



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, September 24, 2010

TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

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POLITICS

1. Maria Flachsbarth: 'Telling the truth in history is a necessary precondition for all the states, including Turkey' [Armenpress, 09/24/10]

New studies and researches on Turkey's membership to the European Union are currently being carried out, according to Maria Flachsbarth, member of the German Bundestag. She added that the main issue is Turkey's level of readiness to become an EU member and EU's readiness to involve new member-states. 'In the recent years Turkey has passed several stages for the issue of membership. The idea of Europe's unity is dominant in the EU; this means that it is necessary to strengthen what is currently available, and not to think about involving new states.

'This does not mean that the talks with Turkey are over; however the results of the talks are not clear yet,' Maria Flachsbarth said. She reminded that the German Bundestag adopted 2005 a resolution, condemning the Armenian Genocide, unanimously. 'Telling the truth in history is a necessary precondition for all the states, including Turkey,' Maria Flachsbarth stated.

2. **Armenian Foreign Minister had a series of meetings of different formats in New York** [Armenpress, 09/24/10]

On September 23, the third day of the visit to New York, Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandyan had a series of meetings of different formats. The working day of the Armenian foreign minister started with a meeting with his Georgian counterpart Grigol Vashadze, during which a number of issues related to the Armenian-Georgian agenda were discussed. Grigol Vashadze will arrive in Yerevan at the beginning of October to continue the dialogue.

In the United Nations Headquarters Edward Nalbandyan handed to Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations the documents on ratification of the international convention of "fighting against international terrorist acts" and of "rights of disabled people" UN convention by Armenia. At the meeting with Foreign Affairs Minister of Croatia Gordan Jandrokovic, the Armenian foreign minister conveyed to his counterpart Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan's message addressed to Croatian President Ivo Josipovic.

The ministers noted that last year's high-class mutual visits have created good prerequisites for elevating the Armenian-Croatian political, economic and cultural cooperation to a new qualitative level. Ministers Nalbandyan and Jandrokovic referred to fulfillment of the agreements gained at presidential level. Edward Nalbandyan and Foreign Affairs Minister of Slovenia Samuel Zbogar discussed the preliminary works of the upcoming official visit of the Slovenian president to Armenia, referred to a number of issues of the bilateral agenda.



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With Slovenian foreign minister's request Edward Nalbandyan presented the latest developments over the regulation of the Artsakh issue. During the meeting with Foreign Affairs Minister of Greece Dimitris Droutsas Edward Nalbandyan discussed the steps to be undertaken toward activation of cooperation between the two friend countries. The Greek Foreign Minister informed about the works implemented toward overcoming of the financial crisis.

At the meetings thoughts were exchanged over regional issues as well. Admitting the invitation to visit Armenia, the Greek foreign minister said that he will visit Armenia within this year. The same day the head of the Armenian foreign political department met with co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk group Bernard Fassier, Robert Bradtke, Igor Popov and Andrzej Kasprzyk, personal representative of the OSCE chairman-in-office. Edward Nalbandyan highly assessed the efforts of the co-chairing countries toward withdrawal of the Azerbaijani deconstructive resolution from the previous session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The co-chairs of the Minsk group informed Edward Nalbandyan about the steps intended before the December OSCE summit in Astana. Edward Nalbandyan's next meeting was with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Syria Ualid Muallim. The interlocutors expressed gratification on the activation noticed lately in different directions of cooperation and agreed to carry out additional works for development of relations.

The ministers referred to the issues of the Near East and South Caucasus as well. The same day in the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Edward Nalbandyan partook in the meeting of the foreign ministers of CSTO member countries, during which they referred to implementation process of the decisions adopted a month ago at the non-official summit of the CSTO in Armenia. In the UN Headquarters the Armenian foreign minister met with his Iraqi counterpart – Hoshyar Zebari.

Mr. Nalbandyan noted that Armenia attaches importance to development of cooperation with Iraq and for that very reason a decision has been adopted to reopen the Armenian Embassy in Baghdad. The Iraqi Foreign Minister, expressing gratitude to the Armenian leadership for establishing an embassy, said that his government, too, intends to establish a diplomatic mission in Yerevan. With Edward Nalbandyan's request Hoshyar Zebari presented the efforts of the authorities exerted toward consolidation of stability of situation in Iraq, as well as the negotiations over formation of a government after the parliamentary elections.

In the evening of September 23, Edward Nalbandyan partook in the reception given by Barack Obama in honor of the heads of the delegations arrived for participation in the session of the UN General Assembly.

3. Rafik Tadevosyan says cultural genocide by Turkey going on [Armenpress, 09/24/10]

Armenian people displayed unity by not participating in the September 19 liturgy in Surb Khach Church, Jasmen Asryan, chairperson of the Public Council subcommittee on history, national values and monuments, and Rafik Tadevosyan, member of the same subcommittee, historian, said today at a meeting with journalists, adding that their subcommittee has been among the pioneers who were against Armenia's participation.

"This was an event of big significance, and we could not be indifferent. Fortunately, Armenian people displayed unity in this issue, few people from Armenia partook in the event," Mrs. Asryan said. Historian Rafik Tadevosyan expressed regret that the Armenian party did not raise its voice of complaint properly just there - in the church. According to him, in 1923 Turkey signed the Treaty of Lausanne, by which it is committed to protect and take care of the cultural monuments inside its territory and to leave them within the liability of minorities. "We have moral, historical and legal right toward that cultural heritage, and Turkey, letting the liturgy, does not do us a favor, as it is our right," the historian noted.

He said that on one hand Turkey introduces itself to the world as a democratic state letting chant a liturgy in the church, and on the other hand, pulls down another cultural monument over one night. "The process of cultural genocide by Turkey is still going on: 20-30 churches are pulled down, 1-2 – restored," he said.

DIASPORA

4. Who Won Akhtamar Propaganda War: Armenians or Turks? [Noyan Tapan, 09/22/10] By Harut Sassounian Publisher, The California Courier



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The Turkish government failed to attract the expected crowd of thousands of worshippers from around the world to the first Mass in almost a century, held at the Holy Cross Church in Akhtamar Island, on Sept. 19. Only a few hundred Armenians showed up, mostly from Istanbul.

Turkey failed miserably in trying to deceive world opinion into believing that it is tolerant towards Armenians. Eventually, it became obvious that Turkish leaders were more interested in putting on a political show than allowing a religious ceremony in a thousand-year old Armenian house of worship.

I wrote a column three years ago criticizing the Turkish government for converting the Holy Cross Church into a state museum. At the time, I urged Turkish officials to 1) place a cross on the church's dome; 2) designate it as a church rather than a museum, and allow regular celebration of Divine Liturgy; and 3) revert ownership of the church to the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul instead of placing it under the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Earlier this year, the Turkish government promised to place a cross on the dome of the church and allow services to be performed there on Sept. 19. I urged Armenians not to participate, knowing that Turkish officials' true intent was to stage a political show under the guise of religious ceremonies.

An intense debate ensued among Armenians on whether to boycott or attend the church services. Articles exposing the Turkey's sinister plans did little to settle the controversy. Making matters worse, the Holy See of Etchmiadzin and the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem announced plans to send representatives to the Akhtamar church, although the Catholicosate of Cilicia declined to participate.

Finally, a lucky break! The Turkish government came to the rescue. A few weeks before the scheduled ceremony, a Turkish official announced that it would not be possible to place the promised cross atop the church, making the ridiculous excuse of "technical difficulties."

Prime Minister Erdogan was caught in a dilemma. Had he allowed the cross to be placed on the dome, he would have scored points with world public opinion, but would have lost crucial votes in the hotly-contested Sept. 12 referendum on constitutional reforms.

The cross finally saved the day! The Holy See of Etchmiadzin canceled its plans to send representatives to Akhtamar. The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem did likewise. Tour operators called off their arrangements to take large numbers of Armenian worshippers to Lake Van. As a result, Turkey lost the propaganda campaign and considerable income.

In a last ditch effort to increase attendance, a few days before Sept. 19, Prime Minister Erdogan's office sent invitations to the Armenia media, offering all expense paid visits to Akhtamar, including free round-trip airfare, hotel accommodations and meals. Another fifty Armenian commentators and analysts received similar invitations, all of whom refused to go because of Turkey's refusal to install the cross.

Inadvertently, the Turks forced most Armenians to do the right thing and cancel their visits to the Holy Cross Church. Interestingly, the Turkish government behaved similarly when it declined to ratify the Armenia-Turkey Protocols, thereby safeguarding Armenia's interests.

While the Armenian public, civic groups, and some political parties opposed the Turkish plans at Akhtamar, the Armenian government remained remarkably silent. For unknown reasons, Turkey did not invite Armenian officials to the Holy Cross ceremonies. In view of the embarrassing games Ankara played with the Armenia-Turkey Protocols and the subsequent collapse of soccer diplomacy, it appears that Armenia's leaders were not too eager to join Turks in yet another ploy.

Regrettably, Armenians wasted far too much time and energy arguing with each other about going to Akhtamar. This distraction prevented them from organizing protests in major capitals to inform the world about the long history of Turkish atrocities, destruction of thousands of churches, and occupation of historic Armenian lands.

However, the boycott of the ceremonies because of the missing cross caught the attention of the international media. Ironically, Turkish officials helped further undermine their own cause, by placing the cross on the ground next to the Holy Cross Church, in full view of the public and TV cameras.

The Turkish government has now promised to place the cross atop the church in six weeks. Regardless of what Turkey decides to do with the cross, Armenians should pursue their own course of action, rather than simply react to the petty games of Turkish officials.

At this point, the only announcement Armenians are interested in hearing from Ankara is the return of the Holy Cross Church to the Armenian Patriarchate of Turkey.

5. Complaint against Azerbaijan in European Court could have grave consequences [Noyan Tapan, 09/22/10] By Harut Sassounian

In recent years, Armenian-Americans have filed several lawsuits in U.S. courts against insurance companies, banks, and the Republic of Turkey, seeking compensation for losses stemming from the Genocide of 1915.



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For the first time, on September 15, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) commenced to hold a hearing on a complaint filed by an Armenian family against the Republic of Azerbaijan for damages suffered during the Karabagh (Artsakh) conflict. Remarkably, the ECHR considered on the same day a similar complaint brought by several Azeris against the Republic of Armenia (Chiragov and others vs. Armenia).

Minas Sargsyan, a former resident of Gulistan in the Shahumyan region, north of Artsakh, filed a complaint on August 11, 2006, regarding the destruction of his house and eviction from his property. Sargsyan stated in his complaint that someone else, presumably an Azeri, is now living in his house. Although Sargsyan passed away a year ago, his widow and two children are continuing to pursue the case. Due to a backlog, the ECHR normally takes several years before it hears a case. The Sargsyan family is represented before the Court by attorneys Narine Gasparian and Knarik Ohanyan of Yerevan (members of the Legal Guide NGO), and well known human rights lawyer Prof. Philip Leach representing the European Human Rights Advocacy Center in London.

The Shahumyan region is situated on the northern border of the former Nagorno- Karabagh Autonomous Oblast, as it was known in Soviet times. More than 80% of Shahumyan was inhabited by Armenians prior to the Artsakh conflict. In June 1992, when the Azerbaijani forces bombed Gulistan, Sargsyans' two-storey house was destroyed. As a result, the entire population of the village fled fearing for their lives, according to the "Statement of Facts," summarized by the ECHR. Sargsyan's complaint is based on the following claims:

1. The destruction of his house and eviction from his property constituted "a violation of his right to peaceful enjoyment of his possessions."
2. Infringement on his right to a private and family life and to his home because of his forced displacement and Azerbaijan's continuing refusal to allow him access to his home and belongings.
3. In view of the demolition or vandalism of several Armenian cemeteries in Azerbaijan, Sargsyan stated that he was unaware of the condition of the cemetery of his close relatives and that he was deprived of the possibility of visiting their graves, which he had done regularly in the past. The mere fact of knowing that the graves of his relatives were under the risk of being destroyed caused Sargsyan severe suffering and distress. The inability to visit the cemetery deprived him of spiritual communication with his deceased relatives, as visiting and maintaining his relatives' graves was a religious duty that he fulfilled before his eviction.
4. There are no effective remedies available to ethnic Armenians who were forced to leave their homes in Azerbaijan. Armenians who had sought to lodge complaints with relevant Azerbaijani authorities were unable to obtain any redress for the violation of their rights. Due to the unresolved status of the Artsakh conflict, there were practical difficulties and obstacles for gaining direct access to any remedies available in Azerbaijan. 5. Sargsyan complained that he had been subjected to discrimination in Azerbaijan, based on his ethnic and religious affiliation. He submitted that only ethnic Armenians living in Azerbaijan had been targets of violence, pogroms, and attacks. The Government of Azerbaijan failed to investigate violence against Armenians and to provide redress for the illegal occupation of their properties and the destruction of Armenian cemeteries.

This is the first Armenian complaint lodged with the ECHR for violations of property rights, among others, by the Republic of Azerbaijan. If successful, it will set an important precedent for claims by hundreds of thousands of Armenians who were forced to abandon their properties in Baku and other parts of Azerbaijan. Similarly, the Chiragov complaint lodged against Armenia could open the door for demands by hundreds of thousands of Azeris who left their homes during the Artsakh conflict. In contrast to the Armenian case, however, most Azeris left at their own free will and sold their properties prior to their departure.

It cannot be a mere coincidence that the Armenian and Azeri complaints were set to be heard by the Grand Chamber of the ECHR on the same day. If the Court finds a violation of property rights in these two cases, and orders monetary compensation to the applicants, this would likely lead to many similar cases being filed in the future, which could have far-reaching consequences for the economies of Armenia and Azerbaijan, amounting to billions of dollars. Alternatively, the Court could mandate that both countries allow their respective citizens to return to their former homes, which could create new upheavals and security risks in the region. As members of the Council of Europe, Armenia and Azerbaijan are obligated to comply with the decision of the Court.

ARTS

6. 'Veradardz' classical music festival to kick off [Armenpress, 09/23/10]



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'Veradardz (Return)' Classical Music Festival will kick off today at Komitas Chamber Music Hall. The festival will last till October 17.

Mariam Shahinyan, founder of the festival, director of 'Art Gallery' cultural foundation, said at today's meeting with journalists that due to continuous support the festival, which has already become traditional, will give an opportunity to spectators of Yerevan, Gyumri and Vanadzor to meet with world-famous Armenian musicians, living and creating abroad. Mariam Shahinyan says the festival is a good opportunity to listen to masterpieces of classical music. 'Due to the festival Armenian musicians get an opportunity to perform together with foreign musicians,' she added. 7 concerts will be held within the framework of the festival.

Lovers of classical music will have an opportunity to listen to classical music in Armenia by Armenian performers, living and creating abroad. The programs of the concerts are difficult; they involve music of various periods – renaissance, baroque, classical period, romantic era and modern music. The opening ceremony will be held at Komitas Chamber Music Hall. Varduhi Khachatryan (mezzo soprano, Switzerland), Anna Mandalyan (pianist) will perform at the opening ceremony. Vivaldi's 'Sposa, son disprezzata', 'Bayazet', Rossini's 'Assisa al pie` d'un salice', Masne's 'Pleurez, pleurez mes yeux' are involved in the program list.

7. Library evening in Armenia [Armenpress, 09/23/10]

A library evening will be conducted October 7 in the republic on the initiative of the Armenian Culture Ministry. Luiza Berberyan, senior specialist of RA Culture Ministry, cultural inheritance department, said that the evening will start at 18:00 pm and will wrap up at 22:00 pm.

All the libraries of the republic will participate in initiative. "We have already met with directors of the libraries of the republic and have discussed issues connected with the events to be implemented that day. We want to underline the importance of book once again, drawing public attention to it," Mrs. Berberyan said.

There will be various events – poetry, presentation of books, showing of films, performances, concert programs, etc. Before the start of the library evening actions will be conducted, informative booklets will be published to make public competent beforehand.

8. Armenian Prime Minister present at Aram Isabekyan's personal exhibition [Armenpress, 09/24/10]

Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan was present today at the opening ceremony of Aram Isabekyan's personal exhibition. About 106 paintings and 30 graphic works were exhibited. Congratulating the guests on opening of Aram Isabekyan's personal exhibition, the prime minister said that Aram Isabekyan is an artist and intellectual with distinct civic position, a person who brings up generations.

"Visiting this exhibition you will be sure, too, that the upbringing of our young people is in trustworthy hands and his art will encourage all of us in that regard," Mr. Sargsyan noted. Press service of the Armenian government told Armenpress that NA Speaker Hovik Abrahamyan, other high ranking officials and many cultural figures attended the exhibition. Walking around in the exhibition hall, the prime minister got acquainted with Aram Isabekyan's works, created over 40 years.

SOCIAL

9. Events dedicated to 100th anniversary of Armenian Relief Society in Armenia [Armenpress, 09/23/10]

A commemoration ceremony will be organized in October in Khor Virap by the ARS Vedi office on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Relief Society (ARS). Hripsime Harutyunyan, head of Vedi office of the Armenian Relief Society, told Armenpress that the above mentioned ceremony will be performed, reassessing the charities of the ARS for the Armenians saved from the 1915 genocide. According to Mrs. Harutyunyan, thanks to Paris philanthropists the ARS has given the other day its autumn grant to 35 parentless children: the children have received a grant of 200-300 USD.

The ARS gives such grants 8-9 times a year. Parentless students, too, get scholarship by philanthropists, and to the advanced students the ARS Yerevan office extends money from the own sources. Mrs. Harutyunyan said that "When September Comes" program is also working, within the frameworks of which 400 province children have got presents in the recent years. This year was the turn



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of Lori province. At the end of October the ARS head office is planning to organize events dedicated to its 100th anniversary, on the occasion of which there will be guests from the USA. The participants of all the Armenian branches of ARS will visit Yerablur, to pay tribute of honor to the memory of the freedom fighters killed in the Artsakh liberation fight.

One hundred fir-trees will be planted on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the ARS; every tree will have the name of the sponsor branch. The Armenian Relief Society (A.R.S) is an independent, non-governmental and non-sectarian organization and NGO, serving the social and educational needs of Armenian communities everywhere, seeking to preserve the cultural identity of the Armenian nation, and, whenever and wherever the need arises, to bring humanitarian help to all communities in distress – Armenia and non-Armenian alike.

In September 1910, renowned intellectual Edward Khachadour Maloumyan, upon arriving in the United States, encouraged Armenian women to take a more active role in the service of the Armenian people. Thus, in a period of a few months, Maloumyan organized the existing women's groups as a cohesive nationwide society. The number of chapters grew rapidly, and by the date of its first Convention, held in May 1915, there were 33 registered chapters across the United States and Canada. It currently has affiliate entities in 26 different countries.

10. Armenian journalists in Surb Khach, Aghtamar [Armenpress, 09/23/10]

About 300 journalists, a great number of policemen, Kurds, Turks and few Armenians, the majority - Constantinople Armenians, partook in the liturgy in Surb Khach Church, Aghtamar, journalist Armen Sargsyan told today's press conference, who was in Aghtamar Island on September 19. He noted that their journalistic group was in Turkey within the frameworks of a journalistic mutual visit organized by Heinrich Boll and Hrant Dink Foundations.

Marietta Khachatryan, member of the group, journalist, said that the state and the Mother See assumed right position not attending the liturgy, and added that Turks distorted the history there, noting that Van is allegedly founded by Queen Shamiram, and Urartu has been a Kurdish state. "It is true, nothing disturbed the normal process of our work, but we were watchfully followed," Mrs. Khachatryan said, adding that the response of the Constantinople Armenians was interesting, too, who were very sorry for the absence of the cross, but could not explicitly complain of it.

"As sign of complaint of absence of cross, we organized an action, during which we walked around Aghtamar, wooden crosses in our hands," journalist Gayane Mkrtychyan said, noting that many Turkish and foreign journalists approached them and asked about the meaning of the action, and they thoroughly explained the history of Surb Khach. "Surb Khach is actually a museum and not a church, as it has distinct hours of closing and opening, and the entrance costs 3 liras, equal in nearly 700 AMD," Mrs. Mkrtychyan stressed.

"Islamized Armenians approached us quite frequently, the meeting with who was quite exciting," journalist Gayane Hakobyan said, adding that after Hrant Dink's death, revelation of many concealed Armenians started in Turkey.

11. Model OSCE Conference in Yerevan [Armenpress, 09/24/10]

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office in Yerevan will hold November 5-6 Model OSCE Conference. Gohar Avagyan, press and PR officer of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, told Armenpress that the initiative of the Model OSCE Conference represents the model of the Permanent Council. The participants of the model conference act as ambassadors of 56 OSCE member-states. They discuss fictitious scenarios on issues of 3 directions – military-political, economic and nature-preserving, human rights and democracy.

The Model OSCE Conference endeavors to involve the new generation, which is the future of the OSCE region. Gohar Avagyan says 18-25-years-old young people may partake in the conference. The deadline for applications is September 24. The selected applicants will partake in the lectures of the office and preparatory practical lessons on the following themes: the activities of the OSCE, diplomatic skills and public speaking. All the participants of the conference will be awarded with official certificates, and the best participants – with encouraging prizes. The Model OSCE Conference was first held in Armenia November 1-2, 2008 in Tsakhkadzor.

12. Digitalized information center of Francophonie to be designed in Armenia [Armenpress, 09/24/10]



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Digitalized information center of Francophonie will be designed in Armenia. The draft of the agreement to be signed between Armenia and Francophone University Agency was approved at today's governmental session.

Deputy Foreign Minister Shavarsh Kocharyan noted that the electronic versions of pedagogical materials are intended to make accessible through an information library, as well as to develop on-line courses, and to encourage scientific product in the sphere of teaching and researches, to support in its publishing and international circulation. Signing of the mentioned agreement is conditioned by change of the status of Armenia in the International Organization of Francophonie (IOF).

By the status of IOF associated member Armenia is committed to extend closer cooperation with institutional bodies of Francophonie, like the Francophone University Agency (AUF), which is a multilateral institution which supports cooperation and solidarity between francophone university institutions and encourages the development of higher education and research. AUF is a world network composed of 686 higher education and research institutions, 60 of which located in Central and Oriental Europe.

Produced by AGBU Armenian Representation

Established in 1906, AGBU (www.agbu.org) is the world's largest non-profit Armenian organization. Headquartered in New York City with an annual budget of \$36 million, AGBU preserves and promotes the Armenian identity and heritage through educational, cultural and humanitarian programs, annually touching the lives of some 400,000 Armenians on six continents.