENIA

### Belgium's Largest French University to Integrate AVC Courses

On September 1, the Armenian Virtual College (AVC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Catholic University of Louvain (UCL) in Yerevan to formalize a partnership for integrating AVC's online courses into the UCL curriculum. Graduate students of UCL's Oriental Studies Program will have an opportunity to sign up for AVC courses in Armenian language, history and culture. AVC will transfer students' grades to UCL upon course completion. Although the courses in Armenian Studies have been part of UCL's curriculum for 20 years, only Classical Armenian was available until recently. AVC courses in modern Western and Eastern Armenian will complement and enrich the university curriculum.



## YEREVAN, ARMENIA

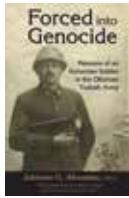
### Mountaineer Ara Khatchadourian Promotes the First Yerevan Marathon as Goodwill Ambassador

To promote peace and inspire youth to pursue their dreams, mountaineer Ara Khatchadourian set off for a cross-continent run from Marseille and courageously completed it in Yerevan on July 21, 105 days later after the start. "My principle is to transmit values other than violence and to tell people that, through work, it is possible to achieve goals together. I visit schools and tell students that if they have dreams, they can be realized—but it takes work. Without an effort, it is impossible to achieve what you desire," said Khatchadourian.

This achievement has propelled Khatchadourian into a new commitment with the Bridge for CSOs project to become a Goodwill Ambassador for the Armenian Marathon Foundation which hosted the first-ever Yerevan Marathon on October 21. A capacity-building project for Armenian civil society, Bridge for CSOs—funded by the European Union and implemented by AGBU Armenia—has this time linked a diaspora sports talent to a local non-governmental organization to advance a significant undertaking. With his incredible example, Khatchadourian has empowered many and in his new role, he has helped promote Yerevan Marathon and sports in general. Khatchadourian, who arrived in Yerevan especially for the Marathon, greeted runners at the starting point and awaited them near the finish line to celebrate their incredible achievement.

## Forced into Genocide

Item Number: **037** \$35.00

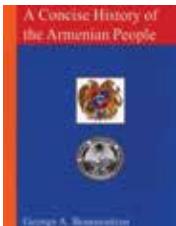


Alexanian was forced to become an onlooker while he watched the atrocities unfold. His story of resourceful action and fateful turns is a suspenseful "insider's account" of a genocide survivor. From his singular position, Alexanian was able to document the tragedy of his people in his journals and diaries, but he also offers us a behind-the-scenes look into the motivations and actions of Turkish military officials as they committed the atrocities. His story continues after the war as we follow the trail of his journey through Europe and finally to America, where he found solace and was able to start anew with fellow survivors.

Editor: **Adrienne G. Alexanian**  
 Publisher: **Transaction/Routledge**  
 Format: **Hardcover**

## A Concise History of the Armenian People

Item Number: **258** \$35.00



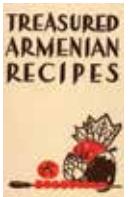
This revised 7th edition is a concise survey of the political history of the Armenian people from their origins to 2018. Included are specially designed historical maps, time-lines, illustrations, new photographs and bibliographical guides.

Author: **George A. Bournoutian**  
 Publisher: **Mazda Publishers**  
 Format: **Paperback**

## BEST SELLER

## Treasured Armenian Recipes

Item Number: **101** \$20.00



Arranged according to categories, from appetizers to desserts, these recipes will conjure up memories for many and awaken others to the pleasures of Armenian cooking.

Author: **Marie Manoogian**  
 Publisher: **AGBU**  
 Format: **Paperback**

## Give Color Gain Life: Adult Coloring Book, Stress Relieving Patterns

Item Number: **034A-1, 034A-2, or 034A-3** \$15.00 Each



Twelve patterns of Armenian ornamental art designed by Armen Kyurkchyan, printed on superior quality paper suitable for water color, pencil, crayon, marker and ink.

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## NEW

## Home Again: Armenian Recipes from the Ottoman Empire

Item Number: **MAR1** \$45.00



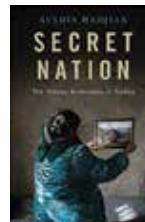
*Home Again* combines a collection of Armenian recipes from the Ottoman Empire with a memoir of a family of immigrants who kept certain recipes close to their hearts as a means of preserving their cultural heritage. The author examines the relationship between history and cuisine, between displacement and memory, between the individual and their ancestors.

Author: **Mari A. Firkatian**  
 Publisher: **CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform**  
 Format: **Paperback**

## NEW

## Secret Nation: The Hidden Armenians of Turkey

Item Number: **AVE1** \$35.00



It has long been assumed that no Armenian presence remained in eastern Turkey after the 1915 massacres. As a result of what has come to be called the Armenian Genocide, those who survived in Anatolia were assimilated as Muslims, with most losing all traces of their Christian identity. In recent years, a growing number of "secret Armenians" have begun to emerge from the shadows.

Avedis Hadjian has travelled to the towns and villages once densely populated by Armenians, recording stories of survival and discovery from those who remain in a region that is deemed unsafe for the people who once lived there. This book takes the reader to the heart of these hidden communities for the first time, unearthing their unique heritage and identity.

Editor: **Avedis Hadjian**  
 Publisher: **I. B. Tauris**  
 Format: **Hardcover**

## Inside Constantinople: A Diplomat's Diary During the Dardanelles Expedition, April-September, 1915

Item Number: **027** \$25.00

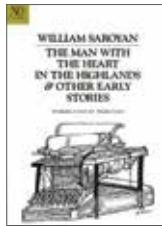


Lewis Einstein was the first United States official to publicly speak against the genocide of Armenians and his diaries foreshadowed much of what Ambassador Morgenthau wrote in his memoirs a year later. Both works supported each other in giving us invaluable insights into how, and how well, American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

Author: **Lewis Einstein**  
 Publisher: **Gomidas Institute**  
 Format: **Paperback**

## The Man With the Heart in the Highlands & Other Early Stories

Item Number: 213 \$11.00

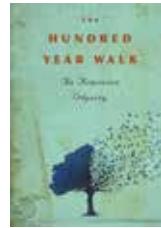


Gathered in *The Man with the Heart in the Highlands* are sixteen stories from William Saroyan's most celebrated literary period, culled from several long out-of-print collections from the 1930's and '40s. His voice here is exhilarating, luminous, and completely distinctive—ready to let go with a lusty brash laugh on every page. These stories amply bear out Elizabeth Bowen's opinion that "probably since O. Henry nobody has done more to endear and stabilize the short story."

Author: William Saroyan  
 Publisher: Academia  
 Format: Paperback

## The Hundred Year Walk—An Armenian Odyssey

Item Number: 022 \$25.00



Nominated for the Dayton Literary Peace Prize, *The Hundred Year Walk* alternates between Stepan's saga and another journey that takes place a century late. Reading this rare firsthand account, his granddaughter Dawn MacKeen finds herself first drawn into the colorful bazaars before the war and then into the horrors Stepan later endured. Inspired to retrace his steps, she sets out alone to Turkey and Syria, shadowing her resourceful, resilient grandfather across a landscape still rife with tension.

Author: Dawn Anahid MacKeen  
 Publisher: Mariner Books  
 Format: Paperback

## Check out our favorite children selections

### My First Armenian Songbook

Item Number: 038 \$35.00



In this unique songbook, English-language songs are presented along with their Armenian translations in order to celebrate both traditions. This comprehensive edition includes original translations of traditional songs from English to Armenian and one from Armenian to English. The book is ideal for children who are learning Armenian or are being exposed to Armenian culture. The rich English texts and the colorful original illustrations make it appealing to children of all backgrounds.

Author: Karenn Chutjian Presti  
 Publisher: Natabella Press  
 Format: Paperback With CD

### Block Letters with Cards

Item Number: TH1 \$39.99



Encourage fine motor and visual perception skills, while learning the Armenian alphabet.

Product info: Designed to encourage fine motor and visual perception skills.

They encourage letter identification in a fun and engaging way. They allow children to learn and grow in a fun and exploratory way

Developer: Toot Hoot

### Armenian Alphabet Poster by Gus on the Go

Item Number: Western- 63/ Eastern- 12 \$20.00



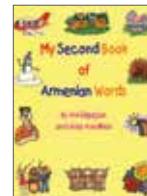
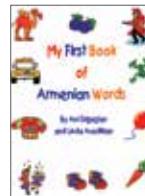
Perfect for the classroom, playroom or a child's bedroom, the Gus on the Go Armenian Alphabet Posters will make learning the Armenian alphabet fun and easy.

Available in Eastern and Western Armenian, the designs are featured from the Gus on the Go: Western/Eastern Armenian for Kids language learning app.

Size: 12" x 18" (fits in 11.75" x 15.75" matted frame)  
 Paper Type: Archival quality, acid free, 30% recycled content  
 Publisher: AGBU

### My Book of Armenian Words—2 Issues

Item Number: 259, 259A \$18.00



*My First Book of Armenian Words:* A wonderful way for children to learn Armenian. Colorful pictures accompany each word with English, Armenian and English transliteration letters.

*My Second Book of Armenian Words:* This book, a follow-up to *My First Book of Armenian Words*, has streamlined pronunciation guides and covers words associated with everyday activities.

Author: Ani Gigarjian, Linda Avedikian  
 Publisher: Gigarjian, Avedikian Publishing  
 Format: Hardcover

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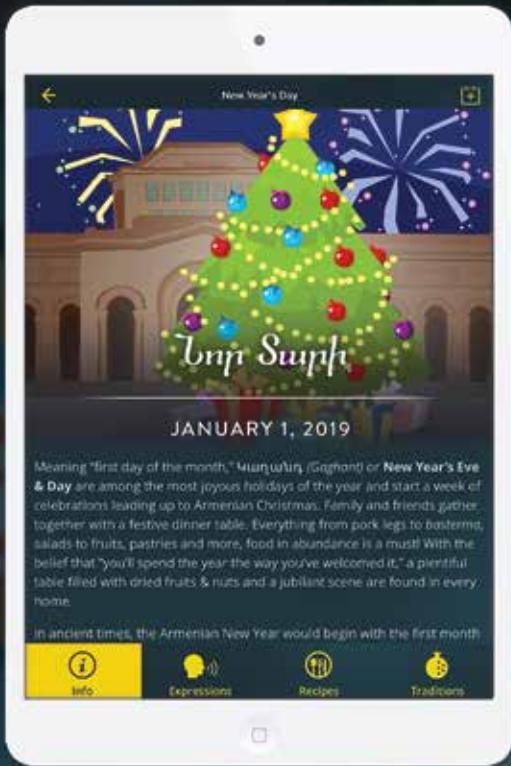
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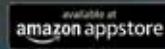


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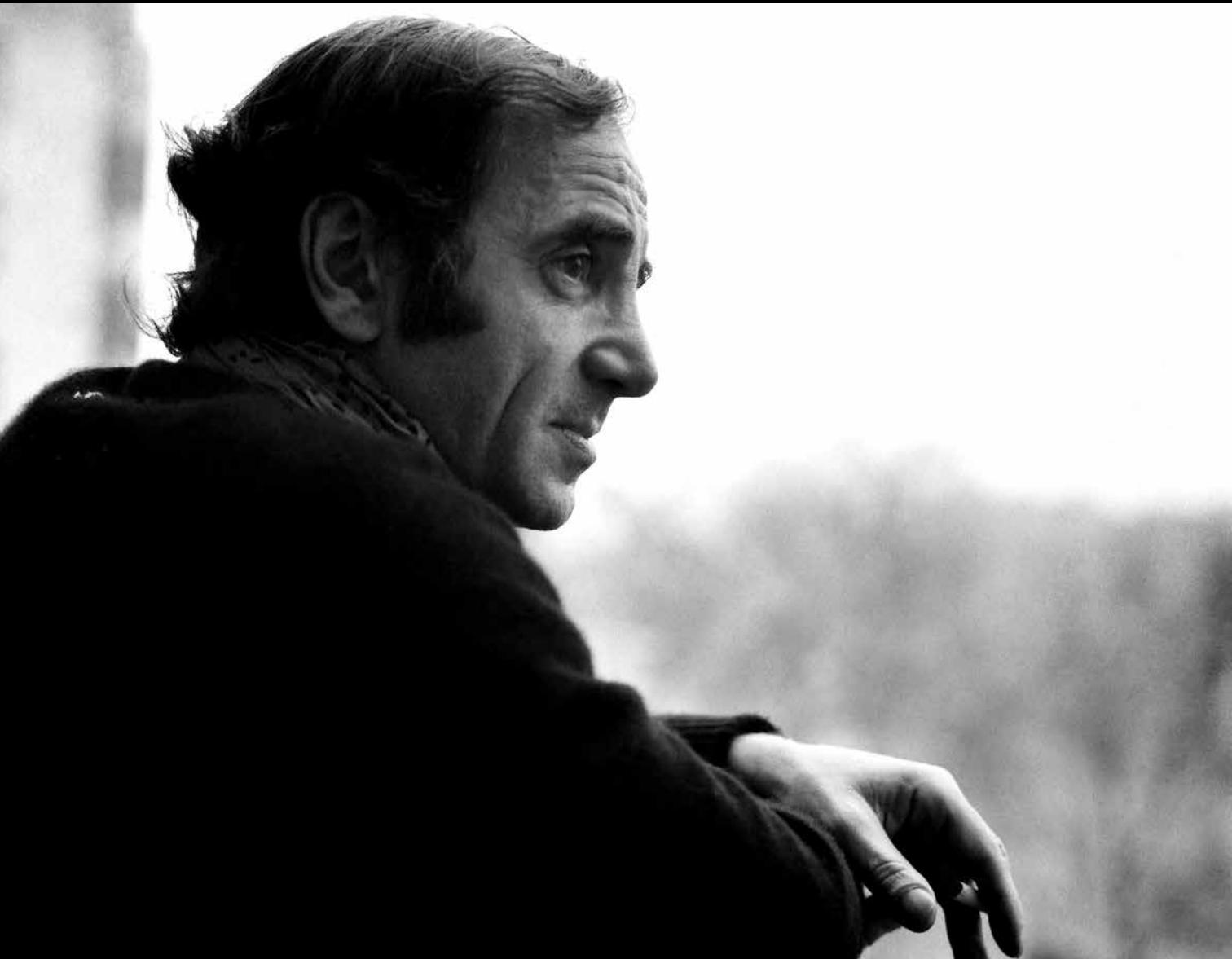
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