

Armenian Community Quarterly Newsletter
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My fellow Armenians and friends

Ever since we started publishing this quarterly newsletter four years ago, our mailing list has grown by 20% as more of you want to be informed regularly about the activities of the Office of the Armenian Representative, the latest developments regarding our community and about a number of useful Laws of the Republic of Cyprus. I thank you all since through your calls and visits to our Office, you have shown your support in the work that we have carried out so far and continue to do.

In January, I visited with Archbishop Varoujan Hergelian and community representatives the historic Sourp Asdvadzadzin church in the old Armenian Quarter of Nicosia, where the representative of UNDP-ACT, Jaco Cilliers, briefed us about the two stages of restoration work taking place there. I am glad to report that initial work has already started details of which you will read further on in this newsletter.

In early February 5-6, I had invited Liana Grigoryan, the Consul of the Embassy of Armenia in Athens, to review issues related to the documentation of citizens of Armenia living and working in Cyprus.

February also saw the seminar on “The Political Future of Minorities in Cyprus” organised by the Democratic Rally Party which I addressed, together with the other Representatives of the three Religious Groups.

I would also like to mention the programme on “The Armenians in Cyprus” which was broadcasted by Sigma TV on February 23 and received a very positive response and comments from the general public.

As you all know, this year marks the 95th anniversary of the Genocide and as proud Armenians it is our duty to support the events organised by the Genocide Committee as a tribute to our past and to renew our solemn promise to continue with the Hay Tad (Armenian Cause).

On May 9, the Representative’s Office and the Armenian Prelature are organising the third annual pilgrimage to Sourp Magaravank monastery and I hope that a large number of people will take part.

Recently, a circular was sent out to all Armenian households informing them of my initiative to send every year graduates of the Nareg elementary schools to Armenia for two weeks in July. This had been on

my list of priorities for quite a while and took some time to realise, and our youth will finally be able to visit their homeland and live memorable experiences. The relevant announcement is also printed in this Newsletter.

On Friday, May 14, we will continue with the series of events on health and social issues, with a lecture on sex education that will be held at the Utudjian Hall in Nicosia. It is aimed at young people aged 16 and over, as well as their parents, to create awareness about the dangers of unsafe sex and some of the related diseases. Mrs. Despo Hadjiloizou, Ex-director of the Family Planning Association, will make the presentation in Greek assisted with Powerpoint presentation.

I would like to conclude by letting you know that very soon we will start publishing a series of articles about the Cyprus Armenian community and the Armenian nation in general outlining our cultural heritage, language and religion in the local press, prepared by our foreign press representative Alexandros Hadjilyras.

On the occasion of the Holy Easter celebrations of the Armenian Apostolic Church, I convey you my very best wishes.

***“Christ has risen,
Blessed is the Resurrection of Christ”***

Vartkes Mahdessian

Armenian Representative in the Cyprus House of Representatives.

A GRADUATION GIFT TO REMEMBER

The Armenian Representative Mr. Vartkes Mahdessian in cooperation with the Government of the Republic of Armenia has made the necessary arrangements, so that all graduates of the Nareg Armenian Schools can visit Armenia for two weeks every year as of July 2010 accompanied by teachers of the school.

Under this arrangement Mr. Mahdessian will cover the cost of air tickets / visas and the Government of the Republic of Armenia will cover the cost of accommodation, food and visits to historical sites.

3-MONTHLY REPORT: Due to the closure of the Aliens and Immigration Unit for a month, the activities of the Representative's Office related to this department resumed on January 7. However, work at the government office has been slow to resume due to administration staff changes and transfer of personal files. Since January 2010, the procedure for visas for Third World citizens is stricter whereby the sponsor needs to have the invitation notarised and must raise a bank guarantee approved by the Immigration Unit, after which the applicant will be issued with a "limited period" visa stamped "Final". As regards to visitors, applications to extend their residence permit will be considered with a lot of caution.

On this subject, the Labour Ministry has also introduced restrictions on certain categories of employment available to foreign workers, due to the rising levels of unemployment.

VISIT TO KALAYDJIAN REST HOME: On Friday, January 1, 2010, Mr and Mrs Vartkes Mahdessian, accompanied by Archbishop Varoujan Hergelian, visited the Old People's Home in Nicosia and extended their warm wishes and individual gifts to the elderly members of our community.

RESTORATION OF HISTORICAL ST. ASDVADZADZIN: On January 15, The Armenian Representative, accompanied by Church Committee chairman Sebouh Tavitian, Executive Committee chairman Dr. Antranig Ashdjian and architect John Guevherian, had a meeting with the UNDP-ACT team that started in November 2009 restoration work at the Sourp Asdvadzadzin church in the Old Armenian Quarter, which includes the mediaeval church and adjacent buildings.

The first phase of the restoration include the church and the convent, for which funding has been secured, while the second phase will see the repair of the Prelature, the kindergartens, the Melikian and Ouzounian buildings and the courtyard.

On Sunday, January 24, a delegation headed by Arch. Hergelian and Mr Mahdessian, as well as Church and Executive committee members and architect John Guevherian visited the occupied part of town to review the site.

VISIT OF CONSUL: Ms Liana Grigoryan, Consul at the Armenian Embassy in Greece and Cyprus, arrived in Nicosia on February 4 at the invitation of the Armenian Representative and in cooperation with Ambassador Gagik Ghalatchian. The purpose of the visit was to assist with the documentation and other issues nationals of the Republic of Armenia, who were on a short-term or resident in Cyprus. More than 40

individuals and families, who had previously secured appointments met with Ms Grigoryan at the Office of the Armenian Representative, who expressed her sincere gratitude for the assistance provided by the staff of the Representative's Office.

While in Cyprus Ms Grigoryan also attended the concert of the Aram Khatchadourian Quartet and before her return to Greece met with Archbishop Varoujan Hergelian.

The previous visit by the Embassy's Consul was in January 2007.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION: The European Affairs and Minorities' Commission of the Democratic Rally party (DISY) organised a public discussion on "The Political Future of Minorities in Cyprus" which was held at the University of Nicosia on February 18. The Representatives of the Maronite, Armenian and Latin groups were invited to give a brief address, which was followed by a welcome speech from DISY Chairman Nicos Anastasiades, while former Attorney General Alecos Markides was the main speaker and afterwards answered the evening's questions.

In his address, Mr Mahdessian referred to the current situation regarding the religious groups and highlighted the difficulties facing the Armenian community, such as the perfect command of the Greek language that hampers the prospects of young Armenians competing for government jobs with native speakers. As regards to the closure of the Melkonian Educational Institute, Mr Mahdessian said that this has had an adverse effect on the Armenian community of Cyprus. He concluded by saying it was necessary that the status of the Representatives of the minorities should be upgraded, so that their position is reinforced and their voice is heard more effectively in parliament.

"ARMENIANS IN CYPRUS" ON SIGMA TV: On February 23, the Armenian Representative, accompanied by historian/researcher Alexandros Hadjilyras and X-Factor finalist Hovig Demirdjian took part in Sigma TV's afternoon 2-hour show hosted by Elita Michaelidou that focused on "The Armenians in Cyprus". The programme referred to the Armenian Genocide, the past and present history of the Armenians in Cyprus and the relations with the people of Cyprus. Viewers called in and praised Mr Mahdessian for his work. Hovig, who had made Cyprus and the Armenian community proud with his talent and on-stage performances, livened up the show with two songs. As regards to the history and traditions of the Armenian Cypriot community, Alexandros Hadjilyras gave a well-researched presentation.

CONGRATULATORY NOTE: On March 1, the Armenian Representative sent a letter congratulating Daniel Chorbadjian and Hovig Nassanian on their production of the “My Fair Lady” musical, wishing them and the Premier Group every success in the future. Mr and Mrs Vartkes Mahdessian had been invited to attend the opening performance on February 27 at the Pallas theatre in Nicosia.

OTHER EVENTS: On January 31, Mr and Mrs Mahdessian attended the performance “1000 and no end” by Vartan Bedrossian staged at the Utudjian Hall by the Oshagan chapter of the Hamazkaine Cultural Association.

- On February 1, the Armenian Representative attended a special reception at the Ledra Palace Hotel to honour UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon.
- On February 7, Mr Vartkes Mahdessian was one of the guests at the 1600th anniversary celebration of St. Maron, patron of the Maronite Church.
- On February 19, the Armenian Representative and Archbishop Varoujan Hergelian jointly inaugurated the art exhibition at the Utudjian Hall with works by Garine Ghahramanian from Armenia.
- On February 21, Mr Mahdessian inaugurated the new club hall of the AYMA Centre in Nicosia and accompanied by his wife attended the celebration banquet on the festive occasion.
- On March 13, Mr and Mrs Mahdessian attended a lecture at the Utudjian Hall on “The Genocide Museum and the Armenia-Turkey Protocols” organised by the Kalaydjian Foundation and held under the auspices of Archbishop Varoujan Hergelian. The speaker was Genocide Museum Director Haig Demoyan from Yerevan.
- On March 22, the Armenian Representative attended a discussion organised by the European University on inter-faith cooperation, with the participation of the Armenian and Maronite communities.
- On March 23, Mr Vartkes Mahdessian had a courtesy meeting with the Ambassador of the Netherlands, Mr Jan Eric van der Berg.
- On March 24, Mr and Mrs Mahdessian attended the Cyprus Symphonic Orchestra’s concert at the Strovolos municipal theatre, “A Musical Pilgrimage across Five Continents”, with the participation of Sona Gargaloyan (soprano) and Berj Krazian (tenor).

CONDOLENCES: On March 8, the Armenian Representative sent a letter of condolences to Bishop Shahan Sarkissian in Aleppo following the death of the dedicated community personality, Daron Avedissian.

LAWS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

Aliens and Immigration Department (Reg. 105/2007)

Due to the worsening of the unemployment rate in Cyprus, the Labour Minister amended Regulation 105/2007 18NE, limiting the sectors that foreign students can work to:

- labourers at wholesale importers/distributors
- petrol station staff
- caretakers in old peoples' homes (only after certain requirements are fulfilled)
- Hourly house helpers
- labourers at farms
- building cleaning staff
- fast food delivery boy

As for those studying tourism/hotel management, electrical and mechanical engineering and require work experience, may only seek employment during the summer holiday period from June 1 to October 15, subject to securing a work employment contract approved by Ministry of Labour.

**On the occasion of the Holy celebration of Easter
Vartkes and Maggie Mahdessian
Wish all members of the Armenian Community of Cyprus
Health and happiness**

***“Christ has risen,
Blessed is the Resurrection of Christ”***