Montreal Says *Bienvenue* to the Armenian Bar Association

Montreal--a city known for world class shopping, historical landmarks, international flair; and host of the 1976 Olympic Games--will be the site of the Armenian Bar Association’s Mid-Year Meeting the weekend of October 19-21, 2012. Anthony Bourdain recently featured Montreal in his famous The Layover Travel Show. In it, he appropriately describes Canada as a great country because of this city.

Members planning to attend will be treated to a spectacular array of receptions, tours, meetings, and lectures. The Montreal Organizing Committee, led by ArmenBar Vice Chair Harry Dikranian, has put together an excellent agenda of events for the weekend.

The Montreal Committee even tried to resolve the National Hockey League’s players lock-out in order to give members a chance to bask in the once glorious Canadiens. The ongoing labour (note the “u”) dispute means Mid-Year Meeting participants will instead focus their attention on great panels of speakers, in a first class location, in the heart of downtown Montreal.

*See Mid Year Meeting Preview, pg. 23*
On the weekend of May 18-20, 2012, the Armenian Bar Association hosted its 23rd Annual Meeting at the Glendale Hilton in Glendale, California. The weekend was highlighted by the presentation of the coveted Hrant Dink Freedom of Speech Award to Edik Baghdasaryan, Editor-in-Chief of Hetq.am, a forum for honest and investigative reporting of issues dealing with democracy and justice in Armenia.

The weekend also included the election and swearing in ceremony of the Association’s Board of Governors. Well-known and highly-respected criminal defense attorney Garo B. Ghazarian of Glendale, California was selected by unanimous vote of the entire Board as the Association’s new Chairman. In addition to his federal and state litigation-based law practice, Ghazarian also serves as Dean of the People’s College of Law in Los Angeles and as a Civil Service Commissioner for the City of Glendale. Among numerous television and radio appearances as an expert legal commentator, Ghazarian has been interviewed on Larry King Live and shared his expertise with Jane Velez-Mitchell on her program concerning current legal issues.

“I am humbled and very honored for the opportunity to serve as Chair of the Armenian Bar Association and I pledge to continue to fulfill the vision of Raffi K. Hovannisian, the founder of our organization, in assisting those in need, of helping to establish the rule of law in Armenia, and protecting the legal rights of Armenians everywhere.” said Ghazarian during a sold-out gala banquet held on May 19, 2012, at the luxurious Armenian Society of Los Angeles Banquet Hall.

Chairman Ghazarian expressed further gratitude when he stated “I wish to thank immediate Past Chair Edvin Minassian for his exemplary and tireless service of the last two years, with whom I was honored to serve as Vice-Chair of the bar the last two terms and whose insight and wisdom I will continue to seek and employ.” Ghazarian

See Glendale Annual Meeting, pg. 24
On June 2, 2012 members of the Armenian Bar Association traveled from all parts of the country to join their medical brothers and sisters for a captivating day in Atlantic City. The site was the Golden Nugget Hotel and many attendees arrived on Friday and departed on Sunday. The Armenian-American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO) began the day with a seminar covering medically current topics. This was followed by a joint luncheon in which ArmenBar and AAHPO members had the pleasure to mingle. Following lunch was the centerpiece event, a Medical Legal Update seminar presented by ArmenBar. Legal attendees, who received 3.5 CLE credits, were joined by many AAHPO members.

The legal seminar was chaired by Sonya Nersessian from Massachusetts, a former Chairperson of ArmenBar. Panelists included Michael Varadian, Executive Director, Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals. Mr. Varadian spoke of National Health Reform – Evolution and Legal Implications. Attendees' interest in this topic was evidenced by the numerous questions following the presentation. The next speaker was Edvin Minassian, an attorney specializing in workers’ compensation matters and the immediate past Chair of ArmenBar. Mr. Minassian traveled from his hometown in Los Angeles to present Workers’ Compensation Laws – Covered Illnesses and Compensation of Physicians. ArmenBar and AAHPO members alike were absorbed by the topic. Finally, ArmenBar’s newly-elected Chairman, Garo Ghazarian, delighted the crowd with his presentation, Prescription Medications and the Law. Mr. Ghazarian, who is LA-based, has represented a number of high-profile and celebrity clients, and shared a number of anecdotes to interest the audience. Garo is also the Dean and Law Professor, Peoples College of Law and Vice President of the Armenian Bar Association.
Ara Babaian recently was selected as a “Rising Star” by Super Lawyers, which is awarded to less than 2.5% of attorneys in California each year who are either 40 years old or younger or in practice for 10 years or less. He also was selected as one of the “Best LGBT Lawyers Under 40” by the National LGBT Bar Association. On July 1, 2012, Ara became the Chairman of Gay & Lesbian Elder Housing, which provides the first and only affordable housing to low-income LGBT elders, as well as social services that allow the elders to age in place. The affordable housing building, known as Triangle Square, is located in Hollywood, California, and has independent apartments for 115 tenants. The organization’s model recently received both national and international attention for its unique service model for elder housing.

Catherine Karayan has begun a two-year clerkship with the United States Tax Court in Washington, DC. In May, Catherine earned her LL.M. in Taxation from New York University, where she edited The Hotchpot and chaired the Tax LL.M. Class Gift Committee. An active member of the California State Bar, Catherine graduated from USC, Gould School of Law in May 2011, where she was a judicial extern under Hon. Zaven Sinanian, founded and was the President of the USC Art Law Society, and served as Content Editor for the Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal.

Kathryn Ossian was recently named “2012 Detroit Information Technology Lawyer of the Year” by Best Lawyers in America. Best Lawyers is an international publication which has been designating high-profile legal professionals for several years. The award is based on multiple factors, including recognition by fellow attorneys in the particular area of practice. Kathryn is a partner in the prestigious Detroit law firm of Miller, Canfield, and has been on the Armenian Bar Board of Governors since 2010.

Christine Engustian, Board Member and former and Vice-Chairperson, was recently appointed General Counsel of the Rhode Island Builder’s Association. She took over the position from her mentor, James M. Sloan, III, who served that post for 53 years. Engustian is an expert in land use and development, which makes her especially qualified for her new position. In 2008, she was appointed Judge of the Probate Court in the City of East Providence, and in 2009 became the first “Green Lawyer” in Rhode Island. She earned that designation from the US Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program.

Souren A. Israelyan, a member of Armenian Bar Association with an office in New York City specializing on representing personal injury plaintiffs, on May 30, 2012, after a month and a half long trial, took a verdict in Queens County Supreme Court in Figueroa v. HLM Electric, Ltd., et al. in the amount of $3,184,302.77.

This is Mr. Israelyan’s second million dollar verdict since he formed his own firm in 2008, and fourth case resolving over million dollars. Mr. Israelyan is a board member of New York State Trial Lawyers’ Association and a member of NYS Bar Association’s standing committee on Civil Procedure Law and Rules.

Last year, Mr. Israelyan briefed and argued one of the most important decisions at New York’s highest court concerning protections available to construction workers, resulting in the change of the existing law and expansion of protections available to workers at work sites. See Wilinski v 334 East 92nd Hous. Dev. Fund Corp., 18 N.Y.3d 1 (NY Court of Appeals 2011).
Garo Ghazarian, Esq. is the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Armenian Bar Association, which boasts members throughout the United States, Canada, Armenia, Europe, South America, Asia and beyond.

Just seven months after being unanimously appointed by the City Council of Glendale to the City’s Civil Service Commission, Commissioner Ghazarian was nominated to the position of Vice-Chair of the Commission by Commissioner John Gantus, a two-time former Chair and a 12-year member of the Commission. On June 27, 2012, Mr. Ghazarian was unanimously elected by his fellow Commissioners and assumed his post as Vice-Chair of the Commission. Also on June 27th, Art Devine, the incumbent Chair of the Commission was nominated by Commissioner Ghazarian to serve another term as Chair. Chair Devine was also confirmed by a unanimous vote of the Commissioners.

In addition to his nationwide criminal defense law practice, Mr. Ghazarian is also the Dean and a professor of law at Peoples College of Law in Los Angeles. Mr. Ghazarian has lectured extensively to law enforcement agencies and is a former guest instructor at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia. He is a board member of the Mexican American Bar Association - Political Action Committee, and serves on its Judicial Evaluations Committee. He also is a board member of The Armenian Center for National and International Studies, a research and educational institute which promotes the rule of law and civil and human rights in the Republic of Armenia.

More Members in the News

Robert Cannuscio, a past Armenian Bar Association Chairman and current Board member, has been elected President of the Philadelphia Intellectual Property Law Association (PIPLA) for the 2012-2013 year. The PIPLA was established in 1923 and is the Philadelphia region’s largest intellectual property bar association and one of the oldest intellectual property bar associations in the country. In addition of overseeing CLE meetings throughout the year, Robert will also be master of ceremonies for the PIPLA’s Judges Dinner, a gala at the National Constitution Center that draws several hundred judges, lawyers and dignitaries in the Philadelphia region. Robert is a partner in the Intellectual Property Group at Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP, and can be reached at 215-988-3303; robert.cannuscio@dbr.com
Edvin Minassian -- A Leader on Multiple Fronts

Longtime member and two-term immediate past Chairman of the Armenian Bar Association, Edvin Minassian, who currently serves on ArmenBar’s Executive Committee as Chair Ex-Officio, was recently re-elected as Chairman of the Organization of Istanbul Armenians (O.I.A.).

The O.I.A., which was created in 1976, boasts the largest membership outside of Turkey of Istanbul-originating Armenians. It is a vibrant and active organization with several functioning arms, among them its scholarship and youth committees, and many projects incorporating the civic, historical and cultural aspects of the Armenian Diaspora.

Prior and parallel to being re-elected Chairman of O.I.A., Edvin Minassian has served in all other capacities of executive leadership of the Armenian Bar Association.

The Armenian Bar Association congratulates the O.I.A. on its fine selection of its Chairman for a second consecutive term and looks forward to collaborative joint projects in service of our common goal, the maintenance and enhancement of the Armenian Diaspora’s vibrancy and vitality now and well into the future.

From Gravel to Gavel, Justice Armand Arabian’s New Book

Armand Arabian, Associate Justice of the California Supreme Court (retired) has written a new book entitled “From Gravel to Gavel.” The book chronicles Justice Arabian’s life, his impressive career on the bench, and his Armenian background. Arabian is an Honorary Member of the Armenian Bar Association and has been a frequent lecturer for ArmenBar.

Justice Arabian was raised in New York; he was the first born son of Armenian immigrants who came to America after surviving the Armenian Genocide of 1915. He received a Juris Doctor Degree in 1961 from Boston University’s School of Law and became a deputy district attorney of Los Angeles County. In 1972, Governor Ronald Reagan appointed him Justice of the Municipal Court, and then in 1973, he was appointed to the Superior Court. In 1983 he was appointed as an Associate justice of the Court of Appeal, and in 1990, Justice Arabian was appointed as the 105th associate Justice of the Supreme Court. He authored 104 majority opinions and retired in 1996.

After his career on the bench, Justice Arabian became president of ARMS Providers, Inc., which is engaged in alternative dispute resolution such as arbitration and mediation in all areas of law.

His honors are extensive. He received the St. Gregory the Illuminator Medal of Honor in 2004 by His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholics of all Armenians, and the Albert Einstein Gold Medal of Honor and the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences award in 2003.

In 2005, the Justice Armand Arabian Judicial Reception Hall was dedicated at the Constitutional Court in Yerevan, Armenia, and in 2006, the County Board of Supervisors dedicated the Justice Armand Arabian Reception Hall at the Chatsworth Superior Court Building.

“We congratulate Justice Arabian on his newest publication, which offers a window into the Arabian family and chronicles his important contributions to the judiciary in California,” said Vicken Simonian, Chairman Emeritus of the Armenian Bar Association.
Armenian Bar Association Member, Professor Anahid Gharakhanian, Appointed Vice Dean for Academic Affairs at Southwestern Law School

Professor Anahid Gharakhanian, a longtime member of the Armenian Bar Association, has been appointed as Vice Dean for Academic Affairs at Southwestern Law School on whose faculty she has served since 2002. In her new capacity, she will be in charge of the overall academic program, faculty appointments, faculty development, and Southwestern’s self-study process, and will continue to serve as Director of the Externship Program.

As a member of the faculty for more than a decade, Dean Gharakhanian has taught legal research and writing and a unique course on Correctional Education, was instrumental in the redevelopment of Southwestern’s unique Legal Analysis, Writing and Skills (LAWS) program, greatly expanded the Externship Program to be one of the largest in the country, and served as Faculty Advisor to the PLEAS part-time day program. She is also Faculty Advisor to the Armenian Law Students Association and recently spearheaded efforts to create the new Southwestern Armenia Fellowship with the Ministry of Justice in Armenia.

Garo Ghazarian, Chairman of the Armenian Bar Association, remarked, “On behalf of the Armenian Bar Association, I congratulate Professor Anahid Gharakhanian on her appointment and I applaud Southwestern Law School for her selection. Professor Gharakhanian’s contributions to the legal community and to our Association are invaluable and wide-ranging. Her mentoring of so many of our new attorney members as well as our law student members is unparalleled and has been unheralded for too long.”

Armen K. Hovannisian, Vice Chair of the Armenian Bar Association, a former colleague of Professor Gharakhanian’s at Chadbourne & Parke LLP, and the Armenian Bar’s representative to the Southwestern Armenia Fellowship with the Ministry of Justice in Armenia, added, “Anahid is so many good things all rolled into one, most certainly a wonderful model for not only the student body of Southwestern, but to all women and men who aspire to combine positive meaning and purpose with the legal profession.”

Edvin Minassian, Chairman Ex-Officio of the Armenian Bar Association, credited Professor Gharakhanian with heeding the call to service and with playing a key role in bringing to life the vision of the Armenian Bar’s commitment to the rule of law in Armenia. “We look forward to many more collaborative efforts with Southwestern and, naturally, with Dean Gharakhanian, who we wish much success in her new and deserving position at the law school.”

In announcing the appointment, Dean Austen Parrish said, “Dean Gharakhanian is a very talented and dedicated teacher and administrator, and I am delighted that she has agreed to expand her administrative role, as we have a very busy year ahead.”

Dean Gharakhanian earned her B.A., magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, in Philosophy at the University of California, Los Angeles. She completed her J.D., cum laude, at Harvard Law School and is a member of the California State Bar. Upon graduation from law school, she joined the firm of Chadbourne & Parke LLP in Los Angeles. During her six-year tenure there, she handled the pre-trial phases of a variety of civil litigation matters as well as arbitration proceedings. Subsequently, she was appointed Vice President of E-commerce Development for an online retailer. She has also served as a temporary judge in Los Angeles Superior Court’s Small Claims Court and has worked on a pro bono basis in the areas of domestic violence and other family law matters.
Garen Nazarian Selected as First Southwestern Law and Armenia Justice Ministry Fellow

Southwestern Law School, with the Armenian Bar Association as a member of the steering committee, has partnered with the Republic of Armenia’s Ministry of Justice to create an opportunity for an American-trained lawyer to spend a year working directly with the Ministry to cultivate Armenia’s legal system. The cooperation between these entities has resulted in the establishment of the Southwestern Armenia Fellowship. Attorney Garen Nazarian, a member of the Armenian Bar Association, has been selected as the first Fellow to participate in this unique program.

In September, Mr. Nazarian began serving in this year-long position in Yerevan, Armenia. Throughout the course of his Fellowship, Mr. Nazarian will work on several critical projects including: development of the new Penal Code, establishing probation in the criminal justice system, finalizing the Criminal Procedure Code and potentially developing a parole system.

With an extensive background in criminal justice, Mr. Nazarian brings the experience and expertise that is essential to effectively serve in this role. He spent seven years in the Los Angeles County Public Defender’s Office, defending a variety of cases, ranging from theft to murder. He was the lead attorney in over 30 felony and misdemeanor jury trials and conducted more than 20 juvenile trials (adjudications) before judges. He also settled hundreds of cases through negotiation.

“We are very happy to welcome Garen Nazarian as the inaugural Southwestern Armenia Fellow with the Ministry of Justice,” said Honorable Hrayr Tovmasyan, Armenia’s Minister of Justice. “His arrival is timely as it coincides with the kickoff of our country’s historic 2012-16 State Plan on Legal and Judicial Reforms, and we anticipate that he’ll play a key role in its implementation. Having our first Southwestern Armenia Fellow with such accomplished credentials, expertise and enthusiasm gives us high hopes and confidence in the far-reaching benefits to Armenia through the anticipated 5-year Fellowship.”

Southwestern Interim Dean Austen Parrish commented on Mr. Nazarian’s appointment from a pool of excellent applicants. “The enthusiastic response from a number of high-credentialed candidates to the Southwestern Armenia Fellowship position has been overwhelming,” he said. Dean Parrish explained why Mr. Nazarian is such a good fit for this unique position. “We’re thrilled that Garen Nazarian is serving as our first Southwestern Armenia Fellow. Mr. Nazarian’s years of service in the public sector, expertise in the criminal justice system, and can-do commitment to help develop the rule of law in Armenia make him an ideal representative of Southwestern half-way across the globe as well as an excellent choice for the important work of the Southwestern Armenia Fellow.”

Mr. Nazarian, who earned his J.D. degree from UCLA School of Law and his B.A. from U.C. Berkeley, said he hopes that he will have an impact on the Armenian justice system that lasts beyond the term of his Fellowship.

“In addition to the practical, I am also looking for ways to bring new ideas and approaches to the government officials, lawyers, judges, law professors, and law students who will ultimately be working toward the development of Armenia’s criminal justice system,” Mr. Nazarian said. “In the United States, the rule of law is...
The leadership of the Armenian Bar Association has been closely following the developments related to the beating-to-death in Yerevan of Dr. Vahe Avetyan, a military hospital top surgeon and Major of the Armenian Armed Forces.

We call upon the authorities entrusted with the administration of criminal justice in the Republic of Armenia to ensure that no one - with respect to whom there is credible basis or probable cause linking such a person to a crime, and especially this crime - is above the law.

All those against whom exists probable cause to suspect they are the perpetrators of the brutality resulting in Dr. Avetyan’s tragic death, and all those against whom exists probable cause to suspect that they are the accomplices, the accessories before or after the fact, or, that they are the co-conspirators of these acts, must be brought to justice and made sure to account for and answer to the people of the Republic of Armenia in a court of competent jurisdiction.

We strongly condemn all prior incidents that disregard human and civil rights of Armenia’s citizens. Those entrenched in the power structure of the Republic of Armenia should neither boldly nor brazenly behave as though the long arm of the law does not or cannot reach them.

Rule of law and respect for the law have been previously ignored by those who espouse and profit from a culture of lawlessness. Our collective complacency in the past has, in part, paved the way for the present tragedy. Armenia and its people are entitled to and deserve a social, economic, and political culture of dignity and lawfulness. Anything less is an affront to the sacrifices and integrity of all those who gave, and give, so much to maintain and enhance our homeland.

Dr. Vahe Avetyan’s death must be the last straw, both for those who flout and diminish the law, and for those who adhere to the concept of fundamental human rights without regard to the title or status that the offender may enjoy in the hierarchy of the Republic of Armenia.

It is time to resist the usurpation of power by those who wreak havoc on civilized society. We call for a fair and impartial investigation. Should such an even-handed inquiry ultimately implicate any member of the National Assembly in the death of Dr. Avetyan, then we call upon the National Assembly to act expeditiously in considering the lifting of protective or legislative immunities. The enemies of Armenia, both foreign and domestic, including reigning oligarchies that appear to operate under the notion that they enjoy absolute power and protection from justice, must be confronted.

Only then would we consider that the senseless death of Major Dr. Vahe Avetyan, a great servant of the Republic of Armenia, will not have been in vain.

Garo Ghazarian
Chairman of the Board,
ARMENIAN BAR ASSOCIATION
When two nations engage in conduct circumventing and bartering justice, as Azerbaijan and Hungary have done in the case of convicted murderer Azeri Ramil Safarov of Armenian Gurgen Markaryan, their actions speak volumes about their lack of respect for the rule of international law and principles of post-conviction extradition and prisoner transfers.

Either the government in Budapest is complicit in this blatant disregard and exploitation of international law, or itself has now been victimized and is the latest nation of a long list of nations which have been hoodwinked by the deceptiveness of the Azeri government, which continues to engage in conduct to solely advance its “Holier than Thou” narcissistic view of itself and the sense of entitlement with which it operates.

Such a mode of operation may very well be attempted by those who subscribe to behavior which disregards accepted norms of international conduct, then rationalized perhaps as diplomacy and politics. However, at its core, it is anything but diplomacy or politics.

Such conduct is perpetuating the previous victimization and murder of an innocent Armenian soldier, not on a battlefield, but on Hungarian soil and, now it seems, in an abyss of utter disrespect of the legal systems and legitimacy of nations, in this case Hungary.

President Ilham Aliyev’s pardon of the murderer Safarov is a shameful repudiation of another sovereign as well as of its people whose laws, after being violated and spat upon, have been rendered a nullity.

To add despicable insult to heinous injury, Safarov, after gloating and luxuriating in Baku’s red-carpet welcome, is being paraded around Azerbaijan as a national hero.

Such conduct is also an affront to the Republic of Armenia, its people and its government, the Armenian nation worldwide, as well as the international community, from the European Union to the United Nations.

Such conduct is no different than an ally of the United States engaging in atrocities and in the killing of innocent lives anywhere on the globe, with the United States sitting and watching idly by.

The Azeri government and its President, with the stroke of a pen, just smeared and desecrated all international documents, treaties, laws and any notion of fundamental fairness and justice. In so doing, this rogue nation declared to all civilized nations that their people, in the absence of any aggression or provocation, are above being held accountable. Azerbaijan has declared that its soldier, a convicted murderer of an innocent Armenian, like the country he is from and belongs to, is above the law.

What are the United States and Canada going to do about it? What is the European Union going to do about it? What are the United Nations and the civilized nations of the world going to do about it?

The President of the Republic of Armenia, Serge Sargsyan, has announced that its government has cut diplomatic ties with the government of Hungary. Whereas that may be fine for starters, where do we go from here? Where do Armenia and the Armenian people worldwide go from here?

Thus far only one thing is clear: justice was for sale in Hungary and the Azeri government just bought Hungarian justice. But, more importantly and far more alarmingly, the Azeri government also bought international justice, or, at the least, hijacked it.

Whether buying justice or hijacking it is worse may be debated. However, one thing which reasonable minds and nations cannot disagree upon is that the Azeris now are the proud owners of international justice, bought and paid for by the blood of an innocent Armenian.

The Armenian Bar Association condemns “Justice for Sale.”

See ArmenBar Condemns pg. 27
Armenian Bar Association Letter to President Obama regarding Safarov Extradition and Pardon

September 3, 2012
President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

Greetings to you on behalf of the Armenian Bar Association, the largest and most diverse group of Armenian-American judges, lawyers, and students who are bound together by the greatest—and often elusive—universal interest, namely justice.

Your life and career have been guided by the North Star of our times, carrying within its glow the promise of enlightenment. These two principles—enlightenment and justice—form the ligament which holds civilized men and women and civilized nations together.

The Executive Committee of the Armenian Bar Association shares your deep concern over Azeri President Ilham Aliyev’s illicit pardon of Azeri Ramil Safarov, who was convicted in Hungarian courts of axing to death an innocent Armenian, Gurgen Markaryan. The painful irony of the crime is that it occurred during a training program in Budapest under the auspices of NATO’s Partnership for Peace program.

Whereas communicating to Azerbaijan’s authorities your disappointment about the decision to pardon Safarov is welcome news to us, we hope there will be more said and more done by you about the affront to international law and fundamental notions of, simply, what is right and what is wrong.

We ask that you follow your own conscience and sense of justice which have elevated you to the highest office in our land and have led to the support of millions of Americans, including the support of countless Armenian-Americans.

Mr. Aliyev’s decision to pardon Safarov is a repudiation of your and American efforts to bring peace, reduce regional tensions and promote reconciliation.

This week, as you accept the nomination of the Democratic Party and, as anticipated, share with the nation the importance of the rule of law and, as you remind the world about the United States of America being the champion of freedom and democracy, we ask that you please take a moment to reflect on how those declarations can be reconciled with the current state of friendly relations with the regime in Azerbaijan.

We urge you to let the world see you as the brave leader for whom justice is above and for all.

Very Truly Yours,

Garo B. Ghazarian
Chairman
Board of Governors Armenian Bar Association

Edvin Minassian
Chairman, Ex-Officio
Armen K. Hovannisian
Vice-Chairman
Harry Dikranian
Vice-Chairman
Sara Bedirian
Treasurer
Hovanes Margarian
Secretary
Vicken I. Simonian
Chairman Emeritus

Join the Armenian Bar Association today!
For more information, visit www.armenianbar.com today.
The Armenian Bar Association has prepared and filed written legal arguments with the United States Supreme Court in an effort to reverse an appellate court decision in Movsesian v. Versicherung AG, which nullified a California statute allowing for the pursuit of Genocide-related life insurance recoveries. Earlier this year in the Movsesian case, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals struck down a California law which extended the statute of limitations for Genocide-era life insurance claims on the grounds that the United States’ alleged position of non-recognition trumped California’s efforts to allow for the legal redress of these insurance claims. The Armenian Bar Association urged the Supreme Court to reconsider the errant appellate decision and to allow for the enforcement of the California insurance-oriented law which pertains to an area of fundamental state sovereignty.

Joining the Armenian Bar Association on its amicus brief, which was written and assembled on a pro bono basis by a team of lawyers from the law firm of Bingham McCutchen and helmed by the Armenian Bar’s founding Chairman—the renowned David Balabanian—are the esteemed Attorneys General of the States of California, Michigan, Nevada, Rhode Island and several federal and state legislators.

Edvin Minassian, the two-term immediate past Chairman of the Armenian Bar Association, is owed a huge debt of gratitude for his wise counsel and active participation in the joint efforts to serve and protect the legal interests of the Armenian community, this time all the way to the steps and through the doors of the country’s ultimate and final tribunal. With Mr. Minassian’s sharp focus and commitment and with the compelling advocacy of Mr. Balabanian, the Armenian Bar Association has, for the first time, weighed in with the Supreme Court asking that it uphold the rights of the Armenian Genocide’s victims and their heirs.

Due to the leadership of our former Chairmen Edvin Minassian and David Balabanian, our resolve is clearly at an all time high. Claims for unpaid life insurance policies dating back to the Armenian Genocide were first brought by plaintiffs’ attorney Vartkes Yeghiayan, a Lifetime Honorary Member of the Armenian Bar Association. Attorneys who have also been representing plaintiffs include Armenian Bar members Mark Geragos and Brian Kabateck, and Lee Crawford Boyd. Igor Timofeyev of the law firm of Paul Hastings filed the original appeal on behalf of plaintiffs, urging the high court to overturn the Ninth Circuit’s en banc ruling.

Also lending support to the Supreme Court petition are our partners, the ANCA, the Zoryan Institute for Contemporary Armenian Research and Documentation, Inc., Genocide Education Project, Jewish Alliance for Law & Social Action, the Center for the Study of Law & Genocide, and the International Human Rights Clinic of the University of Southern California Gould School of Law. The ANCA, through the crucial efforts of its Legislative Director Kate Nahabetian, also an ArmenBar member, played a critical role in securing the on-the-record support of the aforementioned States Attorneys General.
Our hearts and deepest sympathies go out to our friend and colleague Judge Socrates Peter Manoukian and his family for the tragic loss, while on active duty in Afghanistan, of their son and brother, Captain Matthew Manoukian. In the service of his country and of his fellow citizens of the United States, Captain Manoukian personified the high-minded ideals and sacrifices of his ancestral Armenian heritage and devoted his life to the defense of life and liberty the world over.

Five years ago, a blast from an improvised explosive device slammed into Capt. Matt Manoukian. Even with a debilitating concussion, the Marine leader scrambled to the aid of one of his men, quickly applying a tourniquet to his leg that saved the soldier's life.

But Manoukian's bravery and resourcefulness couldn't save him this week from a surprise attack in southern Afghanistan by an insurgent disguised as an Afghan policeman.

Manoukian, the 29-year-old son of a Santa Clara County judge and state appellate court justice, and two other Marines were fatally shot after a pre-dawn meal and security meeting at a police checkpoint. It was the third attack on coalition forces by their Afghan counterparts in a week.

The meal took place before dawn because of Ramadan, the month in which Muslims abstain from food during daylight hours. Manoukian's father, Judge Socrates “Pete” Manoukian, said Friday that his son was observing the holiday out of profound respect for the people of Afghanistan and Iraq, whom he made a point to get to know during his four tours of duty.

“He was very into their culture,” the judge said. “He managed to learn Arabic and worked on opening up a school and setting up a police station and got a courthouse running with some of his people. He even taught little kids to play baseball after one of our friends sent baseballs and bats.

“Who knows, one of these days, maybe little Abdul will be the leadoff batter for the Giants because of Matt.”

Notice of Matt’s death came Thursday night with a knock on the door of the family’s Los Altos Hills home while the judge was preparing fattouch, a Lebanese salad made of pita bread. When he first opened the door, the porch light wasn’t on and all he saw in the gloom were four figures. “I thought they were Jehovah’s Witnesses,” the judge said, his voice cracking. “Then I saw the insignia and I thought, ‘Oh, this isn’t good.’ ”

Matt’s mother, Associate Justice Patricia Bamattre-Manoukian, was returning home from Southern California and couldn’t be reached for comment.

Matt Manoukian had dreamed of becoming a Marine since he was 10 years old. After making the dean’s list, he graduated from the University of Arizona in 2005 with a degree in political science. A year later, he attended officer candidate school in Quantico, Va., and then infantry school in 2007.

As a platoon commander in Iraq, he was supposed to patrol in a Humvee. But Matt didn’t want to be cut off from the locals.

“He didn’t believe in that,” his father said. “So he always walked into town with his guys and talked to little kids and shopkeepers.”
The Armenian Bar Association is proud to share this profile of dedication and duty of one of its young and inspirational members. The original article appeared in The Armenian Weekly which the Armenian Bar thanks for the opportunity to republish.

By Lilly Torosyan

“While I was preparing for my college admission exams, I had to study under the candle light in a room where my whole family slept,” recounts Yelena Nersesyan. Witnessing the collapse of the Soviet Union, Nersesyan experienced a turbulent shift in her studies—from communist laws to an independent legal system, mirroring that of the West. “While we were studying, new criminal and civil codes were adopted. It was an exciting and interesting time to study the law and witness those fundamental changes,” she tells the Weekly.

She jokes that “beautiful and confident female attorneys in Hollywood movies” were one of her inspirations for seeking a profession in law, a field where men far outnumbered women in Soviet (and newly independent) Armenia.

Although her work today mainly deals with residential and commercial real estate and business law, Nersesyan is also involved in organizations that educate adolescents about their civic and political roles in society.

This past September, the Armenian lawyer participated in the New York State Bar Association’s Law, Youth, and Citizenship Program, where attorneys volunteer to educate school children about the Constitution and the freedoms bestowed on the population. In 2004, Congress passed legislation requiring all educational institutions that receive federal funding to present a program each year on Constitution and Citizenship Day, which is celebrated annually on Sept. 17.

Nersesyan explains that “the program makes a specific emphasis on the importance of children in society and understanding their role in a representative democracy. They are made aware of the fact that all elected representatives represent each and every one of them—not only their parents. They also learn that they could send letters to their local elected representatives and their opinions really matter.” Nersesyan is hopeful that a program like this can one day be started in schools in Armenia.

“Armenia is a civil law country, based on statutory laws, while the U.S. legal system is based on the principles of common law, which are rooted in precedent. Nevertheless, in 2005, Armenia joined the trend toward a hybrid legal system, incorporating the use of case law in its judicial system to a certain degree,” she explains.

As a 20-year-old nation, Armenia has made many advancements in government, and is slowly on its way to becoming a fully integrated representative democracy, although the journey will be grueling. According to Nersesyan, “Armenia has to undergo a number of phases to increase the transparency and accountability of its elected officials”. She also emphasizes government’s ability to ensure that the current legal system enables its citizens to exercise their constitutional rights. “We have to remember that Armenia is still a relatively new nation and these changes will not come easy. But I remain confident that they will happen.”

Nersesyan considers hard work, networking, professional curiosity, and confidence the four main factors in attaining a successful career: “When I meet young Armenian students or professionals who consider moving to the U.S., whether for study or just to gain some work experience, I always share my conclusions and observations, which are based on my personal experiences. Luckily, those cold winters, the lack of electricity and heat is all behind us, and the current generation is in a better position, equipped with better tools, to plan their future,” she continues.

Nersesyan is part of entertainment lawyer Mark Geragos’s defense team for the high-profiled Medicare scandal that shook the country last year. She became acquainted with Geragos through the various Armenian social, professional, and political networks in the U.S.
SAN DIEGO, CA - Schwartz Semerdjian Ballard & Cauley, LLP is proud to announce that on August 5, 2012 at the American Bar Association (ABA) annual meeting in Chicago Illinois, partner Dick Semerdjian will be sworn in as the Chair of the ABA Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section (TIPS). Semerdjian, who specializes in civil litigation and trial practice, has completed a two year leadership track as an ABA officer with positions of Chair-Elect and Vice-Chair. Semerdjian will be the first Chair ever in the 80 year history of the ABA to practice in San Diego.

The ABA is the largest voluntary professional membership organization in the world, boasting more than 400,000 members. As the national voice of the legal profession, the ABA works to improve the administration of justice, promotes programs that assist lawyers and judges in their work, accredits law schools, provides continuing legal education and works to build public understanding around the world of the importance of the rule of law.

The ABA Tort Trial & Insurance Practice Section is a national source of expertise in tort, trial and insurance law and brings lawyers together to share information and speak out on issues of importance. The section has more than 32,000 members and 34 general committees that focus on substantive and procedural matters in areas across the broad spectrum of civil law and practice.

“It’s an honor to take this position,” states Semerdjian. “I’ve enjoyed my service to the ABA, and specifically the TIPS section, for nearly two decades. I consider this an opportunity to take my leadership to the next level.”

Semerdjian has been a dedicated member of the ABA since 1986 when he first began practicing law. In 1994, he was appointed by the State Bar of California to the ABA House of Delegates where he served for nine years and gained insight into the policy and legislative arm of the association. Today, he continues as Vice-Chair of the Business Litigation Committee – one of the most successful committees in the TIPS section.

Over the years, Semerdjian has made positive contributions to the many TIPS General and Special Standing Committees in which he’s been involved. In addition, he has served as a faculty member for the National Trial Academy in Reno, Nevada, and in 2009 and 2012, he addressed the ABA/TIPS International Law Committee in Tsinghua University and at the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade in Beijing, China, speaking on the subjects of Legal Challenges to Chinese Companies doing business in the United States and Litigation in America. He is currently a liaison for the ABA Standing Committee on Judicial Independence and ABA American Jury Project.

On a local level, he has been on the Board of Governors for the San Diego County Bar Association, President of the San Diego Barrister’s Club, on the Board of the San Diego Trial Lawyers Association (now Consumer Attorneys of San Diego), a member of the Judicial Nominations Committee for the San Diego’s Lawyers Club and acted as Chairman for the San Diego International Sports Council and Foundation (now the San Diego Sports Commission/Hall of Champions trustee) and Chair of the UCSD Athletic Board.

Respect and professional acknowledgment have been plentiful for Semerdjian throughout his career. He has been selected for inclusion in “The Best Lawyers in America” – an honor based on an extensive review by peers, including more than 2.8 million confidential evaluations by top attorneys.
Civil rights cases are often personal injury disputes in which people’s constitutional rights have been violated, Mardirossian said.

“Coming from people who have been persecuted over the centuries, I wanted to do what I could to help those in this country who have been persecuted,” said Mardirossian, who is of Armenian heritage.

In 1989, he found his calling when he ended up representing the Dole family, who were his friends, in a lawsuit against the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department stemming from charges that deputies had brutalized 36 partygoers at a wedding shower in Cerritos.

Mardirossian obtained a jury verdict and judgment of $24.8 million - the largest judgment in history against the department.

Since then, Mardirossian has tackled a number of landmark products and negligence cases with multimillion-dollar verdicts.

Currently, he is preparing for what will be the first state bellwether personal injury case to go on trial in California next year in the closely-watched Toyota unintended acceleration litigation. Toyota Motor Cases, JCCP 4621 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed March 22, 2010).

Mardirossian is representing the son and husband of Noriko Uno, who was killed in a 2009 accident when her 2006 Camry allegedly sped out of control, forcing her to turn into oncoming traffic on a one-way street in Upland.

In another emotional case, Mardirossian represents the father of a homeless, mentally ill man who died after an encounter with six Fullerton police officers.

In July, Ron Thomas, the father of Kelly Thomas, filed suit in Orange County Superior Court against the city and the officers involved. Thomas v. City of Fullerton, 30-2012-00581299 (Orange Super. Ct., filed July 5, 2012).

The lawsuit was filed on the first anniversary of Kelly Thomas’ fatal beating, which was caught on a nearby police surveillance camera.

The case has attracted attention abroad, Mardirossian said, recalling his conversation at a fast-food emporium with police who had heard about the incident.

“I was in London for the Olympics and my son and I went to McDonald’s,” Mardirossian said. “There were a couple of British bobbies there, and they were shaking their heads. They were shocked at the quick call-to-arms and beatings by American police.”

By PAT BRODERICK / Daily Journal

Join the Armenian Bar Association today! Download and fill out application available on armenianbar.com today.
As part of its continuing legal education program, the Armenian Bar Association hosted a seminar program entitled “A Survey of Immigration Issues Confronting Business Clients” on September 13, 2012, at Phoenicia Restaurant in Glendale, California. The seminar was yet another in a series of outstanding CLE programs presented by ArmenBar in recent months.

The panelists included an all-star list of immigration practitioners and was moderated by the Honorable Amy C. Hoogasian, Immigration Judge of the San Francisco Immigration Court. The speakers included Alice Yardum-Hunter, Lucy Avedissian, and Hagop Tashjian. Yardum-Hunter and Avedissian are both certified specialists in immigration and nationality law, and Tashjian is another expert in the field and a frequent lecturer at national immigration seminars.

The panelists discussed immigration issues facing business people wanting to work and live in the United States. The discussion covered the options for both immigrant and non-immigrant visas as well as the impact of criminal matters on an applicant’s visa application, such as DUI’s, domestic violence and controlled substance violations. The group used a series of hypotheticals based on real life scenarios faced by clients in the workplace. Non-immigrant visa categories included B-1, H-1, E-2, L-1, R-1, and O-1. Immigrant visa categories included EB-1, EB-2, EB-3, and EB-5.

Judge Hoogasian gave introductory remarks and provided the perspective from the bench on the issues presented. Those in attendance were able to interact with the panelists and provided a healthy array of questions on the topics discussed. ArmenBar CLE Chair Ara Babaian once again assembled a first-rate group of panelists for yet another outstanding CLE seminar. Those in attendance received 1.5 units of credit.

“Our immigration seminar was both informative and thought-provoking,” said Armenian Bar Chairman Garo Ghazarian. “I’m proud of the high quality of legal education programs that our organization presents to our members on a regular basis. The immigration seminar was no exception.”
In a little corner of Italy and in the heart of the old ethnic core of Los Angeles, the Armenian Bar Association joined the Italian American Lawyers Association (IALA) to host a debate between the top two contenders for Los Angeles County District Attorney. The special forum was organized and presented by the IALA and co-sponsored and attended by many members of the Armenian Bar.

Within the august appointments of the historic Casa Italiana Cultural Center, on September 19, 2012, the contenders—Deputy District Attorneys Alan Jackson and Jackie Lacey—faced off with each other and dug into the hot-button issues as a precursor to the upcoming run-off election on November 6, 2012.

The event was well attended by more than two hundred lawyers and judges, many of whom have become familiar with and admirers of the good work of the Armenian Bar Association. Those sentiments seem to have been shared by candidates Jackson and Lacey, both of whom during their official remarks singled out and emphasized their close relationships with the Armenian Bar.

The attendees of the forum enjoyed an evening of authentic Italian food and wine, while the tone of the affair was rife with humor and substance. Retired Federal Judge George Schiavelli, who also tipped his hat from the podium towards the Armenian Bar Association, was the moderator of the debate. After the brief introductions of the candidates, each delivered a three-minute opening statement touching on a range of issues. Then, the candidates opined, agreed and disagreed on several points, such as the need for transparency of the district attorney’s office, the three strikes legislation, immigration regulations and reform, the death penalty, and criminal appeals. The debate ended with a discussion about the problem of California’s budget crisis and both candidates expressed concern over the effect of fiscal deficits on court closures, offering their perspectives on what may be done to improve the administration of justice in the current environment.

The evening ended with the IALA raffle benefiting student scholarships and our very own board member and Chair of the Armenian Rights Watch Committee, Saro Kerkonian, was the lucky winner of the one—and only—prize gift basket.

Mr. Jackson and Ms. Lacey met with and paid close and personal attention to the Armenian Bar delegation, which included the majority of the Association’s Executive Committee as well as several current members. The evening marked a wonderful opportunity for the legal community to get a chance to meet these two candidates and hear their perspective leading up to the November 6th elections.
Armenian Bar Association Letter To The United Nations and The League Of Arab States

September 18, 2012
Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General  Nabil Elaraby, Secretary General,
United Nations      The League of Arab States
760 United Nations Plaza,    1100 17th Street, NW
New York, New York 10017    Washington, D.C. 20036
Laura Dupuy Lasserre, Human Rights Council President
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

TO: SECRETARY GENERAL - UNITED NATIONS, AND U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL
TO: SECRETARY GENERAL - LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES
TO: PRESIDENT - UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Dear Secretary General, Nation Representatives, Ambassadors, and President:

The Armenian Bar Association is the largest organized group of Armenian Diasporan attorneys, judges and law students in the world.

We bring to you as multinational bodies, and through each of you to your respective countries and citizens, the plight of the Armenians in Syria.

Our Association shares with the Republic of Armenia and all other civic, religious and humanitarian organizations, which serve the Armenian people worldwide, the memories and pain of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and the bloody ethnic purges which indelibly marked it.

It is with those historically well-documented atrocities in mind that we ask you to not allow history to repeat itself, while you, your respective multi-national collectives, your individual countries, and each of your respective governments watch—
es from afar.

With due respect, you must not allow man's inhumanity to man to occur yet again, as it did almost a century ago during the Armenian Genocide and the Great Dispossession of entire cities, towns and villages. Please join us in saying Not Again!

As the 21st century's gatekeepers of security and civilization, and as nations that have come together under the umbrella of peace, at what point might you extend that cover to provide shelter from the rainfall of rockets, shrapnel and bullets hailing onto the innocent civilians and citizens of Syria, Armenians and non-Armenians alike?

In a conflict that has claimed more than 20,000 casualties thus far and has sent hundreds of thousands more fleeing beyond Syria's borders to hoped-for safety, the Armenians in Syria, some of whom can trace their ancestors as far back to the sixth century B.C., and the bulk of those who arrived in successive waves, either as survivors of the Armenian Genocide, or later, between 1925 and 1945, fleeing persecution in Turkey and seeking refuge in Syria, now once again face uncertainty and dire consequences due to the current situation on the ground.

Unless, of course, you and your leagues of nations act, and act now. Unless you and your respective countries engage in brokering a ceasefire and bringing about lasting peace to the people of Syria.

Armenians, wherever they have resided in Arab lands, or in countries spanning the four corners of the globe, have always been loyalists to their host countries and to their adopted homelands. Syrian Armenians are no exception to this positive subscription and good citizenry.

The Syrian Armenians, and indeed all of the people in Syria, deserve the peace and security which your charters, constitutions, and consciences charge you with helping attain and preserve.

The Armenian Bar Association looks to each of you and your respective nations to deliver on that promise and to replenish the certainty of life and future to Syria and its citizens, including the Syrian-Armenians.

Sincerely,

Garo B. Ghazarian - President & Chairman Armenian Bar Association
Edwin Minassian - Past President & Chairman Ex-Officio
Armen K. Hovannisian - Past President & Vice-Chairman
Harry Dikranian - Vice-Chairman
Sara Bedirian - Treasurer
Hovanes Margarian - Secretary
Vicken I. Simonian - Past President & Chairman Emeritus
The Armenian Bar Association Welcomes The U.S. Supreme Court’s Request For Further Briefing In The Movsesian Case

In response to a group of Armenian-American claimants’ appeal to the United States Supreme Court in the Movsesian matter, which dealt with the issue of a state’s (California’s) right to enact legislation concerning the pursuit of Genocide-era life insurance proceeds, the Supreme Court has ordered the Solicitor General to file a brief expressing the views of the United States as to whether the Court should grant review of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals’ troubling decision that states may have no such rights.

The Armenian Bar Association, through the auspices of the Bingham firm and its senior partner David Balabanian, had filed amicus briefs in the underlying federal appellate proceedings making the case that the relevant state legislation did not conflict with federal law or policy. The Supreme Court’s order is of considerable significance since one of the issues in the case is whether the federal government has a policy about states recognizing the Armenian Genocide and, if so, what the policy is.

Edvin Minassian, the Armenian Bar Association’s Chairman Ex-Officio, remarked: “We are encouraged that the Supreme Court has asked that the Solicitor General weigh in on the issue, with the hope that Solicitor General will not disavow, and instead outright accept, the Genocide’s reality and its prior recognition by the federal government, both of which have been amply documented. In doing so, the Supreme Court will be in a position to evince the constitutionality of state legislation in an area of law (insurance) which has traditionally been within the purview of states’ rights.”

Minassian cautioned that much work lies ahead to ensure that the Armenian Genocide is not politicized so as to be manipulated as an excuse by Genocide denialists to inappropriately undermine the legitimacy and constitutionality of state legislation. “Those who politicize the Armenian Genocide for nefarious purposes shall not deter us in the Movsesian case and beyond,” said the former two-term Chairman of the Armenian Bar.

Captain Manoukian

Continued from pg. 13

Matt was checking out an abandoned building in 2007 in hopes of opening a substation there when the IED went off. He received a Purple Heart, just one of several commendations over the years.

He joined Camp Pendleton’s 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion after enduring a grueling training program that only 40 of 100 men passed, his father said. Matt was in the top five. Among other tests of fortitude, the men had to stay awake for four days.

After seven years of service, Matt was looking forward to leaving the Marines at the end of the year. He was planning to attend law school in the fall of 2013, possibly at Golden Gate University where he’d already been accepted.

He wanted to be a public defender, his father said.

“Matt said he wanted to be one because he was always accused in school of something he didn’t do,” Judge Manoukian said.

His father said he definitely had the chops, recalling how his son stood up to him once after returning home with a detention slip. A teacher had told Matt to throw away his soda. Matt had capped the bottle and complied. But then he had a friend retrieve it and was drinking it again when he ran back into the teacher, who was livid.

So was his father, who as a judge is accustomed to having the last word. But Matt deftly argued his case by bringing up his grandfather, who had nearly starved to death as a victim of the Turkish genocide of Armenians. His grandfather wouldn’t approve of wasting food, even soda, Matt insisted, disarming his dad.

He displayed that same pluck in combat, winning a reputation in special ops as “just fearless,” his father said.

To his younger brothers, Martin and Michael, the tall handsome Marine was their hero.

“Matt was the man,” Martin said. “Everybody looked up to him.”

Arrangements for services will be announced at a later time.

By Tracey Kaplan / Mercury News

Posted: 08/11/2012 10:26:57 AM PDT
The Armenian Bar Association has announced the names of two deserving students in connection with its Seventh Annual Scholarship Program. The recipients are Lena Melkonian, currently a third-year student at Glendale University College of Law’s four-year evening program, and Ani Kocharyan, an Armenian national now pursuing the Master of Laws (LLM) at Columbia University Law School. The Scholarship Program is designed to support meritorious students of Armenian descent attending, or accepted for admission to, an approved law school in the United States, Armenia or elsewhere. Recipients must demonstrate an outstanding academic record as well as a strong commitment to the Armenian community, particularly in humanitarian and/or law-related endeavors.

Lena Melkonian has spent the better part of the past three decades in legal work. Starting out as a receptionist in a legal office in 1983, she progressed over the years to positions of increasing responsibility. For the past two decades she has served as a paralegal in the offices of Los Angeles attorney Daniel V. Behesnilian. As Ms. Melkonian describes it, she had long wanted to pursue a legal career, but family priorities put those aspirations on hold for many years. However, at the behest (and with the encouragement) of John Marshall Law School professor Ann Lousin, Ms. Melkonian returned to academia, completing her undergraduate classroom requirements at Los Angeles Valley College and then receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Ms. Melkonian has been an active promoter of Armenian cultural and national interests, both in Armenia and the United States. For more than ten years, she has been a board member of the Visit Armenia, It Is Beautiful campaign, an effort with the purpose of both encouraging tourism in Armenia and advising local governments on the best measures to foster that economic sector. At a more personal level, she has sponsored youngsters whose family lives have been disrupted. One of the beneficiaries of her support, Stepan (whose father died while fighting against Armenia’s national enemies), was able to complete his formal education and is now practicing law. Her more immediate interests include participation in the Rose and Alex Pilibos PTA, the Burbank chapter of the Armenian Cultural Association, and as a lead actress in Armenian theatre productions.

Ani Kocharyan grew up in post-Soviet Armenia. Reacting on a personal level to the regional chaos threatening Armenia during the first years of independence, she chose to specialize in international law during her university years. Upon completion of university studies, Ms. Kocharyan entered government service, with duties of ever-increasing responsibility. These included preparing documentation for Armenia’s formal participation in more than 80 multi-lateral treaties, representing Armenia at the Council of Europe’s Committee of Experts in Public International Law, and preparing and implementing national programs for the promo-

See Scholarship Awards pg. 26
Armenian Bar Leaders Meet with Ambassador Edward Djerejian

On October 5, 2012, Armenian Bar Association Chairman Garo Ghazarian and Chairman Ex-Officio Edvin Minassian, accompanied by Armenian Rights Watch Committee Chair Saro Kerkonian, personally met with the Honorable Edward P. Djerejian, the former United States Ambassador to Israel and to the Republic of Syria. The meeting took place on the occasion of Ambassador Djerejian’s lecture entitled the “The Arab Awakening, The Turkish Role in the Region, and the Future of Armenians in the Middle East.”

Ghazarian, Minassian and Kerkonian had an opportunity to confer privately with Ambassador Djerejian on the crisis facing the Armenians of Syria, discussed the recent actions taken by the Armenian Bar Association to address the urgency of the situation, and engaged Ambassador Djerejian in a discussion on other means by which the Association could render assistance. The Ambassador congratulated the Armenian Bar for addressing its recent letters to multi-national world bodies (United Nations, League of Arab States and U.N. Human Rights Council) and emphasized the appropriateness of selecting the specific recipients of the letters, as well as the inclusive remarks expressing concern for the safety of Syria’s citizens, Armenians and non-Armenians alike, which Mr. Djerejian found to be very commendable.

The lecture took place at the AGBU Vatche & Tamar Manoukian Center in Pasadena, California, with a standing-room only audience in attendance, and was hosted by the AGBU Asbeds organization.

From left to right, Edvin Minassian, Ambassador Edward Djerejian and Garo Ghazarian

Armenian Bar Executives Meet With Armenia’s Foreign Minister

A rmenian Bar Association Chairman Ex-Officio Edvin Minassian and current Chairman Garo Ghazarian attended a private luncheon on September 25, 2012, with the Republic of Armenia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Edward Nalbandian, within the stately and impressive building of the Consulate of the Republic of Armenia in Glendale, California. The intimate lunch was hosted by Armenia’s Consul General, the Honorable Grigor Hovhannisyan.

During the luncheon, the Armenian Bar Association posed the question of the plight of the Syrian Armenians and invited Mr. Nalbandian to share with those present Armenia’s efforts and commitment to advocacy and action before world inter-governmental and collective organizations, the United Nations, the League of Arab States and others. Inquiry was also made as to Armenia’s open-door policy and assistance being provided to those Armenians of Syria who seek temporary refuge in Armenia.

The Foreign Minister assured those gathered of Armenia’s continuing efforts and full commitment to not only the Armenians of Syria, but also to our Compatriot Armenians in the Middle East and indeed to all Armenians, wherever they may be and on all fronts.

In response to questions on other matters of concern by various other guests, Mr. Nalbandian provided a rare and insightful look into the workings of Armenia’s Foreign Ministry and into its foreign policy, both in the region and globally.
Hotel reservations can be made at the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth at the deeply discounted Armenian Bar rate of $159.00 Canadian per night. You can book by calling (800) 257-7544.

The week-end activities are lined up as follows: Friday, October 19, from 4:30 p.m.-6:00 p.m. there will be a Board of Governors meeting at the Queen Elizabeth, then from 6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m. there will be a warm welcoming reception at City Hall in Old Montreal. As guests of the President of City Council Harout Chitilian, Armenian Bar conference attendees will enjoy a sumptuous cocktail get-together, with wonderful music, in the heart of Old Montreal, a mere 15 to 20 minute walk from the hotel.

On Saturday, October 20, 2012, conference registration and continental breakfast will be served in the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth’s Mackenzie Room. In the first lecture of the conference, three partners and leaders in their fields offer the following CLE presentation: “Current Issues Facing Social Media and the Law.”

Eloïse Gratton of McMillan will focus on employee liability for postings and comments on blogs or twitter and how to develop policies with a comparative approach between Canada and the United States. Seti Hamalian of Lapointe Rosenstein Marchand Melançon will discuss licensing practices and the effect of social media in the online world. Board member Kathryn Ossian of Miller Canfield will discuss online brand hijacking and will provide concrete examples of how such matters have been dealt with in the courts.

Another lecture will be presented, entitled “Introducing the Armenian Story to the World Using the Written Word: Fiction and Non-Fiction.” Acclaimed best selling authors speaking together for the first time, Margaret Ahnert and Dr. Agop Hacikyan, will each discuss their recent works and their efforts to bring about Genocide awareness to non-Armenian readers.

An interesting luncheon presentation will be “Armenian Contributions to North America through Patents and their Inventors.” Acclaimed California and Armenia television personality, author and music producer Stepan Partamian will discuss the significant inventions by Armenians in North America, featured in his two book series “Yes We Have” and “Yes We Have Too.” Stepan will also provide anecdotal information on the inventions, the patents and the lives of truly exceptional Armenians.

The organizing committee has also set up an optional city tour, following the luncheon. Participants will be treated to an extensive tour of the city and its many treasures. After the tour, members are free to spend time among the city’s museums, shopping venues, and, of course, the charm of Old Montreal.

Members will also have the opportunity to participate in a group dinner at the famed Altitude 737. Atop the premiere high-rise Place Ville Marie, across the street from the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Altitude 737 was modeled on the Windows of World bar and restaurant of the World Trade Center in New York. Attendees will enjoy a spectacular dinner and the best views of the city available in a very popular Montreal destination.
also noted the continued service on the Board of Governors of Minassian’s predecessor Chair, Sonya Nersessian, and vowed to build upon the legacy of these two exceptional past chairs and their service to the bar and the Armenian communities of the world and to Armenia these past four years. Ghazarian concluded his remarks by stating that “Each of the 17 board members is capable of leading the Armenian Bar, and though I may be the face of the bar during my tenure as Chair, the leaders of the bar remain, as they always have been, each one of my fellow colleagues and friends on the Board of Governors.”

Joining Garo Ghazarian on the Executive Committee of the board are Vice-Chair (West Coast) Armen K. Hovannisian of Los Angeles, California, Vice-Chair (East Coast) Harry Dickranian of Montreal, Canada, Treasurer Sara Bedirian of Beverly Hills, California, and Secretary Hovanes Margarian of Sherman Oaks, CA. Outgoing Chair Edvin Minassian will continue to serve the Executive Committee of the board as its Chair Ex-Officio. Minassian said, “I look forward to working closely with Garo Ghazarian in the coming year and keeping the momentum which the Armenian Bar Association has realized in recent years, growing ever stronger under Garo’s leadership.”

The general membership in attendance at the conference also filled five vacancies on the board by voting in favor of the following long-standing members: The Honorable Judge Amy Hoogasian (U.S. Immigration Judge, San Francisco), Assistant United States Attorney John Lulejian (Los Angeles), Hovanes Margarian (Sherman Oaks), Sonya Nersessian (Boston) and Saro Kerkonian (Glendale). The remaining current members of the board—Christine Engustian (Providence), Michael Amerian (Los Angeles), Robert Cannuscio (Philadelphia), Gary Moomjian (New York), Katherine Ossian (Detroit) and Laura Karabulut (Toronto)—joined Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Zaven Sinanian on the banquet podium where Judge Sinanian administered their oaths of office. Vicken I. Simonian also serves on the Board of Governors in his capacity as Chairman Emeritus.

The weekend conference also featured presentations concerning civil, environmental and human rights issues in the Republic of Armenia, moderated by Antranig Kasbarian of the Tufenkian Foundation, and included investigative journalist Edik Baghdasaryan of Hetq.am, Ursula Kazarian, Founder and President of Armenian Environmental Network, and Sara Anjargolian, an attorney and documentarian from Los Angeles, California, who has spent many years in Armenia advocating for the advancement of civil and human rights.

Walter Karabian, one of the founding members of the Armenian Bar Association and the youngest Speaker ever in the history of the California State Assembly, was honored by the Association as an Honorary Life Member, an honor bestowed on only a select few who have achieved the highest levels of achievement in the legal field such as Governor George Deukmejian, California Supreme and Appellate Court Justices Marvin Baxter, Armand Arabian and Chuck Poochigian, and Association Founder Raffi K. Hovannisian, to name a few.

The afternoon sessions of the conference saw one of America’s most prominent attorneys, David M. Balabanian of Bingham, McCutcheon, and Kate Nahabetian, an attorney with the Armenian National Committee in Washington, D.C., discuss the history and potential implications of the United States Court of Appeals’ Genocide-related decision in the case of Movsesian v. Versicherung.

See Glendale Annual Meeting pg. 28
As a prelude to what has become an unprecedented level of engagement in issues concerning the Armenian community, on the first full day of their tenures, on May 20, 2012—the day that the Armenian Bar Association’s 23rd Annual Meeting concluded—Chairman Ex Officio and Chairman, Edvin Minassian and Garo Ghazarian, respectively and jointly, appeared on the Armenian National Committee of America’s Annual Telethon. In front of a world-wide audience, they spoke of the Armenian Bar Association’s efforts and commitment towards fulfilling its mission of addressing Armenian issues and assisting the Armenian Cause, wherever the need may arise.

At the conclusion of the televised interview, Minassian and Ghazarian pledged the sum of $3,000.00 on behalf of themselves, in their individual capacities, and on behalf of Chairman Emeritus Vicken Simonian.

In pursuit of their pledge to assist the Armenian Cause through the work of the Armenian Bar Association, Chairman Ghazarian and Chairman Ex-Officio Minassian have embarked on a campaign where virtually everyday they are meeting face-to-face, by email or by telephone with nearly every Armenian community organization to determine the needs of the community and develop effective means by which the Armenian Bar Association can bring to bear the expertise of its global membership. The event with the ANCA on the first day at the helm of the Armenian Bar Association was the first example, but certainly has not been the last, of ArmenBar’s outreach to the community.

Under the leadership of Ghazarian and Minassian, the Executive Committee of ArmenBar will continue its active involvement in the pursuit of justice and protection of the legal rights of the Armenian communities of the world.

In ArmenBar and AAHPO in Atlantic City

Chair of the Glendale Civil Service Commission.

Immediately following the seminar, attendees walked down the hall to a joint wine and cheese reception. The light-spirited and well-attended reception became another excellent opportunity for ArmenBar and AAHPO members to bond. Following a short rest period, a large group of ArmenBar members joined in an impromptu dinner in one of the Golden Nugget restaurants. Members concurred that the day was a complete success. Additional events to be held in the greater New York Metropolitan area are currently in planning stages.

Special thanks go to Denise Darmanian, Talar Iskanian-Hashasian and Gary Moomjian of New York and Jacklin Boyadjian and Lisa Boyadjian of California for their hard work in making this event possible.
Scholarship Awards
continued from pg.21

in the United States. And in San Diego, he was named as semi-finalist for top Civil Litigator in San Diego County by the San Diego Transcript. The Transcript also recognized him in 2006 and 2008 as a Top Influential and in 2006 as one of the Ten Best Attorneys in San Diego. San Diego Magazine regularly names Semerdjian as one of the Top Attorneys in San Diego County in the area of Labor and Employment Law. He is recognized yearly as a Super Lawyer in the area of Business Litigation.

Semerdjian says he is excited to continue his leadership commitment to TIPS: “I thoroughly enjoy helping to shape policy for our profession. And in my experience with TIPS, I have met excellent attorneys and judges throughout the country and our clients know that our firm’s reputation extends far beyond San Diego County and that judges and attorneys throughout the country recognize our name and accomplishments. I am likewise very honored to become the Chair during the 80th year anniversary of ABA TIPS.” Semerdjian’s theme as Chair will focus on “relevance, professionalism, civility and excellence in the profession of law”. All of the year programs and continuing education seminars will focus around this theme and has collaborate with the ABA Judicial Division to have a joint meeting in Washington DC in the spring of 2013.

“We are excited and proud of our founding partner Dick Semerdjian as he enters into this key leadership role for our profession” said Ross Schwartz, managing partner of the firm. “Dick has always been involved with community and professional organizations and has instilled to our lawyers the importance in giving back to our community and profession. We take great pride that each of the attorneys at our firm is dedicated to this cause.”

Schwartz Semerdjian Ballard & Cauley LLP, located in downtown San Diego, has served its clients since 1998. The firm and all of it’s attorneys will be celebrating it’s 15th year anniversary of service to it’s clients and the profession of law by attending Semerdjian’s swearing-in ceremony in Chicago. “We have two wonderful things to celebrate this August: Dick’s swearing in as Chair of ABA/TIPS and our 15th anniversary of providing exemplary legal services to our clients in a spectrum of specialized areas, throughout California and the United States”, said Schwartz. “We are going to have a wonderful time in Chicago with a lot to celebrate and be very proud of.”

Schwartz Semerdjian is a member of Legus – an association of law firms world-wide, which focuses on legal and educational programming to improve the quality of legal performance.

Join the Armenian Bar Association today!
For more information, visit www.armenianbar.com today.
Conference and Banquet in May 2012, still echo in our minds, vibrate in our hearts, and reverberate in our souls: “The Armenian Bar Association has certainly found its soul.”

The foregoing reflection is more than mere words by a great Armenian-American lawyer. It is an assessment by our first Chairman of the great strides we have made, led by the tireless efforts of my predecessor, our Chairman Ex-Officio, Edvin Minassian. But we have much more work ahead than behind us. Noble causes in advancing the rule of law in Armenia, from respect for human and civil rights, the protection of the environment, to the entitlement to fair and transparent elections, still beckon.

That which has been accomplished by previous Chairs, Boards, and many members and supporters who make up the Armenian Bar Association family, is ours not only to preserve and maintain, but also to expand and advance. Our task is to achieve progress with an aim towards perfection of the rule of law in all of its forms, forums and shades, both in the Diaspora and in Armenia.

As the incoming Chairman, I have been asked whether I have the requisite time to take on the primary leadership role of this organization. My answer is a simple “Yes.” I say so because the Armenian Bar has some of the best, brightest, and most committed Board members and officers guiding the way. Each member of the Board and of our committees dedicates countless hours organizing and volunteering at legal clinics, conferences, continuing education, and pro bono programs. I believe that each member of the Board is a leader in our community and that, by working together, we will add another successful chapter to our proud and rewarding history.

We have come far and we are ready to go farther still. Our efforts are but a small sacrifice to achieve our dreams and those of our parents and our ancestors. Starting in July of 2012 and in future months, as Chairman of the Armenian Bar, I will embark on a journey to the various Armenian communities, to meet with organizational and civic leaders and to discuss the ways in which our Association may be of service.

We will speak for people who cannot speak for themselves. We will strive to make our voice travel farther and more effectively than it has before. The way to accomplish our mission of protecting the rights of Armenians, wherever they may be, requires us to adhere to the following principle: To reach the destination of any journey we undertake, we must not hold back on our resources. If we are to continue to stand for ourselves and others, we must be prepared to stand solitary and resolute like a tree; and, if we are to fall or falter along the way, we must be ready to spring up again as one Association, united, to work again for those too weak or too meek to fend themselves.

Join us in maintaining the honor and integrity of the legal profession, wherever each of us calls home; to promote and maintain the rule of law in Armenia; to further equal opportunity and justice for our communities; to advance and preserve the integrity of the lawyers and the judiciary in Armenia; and to promote the legal education and general understanding of the legal system through pro bono clinics and town hall meetings, one community after another.

To accomplish these objectives, I challenge each of us, including myself, to create an environment of dialog and to enhance the relationship between the Armenian Bar Association and the churches, schools and including but not limited to all cultural and professional groups, based on mutual respect and understanding and on common cause. Historically, there has been a manipulation in certain parts of the world of what justice is and who is entitled to receive it. Justice and equality have been hard fought for by our ancestors, and they continue to be hard fought for by Armenians to this day. As educated and empowered people with the ability to make change, it is our responsibility to advocate for the deliverance of justice in tangible ways to those for whom these promises have yet to be realized.

I am excited to work with a dynamic group of individuals who comprise our officers and board members and am confident that, with their considerable talents and dedication, and with the support of our members, we will achieve our goals.

Please join us in opening doors and building bridges, as we continue championing fundamental rights for the ones who need and deserve them most.

Warmest Regards,
Garo B. Ghazarian,
Chairman,
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We hold the seller, Hungary, the buyer, Azerbaijan, and all other nations which sit silently, accountable for the rapid deterioration of the integrity, the honor, and the fundamental notions of accountability upon which international law and justice are based.

Garo Ghazarian
Chairman,
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Harut Sassounian, the Editor-in-Chief of the California Courier, whose editorials are reprinted in over 200 newspapers, journals and periodicals worldwide, presented his dynamic proposal on the formation of a democratically-elected representative body that would be a cross-section of every aspect of diasporan Armenian society, organizations and religious denominations. The elected body would then make decisions and represent the interests of the entire diaspora before international political and legal forums, such as the United Nations and the World Court.

The final panel of the day provided a personal, insightful look at the recent parliamentary elections that took place in the Republic of Armenia on May 6, 2012. The panel featured Edik Baghdasaryan and ArmenBar Chair Garo Ghazarian. Both were present in Yerevan and traveled to the Armenian countryside to monitor and observe the election process. The presentation took a critical look at Armenia’s electoral process and noted irregularities that continue to persist, recognized some improvements over previous elections, and suggested remedies which would possibly bring about positive change in the areas of the electoral process which fail to meet international and local norms for free and fair elections.

On the evening of May 19, 2012, with ArmenBar Treasurer, Sara Bedirian, serving as the graceful and eloquent Mistress of Ceremonies, nearly 300 members, guests and family were treated to keynote speeches from Eric Garcetti, current member and former president of the Los Angeles City Council, Carmen Trutanich, the City Attorney for the City of Los Angeles, and the Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, His Eminence Hovnan Derderian, and Archbishop of the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, His Eminence Moushegh Marderosian. Association members were also recognized for their pro bono efforts during the year.

The weekend closed with a meeting of the Board of Governors, on Sunday, May 20, where the Association’s goals and agenda were set and plans were made for the Association’s Mid-Year meeting in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, the weekend of October 19-20, 2012.
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☐ Computer ☐ Immigration ☐ Taxation
☐ Construction ☐ Insurance ☐ Personal Injury
☐ Corporate ☐ Intellectual Property ☐ Social Security
☐ Criminal - Defense ☐ International ☐ Trust, Probate & Estate Planning
☐ Criminal - Prosecution ☐ Judge ☐ Workers' Compensation

Type of Practice - Limit 1 - Please Circle - Law Firm - Government - In-House
AIMS AND STRUCTURE

The Armenian Bar Association is a non-profit, non-partisan organization, formed in 1989 to enable attorneys of Armenian heritage to better serve the law, the legal profession, and the Armenian community.

The Association provides pro bono services and legal education in Armenian communities across the country and sponsors programs to promote democracy and the rule of law in the Republic of Armenia.

Coming together socially and professionally, members from around the world have the opportunity to learn from one another as they join their different backgrounds and experiences in Association activities.

The Association is a democratic organization. It is supported and directed by its members, who approve its bylaws, elect its Board of Governors, nominate prominent jurists as honorary members, and set the Association’s annual goals and policies.

The Armenian Bar Association is committed to serving the profession of law, addressing the legal concerns of the Armenian community and fostering respect for human and civil rights.

ACTIVITIES AND BENEFITS

Some of the Association’s operations include:

- Worldwide Network of Attorneys
- Continuing Legal Education, Seminars & Workshops
- Pro Bono Program
- Rule of Law Projects in the Republic of Armenia
- Armenian Rights Watch
- Annual National Meeting
- Newsletter
- Membership Directory
- Amicus Curiae Submission on Issues of Interest
- Topical and Regional Practice Groups
- Cooperation with other bar associations and lawyers’ societies

The Armenian Bar Association Newsletter is published periodically by the Armenian Bar Association. Members and friends of the Association receive a subscription to the Newsletter as part of their membership. Opinions expressed in the Newsletter are those of the authors of the articles and/or the editors of the Newsletter and do not necessarily represent the views of the Armenian Bar Association.

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