

Highest court says portions of law unconstitutional

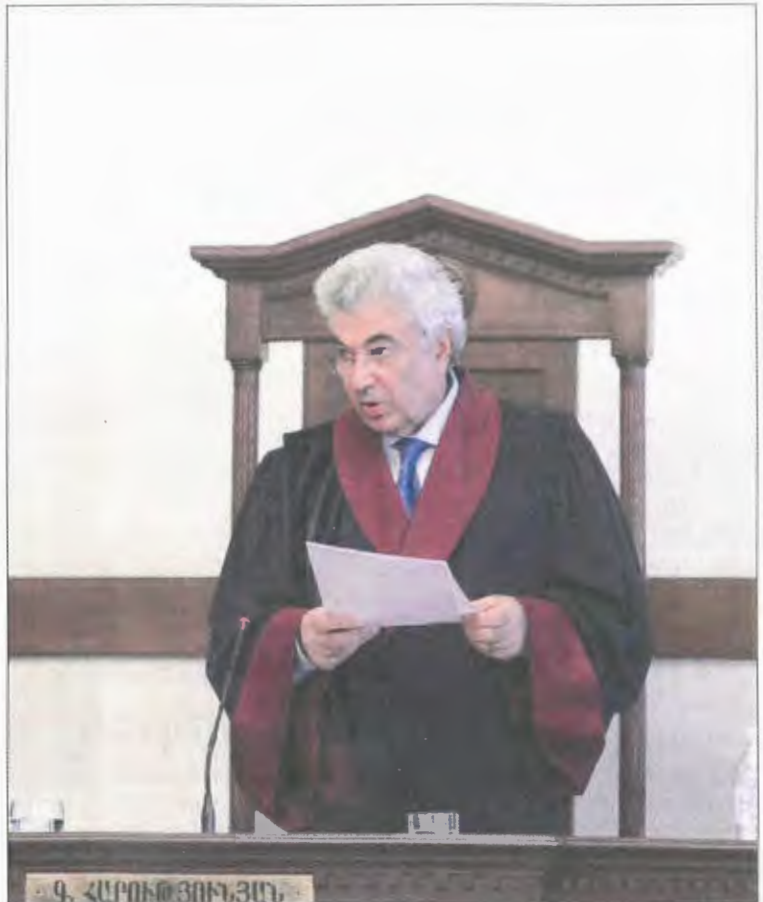
The Constitutional Court has completed the hearing on the compliance of Articles 5, 7, 8, 37, 38, 45, 49 and 86 of the Law on Funded Pension.

Following the arguments and counterarguments presented by the parties to the examination that lasted for two days, the chair and representatives of the Constitutional Court passed a decision running on 64 pages. The law was ruled as not complying with the decision of the Constitutional Court.

At the same time, the Constitutional Court has set a deadline for the parliament and the government to change some articles of the law by September 30. All the payments made by then must be reviewed. The decision enters into force from the moment of its publication.

According to Gagik Harutiunyan, the term "pension" is not set down in the RA Constitution but the basic principles of the social law are set down. Essentially, a social state recognizes clear social obligations. A state is limited by this law, and has assumed an international obligation to recognize the social right of anyone.

The experience of over 50 countries is evidence that the introduction of funded pension boosts stability of the country and people's welfare. He also noted that the forms of introduction are important and there is no need to adopt the experience of other countries mechanically, especially that corrections have been made by other countries. According to the chair of the Constitutional Court, Armenia is one of the singular countries where pension is deducted from salaries, not social payments.



In This Issue

Armenian Christians unseen victims in Syrian civil war p.2

Schiff questions Samantha Power on UN action on Kessab p.3

Global Coalition urges Armenia to join the International Criminal Court p. 15

State Youth Orchestra of Armenia Conquers Beirut p.p.12-13

Pallone requests increase in assistance to Armenia, Nagorno Karabakh p.p.18,19

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Armenia to continue cooperation with NATO within existing formats

Armenia intends to continue the cooperation with NATO within existing formats, Spokesman for the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tigran Balayan told ITAR-TASS on Wednesday.

"We cooperate with NATO within certain formats. And we do not intend to expand or change them," he said.

The comments come after NATO declared Tuesday about plans to expand cooperation with Eastern Europe.

Rep. Speier: Armenian Christians unseen victims in Syrian civil war

Congresswoman Jackie Speier (D-San Francisco/San Mateo/Redwood City) issued the following statement today after recent attacks against Armenian Christians in Kessab, Syria, forced about 2,000 people to flee their homes.

"Armenians are once again being forced to leave their homes as Syria's civil war rages on and Turkey meddles in the war-torn country's affairs. The small village of Kessab was a safe haven for this Christian community, but now their futures are cast in great doubt as they seek refuge elsewhere, not knowing whether they will ever return home. No one should have to live in fear or leave their homes because of the faith they practice.

"Anti-Armenian violence is real but



much of the world still denies it. We must open our eyes to the truth that the assault on these Christians continues almost 100 years after the Armenian genocide that left nearly 1.5 million dead. The U.S. must launch formal inquiries into Turkey's role and whether this is al-Qaeda-linked aggression."

NATO suspends Russia co-operation

NATO foreign ministers have agreed to suspend all practical civilian and military co-operation with Russia, the BBC reports.

In a strongly worded statement, they condemned Russia's "illegal annexation" of Ukraine's Crimea region and praised the Ukrainian government's "restraint".

Ministers from the 28-member bloc gathered in Brussels for their first meeting since the referendum in Crimea.

They agreed to suspend NATO co-



operation with Russia in a number of bodies but added that dialogue in the NATO-Russia Council could continue, as necessary, at ambassadorial level and above "to allow us to exchange views, first and foremost on this crisis. We will review Nato's relations with Russia at our next meeting in June".

They are also looking at options including situating permanent military bases in the Baltic states to reassure members in Eastern Europe.

FM: Armenia doing its best to ensure the security of its compatriots in Syria

Armenia is doing its best to ensure the security of its compatriots in Syria, Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian said today, speaking at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations.

The Minister said there were 120 thousand Armenians living in Syria before the crisis, while the number has reduced to 50-80 thousand now.

"Many fled the country because of the military actions and the humanitarian crisis. Practically the whole population of Kessab was forced to leave the city. About 700 families are now in Latakia, 70-80 of them have found refuge in churches. They need humanitarian assistance. We are raising the issue in concerned structures and are trying to provide assistance to Syrian Armenians to

the extent possible," the Minister said.

"Al-Qaeda-linked armed groups penetrated the region from Turkey. We must not allow Turkey to provide its territory for incursion into Syria and attacks on the civilian population," Edward Nalbandian

stated.

The Armenian Foreign Minister was bestowed the title of the Honorary Doctor of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations.



Russia's ex-PM discusses the issue of Kessab Armenians with Syrian President

"Russia is concerned about the situation in Syria," Russia's ex-Prime Minister, Chairman of the Russia-based Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society Sergei Stepashin said at a meeting with Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, Newsru.com reports.

Stepashin conveyed to President Assad a message from Russian President Vladimir Putin in which the latter expressed support for the Syrian government's fight against terrorism and emphasized the importance of settlement of the crisis through dialogue.

Stepashin said he agreed with Assad to organize the delivery of aid to Syrian Armenians. The plane of the Syrian Airlines will deliver the humanitarian supplies in the coming days.

The non-official envoy of the Russian President told Bashar Al-Assad about the unacceptability of the "actual reoccurrence of the genocide of Armenians."

Yesterday the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement, urging the UN Security Council has to discuss the attack on the Armenian-inhabited village of Kessab.



Artsvik Minasyan: RPA representatives manipulate Constitutional Court's decision



After the Constitutional Court's decision on declaring some provisions of the law on mandatory accumulative pension system anti-constitutional, the employers must demand that the State Revenue Committee give them back the funds transferred to the single account of the Armenian Finance Ministry over the past three months, MP from ARF Dashnaksutyun Faction, economist Artsvik Minasyan said at a press conference on Wednesday.

According to him, some representatives of the ruling Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) manipulate the Constitutional Court's decision, citing the concluding part of the verdict only, and try to hinder the return of the funds to the population. "From the moment of announcement of the Court's verdict, the employers no longer have to make pension payments. Moreover, from now on the pension payments will be made on the voluntary basis

only", said Minasyan. He also stressed that if the State Revenue Committee refuses to give back the earlier transferred funds, the employers and employees can apply to court.

The economist added that on Thursday at the latest the Government must elaborate a mechanism to return the funds to the population. "A new situation has arisen after the Court's verdict and the Government must return the funds within a given time", he said.

On April 2 the Constitutional Court (CC) of Armenia cancelled the mandatory component of the accumulative pension system. Head of the Constitutional Court of Armenia Gagik Haroutiunyan read out the CC's 64-page verdict on 2 April. The Constitutional Court adopted a decision to recognize the law null and void in the parts that infringe the citizen's right to manage his own salary. The CC recognized invalid all the disputable articles of the law, as they are interconnected. The CC announced 30 September the deadline for the Government and the Parliament to bring the law in line with the requirements made. The decision of the CC comes into force at the moment of announcement.

However, Head of the Parliamentary Committee for State and Legal Affairs David Harutyunyan has told ArmInfo that the anti-constitutional provisions of the law on accumulative pensions will remain in force till September 30 to avoid a legal vacuum.

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Schiff questions Samantha Power on UN action on Kessab



Most United Nations Security Council members have “raised the issue” of the recent takeover of the historically Armenian town of Kessab, Syria, and urged the world body “to do more to meet the needs of these people,” U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power told Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) and members of a key House Appropriations panel Wednesday during a Congressional hearing, reported the Armenian National Committee of America.

“We join with Armenians across California and around America in thanking Congressman Schiff for raising the plight of the Armenians driven out of Kessab with Ambassador Power,” said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. “We appreciate Ambassador Power’s statement that Kessab is ‘an issue of huge concern,’ and value her explanation to Congress about the UN Security Council’s efforts to help the Armenian civilians driven from their homes by extremist militants. We will continue to work, in partnership with our friends in Congress, to encourage our government to speak directly to the cause of Kessab’s suffering – namely the clear complicity of Turkey in the al-Qaeda linked attack that drove more than 2,000 Armenians from their ancestral homes.”

The ANCA has called on the Senate and House Intelligence committees to investigate Turkey’s role in the recent attacks against the Kessab civilian population. A new action alert has been posted and has received broad support following social media posts by citizens and celebrities alike.

During a question and answer session at the House Appropriations Committee State-Foreign Operations Subcommittee hearing with Ambassador Power earlier today, Rep. Schiff asked “About a week ago, the town of Kessab, which is predominantly Armenian Christian, was attacked by Al-Qaeda-linked fighters who had crossed over from Turkey and the town was emptied in a bloody assault. Many of the residents are descendants of the Armenian Genocide and there is particular poignancy in them being targeted in this manner.” Rep. Schiff went on to ask what efforts the United Nations and its agencies are making to address the crisis.

Ambassador Power, noting that the recent attacks on Kessab are a “huge concern,” went on to note that: “Most of the [UN Security] Council members raised the issue of Kessab, calling on the UN to do more, to try to meet the needs of these people. [...] I would note that, unfortunately, the extremist group that appears to have taken hold of that town is not one that the United States and the United Nations overall has a great deal of leverage over. And so, our emphasis now, is on supporting the moderate opposition in Syria that is taking on those extremist groups and making sure that the UN has the funding it needs, and the resources of all kinds that it needs to accommodate [...] in this case, the Syrian Armenian community, as you said, an internally displaced population flow. So, it’s

resources, it’s strengthening the moderate opposition which is taking on ISIL – the very group that appears to have taken over that town – making sure that none of the neighbors are giving support to terrorist groups or extremist groups which would aid their efforts in seizures like that, and going on a funding drive internationally because only a very small percentage of the UN funding appeal for Syria generally has been filled at this point.”

Located in the northwestern corner of Syria, near the border with Turkey, Kessab had, until very recently, evaded major battles in the Syrian conflict. The local Armenian population had increased in recently years with the city serving as safe-haven for those fleeing from the war-torn cities of Yacubiye, Rakka and Aleppo. On the morning of March 21st, extremist foreign fighters launched a vicious attack, from Turkey, on Kessab civilians, forcing over 2000 to flee to neighboring Latakia and Bassit. An international social media campaign – #SaveKessab – has garnered broad media attention to the tragedy with over 100,000 tweeting about the crisis and tens of thousands calling for immediate U.S. and U.N. action.

In a statement issued last week, the U.S. State Department noted that they are “deeply troubled by recent fighting and violence that is endangering the Armenian community in Kasab, Syria and has forced many to flee. There are far too many innocent civilians suffering as a result of the war. All civilians, as well as their places of worship, must be protected.” The statement went on to note that “We have long had concerns about the threat posed by violent extremists and this latest threat to the Armenian community in Syria only underscores this further.”

Representatives Adam Schiff (D-CA), Brad Sherman (D-CA), Jim Costa (D-CA), James McGovern (D-MA) and Jackie Speier (D-CA) have condemned the attacks and urged the State Department to investigate Turkey’s involvement. In a joint letter to President Obama issued earlier today, Congressional Armenian Caucus co-Chairs Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Michael Grimm (R-NY) and Armenian Genocide Resolution (H.Res.227) lead authors David Valadao (R-CA) and Adam Schiff, commented on the Kessab attacks, noting “When coupled with a mass exodus of the Armenian community, these events are far too reminiscent of the early days of the Armenian Genocide, which took place nearly 100 years ago in Ottoman Turkey under the cover of World War I.” The letter goes on to note, “With the Christian Armenian community being uprooted from its homeland, yet again, we strongly urge you to take all necessary measures without delay to safeguard the Christian Armenian community of Kessab. We also believe that now is the time to redouble America’s efforts to ensure that all minority communities at risk in the Middle East are afforded greater protection.”

Wayne Merry: Situation around Ukraine is a serious alarm that the South Caucasus political nucleus must be seriously revised

By David Stepanyan

As a man who is well informed of the Karabakh peace process, could you assess its perspective given the latest processes and global changes?

It seems to me that over the last decades the South Caucasus has generally lost many opportunities. This happens as Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan wrongly think that time works for them. Actually, the latest developments in Ukraine have once again demonstrated it. Meanwhile, the actual refusal of the conflicting parties to support the efforts of the mediators to find a solution to the

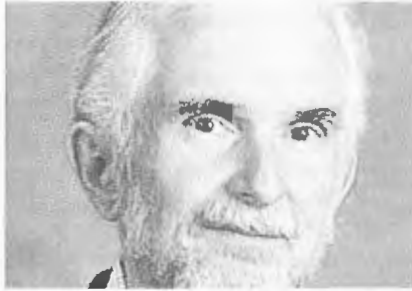
Karabakh conflict has affected them, first of all. I have to reiterate that it is the parties to the conflict that are able to achieve a real agreement on the peaceful resolution of the Karabakh conflict. In your region they think for some unknown reason that the Caucasus is the hub of the universe and nearly all the interests of superpowers collide just there. South Caucasus is not even the periphery of the global policy; it is the periphery where the interests of global actors collide.

Generally, looking at the South Caucasus from my point of view, I see rather a sad picture amid USA's falling expectations from the region. The South Caucasus, has not become a single whole despite common regional programs. The South Caucasus countries do not develop economically and democratically. All this rests upon the regional conflicts that are not subject to settlement by the efforts of foreign mediators and are not being settled.

USA has traditionally exerted genuine efforts to resolve the Nagorno Karabakh conflict on the basis of a mutually acceptable concession. Everything is in vain. This is the reason of our disappointment, concern and even discontent. The arms race between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the frequent cross fires on the border is what arouses utmost concern and discontent.

What is today's imperative for the parties to the conflict?

I think, the first thing one must and can do now is not to allow the conflict to spiral into armed confrontation. It must be avoided at any price. Otherwise, the price will be too high for all the parties to the conflict. In this light, it is very important for the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan to support the efforts of inter-



ArmInfo's interview with AFPC (American Foreign Policy Council) Senior Advisor E. Wayne Merry

national mediators by all means possible. I am sure that the failed efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group mediation mission are not personal failures of the mediators. The peace process is hopeless, as the conflicting parties are unable to conduct normal negotiations. Any mediation will be a success if the conflicting parties are ready to negotiate.

The stance of the West, Washington and your personal stance come down to the need to lift the blockade of the Armenian-Turkish border that was closed by Ankara in 1993. What makes it so much important for the West and the U.S.?

Speaking of Armenian-Turkish normalization, we mean establishment of diplomatic and economic relations, first of all, and not specifically opening of the border. Being strongly convinced that normalization of relations meets the interests of both the countries, I cannot but say that normalization is within Armenia's interests, first of all. Turkey, as you know, can do without Armenia. Meanwhile, Armenia due to its political geography, cannot overcome many restrictions without having normal relations with Turkey. Naturally, normalization of the Armenian-Turkish relations is the best vector of developments for the United States.

In Washington they are sure that the relations of Armenia and Turkey should have been normalized long ago. Yerevan made a mistake failing to take advantage of the opportunity to normalize relations with Ankara and missing the huge foreign policy advantages possible normalization would give. In this light, the initiative must come from Yerevan rather than Ankara.

Well, but actual failure of Turkish minister Davutoglu's policy of "zero problem with neighbors" and putting the

Armenian-Turkish protocols off the agenda of the Turkish parliament speaks of opposite trends...

For Turkey it is of vital importance today to have permanent and strong ties with Iran and Russia. Naturally, Turkey should have normal diplomatic and economic relations, I repeat, with all the three countries in the South Caucasus. I think, involvement of the Caucasus countries in NATO PfP is the best instrument that helps increase the Alliance's role in the South Caucasus. Therefore,

Ankara should maintain and establish diplomatic relations with all the three countries in the region.

Are the processes in Ukraine also part of the everlasting confrontation of the West and Russia or it is a domestic political process?

I think the crisis in Ukraine is both domestic and international problem. In that country, the old domestic disputes have transformed into an international antagonism that was mainly provoked by the EU Eastern Partnership Project. I think there was no need in such global rivalry and confrontation.

All the latest processes in Ukraine have obviously demonstrated how much restricted is the political flexibility of the South Caucasus countries and their opportunities to maneuver, as well as how much the region depends on the processes in other regions. The situation in Ukraine is a serious alarm that there is need to seriously revise the political nucleus of all the South Caucasus countries.

Russia has recognized Crimea's independence on the basis of the international principle of the peoples' right to self-determination. Will that principle - leaving aside Crimea's joining Russia - work against Russia in future like it happened in mid-90s given its federal structure?

Many of the huge number of the principles of the international relations stipulated by the UN documents contradict to each other. In this light, every time when the principle of the peoples' right to self-determination is applied, it is necessary to study the given principle depending on the peculiarities of every particular case. I think it is impossible to compare Crimea with the Balkans or Bosnia. Neither it can be compared with the Kurile Islands, Kaliningrad region. I am sure that every case needs a special approach.

Kesab, Turkey and Shahan Natalie

By Sako Arian

Three years after the start of the bloody war, we haven't been able to solve the security issue of Syrian-Armenians

American-Armenian reporter Stepan Partamian, on his Facebook page, asks how many of the world's ten million Armenians have visited Kesab or even gave it a second thought in the years preceding the war in Syria.

It's a spot on observation. After 1,000 days of bloody and brutal war scenes emerging from Syria, we Armenians have yet to decide on what to do. The charitable and other forms of assistance provided to the Syrian Armenians caught in the pincers of this life and death struggle have, sadly, failed to address the most important dilemma facing them – their safety and security.

The position of the authorities in Armenia to ensure the "return" of Syrian-Armenians to the homeland hasn't been promising. One of the main reasons for such an attitude is the constant calls of diaspora institutions to preserve the Syrian-Armenia community at all costs. Overlooked in all this is the fact that some 40% of Kesab Armenians hold RA citizenship. A legal infraction is at play here as well since any state has a primary obligation to its citizens to ensure their safety.

The fact that Turkey is assisting the rebels in Syria isn't a recent development. The Turkish Air Force has not only shot down Syrian planes but has installed Patriot type missile systems on its southern border.

These are the facts.

What is sad is that we Armenians have again fallen in the old trap of enemy hating creating by Turkey itself. Statements and posts of pain, sorrow and lament appear everywhere. In the midst of all these emotional outbursts, no one is thinking of real exit strategies.

Once again, the 'genocide phobia' is making the rounds, without understanding that this approach, especially regarding Kesab, will be of no benefit to Armenians who have sought refuge in Latakia, which is practically blockaded on all sides. It is also no secret that we are used to this situation that is the most convenient of all approaches. It doesn't require much effort to pluck out the eye of a Turk, but accusing them brings no

positive change at all for Syrian-Armenians now living in crisis mode.

The United Nations can merely take the rebels to task. The U.S. Congress and the Russian State Duma will do the same. And that's where it will end. They have been issuing charges for the past three years and will continue to react to events on the ground in Syria in the same fashion.

Shahan Natalie talks about the defeats suffered by Armenians

In his book "The Turks and Us", Shahan Natalie says the following:

"The Turk is ignorant, the Armenian clever; the Turk is savage, the Armenian educated; the Turk is anarchistic, the Armenian skilled; the Turk is poor, the Armenian rich; and while the Turk isn't a



diplomat, the Armenian is a politician...thus, the Turk dies and the Armenian is reborn. The person who committed the biggest crime of the Armenians' political destiny was when he placed these glasses on Armenian eyes. In time, they blinded us to the extent that we couldn't see things in the correct light. We can imagine the extent of our blindness when, for example, an Armenian editor, a son of a peasant, proclaims that Sultan Hamid wasn't a diplomat. And this is a fact."

This is the observation of Natalie and it is also no secret that the number one enemy of our people isn't the average

Turk but that Turk suffocating in the bile and blood of Turkishness in whom Armenian hating is a pronounced quality. Our problem is our lack of an effective means to deal with those Armenian hating Turks. Our avoidance to deal with this issue, and to instead rain down accusations and curses as a means of struggle will change nothing. On the contrary, such an approach merely exposes our powerlessness.

In the same work, Natalie speaks not only about the blows inflicted upon us by the Turks but presents, in detail, the position of the Great Powers regarding our plight. In this regard he writes:

"So why were we defeated?"

Volumes answer that it was mainly due to those external reasons in which the Great Powers played a role.

The Russians betrayed us. Towards an outlet in the Mediterranean, they wanted a road free of Armenians, and they pursued that policy by, on the one hand, by encouraging us, and, on the other, by having us massacred by the hands of the Turks.

The English, in defense of their eastern policies and economic interests, sold us out. The French, after capturing Cilicia with our weapons and blood, left us defenseless in the face of the Turkish sword in order to curry friendship with the Turks.

The Italians, regarding Smyrna as their own, gave weapons to the Turks to drive the Greeks out and they burned us in fire.

The Americans put us to sleep with their pretty speeches and burnt our cause for a few oil wells.

These are only examples. Behind each lies a great tragedy."

Returning to the issue of Syria, what is also of concern is that many, without correctly understanding the realm of events, consider it an act of courage to mix Turks and Arabs and to paint Islam and the Turks with the same brush. However, they are totally dissimilar. Faced with this centuries-old issue, we have presented solutions without understanding its complexity and attempt to connect Turks with Islam, all the while forgetting that these same Kesab Armenians (or their forbearers) who sur-

continued on page 16

About 35-40 percent of Armenia's economy is in shadow, human rights defender's report

About 35-40 percent of Armenia's economy is in shadow, according to a recent report by human rights defender Karen Andreasyan on the problems in the tax and customs areas.

According to him, the State Revenue Committee examined 225 cases related to shadow economy, but criminal cases were started only into 25 cases.

The report says the share of shadow economy did not change for years, accounting approximately for 35-40 % of the total economic activity.

Food prices dropped 1% in March

Foodstuff prices fell by 1% in Armenia in March compared to February, ArmStat reported.

General decrease was recorded due to reduced prices for vegetables and potatoes, vegetable and animal oils, fish products, according to the report. In March this year against March 2013, food prices rose by 1%.

Prices for vegetables and potatoes alone dropped by 6.2% compared to February; a 3.6% year-on-year increase was recorded compared to March 2013.

Prices for vegetable and animal oils fell by 1.3% against the month before and by 3.7% compared to March 2013.

A 1% reduction is seen in fish prices; year-on-year increase was 7.1%.

Meat product prices reduced by 0.7% compared to February and by 1.4% against March 2013.

Average egg prices dropped by 0.6% in February, but rose by 8.5% against March the year before.

Fruit prices rose by 1.4% in March against February and fell by 8.4% compared to March 2013 levels.

Prices for milk products hiked by 1% against February and by 10% compared to March the year before.

Consumer prices fell by 0.4% in Armenia in March this year. A 4.6% increase was recorded in consumer prices in March-January compared to the same period of 2013. Armenia's inflation is projected at 4% (±1.5%) under the 2014 budget.

Union of domestic commodity producers urges authorities to help resume operation of chemical plant in Vanadzor

Vazgen Safaryan, the chairman of the Union of Domestic Commodity Producers, urged today the government to help resume the operation of a major chemical plant in Armenia's third largest town of Vanadzor, the administrative center of northern region of Lori.

Speaking at a news conference he said a lot of money had been invested in its rehabilitation. It passed then from hand to hand and was rumored to start operation, but it did not happen yet.

He said the plant is of paramount importance for Armenia, especially in terms of production of ammonia and nitrogen fertilizers which have great demand in the country.

Safaryan said about 90 tons of ammonia is used in Armenia a month. Local companies have to buy it in the neighboring Georgia at \$1,000 per ton.

Armenia buys also over 8000 tons of nitrogen fertilizers in Georgia, which the Vanadzor chemical plant can also produce. Besides, according to him, the Vanadzor



chemical plant was ready to start production of corundum that also could be sold to local enterprises.

The Prometheus Khimprom company in Vanadzor is a merger of three companies - Vanadzor chemical plant, Vanadzor fiber plant and the Vanadzor thermal power plant that was commissioned in 2005 after long periods of idleness. The company is owned by the British-registered Russian Roding International Limited.

Union of domestic commodity producers says Armenia could use Iranian gas to produce chloroprene rubber

Vazgen Safaryan, the chairman of the Union of Domestic Commodity Producers, said today Nairit chemical plant in Yerevan could use Iranian gas to resume production of chloroprene rubber.

Speaking at a news conference he said the Union had sent a letter with this proposal to the Iranian ambassador in Armenia and is now waiting for his answer.

He said part of rubber could be shipped to Iran in return for the gas and the rest could be sold to other countries.

Armenia and Iran have a gas pipeline commissioned in 2007. It is used to transport Iranian gas to Armenia where it is converted into electricity for export to Iran. In return for one cubic meter of gas Armenia exports 3 kWh of electricity. Under the agreement Iran is to supply 36 billion cubic meters of gas in 20 years. The agreement can be prolonged by another five years.

"According to rough estimates, Russia's annual demand for chloroprene rubber is about 20,000 tons. Armenian can

produce about 15,000 tons of rubber annually and sell it to Russia, China, Kazakhstan and other countries," he said.

Nairit was the only plant in the Soviet Union to produce chloroprene rubber. It was closed in 1989 for environmental reasons and resumed operation partially in 1992. In 2006, 90% of Nairit's shares were sold to British Rainville Property Limited for \$40 million.

The remaining 10% belong to the Armenian government. In April 2010 the plant stopped production of rubber. Before the halt, the plant sold its products to EU countries, Russia (about 30% of exports), the United States and 20 other countries.

In late 2013 December Russian Rosneft, Pirelli Tyre Russia and Rosneft-Armenia signed in Yerevan a memorandum of understanding to establish a joint venture for production of butadiene-styrene rubber. Later prime minister Tigran Sargsyan said Rosneft could invest \$400 million in construction of a new rubber plant in Armenia.

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- 1440.Northern Ave., Newly built, 3rd floor, 110 sq.m., 1 bedroom, h-3m, euro repaired, heating system, ,furnished, parking., Price: 350.000 USD.
- 1715- Sayat Nova Ave., 5/4, 70sq.m, stone bld, h-4m, 1 bedroom, capitally repaired, heating system. Price: 110.000 USD
- 1680- Mashtots Ave., 5/4, 68sq.m, 1 bedroom, old repair, possibility of gas. Price: 86.000 USD.
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- 2949.Aram str., Newly built, 1st floor, 143 sq.m, 2 bedrooms, zero state, Price: 2000 USD per sq.m.
- 2300.Northern ave., Newly built, 6/2, 130 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, parking. Price: 400.000 USD.

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- 2958.Pushkin str., 5/2, 140 sq.m., stone building, 4 bedrooms, capitally repaired, heating system. Price: Negotiable.
- 2895.Northern Ave., Newly built, 3rd floor, 300sq.m, 3bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control, AC. Price: negotiable
- 2802.Amiryan str., Newly built, 8/4, 166sq.m, 3bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, central heating, AC, security system. Price: 320.000 USD.
- 1104.Komitas Ave., Aram Khachatryan str., 5/2, 125sq.m., stone bld, h-2.75m., 3 bedrooms, office, 2 bathrooms, old repair, gas, garage. Price: 130.000 USD
- 2950.Aram str., Newly built, 5th floor, 176 sq.m, 3 bedrooms, office, zero state, Price: 310.000 USD
- 2836.Pushkin str., 4/4, 5, 400sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC. Price: 460.000 USD.

PREMISES

- 1789.Charents str. Land-1270sq.m, 5 storied building, each floor-400sq.m., basement, capitally repaired, parkings. Price: 4.000.000 USD negotiable

- 1598.Komitas, Nairy Zaryan str., 1000 sq.m., working restaurant, 1st line, capitally repaired. Price: negotiable.
- 1603.Northern Ave., Ground floor of the building, 160 sq.m., zero level, window glasses. Price: 2.600.000 USD.
- 2035.Tumanyan str., Ground floor of the building, 220sq.m., 1st line, facade-55m., capitally repaired, h-5m., cellar. Price: Negotiable
- 2013.Tumanyan str., Ground floor of the building, 265sq.m., 1st line, capitally repaired, heating system, cellar. Price: 1.300.000\$ negotiable
- 2012.Mashtots Ave., 5/1, 2, 140sq.m., window glasses, capitally repaired, AC. Price: 1.100.000\$ negotiable
- 2155.Mashtots ave., 3storied building, 540sq.m., each floor-180sq.m, window glasses, parking. Price: 3.600.000 USD
- 2020.Hr. Kochar str., Land-300sq.m, 1st line, 4storied building, 1080sq.m., each floor-270sq.m, h-3.6m, without divisions, parkings, 3 access. Price: 1.400.000 USD negotiable
- 1986.Cascade, Land 1000sq.m. 3storied building 1200sq.m., unfinished, parking. Price: 1.000.000 USD.
- 2167.Sayat Nova str., newly built, 38sq.m, capitally repaired. Price: 200.000 USD

LANDS

- 2122.Davitashen, 1800 sq.m., water, gas, electricity, possible to sell separately 600 sq.m., and 1200 sq.m. Price: 150 USD per sq.m.
- 2121.Demirchyan str., 1338 sq.m., building permits. Price: 2million USD.
- 2013.Cascade. 1000 sq.m. building permits, first line, gas, water and electricity possibilities. Price 460.000USD
- 1402.Hr. Kochar Str., 1100 sq. m., facade - 25 m. Price negotiable.
- 2090.Lori region, close to Stepanavan, Gyargyar village, 6 hectares, forest 2 hectare has building permits, 3 water source, electricity. Price: 100.000USD.
- 2406.Avan, Mher Mkrtchyan block, 1000 sq.m., electricity, gas, water, the district is inhabited. Price: 30USD per sq.m
- 2310.Monument, Babayan str, 1000 sq. m, facade-25m, privatized, Price: 350 USD negotiable
- 2107.Monument, 2400sq.m, building permits, building project. Price: 400 USD per sq.m.
- 2413.Asharak roadway, 1000sq.m, building permits, building project. Price: Negotiable
- 2414.Demirchyan str. land-750sq.m., building permits. Price: 750.000 USD.

PRIVATE HOUSES

- 3348.Blur, Barbyus str. Land - 800 sq.m, 3 storied bld.-700 sq.m, 4bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control. Price: 1.2 million USD
- 3146.Aygestan, Land-500 sq.m., 5 storied bld-765 sq.m., each floor-180 sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, study, capitally repaired, heating system, elevator. Price: 2.300.000 USD.
- 3583.Nork-Marash, Land-1100sq.m, 2 storied bld-520sq.m, 6 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, swimming pool, garden. Price: 1.350.000 USD.
- 3432.Aygedzor, Land - 1021 sq m, 3 storied bld.- 501 sq.m., 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms,

study, capitally repaired, central heating, AC, boiler room garden, swimming pool, sauna, garage, security system. Price: 1.000.000 USD

•3576.Avan, Tsarav Akhbyur /near Botanical garden/, Land-560sq.m., 4 storied building-560sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 4bathrooms, a kitchen, office, capitally repaired, heating system, swimming pool, garden, 2 car parking. Price: 850.000 USD

•3606.Avan, Tsarav Akhbyur/near Botanical garden/, Land-1000sq.m., 3 storied building-750sq.m., 6 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, 2 kitchens, capitally repaired, heating system



swimming pool, garden, sauna, 2 car parking. Price-1.500.000 USD

•3574.Blur, Land-779sq.m., 2 storied building-720sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms, study, capitally repaired, heating system, sauna swimming pool, garden. Price: 2.000.000 USD

•3590.Blur, Barbyus str., Land-450 sq.m., 4 storied building-470sq.m., 3bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, garden. Price: 680.000 USD

•3651.Blur, Barbyus str., Land-900sq.m., 5 storied building-800sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, garden. Price: 1.700.000 USD.

NEWLY BUILT RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

- 74.Cascade, Verin Antarayin. 136-315 sq m., walls plastered, electricity, water, gas, euro windows, no exploitation fees. Price: 1200 USD per sq.m, parking -15.000 USD.
- 107.Monument, Verin Antarayin. inhabited, 8 floors, gas, windows, street view -1000 USD per sq.m., city looking -1500 USD per sq.m., parking - 4 million USD preliminary.
- 87.Sayat-Nova str., 21 floors, 3 bedrooms - 188 sq.m., 199 sq.m., Price 1900 USD per sq.m., 2 bedrooms have a beautiful sight - 117 sq.m., 120 sq.m., 124 sq.m., Price: 1700 USD per sq.m., climate control, gas.
- 93.Kievyan str., Given to the operation in October 2011, 16 floors, walls plastered, windows, exterior doors, h -3, 15 m, gas, parking. Price: 1500-1600USD per sq.m, parking-12 000 USD. Possible with mortgage, for 13 years term.
- 94.Masiv. 3floors, 8 flats, each flat has 3 bedrooms, 210 sq.m., parking. Price: negotiable.
- 130.Antarayin str., 34 flats, 110-275 sq.m., 4 penthouses-200-275sq.m, available services-car wash, cleaning service, garbage removal service, parking. Price: Negotiable
- 131.Busand str., commercial, office and residential areas, penthouse, available services-car wash, cleaning service, garbage removal service, parking. Price: Negotiable



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1 ROOM

- 2037. **Baghramyan str.**, 5/2, 60sqm, 1 bedroom, euro repaired, gas, heating system, AC, modern furnished, equipped. Price: negotiable
- 2189. **Vardanants str.**, Newly built, 24/12, 90 sqm, 1 bedroom, capitally repaired, furnished, equipped. Price: 1000 USD.
- 2099. **Sayat-Nova Ave.**, 12/6, 1 bedroom, capitally repaired, gas, heating system, AC, furnished, equipped. Price: 600 USD.
- 1972. **Northern ave.**, 8/4, 80sq.m., 1 bedroom, 2 bathrooms, open kitchen, capitally repaired, climate control. Price: 1200 USD
- 2171. **Tumanyan str.**, Newly built, 5th floor, 94 sq.m., 1 bedroom, 1 bathroom, capitally repaired, central heating, furnished, equipped. Price: 1000 USD
- 2367. **Northern ave.**, Newly built, 9th floor, 98 sq.m., capitally repaired, heating system, furnished equipped. Price: Negotiable.

2 ROOMS

- 942. **Teryan str.** 4/3, 130 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped. Price: 1500 USD.
- 1950. **Buzand/Mashtots area.** Newly built, 8th floor, 163 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control, furnished, open balcony. Price: 2500 USD.
- 1681. **Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 6/2, 130 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, parking. Price: 2000 USD.
- 1535. **Busand str.**, Newly built, 7/4, 82sq.m., 2 bedrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, parking, furnished, equipped. Price: Negotiable.
- 2089. **Northern ave.**, Newly built, 8/6, 120sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control, furnished, equipped. Price: 2500 USD
- 1738. **Amiryan str.**, 8/8, 159sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, parking. Price: Negotiable
- 1951. **Busand str.**, Newly built, 13th floor, 122sq.m, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control. Price: 2500 USD
- 1406. **Sayat Nova ave.**, 7/3, 110sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped. Price: Negotiable
- 2187. **Northern ave.**, Newly built, 9/5, 120 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, finished, equipped. Price: 2.200 USD
- 2109. **Northern ave.**, Newly built, 10/4, 137sq.m, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, central heating, furnished, equipped, parking. Price: 2000 USD.

3 ROOMS AND MORE

- 2021. **Teryan Str.**, Newly built, 9/8,9, 245 sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, furnished. Preliminary price: 3500 USD.
- 2005. **Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 8/8, 130 sq.m, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, furnished, parking. Price: 2200 USD.
- 1723. **Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 8/4., 170 sq.m 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, open kitchen, capitally repaired, furnished, equipped. Price:

2000 USD.

•1981. **Vardanants Str.**, Newly built, 14/14, 140 sq m, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, 3 open balconies, furnished, equipped, parking. Price: 2000 USD.

•1793. **Teryan str.**, Newly built, 8th floor, 260 sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, study, capitally repaired, climat control, parking, unfurnished (possible to furnish), Price: 3500 USD.

•1720. **Amiryan str.**, Newly built, 16/10, 179 sq.m, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, central heating, AC, cellar- 25sq.m, with or without furniture, parking, Price 3000 USD negotiable

•2249. **Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 9/7, 186sq.m, 3bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, one of which in bedroom, open balcony, capitally repaired, climat control, furnished, equipped., parking. Price: 3500 USD negotiable.

•2195. **Northern ave.**, Newly built, 3rd floor, 300sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, 2 kitchens, capitally repaired, climate control, AC, parking. Price: 5000 USD

•2084. **Tumanyan str.**, 4th floor, 200sq.m, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control, parking. Price: 5000 USD

•2252. **Northern ave**, 7th floor, 350 sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, study, open balconies, capitally repaired, climate control, parking. Price Negotiable.

PRIVATE HOUSES

•1191. **Aygestan**, Land-400 sqm, 2 storied bld.- 270 sqm, 4 bedrooms, 3 bathroom, study, capitally repaired, partly furnished, garden, swimming pool, garage. Starting Price: 3500 USD.

•1248. **Aygedzor**, Land - 1021 sq m, 3 storied bld. - 501 sq.m., 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, study, capitally repaired, central heating, AC, sauna, boiler room garden, swimming pool, garage, alarming system, security system.



Price: 8000 USD.

•999. **Aygedzor**, Land -1000 sqm, basement + 2 floors- 310 sqm, capitally repaired, 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, newly furnished, equipped, sauna, swimming-pool. Starting Price: 5000 USD.

•1094. **Noy block**, Land-450sqm, 2 storied building - 220sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped, swimming pool, garden. Price: 2000USD.

•1195. **Nork, Armenakyan str.**, Land - 2000 sq.m, 4 storied bld.-520 sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 4bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, sauna, gym, furnished, swimming-pool, garden. Price: 4.000 USD negotiable.

•1142. **Djrvej**, Bagrevand community. Land-1000 sq.m., 3 storied bld.-700 sq.m., 5 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, pantry, playing room, capitally repaired, no furniture/ can be furnished, if necessary /garage for 2 cars. Price: 4 000 USD.

•1293. **Nork-Marash**, Land-1100sq.m, 2 storied bld-520 sq.m, 6 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, swimming pool, garden. Price: 7.000 USD

•327. **Nork-Marash**, Land-500sq.m., 4 storied building-600 sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped, swimming pool, garden, sauna, 2 car parking. Price-4000 USD

•1306. **Tsarav Akhbyur** /near Botanical garden/, Land-1000sq.m., 3 storied building-750sq.m., 6 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, 2 kitchens, capitally repaired, heating system swimming pool, garden, sauna, 2 car parking, with or without furniture. Price: 6000-8000 USD negotiable

•1288. **Tsarav Akhbyur** /near Botanical garden/, Land-560sq.m., 4 storied building-560 sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 4bathrooms, a kitchen, office, capitally repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped, swimming pool, garden, 2 car parking. Price: 5000 USD

•1197. **Blur**, Land-779sq.m., 2 storied building-720sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms, study, capitally repaired, heating system, sauna swimming pool, garden. Price: 8000 USD

•1312. **Blur, Barbyus str.**, Land-450sq.m., 4 storied building-470sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, garden. Price: Negotiable

•1317. **Blur, Barbyus str.**, Land-900sq.m., 5 storied building-800sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, garden. Price: Negotiable.

PREMISES

•1693. **Malatia-Sebastia** 4 storied building, 1200sq.m, each floor-300sq.m, 2 separate entrances, climate control, 2 elevators, basement, parking. Price: 15USD per sq.m.

•1526. **Byuzand str.**, 5/semi-basement, 170 sqm., 4-5 degrees below zero level, window glasses, cellar - 50 sq.m., 6 rooms, the largest is 30 sq.m., 2 entrances, 2 lavatories. Price 2000 USD per month, negotiable.

•1408. **Zarobyan str.**, /parallel to Baghramyan str./, 2 storied building, 600 sqm. ground floor- hall and kitchen, 1st floor 5 rooms, bathroom, open balcony, capitally repaired, gas, heating system, parking. Price: Negotiable.

•1462. **Teryan str.**, 3 storied building, 800 sq.m., capitally repaired, AC, parking, Price: 10.000 USD.

•1945. **Mashtots Ave.**, 5/1,2, 140sq.m., window glasses, capitally repaired, AC. Price: 8000 USD

•1943. **Tumanyan str.**, Ground floor of the building, 265sq.m., 1st line, capitally repaired, heating system, cellar. Price: 7000 USD

•1868. **Tumanyan str.**, Ground floor of the building, 220sq.m., 1st line, facade-55m., capitally repaired, h-5m., cellar. Price: 15.000 USD.

•2087. **Northern ave.**, Ground floor of the building, 100sq.m, 1st line, zero level, capitally repaired, window glasses. Price: Negotiable.

Concern for Kesab: Social networks campaign for immediate attention



By **GAYANE MKRTCHYAN**

Kessab, an ethnic Armenian-populated town in northwestern Syria, at the border with Turkey, along with its nine adjoining villages, remains in the focus of attention of Armenians across the world. The tragic events of March 22-25, when the peaceful population became a target of brutal attacks by armed Syrian rebels, have now raised international concerns, however, no adequate legal response has been given so far.

While social networks are overwhelmed with petitions to various instances with urges and pleas to "Save Kessab", the Human Rights Defense Office of Armenia addressed an urgent appeal to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, CoE Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Ombudsman Institute, the European Ombudsman Institute, the Red Cross International Committee, Human Rights Watch, and Freedom House, saying in part:

"...Taking into account that the Kessab events have the elements of the crime of Genocide as established in the 1948 Genocide convention, Rome statute and also that the prevention of Genocide is considered as an erga omnes norm recognized by the UN International Court of Justice, now more than ever, we call on the international society and international organizations to undertake thorough inquiries aimed at establishing whether neighboring countries such as Turkey, or other states had effective control of the operations and gross human rights violations committed in Kessab and to safeguard the Syrian population of Armenian or other origin..."

Caucasus Institute deputy director, Political analyst Sergey Minasyan says the only adequate international response under such circumstance would be a military intervention. He believes that the United States, Russia and certain international structures have made statements

only due to the efforts of the Armenian Diaspora.

"To me what matters most is when the Syrian army would be able to regain control over Kessab, which would allow our compatriots to return to their homes," says Minasyan, adding that Russia's military support to the Syrian army would be of great help in this issue.

The Ombudsman's statement also cites some reported data and historic facts: "It has been reported that there have been 80 civilian casualties, 670 Armenian families and the majority of the population of Kessab, were evacuated to safer areas in neighboring Basit and Latakia. Similarly, in the years 1909 and 1915 as a result of the Armenian Genocide by Turkish legions, Armenians were forced to leave Kessab, and today's killings and forced deportation of Kessab Armenians is the third in their history."

Expert in Turkish studies Artak Shakaryan believes that the Kessab events were another step against Syrian President Assad and that Armenians simply happened to be there and suffered, rather than being the intentional target of attack, due to their ethnicity.

"It is obvious that the Turks are helping the assailants in Syria, but the purpose is to take over Kessab rather than kill Armenians. The Kessab mission had another target – it is on the way to Latakia, which is of strategic importance, because Syrian president Bashar Assad's family resides in that area and Assad's power comes from Latakia. Hence, the Turkish military's target was to gain control over

Latakia to underscore Assad's power, to weaken him," says the expert.

The Turkish foreign ministry released a statement several days after the Kessab events, expressing its willingness to accept the Armenian population of Kessab, Syria, and ensure their safety. Interestingly, earlier, video material appeared in YouTube showing how trucks with armed militants effortlessly and with no hindrances crossed the Turkish border at Yayladagi pass and penetrated Kessab.

Syrian Armenian Vazgen Mesropian, vice president of the Social Democrat Hunchakian Party Armenian office, says such a statement is coming from the foreign ministry of a country which, reportedly, was first to open fire, remove the barbed wire fences and let the terrorists attack Kessab.

"It is the demand of the Armenian people to not limit this matter to condemning it, but that the Armenian foreign minister voices a protest on all international platforms directly against the genocide-perpetrator Turkey, so that punitive measures are applied against criminal Erdogan and his administration," he says.

World famous singer Cher has also made a Twitter post related to the recent events in Kessab: "Please check out what's going on in Kessab, Syria. Innocent Christians and Armenians being killed by turks.#Save Kessab". Earlier, top American socialite and television star Kim Kardashian had joined tens of thousands of fellow Armenians in cyber space in condemning the recent attacks by Islamic militants on the town of Kessab, so has Russian actor Sergey Bezrukov, Blink 182 American rock band drummer Travis Barker, boxer Nikolay Valuyev and others.



Message of People of Kessab To Armenians Worldwide

On Mother's Day, March 21-2014, our beautiful town was brutally attacked by Al-Qaeda extremists And Al Nusra front that is linked to Al Qaeda. with the blessings and full military and logistical support of the Turkish government.

Before sunrise, we woke up to the horror of a shower of missiles and rockets falling on our town. Thousands of extremists crossed the borders towards our town. Missiles were fired from Turkey, to destroy beautiful Kessab and to celebrate the approach of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. Kesabtsi heroes defended the town with their simple hunting weapons until more forces from the Syrian government came to fight back the horrific attack on our town. If Kessabtsis were not informed to leave their houses by those heroes, the world would have silently witnessed yet another genocide and stood by while the media gave them yet another version of lies.

Kessab has always been home to thousands of Armenians for centuries. The first agonizing tragedy in Kessab happened in April 1909, when a rabble of thousands of Turkish men attacked Kessab, robbing and burning houses. 161 Armenians were killed in this brutal attack. In 1915, during the Armenian genocide, Turkish troops came into Kessab and started deporting Armenians and killed almost 5000 Armenian people from Kessab. The Armenian genocide at the hands of the Turks in 1915 took the lives of One and a half million Armenians. More Armenians are getting killed and will get killed in Syria if nothing is done. The Arabs in Syria took us in then, took care of us, helped us back on our feet and helped us survive through that horrible memory of death and destruction and we will be eternally grateful to them. Since then we lived in peace and harmony with other sects, like a huge family in a home called Syria.

Today, we need help once again, because Sadly the Turkish government dared to attack Armenians one more time ignoring the Armenian case. With this act Turkey has refused, yet again, to recognize the Armenian genocide at the hands of the Turks and is assisting in the murder



of more Armenians in Syria. We have nothing against the Turkish people. We have lived as neighbors with them and want to continue to live as neighbors with them. It is the Turkish government, supporting and facilitating the murder of Kessabtsis by terrorists, that we plea against. We just want our town back, or what's remained of it. Because there are a lot of videos on youtube that shows how those extremists are destroying and burning our beautiful town. All Syria knows wherever those extremists get in, only death and destruction is left behind.

Our homes have been taken from us, centuries of our heritage has been destroyed.

This is a call to all Armenians. This is a call to humanity. The world needs to hear the truth. Erdogan and his government are war criminals. We need your help. We need you to take action. Our lives hang in the chance that you will do something to make sure we too don't die. We were forced out of our homes and our town with nothing but the clothes we wear. If we stayed to gather even the bare necessities, we would have definitely died. Most of us cannot even escape because we don't have our passports or documents of identification. Please,

invoke the intervention of your governments, of the UN, of any other authority that you believe can help us. All we want to do, is live. If you ignore this, we all will die a horrible death at the hands of these terrorists, by being butchered in cold blood like many other Armenians in Aleppo, Yacoubiyeh, Ghenemiyeh, and around Syria.

Those who you call rebels are extremists who came to Syria for jihad with many nationalities in it like Afghans, Chechen, Saudis etc. Kessabtsis and all of Syria, saw them and were attacked and killed by them. The media can't hide the truth forever. You can't manipulate the lives of people forever. Those who you call rebels, were targeting and attacking civilians. Wake up, please.

Don't you think enough innocent blood has been split? Don't you think enough destruction has been done? We all lived peacefully and happily just three years ago. This is not a revolution, this is war. And the Syrian army is now in Kessab fighting to make sure Armenians will go back to their homes safely.

P.S.: This letter has been written by Kessabtsis being given refuge by the Armenian Church in Lattakia.

State Youth Orchestra of Armenia: a Triumph in Beirut

By George Chakhalian

As The Highlights reported already, the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia (SYOA, Founding Artistic Director and Principal Conductor **Sergey Smbatyan**) has been invited to have four concerts in Beirut as the official orchestra of the 20th Al Bustan International Festival. It is noteworthy that the trip to Lebanon came true thanks to the support of the Armenia's leading telecom operator VivaCell-MTS, the General Partner of the Orchestra that has been supporting for a long time already also a number of other musical/cultural ensembles.

We believe it will be interesting for The Highlights readers to find a brief chronicle of the SYOA tour below, - to see that it was a real success.

So on March 19 at St. Joseph Church in Beirut the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia presented its first concert within the framework of the Festival. The concert was conducted by **Gianluca Marciano**. Jointly with the soloists **Yasko Fujii** (soprano), **Clare Presland** (mezzo-soprano), **Irakly Murjikneli** (tenor), **Sasha Gano** (bass) the Youth Orchestra performed Symphony No.9 by **Ludwig van Beethoven**. During the evening the choirs of Lebanon Conservatory and Universities of Notre Dame and Antonin also performed on the same stage.

Maestro Marciano who has worked with such world-renowned orchestras as the George Enescu Philharmonic Orchestra, praised the professionalism of the young musicians and thanked them for the enjoyable collaboration.

And just in two days, on March 21 SYOA performed at Emile Bustani Auditorium under the baton of its Artistic Director and Principal Conductor **Sergey Smbatyan**.

In the first part of the concert the audience was presented "The Wild Dove" by **Antonin Dvorak** and Cello Concerto by **Robert Schumann** (Soloist: **Antonio Meneses** (cello)). Maestro Meneses performed Courante on Cello Suite No.1 by **Bach** for an encore.

In the second part of the concert the SYOA performed "Swan Lake" Suite by **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**. At the end of the evening the listeners were refusing to leave the hall demanding more performances. With standing ovations the Orchestra performed "Lezginka" by the Great **Aram Khachaturian**.

And to be prepared best for the next, the third concert young Armenian musicians have had mere a day, as right on the next, 22nd day of March the string staff of the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia performed award winning movie soundtracks "Caramel", "Where do we go now" and "Beirut After Shave" as well as several others by famous Lebanese compos-

er **Khaled Mouzanar**.

The performance was held under the direction of violin soloist **Claude Chalhouh** at Emile Bustani Auditorium accompanied with the screening of some of the most memorable scenes from those films. Together with the SYOA strings on stage there were singers **Lena Farah** and **Maan Zacharia**, the Antonin University Choir and several other instrumentalists among which was **Mario Stefano Pietrodarchi** (bandoneon), - a beloved performer around the world and especially in Armenia (The Highlights has pub-

with the soloist, multiple national and international award winning singer **Ruxandra Donose** (mezzo-soprano).

As Mrs Donose mentioned, she "enjoyed every moment of working with the Orchestra". She also noted that even though there was not much time for rehearsals, it was easy to work with such professional and enthusiastic musicians.

In the second part of the concert the Orchestra performed Symphony No. 6 "Pastorale" by Ludwig van Beethoven.

This concert was the fourth and the last one in the Orchestra's concert tour in Lebanon in the framework of the 20th Al Bustan International Festival.

We believe it will not be a great exaggeration to say that during all four concerts the Orchestra managed to captivate and earn standing ovations of the audiences of fully booked concert halls and auditoriums by performing world famous classic music pieces with talented musicians like Antonio Meneses (cello),



ished stories on his groundbreaking joint concerts with the SYOA in Yerevan in recent years). So Mario was very pleased to have opportunity to work with SYOA musicians once again.

And... again, having just a day for a rehearsal, on March 23 the SYOA, under the baton of Maestro Gianluca Marciano, performed at the Grand Closing of the 20th Al Bustan International Festival at Emile Bustani Auditorium. The program of the first part of the concert included "Summer Nights" by **Hector Berlioz**,

Gianluca Marciano (conductor), Ruxandra Donose (mezzo-soprano), Mario Stefano Pietrodarchi (bandoneon) and several others. And for the first time in the history of the festival its official orchestra has become an Armenian ensemble.

Notably, the concerts were attended by Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to Lebanon H.E. Mr **Ashot Kocharian** and many other significant persons of the Armenian community of

Lebanon. Among the listeners were also numerous reps of the Lebanese state, business and intellectual elite as well as foreign diplomats accredited in the country. According to many of them, the tour was a success, even "...beyond any expectation".

Of course, this success could not become a reality without the kind support of VivaCell-MTS, the General Partner of the Orchestra. And, importantly and symbolically, it has become a next stone in the old but strong bridge between two very friendly peoples, the Armenians and the Lebanese, due to generosity of a company having as its Founding General Manager Mr **Ralph Yirikian**, holder of Presidency Shield Order of the Republic

had long been widely known among classic music lovers. Headed by the Artistic Director and Principal Conductor Sergey Smbatyan, the Orchestra jointly with the soloist presented Violin Concerto by **Johannes Brahms**. In 1979 this piece brought a victory to Sitkovetsky in F. Kreisler Competition and for this time it was also greeted with a storm of applauses. "It is very popular concert. For my first performance in Armenia it is rather good choice. Next time we will present something new or not so popular..."-shared the soloist.

Speaking on the details of cooperation with younger colleagues from SYOA, Sitkovetsky noted that he has got great pleasure from dealing with the new

musicians played with great enthusiasm, and I really enjoyed the concert..."

As to forthcoming events, it should be noted that on April 3 at 19:00 at Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia is going to present a concert dedicated to the 70th anniversary of Honored Artist of Armenia, Professor, clarinet player **Abgar Muradyan** of the blessed memory.

During the first part of the concert the audience will be presented Largo for Clarinet and Orchestra from the Symphonic Suite "Choreographic Pieces" dedicated to Abgar Muradyan by **Gagik Hovunts** and the Armenian premiere of Clarinet Concerto No.4 by **Louis Spohr**. The soloist will be clar-



of Lebanon.

Earlier The Highlights informed its readers on the joint concert of the SYOA and a world-renowned musician **Dmitry Sitkovetsky** to be held on March 13 at A. Spendiaryan National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre. Mr Sitkovetsky is an artist whose creativity defies categorizing. He has built up successful career as a violinist, conductor, arranger and festival director.

The soloist was performing in Armenia for the first time, but his name

generation: "It is pleasure to work with young musicians, as they are more flexible and not stuck on stereotypes. As for the orchestra, I was impressed with their performance: they are young, full of energy, they work with enthusiasm, interest and passion, with fire in their eyes - this is the most important. To my point of view, the concert had a success, though we had only 2 days for joint practices. The concert has been a part of my repertoire for more than 35 years, but for the Orchestra it was totally new piece. Young

inetist **Davit Gyulamiryan**, a student of Abgar Muradyan and musician of the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia.

In the second part the orchestra will perform the piece "Pictures at an Exhibition" by **Modest Mussorgsky / Maurice Ravel**.



Latest News from Armenia's Leading Telecom Operator

Since 2008 VivaCell-MTS has been supporting children with autism

During 7 years of cooperation financial support of more than AMD 96 million has been provided to the International Child Development Center NGO which provides specialized educational treatment to children with autism

In the frames of the Autism Awareness International Day VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph Yirikian** visited the International Child Development Center for children with autism. VivaCell-MTS supports 30 3-12 year-old children attending the Center. The specialized educational treatment of children with autism is an expensive process, as each child is being treated individually - one specialist per each child. In order to support this resource-consuming process VivaCell-MTS has allocated more than AMD 96 million since 2008, thanks to which children attend this institution with no fee.

"We believe that more positive results and progress can be reached if these children feel that they are surrounded with care, attention and support, which are the most important things when dealing with children in general. We are glad to cooperate with the Center where children with autism get the consistent professional treatment they need", noted Mr Yirikian.

According to the professional staff of the Center and the parents of the children, progress and positive change was observed not only in terms of obtaining academic knowledge but in the behavior and mental abilities of the children as well. Moreover, 14 children from the Center started attending secondary schools. These results are the proof of the efficiency of the activities realized by the "International Child Development Center" NGO. A child won't "outgrow" autism as there's no cure for it. But children can learn to function within the confines of the disorder, especially if treatment begins early. Intensive early intervention yields a tremendous amount of progress in children by the time they enter kindergarten, often reducing the need for intensive supports. Children with autism require specially designed services and support to reach those goals.

Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life and is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the normal functioning of the brain. Both children and adults with autism typically show difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and

leisure or play activities.

31 smartphones to loyal customers

VivaCell-MTS organized another draw of 365 phones

Armenia's leading telecommunications operator prepared just another surprise for its loyal customers, who are using the "Personal" and the "City Talks" and are subscribed to the "Special" package designed especially for them. This time VivaCell-MTS hosted the winners of the draw of the 365 for March at its headquarters, and awarded them with 31 MTS



Ego smartphones. The number of the drawn phones corresponds to the quantity of the days in March.

The draw was videotaped with no interruption, on March 21, 2014. Specially designed software "Microsoft.NET Random class selection on the system time", allows selecting winners from the database randomly. Bilaterally disconnected phone numbers did not participate in the draw.

To remind, similar draws were organized in October, November and December 2013 with 100 smartphones handed to the winning subscribers from different regions of Armenia. This year 28 smartphones were handed in February.

The new draw is organized on a new - one smartphone per day - principle (totaling to 365 within 2014). Hence, next month 30 smartphones will be raffled, corresponding exactly to the number days in the month of April.

The "Special" package provides 1500

minutes included on-net airtime and 150 SMS messages for sending to RA mobile networks for only AMD 2500 per month.

VivaCell-MTS sponsors the mini soccer championship among mass media representatives

Mini Soccer Championship among the Armenian media kicked off. The championship was organized by the Association of the Foreign Correspondents. VivaCell-MTS undertook the general sponsorship of the competition.

The championship is aimed at agitating for the healthy lifestyle and increase in the number of population actively interested in football.

The Chairman of the Association of Foreign Correspondents Tigran Hovhannisyan greeted the participants of the competition. Veteran of football, honorary coach Semyon Israelyan also participated in the opening ceremony.

"Arabkir" dance ensemble performed for the participants and guests.

There are 8 teams participating in the championship - those of News.am, boon.am, emedia.am sites, Lime TV, Yerkir Media TV, "Mediamax" news agency, "Chorrord Ishkhanutyun" newspaper and "Association of Foreign Correspondents" NGO.

The closing ceremony of the championship is planned for April 6. The winner will be awarded with the "VivaCell-MTS-2014" cup and diploma. Cups will be handed to the teams that come second and third as well. The Association of Foreign Correspondents will also award football players in 10 nominations - best goalkeeper, best full-back, best forward, author of the most beautiful goal, the most respectful player of the competition, the captain of the best team, the best reporter covering competition, and the best fan, - will also get prizes.

The Association of Foreign Correspondents has significant experience in organizing competitions among non-professionals. Beginning 2000, the association has organized various events in Armenia: among foreign missions (Dialogue of Civilizations Cup), among the enterprises of Armenia (Made in Armenia Cup), among banks, accredited in Armenia, students of universities (Lev Yashin Cup); has held charity games, with the funds raised from them being forwarded to the orphanages of the republic. In 2002 and 2009 the Association organized competitions of journalists of the CIS and the Baltic states.

Global Coalition urges Armenia to join the International Criminal Court

Armenia can pay tribute to victims of past atrocities and ensure protection under the rule of law for future generations by joining the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Coalition for the ICC said today.

Throughout the month of April, Armenia is the focus of the Coalition's Campaign for Global

Justice, which encourages states to join the Rome Statute—the founding treaty of the only permanent international court capable of trying perpetrators of graves crimes.

“International justice mechanisms such as the ICC seek to preserve the historic record regarding the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, yet they can also serve to prevent those crimes from happening again,” said Tatevik Gharibyan of Civil Society Institute

Armenia. “We are hopeful that our government will ratify the Rome Statute as soon as possible.

Armenia's membership would serve as a tribute to victims of the past and contribute to preventing the creation of new victims in the future.”

In a letter to President Serzh Sargsyan, the Coalition urged Armenia to take the necessary steps to join the



122 other states that are members of the ICC and help put an end to impunity.

Although Armenia signed the Rome Statute in 1999, its Constitutional Court ruled that the Statute was incompatible with the Armenian constitution in 2004.

“Ten years have passed since the Armenian Constitutional Court ruled on the incompatibility of the Rome Statute,” said Kirsten Meersschaert Duchens, the Coalition's Regional Coordinator for

Europe. “For a decade now, Armenia has sadly been absent from the developing architecture of an international justice system that seeks to acknowledge and redress the sufferings of victims of mass atrocities.”

Late last year, a Commission for Constitutional Reform was established to consider amendments to the Armenian constitution.

“The current process of constitutional review provides a long-awaited opportunity for the government to ensure that amendments are made to pave the way for ratification of the Statute, and we look forward to seeing proposals to that end,” added Meersschaert Duchens.

The ICC is the world's first permanent international court to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Central to the Court's mandate is the principle of complementarity, which holds that the Court will only intervene if national legal systems are unwilling or unable to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The Coalition is a global network of civil society organizations in 150 countries working in partnership to strengthen international cooperation with the ICC; ensure that the Court is fair, effective and independent; make justice both visible and universal; and advance stronger national laws that deliver justice to victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Apartment is for rent

A two room apartment is for rent on the M.Baghramyan Avenue. It is situated on the 2nd floor of a 4 storey stone residential building. During the whole period of staying you can use the furniture and technical equipment. It is being heated with central heating system. The kitchen is furnished with classic wood-en and functional furniture. There is the Lovers' park one bus stop down. A little far you can find a supermarket, underground station.

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United States and Armenia cooperate to strengthen counter nuclear smuggling capabilities

Officials from the governments of the United States and Armenia meet in Yerevan April 3-4, 2014, to discuss ways to further strengthen cooperation to counter nuclear smuggling. These discussions continue ongoing bilateral cooperation initiated in December 2007 to advance Armenia's capabilities to prevent, detect, and respond to nuclear and other radioactive material smuggling incidents.

The U.S. and Armenian delegations reaffirmed the need to cooperate more closely to prevent terrorists and other criminals from acquiring black market nuclear material. Recognizing the importance of a coordinated, whole-of-government response to potential nuclear smuggling incidents, meeting participants included

representatives from several ministries of the Republic of Armenia, and representatives from the relevant U.S. Government agencies.

During the meeting in Yerevan, both sides reviewed progress in implementing the U.S.-Armenia Joint Action Plan, signed in July 2008. Within this framework, both sides shared information on current nuclear smuggling threats and trends, and discussed best practices in the areas of nuclear detection, nuclear forensics, law enforcement investigations, and other tools to prevent, detect, and respond to incidents of nuclear smuggling. These discussions provide a platform for continued cooperation between the United States and Armenia to strengthen capabilities to investigate and

successfully prosecute nuclear smugglers.

Seizures of potentially-dangerous nuclear material in the region in 2010 and 2011 highlighted the need for enhanced cooperation to counter nuclear smuggling. The threat posed to regional and global security by the potential smuggling of nuclear material is best met through joint cooperation. The United States works with partner governments, including Armenia, to strengthen counter nuclear smuggling capabilities in a comprehensive manner, including by focusing on information collection and analysis, law enforcement, and technical reach-back—all capabilities that have proven successful in detecting past nuclear smuggling networks and arresting criminals involved in most known cases.

Kesab, Turkey and Shahan Natalie

From page 6

vived the Turkish sword have broken bread with Arabs and shared a destiny with them. And if there is a point where the interests of Turkey and these extremist Islamists coincide (this remains questionable) to solve an interim issues, then we must talk about the differences between these two entities.

Even if we accept for a moment that the real author of these events is Turkey, then where were we for the past three years? Where were our ministers and diplomats, our Arab specialists and editors? They were simply busy watching videos about Aleppo Armenians and giving press conferences, or in the best case, organizing Aleppo cuisine festivals in Yerevan or providing preliminary assistance.

In this, there is no one in particular at fault. Rather, the fault lies in the fact that we lack a collective body tasked with ensuring the security of Syrian-Armenians. Three years on, we still lack such a structure.

All this is yet further evidence of an approach of a nation replete with a shopkeeper's mentality - when we feel we have the luxury of discussing granting sainthood to those massacred one hundred years ago, through collective deceit, while today their offspring are facing the fires of death and destruction.

This is how it has always happened to us.

Given all this, what will happen tomorrow?

Providing material assistance for Kesab, posting photos of Islamist rebels through hash-tag initiatives, and by bringing news of what has happened to the halls of the United Nations, might serve to ameliorate the pain experienced by Kesab Armenians who have been forced to flee their homes and take to the road as refugees, but none of it will resolve the problem at hand.

In addition, based on the eye witness accounts of Kesab Armenians who have found refuge in Latakia, we can assert that even Latakia isn't safe and can witness the same chain of events.

Furthermore, any talk of military intervention from Armenia or sending armed units to Kesab is even more dangerous.

Here, the attempt by Catholicos Aram I to get the Kesab issue onto the U.N. stage was correct, despite the fact that there has yet to be any practical response by the world body. One cannot be hopeful of U.N. intervention given that the international community is more interested in the removal of chemical weapons out of the hands of the Assad regime than in stopping the bloodshed.

It is also important to note that against

the backdrop of 150,000 dead in Syria, the western media (that suddenly turned into a mirror of justice for many of us) is spilling no tears hat armed extremists, who have come to Syria from Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Chechnya and Europe, have begun to kill each other.

In this great tempest, we have also forgotten the Arabs. We have yet to speak about the fact, which is no secret, that most of the Arab world is opposed to the ruling regime in Syria. And whilst forgetting the privileges we enjoy in the Arab world we are trying to turn Arabs into Turks.

All the calls to liberate Kesab signify yet another attempt to lull the refugees of Kesab with a dose of morphine.

Evacuating the Armenians of Kesab to Armenia is an issue on par with national security.

I don't wish to speak about the other communities because the future prospects of Christians in the Middle East aren't bright. This is a fact and not an observation based on whims or suppositions.

Sooner or later, the Armenians of the Middle East will leave and it would be correct for Armenia to oversee this human resource.

Otherwise, these same Armenians just might set their sights on the faraway shores of America and Canada.

Hetq Goes Undercover: Does an Armenian Company's Charity Drive Benefit its Business or the Children It Purports to Help?

A local company carries out regular charitable campaigns, all purporting to help children in need.

However, to what extent do these campaigns help the families rather than drive the company's business?

"The company has organized a charitable campaign; we are helping five-year-old disabled Mariam, who doesn't speak, doesn't walk, and is confined to a wheelchair. We present you with a children's coloring book Pokrik Gitunik comprised of 36 pages in A4 format, 600 dram; delivery, free of charge. If possible, will you help us this once? It's a disabled child," said a representative of the company Dil Master who had called the Hetq office.

The caller ended her memorized lines and waited for an answer to her question. We asked her to give us a phone or account number with which we could help the family directly. She said she couldn't, since that information will be made public at the end of the campaign, on the last page of the magazine's next issue.

Dil Master, meanwhile, has carried out 7 charitable campaigns, each worth 150,000 AMD (about \$362 USD).

This is written on the last page of their magazine. Published are also the names of those children whom they've helped. During those campaigns, as the company's deputy director Ashot Yeritsyan informed us in conversation, three publications — the magazines Gitunik and Hamegh Khohanots ("delicious cuisine") and one fairytale book — are sold, each at a minimum of 1,000 copies.

The magazines are sold for 600 dram (\$1.45); that is, the company makes 1.8 million AMD (\$4,350) from a single campaign. They get those proceeds by "circulating" a child's health and socioeconomic condition, but from the money they earn, they give the family in question at most 150,000 AMD as financial assistance. The company cannot sell its magazines without that assistance, and they are "charitable" only so much.

Dil Master published the children's addresses and phone numbers also on its Facebook page and noted that it helped everyone with an amount of 150,000 AMD. The company's deputy director adds that sometimes they give 100,000 AMD and use the 50,000 AMD to buy gifts for

the family.

Susanna Gyurjyan, the mother of one of the children who received assistance, thanking the company, said they were given 100,000 AMD and gifts, the value of which, according to her, could not have been 50,000 AMD.

The grandmother of one of the other children, who didn't wish to be named, said she was given less: 90,000 AMD monetary assistance and gifts not exceeding 10,000 AMD in value. Then when she discovered that the children's contact details were published on the last page of Gitunik, in the list of families who received assistance, she called Dil Master and asked why they published false information (that the family was given 150,000 AMD). They said that they would provide the difference when they receive funds.

"They said, we have employees, we allocate money to them too. I had no room to complain, I am grateful, it's just that if the child was to get that much... Well, I don't know, they said they will bring [the rest of the funds]," said the child's grandmother, who lives with her 7-year-old grandchild in a dormitory. She adds, she didn't know beforehand about the charitable campaign organized in her grandchild's name by the company. "As much as I can, I live with my 64,000 [AMD = \$155]. You should've asked me whether I aimed to be published with my [grand] child in all of Yerevan," she said.

Dil Master truly has a large team of employees and the 600 dram's organized "for charitable purposes" can barely cover the company's expenses. Their staff gradually increases in number: they often need a new employee and the company recently published a job posting.

One of Hetq's employees, following up on that posting, was admitted to work and spent a day there.

The company's female callers worked vigorously: though they received a fixed salary, depending on their skills on selling the magazine, their salary could go up or down. Working at the company were young female callers (10–13 people, some of whom were going through a trial period), as well as women over the age of 40 (8–10 people). They had a separate room. According to one of the young female callers, they have been working at the com-

pany much longer and have greater experience. The women called and asked those on the receiving end to purchase one of their magazines valued at 600 dram. Working in the next room were novice female callers and those in a trial period.

On the first day of work, the company manager called new employees to a separate room, to attempt reading the text and to explain certain "subtleties". The main requirement to being a successful employee here, he said, is to have "good language" skills. After drudging through "classes", employees get the day's list of phone numbers. The neighborhood that they had to call that day was in Yerevan's Erebuni administrative district.

"Hello, we are calling you from the company Dil Master, we are trying to help 4-year-old Anna, who is an orphan. Her parents died from a car accident, and she needs surgery. We offer you a 36-page children's scientific book..." the person sitting next to the Hetq correspondent begins to call and easily persuade the person on the other end of the line, who likely refuses, but she continues without despair. "Wouldn't you want to give as a gift... and you would be doing a charitable act with 600 drams."

From 11 am to 8:30 pm, they called various numbers and attempted to convince people to help some child. They too sometimes don't know who that child is, but they convince others — in the name of a salary. Their salary, depending on their persuasion skills, fluctuates from 70,000 to 100,000 AMD (\$169 – \$242).

Ashot Yeritsyan, the deputy director told Hetq that a charitable campaign lasts 1–1.5 months. Since Dil Master has been operating for 3 years now, they should have helped at least 15–18 children by now; meanwhile, they have helped 7 people.

One-and-a-half months have passed since the Hetq correspondent worked a day at Dil Master, but the 4-year-old Anna for whom the Hetq employee and others were to call various homes and ask for help has not yet received the assistance. She also is not in the list of children published in the magazine's latest issue. In one day of work, the Hetq employee sold two magazines for that child, "believing" in the three-year-old business' charitable aims. *Hetq.am*

Pallone requests increase in assistance to

Congressman Frank Pallone Jr. (D-NJ), along with 27 members of Congress, sent a letter on Wednesday to Chairwoman Kay Granger and Ranking Member Nita Lowey of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Department of State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs, requesting increased funding for Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh.

In preparing the Fiscal Year 2015 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill, the lawmakers are requesting that the subcommittee support increased funding for U.S. assistance to Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh.

Specifically, the representatives are asking the subcommittee to direct the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to spend at least \$5 million in the fiscal year 2015 for humanitarian and development programs in Nagorno Karabakh and to ensure that at least \$40 million in overall economic aid is appropriated for Armenia.

"We want to thank Congressmen Pallone and Grimm, and all their U.S. House colleagues who signed this letter, for helping to further strengthen the longstanding friendship of the American and Armenian peoples," stated ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. "We value their support for each of these foreign aid priorities and, more broadly, for their continued efforts to promote peace, stability, and democracy in this pivotal region of the world."

Joining Pallone as signatories on the letter are members of Congress, Michael Grimm, Jackie Speier, John F. Tierney, Loretta Sanchez, Jim Costa, James R. Langevin, Barbara Lee, Gary Peters, Katherine Clark, Jared Polis, Linda Sanchez, Judy Chu, Rush Holt, Dan Lipinski, Collin Peterson, Grace F. Napolitano, Anna G. Eshoo, Tim Bishop, David Cicilline, Brad Sherman, James P. McGovern, Carolyn Maloney, Bruce Braley, Chaka Fattah, Stephen F. Lynch, Jan Schakowsky and Dina Titus

The group also requested that the U.S. close distribution gaps in need-based aid to at-risk populations in Syria, including Armenians and Christian communities, fund sustainable job creation programs in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of



Georgia, and suspend military aid to Azerbaijan until their government ceases cross-border attacks into Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia and agrees to settle regional conflicts by peaceful means.

Below is the full text of the letter:

Dear Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member Lowey:

We are writing to underscore the importance of strengthening our ties with Armenia and empowering American diplomacy through continued U.S. assistance for Armenia, Nagorno Karabakh, the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of Georgia, and at-risk minorities in the Middle East. Given recent events, U.S. support in the region is critically important.

As you work with your colleagues in preparing the Fiscal Year 2015 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill, we respectfully ask that you consider the following requests:

Assistance to Nagorno Karabakh:

Direct U.S. aid to Nagorno Karabakh has, for more than a decade and a half, represented a powerful investment in peace and an expression of America's leadership in support of a negotiated and democratic resolution of security and status issues related to the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh. This direct aid has met pressing humanitarian needs, most recently providing for desperately needed clean water to families and the clearing of mines and unexploded ordnance from villages and farmlands. We thank the

Subcommittee for its longstanding leadership in support of this aid program and for consistently including language in its report calling for U.S. assistance in Nagorno Karabakh.

We request that the Subcommittee include language directing USAID to spend at least \$5 million in Fiscal Year 2015 for humanitarian and development programs in Nagorno Karabakh.

Suspension of U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan:

The oil-rich government of Azerbaijan, which routinely threatens to start a new war with Armenia, is listed as one of the most corrupt in the world, and has been ruled by the Aliyev family for much of the past half-century. Azerbaijan neither needs nor deserves American military aid.

Azerbaijan continues to launch cross-border attacks not only into Nagorno Karabakh, but also Armenia, a NATO Partnership for Peace country with troops serving in both Afghanistan and Kosovo. The President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, regularly threatens to renew full-scale hostilities, refuses U.S. and international calls to pull back snipers, has made land claims against Armenia, and openly incites anti-Armenian hatred, including against Americans of Armenian descent. As was widely reported in the international media, on August 31, 2012, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev personally pardoned an unrepentant, convicted murderer for killing a NATO Partnership for Peace participant because he was Armenian. Immediately after his

Armenia, Nagorno Karabakh

pardon, this convicted murderer received a promotion in the Azerbaijani military, an apartment, and years of back pay for his prison time. The pardon was condemned around the world, including by President Obama, Members of Congress, European Parliament, OSCE, Council of Europe, and NATO.

We request that the Subcommittee suspend the appropriation of Fiscal Year 2015 U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan until its government ceases cross-border attacks, ends its threats of renewed war, and agrees to a settlement of regional conflicts through peaceful means.

Assistance to Armenia:

Armenia, a crucial ally in a strategic region of the world, has extended robust support for U.S.-led peace-keeping deployments in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo, and is cooperating with the U.S. on a broad range of regional and security challenges. Armenia is regularly ranked highly by the Wall Street Journal/Heritage Foundation Index of Economic Freedom, and met the Fiscal Year 2014 eligibility criteria for the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

At the same time, the people of landlocked Armenia continue to face the devastating impact of Turkey and Azerbaijan's dual economic blockades. Our assistance has played a vital role in helping alleviate these blockades and promoting Armenia's free market system and democratic development.

We respectfully request that the Subcommittee include language within the Assistance for Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia Account ensuring that not less than \$40 million in overall Fiscal Year 2015 economic aid (including Economic Support Fund, International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement, and Global Health Programs), is appropriated for Armenia.

Assistance to Christian and other minority communities in the Middle East:

Distribution gaps in need-based international aid deliveries to Aleppo, Syria and other areas of the country have resulted in desperately needed food, medicine, and other relief supplies not reaching Armenians, Christian communities, and other at-risk and vulnerable minorities. At the same time, thousands from

Syria, including many Christians, have sought safe-haven in Armenia. Armenia, a majority-Christian state, has received very modest U.S. and international relief and resettlement assistance, particularly compared with the per-capita level of such aid provided to Turkey, Jordan, and other regional countries.

We request that the Subcommittee instruct the State Department and USAID to put in place policies and programs to close gaps in the distribution of need-based aid to at-risk minority populations in Syria, including Armenians and other Christians.

We further ask that the Subcommittee instruct the State Department and USAID to ensure the allocation to Armenia of a proportional level of the U.S. and international aid supporting the efforts to regional states to resettle those fleeing from Syria.

Assistance to the Javakheti Region in Georgia:

We encourage the Subcommittee, as part of a robust U.S. aid package to Georgia, to expand on U.S. assistance previously targeted to the largely Armenian-populated region of Samtskhe-Javakheti in south-central Georgia, including funding for job-creation programs and ongoing improvements to transportation and communication infrastructure.

Over the past decade, USAID and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) have expanded their presence in Samtskhe-Javakheti in an effort to address core humanitarian and economic difficulties that face the population. Over the past several years, Americans of Armenian heritage have worked with USAID to leverage existing U.S. aid programs and to pursue public-private partnerships.

We request that the Subcommittee include language directing USAID to target at least 10 percent of Fiscal Year 2015 aid to Georgia to fund sustainable job-creation programs in Samtskhe-Javakheti.

Enhancing Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act:

Enacted in 1992, Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act stands as a statement of U.S. opposition to Azerbaijan's blockades and other aggressive uses of

force against Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh. Since its enactment, Azerbaijan has not lifted its illegal blockades and has ignored U.S. calls to cease its destabilizing threats.

In light of Baku's actions, we urge the Subcommittee to add the following language narrowing the President's waiver authority and requiring the following additional certification requirement: "In the last fiscal year, Azerbaijan has not taken hostile action, either through military force or incitement, including but not limited to threatening pronouncements by government officials toward Armenia or Nagorno Karabakh, and has both stated and demonstrated its commitment to pursuing a lasting peace with Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh through solely non-violent means."

Ending the Exclusion of the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh from the Peace Process:

The Nagorno Karabakh Republic was one of the three parties to the 1994 ceasefire, which ended military hostilities between Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan. In its aftermath, Nagorno Karabakh participated in the OSCE Minsk Group peace process as a partner, along with Armenia and Azerbaijan. Since 1998, however, at Baku's insistence, Nagorno Karabakh has been excluded from the peace process. Nagorno Karabakh should, in the interests of peace and basic fairness, be permitted to fully participate in all talks regarding its future.

We respectfully request that the following report language be included: "In the interest of promoting a lasting and durable peace in the South Caucasus, the Nagorno Karabakh Republic must be reinstated into the OSCE Minsk Group peace process as a full negotiating partner."

Thank you for your leadership on the Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs. We are grateful for your role in strengthening the relationship between the U.S. and Armenia, supporting aid to Nagorno Karabakh, and on all the issues we have raised.

We appreciate your consideration of these requests.

Mkhitaryan reveals Zidane was his childhood hero

Borussia Dortmund midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan has revealed Real Madrid assistant Zinedine Zidane was his childhood hero.

Mkhitaryan is likely to line up tonight for Dortmund against Madrid at Santiago Bernabeu as the sides meet in the quarter-final of the Champions League.

The Armenia international has told AS that Zidane was his favourite player when he was growing up, but that he never tried to copy the World Cup winner.

"I first saw Madrid with Raul and he was the best. But then I saw Zidane...he was a great playmaker," Mkhitaryan said.

"It's totally true he was my idol as a child. I loved how he played and he was a great inspiration to me.

"But I never tried to copy or imitate his style. I'm happy being myself."

Mkhitaryan joined Dortmund from Shakhtar Donetsk last summer and admitted he needed time to settle in to his new surroundings.

"It took me a while to get used to the team's way of playing and to get used to the Bundesliga," Mkhitaryan added.

"I played some good games and some not so good games. But I know I can play even better."

Mkhitaryan is also looking forward to his first time playing



at the Bernabeu.

"I really want to experience the atmosphere. We are used to an incredible atmosphere at Signal Iduna," he continued.

"And now we are thrilled to play in such a legendary stadium in the quarter-finals. You don't get an opportunity like this every day."

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