

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.14, December 2009

My fellow Armenians and friends

From the first day I was elected Representative, and as I had promised during my election campaign, I have felt obliged to inform the Armenians of Cyprus about all issues that concern our community, working with transparent and clear principles.

This need resulted in the regular publication of the *Lradou* newsletter produced by a team of 3 individuals, contains my address to the community, a brief 3-monthly report on the activities of the Representative's Office, as well as highlights from the Laws of the Republic of Cyprus or other useful information. An English version of the newsletter is also posted on our community website.

This past year was a relatively smooth and productive year with the exception being the ugly developments relating to the appointment of the Principal and Board of Governors of the Nareg Schools. I can eventually declare, with a clear conscience that these issues had a calm ending in the best interest of our only remaining Armenian educational establishment in Cyprus.

Throughout the unpleasant developments leading up to the appointment of the new Nareg Schools board, and having remained firm on my initial list of appointees, the individuals whose names were proposed based on independent principles made my job easier in proving to high-ranking government officials that the information provided by a small group were totally unfounded and that my proposed list was created based on the values and professional abilities of each and every candidate. By maintaining a balance of neutrality I finally resolved the unpleasant situation. In order to avoid any repetition in this newsletter, I issued "A Necessary Explanation" concerning the Nareg Schools' new committee on 16/12/2009 where I explained in great detail all that I considered to be necessary. I am content with the result of my efforts, and all those who are genuinely interested in the progress of the Nareg Schools will notice that some changes were made to the detriment of individuals with great abilities. Those persons would have had a lot to offer to the schools,

through their experience and knowledge from the educational and other professional spheres.

Here, I would like to take this opportunity to add that several years ago, three individuals were added to a one sided board of governors where a large part of our community was not represented, while in this case, efforts were made to take out five specific names replacing them with five others. The two cases are very different to each other and should not be judged in the same context.

In any case, the eventual outcome will change nothing from the objectives and ideas of the new governing body, since it includes the great majority of the names proposed in my initial list. I assure you that with the earlier 2009 appointment of the new Principal and now of the new board of governors, the Nareg Schools will continue with a new vision and will progress to high levels of success.

On October 31, the “Gomidas Quartet” enjoyed great success at the Pallas Theatre in Nicosia, both with the quality of the performance and in the big turnout of the public.

On November 18, a lecture-discussion on “Prevention of Addictions” took place at the Prelature’s “Utudjian” Hall, which started with a quality presentation, followed by a very interesting session of questions and answers.

The periodic visit of the members of the European Parliament’s Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities has become an important and productive meeting every time, details of which are presented in other pages of this newsletter.

In order to facilitate the needs and concerns of many of our compatriots from Armenia, I have invited once again the Consular Officer at the Embassy of Armenia in Greece Liana Krikorian to visit us on February 5 and 6 and the Representative’s Office will be made available for these meetings throughout these two days.

On the occasion of the New Year and our Christmas, I wish you all the best hoping that 2010 will be a year where we will all work together to achieve a brighter future for us all.

Vartkes Mahdessian

Armenian Representative in the Cyprus House of Representatives.

3-MONTHLY REPORT: The Aliens and Immigration Unit will be closed to the public from 7 December 2009 to 7 January 2010, as the offices are moving to new premises. During this time, the activities of the Representative's Office related to this department will be temporarily suspended.

CITIZENSHIP: During the past three months, three individuals received their Cypriot nationality, two of whom are former graduates of the Melkonian Educational Institute.

So far, a large number of people have applied to Mr Mahdessian to assist in their applications for citizenship. During 2006, 2007 and 2008, the Armenian Representative has presented three successive lists to the Ministry of Interior. Although some of the cases were difficult, they were resolved favourably, always within the parameters of the laws of Cyprus, such as regular renewal of annual residency permits, health insurance, and proof of sufficient funds or employment contract. Naturally, all applicants would have to remain in Cyprus until their cases are reviewed and concluded.

PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES: On October 12, Mr Mahdessian met with members of the European Parliament's Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. This was the third meeting with the members of the Committee, who were briefed about the difficulties still facing by young Cypriot Armenians in some professions and during examinations for government jobs since the Greek language is not their mother tongue. Mr Mahdessian raised the argument, "should the teaching of our mother language be restricted in order to teach a higher level of Greek? The closure of the Melkonian Educational Institute has increased the necessity for the Nareg Armenian Schools to provide a standard of excellence in teaching the Armenian language and history."

As regards the fate of the Melkonian School, Mr Mahdessian informed the Committee members that he continues to discuss the issue with local government officials and sought the support of the Committee on this matter.

The third issue discussed with the visiting Committee members was the Constitutional status of the Representatives of Religious Groups, a matter which Mr Mahdessian said he did not wish to raise immediately, due to the serious extent of the Cyprus talks, but underlined the necessity of having a greater say in matters relating to the community.

Other issues included national service and the establishment of an Armenian chair of studies at the University of Cyprus. Finally, Mr Mahdessian said there was progress and improvement in the

government's approach to educational, cultural and community issues and thanked the committee members for their valuable contribution.

GOMIDAS QUARTET: On October 31, the Representative Office organised a concert by the world-famous "Gomidas Quartet" at the Pallas Theatre in Nicosia that enjoyed unprecedented success. The event was held to commemorate the 140 years from the birth of Gomidas Vartabed who is considered as the father of 19th and 20th century Armenian traditional, folk and ecclesiastical music. More than 400 people enjoyed the performance by the third generation of the quartet's musicians who played Gomidas, Mozart, Handel, Gardel and Piazzolla on their trademark instruments, the Guarneri violins and viola that date to the 17th and 18th centuries. The ecstatic audience also listened to three additional pieces played outside of the evening's programme.

Later in the evening, members of the organising committee enjoyed the company of the Gomidas Quartet over dinner hosted by Vartkes and Maggie Mahdessian at their residence. The following day, the musicians enjoyed a relaxing trip around Cyprus before their departure the next day.

PREVENTION OF ADDICTIONS: A lecture-discussion took place at the Utudjian Hall of the Armenian Prelature in Nicosia, where psychologist Dr. Kyriakos Veresies discussed programmes about the prevention of addictions, as part of the Representative Office's efforts campaign to raise awareness among the youth on social issues. Dr. Veresies analysed results from surveys regarding drugs abuse and addictions in Cyprus, which was followed by a lengthy interactive session of questions and answers. At the end of the evening, Dr. Veresies was given a token gift by the Representative in the way of appreciation.

NEW AMBASSADOR OF ARMENIA: Vartkes Mahdessian sent a letter of congratulations on October 16 to the newly appointed Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia, Gagik Ghalachian, who is accredited to Greece, Cyprus and the Balkans, noting that this appointment will contribute to improving even further the relations between the Embassy in Athens and the Representative's Office in Nicosia, as well as with the government of the Republic of Armenia.

OFFICIAL MEETINGS: On October 29, Mr Mahdessian, accompanied by representatives of the Melkonian alumni association, met with the Minister of Education, Dr. Andreas Demetriou, as well as the Rector of the University of Cyprus, Dr. Stavros Zenios, to discuss issues related to the Melkonian Educational Institute. The Minister expressed his commitment once again to support the Melkonian issue.

On the same day, the Armenian Representative received a delegation of the Armenian Evangelical Church, led by Hrayr Djebedjian and accompanied by the French-Armenian researcher, Dr. Ari Topouzkhonian. Mr and Mrs Mahdessian also attended a lecture given by Dr. Topouzkhonian on the use and teachings of the Holy Bible.

On November 27, Representative Mahdessian accompanied a delegation of high-ranking officials of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) during a visit to the President of the Parliament, Marios Garoyian, who pledged his continued support to the Armenian Cause. The delegation comprised ARF Bureau member Megerditch Megerditchian, Lebanese parliamentary representative Hagop Pakdradouni, former minister Alen Tabourian and ARF Cyprus Committee members Hagop Kazandjian and Vahan Aynedjian.

OTHER ACTIVITIES: On October 11, Mr Mahdessian attended a discussion organised by the Armenian Club of Larnaca on the Armenia-Turkey protocols signed in Zurich on October 10.

- on November 7, Vartkes and Maggie Mahdessian attended the twin performances of the “Gargach” and “Ayk” children’s choirs from Lebanon that took place at the Larnaca municipal hall. The event was held under the Armenian Representative’s auspices and organised by the “Oshagan” Cyprus chapter of the Hamazkayin Cultural Foundation.
- on November 27, Mr and Mrs Mahdessian and other public figures and politicians from Cyprus, attended the “Personality of the Year” awards ceremony to honour House President Marios Garoyian, organised by the Armenian National Committee of Cyprus that took place at the Lachia Municipal Theatre. The event was held under the auspices of the Armenian Representative.
- on December 18, the Armenian Representative with the Rev. Fr. Momig Habeshian visited the Central Prisons in Nicosia and met with the Armenian inmates there, whom he wished a Happy New Year and a Merry Christmas.
- on December 25, Vartkes and Maggie Mahdessian attended the ceremony marking the commemoration of the Sourp Stepanos Armenian Church of Larnaca.
- in the evening of December 25, Mr and Mrs Mahdessian were invited to attend that annual AYMA dinner dance held at the Cyprus Hilton.

CHILDREN’S DANCE GROUP: On December 18, the younger members of the Armenian School of Arts held their final dance session of the year and performed for their parents and friends.

LAWS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

Ministry of Finance –aid to pensioners

The Council of Ministers decided on April 14, 2009, to raise the aid to low-income pensioners, varying on a case-by-case basis, as described on the final page of the application form that was issued in November and implemented in December.

To be eligible for this aid, applicants must comply with the following requirements:

- annual earnings of less than €10,398;
- joint spouses' earnings of less than €15,597;
- no other source of income (pension from abroad, other work, rental income or interest from deposits);
- in the case of two eligible individuals living in the same household, only one application is submitted. If either of the two lives in an old people's home, then both can apply.

Applications must be submitted between December 2009 and December 2010. Those wishing to receive aid in 2011 as well must reapply from September 1 to November 30, 2010.

Needless to say that all grants and subsidies require a formal application and more information may be received from the Ministry of Finance (Tel. 22-459911) or from any Citizens' Bureaus all over Cyprus.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT – Consular Visit: Following an invitation from the Armenian Representative, Mr Vartkes Mahdessian, the Head of the Consular Section of the Armenian Embassy in Athens, Liana Krikorian, will be visiting Cyprus on Friday, 5th of February and Saturday, 6th of February, 2010.

Citizens of the Republic of Armenia who are temporary or permanent residents in Cyprus who require a passport renewal, have lost their passports, or have other issues related to the public registry office, must call the Representative Office on 22-454540 to arrange for an appointment with Mrs. Krikorian.

*Vartkes and Maggie Mahdessian convey their heartfelt wishes
for health and happiness to all Armenians in Cyprus
on the occasion of the New Year and Christmas.
May 2010 be a year of progress for our Nation
whereby all our national issues reach a desirable conclusion.*