

Armenian Community Quarterly Newsletter
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My fellow Armenians and friends

Work at the Representative's Office reached a new peak in the second Quarter of this year, both in terms of administration of community affairs, as well as in terms of visitors, either planned or unexpected. In addition, there were a number of other significant events to which our Office also contributed or participated, all within our mission of "*supporting all events, to the best of our ability, in the interest of the whole community.*" You, dear reader, can see this for yourself in the pages that follow, in addition to the work that we do and the aid we provide in innumerable cases.

Allow me to refer to some achievements within our community which is the outcome of the hard work of the past few years through a great number of meetings and consistent efforts:

First, a series of articles have been published by the local media that put an end to common questions like "when did you come to Cyprus", "what language do you speak" and "what is your religion?"

Second, the University of Cyprus has introduced Armenian lessons as part of its foreign languages programme, which will hopefully be upgraded to a full Chair for Armenian Studies some day. I urge all those who have little or no command of the Armenian language to attend this course, application forms for which are available from the Representative's Office. The most fundamental principle for the survival of the Armenian Diaspora is our language, which is why we should pay particular attention to this programme.

Thirdly, with my suggestion and in cooperation with the Armenians Schools Committee, a new programme has been offered within the Nareg schools to allow pupils to stay behind in the afternoon and catch up with their homework during supervised sessions, which has been a long-time demand of many working parents, a need we have all realised is just as vital for the survival of our community.

As regards future events organised by the Representative's Office, let me

mention the sensational concert to mark the 50th anniversary of the Republic of Cyprus, which will be held at the Strovolos municipal theatre on November 20 and 21 by talented musician-composer Ara Gevorgian, accompanied by a group of 20 folk musicians and dancers from Armenia, in collaboration with the Cyprus State Symphony Orchestra, where the 'Sipan' dance group will also perform.

Wish you all pleasant holidays.

Vartkes Mahdessian

Armenian Representative in the Cyprus House of Representatives.

3-MONTHLY REPORT: Due to the continued administration changes at the Aliens and Immigration Department (AID), outstanding cases that have not been resolved since January will, hopefully, be reviewed by September. This has caused a significant delay in the issue of Residence Permits and we urge all those whose permits have not yet expired, to reapply earlier than the required date in order to allow for time to process these applications.

In June, an individual who had been living in Nicosia since childhood finally received Cypriot citizenship.

EUROVISION STAR EVA RIVAS IN CYPRUS: On Thursday, April 8, 2010, and following an invitation from Mr Vartkes Mahdessian, Armenia's Eurovision hopeful Eva Rivas arrived on the island, accompanied by composer Armen Mardirossian and tour manager Hratchya Mesrobian. On Friday, April 9, Eva Rivas appeared on the state CyBC channel's "Epta-Deka" breakfast show and later in the evening performed at the 'Zoo' club. On Saturday, April 10, and accompanied by Mr and Mrs Mahdessian, Eva Rivas met with Nicosia Mayor Eleni Mavrou and planted a symbolic apricot tree in the municipal gardens, followed by a press conference. Later in the day she called on Archbishop Varoujan Hergelian and in the evening Eva Rivas performed her Eurovision entry and two other songs to the delight of the crowd at the Hamazkayin 'Sipan' dance group's 10th anniversary show.

95TH COMMEMORATION OF THE GENOCIDE: On Wednesday, April 21, the Armenian Representative presided at the Genocide commemoration event held at the Larnaca Nareg School.

On Thursday, April 22, he addressed the regular weekly session of the House of Representatives, where he noted once again that Turkey

remains unpunished for committing the Armenian Genocide, and that if Turkey does not show the courage to acknowledge these crimes then it can never pave a bright future its own nation.

On Saturday, April 24, Vartkes Mahdessian appeared on the state CyBC-2 channel's programme on "The Armenians in Cyprus" where he addressed the Cypriot audience in Greek.

In the afternoon, the main commemorative event took place at the Pasydy Hall in Nicosia organised by the Committee for the Genocide Remembrance where the Armenian Representative highlighted the common struggles of the Armenian and Greek Cypriot people to achieve justice in their relative causes. The keynote speaker of the day was Euro MP Ioannis Kasoulides who emphasised the importance of international recognition of the Genocide, by quoting from the late Hrant Dink: "I could not convince the parliaments of foreign countries, but with my pen I succeeded in waking up Turkey's intellectual society."

VISIT OF ARMENIAN EMPLOYERS: On April 25-30, a delegation from the employers' association of Armenia (RUEA) visited Cyprus, invited by the Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation (OEV), with the aim of developing closer cooperation between the two. The visiting delegation and the leadership of the OEV council were hosted during a special dinner by Mr and Mrs Mahdessian.

VISIT OF THE AMBASSADOR: Gagik Ghalachyan, Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia in Cyprus and Greece arrived on the island on May 5. During his stay he was accompanied by Mr Mahdessian and they visited the Nareg Armenian school in Nicosia and the Melkonian Educational Institute grounds. They called on Archbishop Varoujan Hergelian and met with the members of the church and lay committees. On Thursday, May 6, the Ambassador presented his credentials to the President of the Republic, Demetris Christofias, and later visited the House of Representatives, where they met with the President of the House, Marios Garoyian. The Ambassador also had several meetings with individuals and representatives of community organisations at the Cyprus Hilton and later, accompanied by his wife, attended a reception in his honour hosted by the Armenian Representative at his residence. Before leaving the island, Mr Ghalachyan visited the Kalaydjian Rest Home in Nicosia, the genocide memorial, the St Stepanos church and the Nareg school in Larnaca.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ABOUT THE COMMUNITY: As a new initiative of the Representative's Office, monthly articles have started to appear in the local media since May 2010 informing the Cypriot public

about the history of the Armenian community in Cyprus, its cultural heritage, language and religion, authored by press relations officer Alexander Hadjilyras.

MAGARAVANK PILGRIMAGE: On Sunday, May 9, the third pilgrimage to the occupied Magaravank monastery took place, organised jointly by the Representative's Office and the Armenian Prelature of Cyprus, and under the supervision of the United Nations. More than 200 people joined the trip, including visitors from Lebanon, Britain and several other European countries. Participants in the pilgrimage gathered around the ruins of the holy table in the monastery's chapel and renewed their pledge by singing the "Hayr Mer" and other hymns, led by Archbishop Varoujan and the Reverend Fathers, as well as folk songs such as "Giligia". Renowned soprano Sona Gargaloyian led the group and sang "Der Voghormya" accompanied by Fr. Momig Habeshian. Later in the day, the Representative's Office issued a press statement that was carried by most of the evening television news bulletins. On Sunday, May 23, Alexander Hadjilyras, press relations officer of the Representative's Office appeared on a special programme on the state CyBC channel "Kyprión Nostos" programme, where he elaborated on the history and present state of the monastery.

SEX EDUCATION AND HEALTH: As part of its ongoing series of public information lectures, the Representative's Office organised a seminar at the Utudjian Hall on May 14 with the subject "Sex Education and Healthy Relationships" which was presented by Despo Hadjiloizou, former executive director of the Cyprus Family Planning Association.

EUROPEAN FRIENDS OF ARMENIA: A delegation from the European Friends of Armenia (EuFoA) grouping within the European Parliament visited Cyprus on May 28-30, headed by its General Secretary, Dr Michael Kembek, who invited Mr Vartkes Mahdessian to participate in their deliberations. During their visit, the delegation attended the May 28 celebrations. They also called on Nicosia Mayor Eleni Mavrou and visited the Green Line where they made statements to the media. After his visit, Mr. & Mrs Mahdessian hosted lunch for the delegation along with the Cypriot Euro MPs.

MILITARY SERVICE: On June 22, Mr Vartkes Mahdessian invited parents and Armenian community youngsters, who were called up to serve in the National Guard, in order to give them some information about the military service. Former Guardsman Aren Armenagian gave parents his own recollection of his service and the young recruits were

provided with a list of their basic requirements.

RECEPTION FOR GRADUATES: Mr and Mrs Mahdessian hosted more than 60 graduates from the Nareg elementary and other schools and colleges in Cyprus. Also present were Archbishop Hergelian, the Reverend Fathers and teachers from Nareg. During the reception, some of the young graduates had the opportunity to discuss matters of mutual interest with the Representative.

ARTS WORKSHOP: The 6 to 12 year old members of the Arts School organised by the Representative's Office held their end-of-year performance at the Utudjian Hall, where they displayed their dancing skills where Mr Mahdessain expressed his deep appreciation to dance instructor Armenouhi Mekhitarian.

OFFICIAL MEETINGS: On May 11, Mr Mahdessian met with Antranig Kassabian, the Executive Director of the Tufenkjian Foundation, who was visiting Cyprus.

On June 24, the Armenian Representative along with the two other Representatives of the Maronite and Latin communities was received by Attorney General Petros Clerides with whom he discussed matters relating to the religious minority groups in Cyprus and the prospects of improving the legal status of the representatives.

OTHER EVENTS: The Armenian Representative and Mrs Mahdessian attended several community events:

- Sunday, April 11, the first service in 47 years of the St. Boghos chapel of the Old Cemetery in Nicosia.
- April 12, hosted lunch for Dr Vartkes and Mrs Kasouni of the Armenian Evangelical Church, who were visiting Cyprus for Easter celebrations.
- April 17, the Limassol performance of the 'Sipan' dance group, held at the Ethal hall, organised by the Limassol club and held under the auspices of Mayor Andreas Christou.
- May 12, the annual Sports Day at the Nareg school in Nicosia. The Representative handed out medals to the winners of the various events.
- June 4, the 100th anniversary celebration of the Armenian Relief Society, held at the Stoa centre, presided by Mrs Maggie Mahdessian.
- June 5, the state reception at the Presidential Palace held in honour of the historical visit of Pope Benedict XVI. In the evening, Mr and Mrs Mahdessian hosted a reception to honour the Catholic

Armenian Patriarch, Nerses XVI, who was part of the Hoy Father's entourage.

- June 16, the graduation ceremony of the Nareg schools, followed by a party celebration in the school's yard.
- June 23, the film show at K-Cineplex Nicosia of "My Name is Aram" by Lebanese director Carmen Labaki, organised by the Hamazkayin cultural society's "Oshagan" chapter.
- June 24, the book presentation of the "Melkonian Historical Almanac" compiled by Yegia Kayayian, held at the Utudjian Hall.

NOTE OF CONGRATULATIONS: On May 14, the Armenian Representative sent a letter of congratulation to Mrs Takouhi Devletian, recognising her years of devotion to the Girl Guides movement, from which she received the highest honour.

On May 18, Mr Mahdessian congratulated the AGBU Ararad futsal team on winning both the championship and cup for the 2009-2010 season, with special recognition to team coach Ara Bedrossian.

On May 18, the Representative congratulated the HMM Futsal team for being promoted from the third division to the second division.

CONDOLENCES: On April 12, the Armenian Representative attended in person and signed the book of condolences at the Polish Embassy to mark the airline disaster on April 10.

On April 30, Mr Mahdessian sent a letter of condolence to the Armenian Catholicos, Aram I, on the occasion of the death of Bishop Nishan Topouzian of the Adrbadagan region.

The section on "The Laws of the Republic of Cyprus" will appear in the next edition of the '*Lradou*'.

The Representative's Office will be closed from August 2 to 22, 2010.