

Armenian Community Quarterly Newsletter

**Produced by the Office of the Armenian Representative
in the House of Representatives of Cyprus, Mr Vartkes Mahdessian**

9 B&C Kastorias Str., Ayia Paraskevi, 2002 Strovolos
Tel. 22 454540, Fax. 22 424642, e-mail: office@armenianmp.com

Issue No. 7, April 2008

My fellow Armenians and friends

The year 2008 can best be described as a crucial year for both Cyprus and Armenia, as presidential elections took place in both countries in February.

I consider these elections as being a turning point, especially as both countries face territorial issues, the resolve of which is perceived to be complicated, yet we hope that 2008 be a productive year towards reaching a settlement.

As regards the political preferences of the Armenian community of Cyprus, I am sure that you have all noticed my neutral stance, by keeping the interests of the community as well as the best interest of Cyprus in general, above all else. My policy has been one of cooperation with all political parties and administration officials, putting aside any personal political preferences.

I am happy to say that I enjoy very good relations with several members of the newly-elected government, which I hope to develop even further within the next few years which will further boost our efforts to secure our community's rights. I have already sent congratulatory notes to all members of the government to include the warmest wishes and support of our community.

Marios Garoyian's election as President of the House of Representatives sparked some unfounded remarks regarding his Armenian descent, to which I issued a statement to the press with a strict condemnation of all that had been said or suggested, with a reminder of the equal political rights that the community has as a religious minority group within the Constitution of Cyprus.

We organised with great success the visit by the Armenian Embassy's Consul to Greece and Cyprus who used the facilities of the Representative's Office in order to respond to the various needs of the Armenian nationals who live in Cyprus.

Many of you would probably expect to hear about the pilgrimage to Magaravank. However, this did not take place as this year's Holy day would have been a week after the Greek Orthodox Easter, as well as the May Day celebrations, and all the necessary formalities could not have been concluded and secured in time.

The Representative's Office and the Youth Advisory Committee have organised two events to raise awareness about Road Safety as Cyprus has the second highest rate of road fatalities after Greece. These will take place on two consecutive Fridays, on May 9th and May 16th at the Bank of Cyprus Head Office in Nicosia where road accident victims and a former Traffic Police officer will tell their stories and give practical advice.

Finally, on the occasion of the Armenian Apostolic Easter, I send you all my best wishes.

Vartkes Mahdessian

Armenian Representative in the Cyprus House of Representatives.

3-MONTHLY REPORT: The Representative Office continued to assist individuals to process their residency or work permits. One person in Nicosia and one in Larnaca secured work permits. However, it is important to note that work permits normally take 2 months to process.

An individual who had illegally stayed longer than his permit required, was arrested and ordered to be deported. However, Mr. Mahdessian intervened and secured the person's release as well as a 3-month residency permit.

A delay was also noted at the Aliens and Immigration Dept. of the Ministry of Interior due to downtime at the Department's computer network system.

- The Representative and Rev. Momig Habeshian visited the Central Prisons on December 21 and met with Armenian inmates.
- On December 30, Mr and Mrs Vartkes Mahdessian, accompanied by Arch. Varoujan Hergelian of the Armenian Prelature of Cyprus, visited the Kalaydjian Old People's Home in Nicosia and met with the community's senior members to whom they gave presents and wished them a well for the holidays.
- On February 21, the Representative sent a letter of congratulations to the newly-elected President of Armenia, Serge Sarkissian, wishing him success and for Armenia's political environment to be strengthened even further.
- On February 26, Mr. Mahdessian sent a letter of congratulations to the newly-elected President of the Republic of Cyprus, ensuring Mr. Christofias of the support from the Armenian community, particularly as regards helping to resolve the Cyprus problem. He added that the new President of Cyprus is expected to continue to show interest in the national, religious and cultural issues of the Armenian community of Cyprus.
- On February 29, the Representative sent letters of congratulations and best wishes to the new members of the Cabinet.
- On March 11, Vartkes Mahdessian congratulated Mr Marios Garoyian on his election as President of the House of Representatives and wished him every success, adding that the Armenian Representative will continue to offer his full support and cooperation.

PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT: On March 2, the Armenian Representative was obliged to issue a press release expressing his and the whole community's disappointment over the insulting comments made about Marios Garoyian's candidacy for President of the House of Representatives, some of which were on the verge of racism and referred to Mr. Garoyian's Armenian descent.

Mr. Mahdessian said, in his statement, that the Armenians of Cyprus have a long and dignified history in Cyprus and the social, cultural and political rights of the Community are entrenched in the Constitution of the Republic, as with all citizens of Cyprus. He went on to condemn such attitudes which are not within the spirit of the European Union of which Cyprus is a full member, and that we should all collectively try and find a permanent, viable and just solution to the Cyprus problem, one which would secure the equal interests of Greek, Turkish, Armenian, Maronite and Latin Cypriots.

The press announcement was published by almost all of the local Cyprus newspapers, as well as in Aztag Daily of Lebanon.

OFFICIAL MEETINGS: During the 3-month reporting period, Mr. Mahdessian had the following meetings with:

- the Director of the Goteburg Historical Society of Sweden, Dr. Holmen Bemget;
- the Director of the European Association of Cyprus, Dr. Neophytos Chrysochos, to discuss European funding for the three major projects planned by the Representative's Office;
- the Mayor of Nicosia, Eleni Mavrou, in the presence of the Prelature's Executive Committee chairman Sebouh Tavitian and representatives of the ARC+ architectural firm to discuss progress of the repair plans for the old cemetery at Ledra Palace;
- a delegation of Tallin town council of Esthonia, headed by Thomas Vitsut;
- the Projects Director of UNDP-ACT, Jako Sillerz, accompanied by Sebouh Tavitian and architect John Guevherian, to discuss progress on the repair work at the St. Asdvadzadzin church on Victoria Street, in the Old Armenian Quarter;
- the Vice Dean of Economics at the Armenian State University, Dr. Vartan Sargsian, and Trade Deputy Minister Vahram Goushchian, who were in Cyprus on official academic business.

VISIT OF THE CONSUL OF ARMENIA: On Jan. 31, Mrs. Lilit Sarkssyan, Consul at the Armenian Embassy accredited to Greece and Cyprus, arrived for a 3-day visit following consultation between Mr Mahdessian and Ambassador Vahram Gazhoyian, to assist with the documentation needs of citizens of the Republic of Armenian who are temporary or permanent residents of Cyprus. More than 40 individuals and families met with Mrs Sarksian who was impressed by the services provided by the Representative's Office and assured that such visits would continue more frequently.

EVENTS: Between December 2007 and March 2008, Mr. and Mrs. Mahdessian attended the following events:

- Dec. 25, the St. Stepanos church commemoration in Larnaca;
- Dec. 25, the AYMA annual dinner dance at the Hilton in Nicosia;
- Dec. 28, the "Armenian Voices" performance organised by the Cyprus-Armenian Friendship Association that was held under the Representative's auspices;
- Jan. 20, the annual memorial service for the Melkonian founders and Hrant Dink;
- Jan. 27, the commemoration of the 40 years of service of Arch. Varoujan Hergelian and celebration that followed, where the Armenian Representative praised the Archbishop's contribution and dedication to the Armenian Church and the Community of Cyprus;
- March 6 and 11, the events organised by the Armenian Prelature of Cyprus, with the participation of Alexander and Anahid Topdjian;
- March 19, the "Verelk" comedy evening organised by the Oshagan chapter of the Hamazkayin Cultural Association that was held under the Representative's auspices.

LAWS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

Identity Card

The Republic of Cyprus has two types of Identity Cards – the Civil Identity Card and the Refugee Identity Card.

1. Civil Identity Card

This is issued to persons over 12 who are citizens of the Republic of Cyprus, have Cypriot descent, and to foreign nationals who have secured a temporary or permanent residency permit.

Since 2004, those wishing to replace their identity cards (due to wear, tear, or loss), will receive the new European-type Identity Card having submitted a completed form, a photograph (4x3cm) certified by a notary, a marriage or divorce document (in case of name change), a copy of the passport (in the case of foreign nationals), Alien Registration Certificate and a Birth Certificate with an official translation into Greek, and 8,54 euros. Applications are submitted at the District Office or Citizens' service Centres.

2. Refugee Identity Card

This is issued to those who have been uprooted from their homes, ie. those who used to live in the present-day Turkish-occupied territories before and up to the Turkish invasion in 1974; those who lived in the present-day free areas but had property that was occupied in 1974; non-immigrants who were temporarily living abroad before or up to the invasion in 1974.

To secure a Refugee Identity Card, a person must submit the relative form, proof of marriage or engagement (including a notification published in the local press), birth certificate, parents' Refugee Identity card(s), parents' Civil Identity Card numbers. Further information can be obtained from the Tel., 22 867664 (government working hours).

ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS: The Representative's Office has organised two consecutive sessions on road safety awareness to be held at the Bank of Cyprus Head Office, Solon Traintafyllides Hall, on Friday, May 9, and the following Friday, May 16, both starting at 8pm.

The events include personal views by victims of road accidents, video presentations and a workshop of safe driving by road safety consultant Andreas Papas.

The event is open to all individuals over the age of 14.

On the occasion of the Holy Easter and the Resurrection of Christ, Vartkes and Maggie Mahdessian wish a Happy Easter to all of the Armenian Community of Cyprus and their friends, and wish them health and happiness.