New York City To Host Annual National Meeting

The Armenian Bar Association is delighted to announce that it will hold its 25th Annual Meeting in New York City from May 30 to June 1, 2014. The meeting will feature a variety of CLE panels and a special Friday evening reception and Saturday luncheon. The annual meeting of the Armenian Bar Association, which includes lawyers of Armenian origin throughout the United States, Canada and worldwide, will bring together practitioners from a variety of backgrounds to discuss issues of mutual interest and to select leadership for the upcoming year.

“We are excited to feature a top-notch lineup of speakers for this historic assembly of the Armenian Bar Association, celebrating our 25 years as an organization dedicated to promoting the interests of the Armenian legal community,” said Garo Ghazarian, Chairman of the Board of Governors.

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**New York City Annual Meeting**
(continued from page 1)

“We invite Armenian lawyers to make the time to attend this meeting, and deepen their involvement with the important work of our Association.”

The meeting will include three CLE panels on Saturday, May 31, including Ethics in Social Media, to be presented by Stacy K. Marcus, a partner in the international law firm of Reed Smith. The session will review current developments in the law and regulations that apply to advertising and marketing and focus on the new world of digital technology, social media and mobile marketing. Of the two anticipated CLE credits, one will be for Ethics.

A second session will feature Mark L. Movsesian, Frederick A. Whitney Professor of Law and Director, Center for Law and Religion, St. John’s University School of Law, on the topic of “Human Rights Concerns in the Middle East,” focusing on the Christian population of the Middle East.

The third CLE session, “Ongoing Legal Efforts and Challenges to Preserve Armenian Antiquities and Cultural Property,” will be moderated by Mark A. Momjian, a prominent family lawyer and partner of Momjian Anderer, LLC, and include panelists Claire S. Kedeshian, Assistant U.S. Attorney, Eastern District of New York; Anahid M. Ugurlayan, Senior Staff Attorney, National Advertising Division of the Council of Better Business Bureaus; and Yelena Ambartsumian, Law Clerk at Shaub, Ahumty, Citrin & Spratt LLP. The panel will cover international law conventions relating to the protection of cultural property, as well as federal and state laws and relevant case law on the recovery of antiquities.

The Saturday keynote luncheon, to be held at the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, will feature Kenneth Roth, the Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, a leading global human rights research and advocacy group, to describe human rights issues of interest to the Armenian legal community.

The meeting will kick off with a cocktail reception on Friday, May 30 at the Tufenkian Artisan Carpet New York Showroom. The Board will hold its annual business meeting at the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations.

The New York City Armenian Bar Association organizing committee is also organizing a tour of the Court of International Trade and a visit to downtown Manhattan to be held earlier on Friday.

“We promise to deliver a meeting with just the right balance of information, ideas, education and networking,” said Gary T. Moomjian, a New York based Board member and former Chair of the Armenian Bar Association. “This event will be well worth the time of the many lawyers that we expect will be attending.”

Accommodations for the annual meeting will be at the Roosevelt Hotel, where the organization has negotiated a special rate of $249 per night for bookings by May 15, 2014, with reference to the Armenian Bar Conference special rate, available at (888) 833-3969 or [https://www.reservations-page.com/C00268/H01416/be.ashx?pc=CAR](https://www.reservations-page.com/C00268/H01416/be.ashx?pc=CAR).

**For more information, please contact:**
Gary Moomjian at gmoomjian@mwcllp.com; Denise Darmanian at nyfed@aol.com or Lisa Boyadjian at lisa@armenianbar.com
Moving forward and rising high into its 25th anniversary, the Armenian Bar Association has taken its place among the most impressive and influential organizations of our diaspora—a visionary platform as much as it is a network of the finest attorneys, judges, and legal scholars in the United States.

It was not always so. What we started with, in 1989, was a stack of lawyer directories on a kitchen table and a simple mission: to find buried among them some names ending in "-ian" and "-yan." It seemed, at that time, an end in itself to bring these Armenian attorneys together.

That the Armenian Bar Association has become, since then, much more than that—occupying its rightful position alongside the major institutions of American jurisprudence—is a testament to the generations of members who brought their passion, experience, and imagination to our mission.

I am proud, on this occasion, to salute their and your service to community, country, and the law.

My own ideas of service have long ago brought me to the other side of the world. In our country Armenia, I have had the privilege to stand and deliver: in power, in opposition, but always, I hope, in defense of the principles that once brought a group of young lawyers to a kitchen table twenty-five years ago.

As I continue to do the only thing I know how, I am inspired—and empowered—by your dedication, your ambition, and your faith.
IN THE WORDS OF FORMER CHAIRPERSONS OF THE ARmenian Bar Association

The Armenian Bar Association’s Chairman Emeritus

“I am so proud of the accomplishments of the Armenian Bar Association during our 25 years of service to the community. Our founder, the Honorable Raffi K. Hovannisian, had a great vision for what a group of Armenian judges, lawyers and law students could accomplish if we put our minds together.

Amazingly, we have reached out to, and assisted, thousands of members of the Armenian community. We have provided top level legal seminars, given scholarships to worthy Armenian law students, have participated in defending the worldwide acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide and much more.

Our great resource has been the willingness of our members to donate their valuable time for the sole purpose of making a positive difference. I am honored to have helped lead the efforts of this incredible group.”

The Armenian Bar Association’s First Chairman

“Many of the greatest challenges facing the Diaspora and the Armenian Republic are legal in nature. Thanks to its steady gains in membership and respect, the Armenian Bar Association can play a meaningful role in addressing them.”

Vicken I. Simonian
Glendale, CA

David Balabanian
San Francisco, CA
“The story of the Armenian Bar Association harkens to the better-known legend of Horatio Alger, starting with their common roots in humble settings and culminating in their ultimate rise through hard work, determination, and courage. Unlike Mr. Alger’s successes, the riches which our organization has earned cannot be registered on a bank ledger and do not line our pockets. Instead, our wealth—and the Armenianized version of the American Dream—is better measured by the diversity and commitment of our hundreds of wonderful members who have combined their extraordinary legal backgrounds to advance the causes of professional and public education, and the protection of civil and human rights of Armenian communities throughout the world.

I will leave it to the fine writers and readers of the words on these pages to take stock of the Armenian Bar Association’s long record of meaningful accomplishments, of the many goals that we reached and of some which we have the humility to say that we came up short. On a personal note, a quick look at our first Newsletter in 1989 (available on our website) makes it abundantly clear that the Armenian Bar Association has aged a lot more gracefully than I have during our 25-year relationship. Its beauty and its essence, with the many passing years, have only grown and deepened.”

“On this 25th anniversary of the association, as one of the founding members, alongside our leader and founder Raffi K. Hovannisian, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate all those who had a role in the past quarter century. I have personally witnessed the association’s development as a vital and necessary legal advocate of Armenian interests throughout the world.

Today’s chair and leader, Garo B. Ghazarian and his immediate predecessor, Edvin E. Minassian, have made the association more prominent in civic affairs and highly proactive in our nation’s quest for justice. They should be thanked for their tireless service to our nation. Yours truly, Judge Zaven V. Sinanian, past chair, 2002.”
“The Armenian Bar Association plays a unique and very important role in the Armenian community nation-wide. Its law-related community outreach in the U.S. and its dedication to promoting democracy and the rule of law in Armenia are unmatched by any other organization. It connects lawyers of Armenian heritage in the U.S., Canada, Armenia, and throughout the world in friendship and a common mission of service. It even provides some unexpected benefits, like affording me the opportunity to meet my wife Genya during our 1997 Mid-year Meeting in Yerevan.”

James Derian
Detroit, MI

“The Armenian Bar Association (hereinafter “ArmenBar”) has been part of my life since I attended the mid-year meeting in Detroit, MI, on Saturday, September 20, 1991. When we held our dinner in Greektown, Tamar Hajian offered a toast: “It is now Sunday the 21st in Armenia, S.S.R., and our compatriots are going to the polls to decide whether there will be a new, a real Republic of Armenia. The dream has come true!”

We drank to the new Armenia, to the dream that was coming true. When I told my father, a survivor from Sis, about the vote a day later, he said, “I never thought I would see this day. Now all of you younger people must work to build a free Armenia.”

That’s what ArmenBar has done. Above all else, we have toiled to build a civil society in the Armenian homeland. We have worked with our compatriots, not just for them. With the tiniest of treasuries---as chair from 1995 to 1998 I rejoiced when we had more than $5,000 in our bank account---we have all pitched in with our own funds, our own efforts.

What a glorious quarter-century this has been! I am honored to have been part of it.”

Professor Ann Lousin
Chicago, IL
“Twenty-five years! A lot has happened in the Armenian Bar Association in that time. I have seen an organization transform the words of its mission statement from mere goals to completed actions. What were once aspirations have turned into milestones that have been passed and surpassed. As a past Chair, I am proud of what the organization has accomplished in its 25 years.

Everything that has been accomplished was not done by an entity, but by members who volunteered their time to contribute on the Board of Governors, various committees, CLE programs, or simply just organizing local social events. Every one of them has helped the Armenian Bar Association achieve so much in so little time. They deserve to be cheered for what they have done. But I know that they did not volunteer their time for the pats on the back. They did so because they know that there is no better feeling than leaving an event and knowing they were involved in putting it together. I encourage all of you to become more active in the Armenian Bar Association and enjoy those same feelings of accomplishment. You will not regret it.”

“My heartfelt congratulations to the Armenian Bar Association on the 25th anniversary of its founding. I remain humbled and privileged to have served on its first Board of Governors and later as its Chairman, and enriched by all of the good and dedicated people I have met in and through the Association.

To get an idea how long it has been, one only need realize that our newest members have never even seen (and probably cannot imagine) the large, hardcover editions of Martindale-Hubbell that we used in 1989 to look up prospective members!

The history of the Armenian people lit the spark in many of us to become lawyers. On this occasion, let us renew our commitment to the pursuit of justice for our people and to the continued development of the rule of law in the Armenian homeland.”
“For those of us who were lucky enough to be in the room in Marina Del Ray, California to form this promising organization, and for those of us who had the honor of leading an amazing group of lawyers, judges, academics and elected officials, this milestone is indeed special. To our younger generation of lawyers: thank you all for continuing to make the Armenian Bar a premier association of international professionals. To many more milestones!”

Frank Zerunyan  
Rolling Hills Estates, CA

“From the very first Annual Meeting that I attended in 1992, I was impressed with the high caliber of the programs presented by the Armenian Bar Association. This led me to participate more actively and culminated with the privilege of serving as Chair. Throughout it all, I have been amazed by the unique and rewarding opportunity presented by membership in this organization, namely growing professionally by meeting and interacting with Armenian attorney colleagues.”

Robert Roomian  
Alexandria, VA

“I am immensely grateful to the Armenian Bar Association for providing me with a long sought connection to my Armenian culture. Prior to attending my first meeting approximately 12 years ago, my interactions with Armenians were few and far between. That changed with my attendance at my first Armenian Bar Annual Meeting. Armenian Bar inspired me, and I sought and became an active member of the organization. Now I have a multitude of Armenian friends and take great pride in the contributions of our organization to the community and each other.”

Gary Moomjian  
New York, NY
“As we are celebrate our 25th anniversary and all of our many accomplishments over the years, we should not forget to look to the future.

Here is my wish list for the Armenian Bar Association for the next twenty-five years – may our organization:

1) Attract and keep more actively participating members as an organization is only as strong as its membership.
2) Create chapters in different states and regions, each of which will send one or more delegates representing their group to the Annual Meeting.
3) Be responsive to the needs of the membership – CLE may be mandatory in one state and could be provided by the Armenian Bar Association. In another state, providing networking opportunities may be more relevant. And in a third, perhaps combining legal brains and brawn might resolve a local Armenian issue.
4) Re-examine the structure of our organization and establish a path to leadership.
5) Establish working committees to accomplish the goals of our organization and grow the leaders of tomorrow.
6) Identify short-term goals and articulate long-term plans for our organization. Unless we can state where we are going we will never get there.
7) Reexamine our mission statement and recommit to or re-define our mission.

There are some challenges for our people that the Armenian Bar Association is uniquely suited to undertake and achieve. We must be prepared to undertake these challenges when they arise and to succeed. We should think big and expand our scope, partnering with other organizations with similar aspirations to achieve our mutual ends.

Twenty-five years from now, I want to look back and celebrate even greater accomplishments.”
That is why in 1989 Raffi K. Hovannisian founded the Armenian Bar - to be the voice of our people, to advocate justice and to speak for those too weak or meek to fend for themselves. We have done that. We have carried the mantle for 25 years with great vigor and inclusiveness, partnering with many organizations and taking on a multitude of challenges, big and small.

Too many are our accomplishments of the last several years. I will not list any of them. Our work speaks for itself. We are eternally grateful to our Chairman Emeritus, Vicken I. Simonian for a lifetime of service. He and two other unsung heroes, who have and continue to be the axis of the Armenian Bar, are due our heartfelt thanks.

Vicken Simonian: I salute you. You are the Armenian Bar Association. You are Our Chairman Forever!

Armen Hovannisian and Edvin Minassian: all credit is due to you both, for the accomplishments prior to, and during my two terms as chairman. You traveled with me daily on my journey, often carried me on your backs, never saying “No” to my requests for help or guidance, and all the while answering the calls for action.

Gratitude is due to all whose resolve of the past two years fueled our battle against the injustices suffered by the Armenian Nation. While I conclude my service as chairman, I bid you farewell and look forward to joining the great and diverse ranks of the Armenian Bar, vowing to continue working with all Armenian organizations taking on the challenges ahead to bring resolution to the Armenian Cause, by pledging to --

Always Reach Farther.

Garo B. Ghazarian
Chairman
Board of Governors
Armenian Bar Association
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Carney Shegerian was named and feted as Trial Lawyer of the Year by the Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles (CAALA). In a star-studded event held at the luxurious Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Beverly Hills, California, the largest association of consumer attorneys in America named Armenian Bar Association member Carney Shegerian as its trial lawyer of the year. Mr. Shegerian also made news recently when a Los Angeles County jury returned a $26 million verdict in a wrongful termination case which he tried.

James Derian, Corporate Counsel at Delphi Automotive Systems in Troy, Michigan, has been elected President of the Oakland County Bar Association. With over 3,100 members, the Oakland County Bar Association is the largest and most active county bar association in the State of Michigan. Jim also served as Chairman of the Armenian Bar Association’s Board of Governors during 1992-1993.

On April 8, 2014, veteran Armenian Bar Association member Zareh Sinanyan was elected as mayor of the City of Glendale, California by the Glendale City Council of which he has been a member for the past year. Mayor Sinanyan will now lead the city with the largest concentration of Armenians in the diaspora. Mayor Sinanyan and his wife Lori, who is also an attorney, have been active and supportive members of the Armenian Bar Association for many years. Chairman Ghazarian stated, “On behalf of the Armenian Bar Association, we congratulate one of our own, Zareh Sinanyan, for his election as Mayor of the City of Glendale and pledge to continue our strong ties with the City whenever our organization can be of assistance on issues of mutual concern.”

The Armenian Bar Association wishes to express its deepest sympathies and condolences to our Chairman Emeritus Vicken I. Simonian on the sad occasion of the passing of his mother Manoushak Kargodorian Simonian and to our Board member Nigol Manoukian for the loss of his father Ohanes Manoukian. Both Mrs. Simonian and Mr. Manoukian were strong supporters of the Armenian Bar Association and were extensively involved in Armenian community cultural and philanthropic organizations. They will be missed, but their legacies of service will endure as a shining example for all of us at the Armenian Bar Association to aspire to and carry on in the decades to come.

Armenian Bar Board member Michael Amerian, who is a Deputy City Attorney for the City of Los Angeles, was part of the defense team that successfully defended the City of Los Angeles Police Department and two of its officers in the high profile case where former Deutsche Bank executive, Brian Mulligan, alleged that he was the victim of police brutality.
On December 5, 2013, California Governor Jerry Brown appointed Armenian Bar Association member Armen Tamzarian to the Los Angeles County Superior Court. Heeding the calls of the Armenian community, including the Armenian Bar Association, to name another Armenian-American to the judicial bench, and in recognition of Mr. Tamzarian's impeccable background and experience, Governor Brown's appointment comes as a most welcome and auspicious development.

Mr. Tamzarian has been an active member of the Armenian-American community for most of his life. Beginning from early on in his education and career, Mr. Tamzarian studied and then published on the issue of the Armenian question under international law. Most recently, he served on the organizing committee for the ANCA Grassroots Conference. He also served for seven years as a task force member of the AGBU Generation Next mentorship program.

Mr. Tamzarian received his B.B.A. from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and his J.D. from Southwestern Law School. At Southwestern, Tamzarian received a full three-year merit scholarship and served on the school’s law review.

"The Armenian Bar Association welcomes Armen Tamzarian's appointment to the bench by California Governor Jerry Brown. Mr. Tamzarian is a wonderful choice and will make a superb contribution to the California judiciary. We look forward to additional judicial appointments in the near future of other worthy Armenian-Americans in California and other states. We also call upon President Obama to draw from a pool of highly-qualified Armenian-American lawyers and state court judges for an appointment to our federal bench," stated Armenian Bar Association Chairman Garo Ghazarian.

From October 30, 2013 through November 8, 2013, a member of the Armenian Bar Association, attorney Vanna Kitsinian, participated as a delegate on behalf of the Armenian Church at the World Council of Churches (WCC) 10th General Assembly in Busan, Korea. The WCC is the broadest and most inclusive organization of the modern ecumenical movement, whose overall goal is to achieve Christian unity. Headquartered in Geneva, the WCC was formed in 1948 in Amsterdam and has 345 member churches in 110 different countries, representing more than 500 million faithful around the world.
It was a beautiful late summer evening and the Armenian Bar Association drew a glowing crowd to the sundeck of the Gansevoort Hotel on Park Avenue in New York City. A gathering of 50 people, including attorneys, law students and guests, congregated on August 20th in this spectacular venue. There were plentiful platters of delicious food and excellent service. As anticipated, a nice mixture of social conversation and networking took place.

Gary Moomjian, the former Chairman and current member of the Board of Governors of the Armenian Bar Association, made a short presentation in which he thanked those present for attending and in which he described future ArmenBar plans.

The Summer Reception, following in the heels of the recent Spring Reception and Holiday Party, is continuing to firmly establish the presence of the Armenian Bar Association in the Greater New York Metropolitan Area. While there are a good number of Armenian attorneys in the Greater New York Area, their interactions in the past were often hit or miss. The ArmenBar has sought to remedy this situation by establishing common meeting grounds for attorneys and students of Armenian descent. As suggested above, this is leading to new friendships, client referral opportunities and for opportunities for attorneys to help students and fellow attorneys with job placement.

As we gather momentum in New York, plenty more is in store. A mentoring program has recently concluded. This program brought together practitioners and law students, grouped by area of law, whereby the attorney mentors met with students to provide knowledge and direction. Of course, the Planning Committee for the 2014 Annual Membership Meeting of the ArmenBar has been tremendously active in putting together a great program. It is further anticipated that a Holiday Party will be scheduled for December. Other gatherings are being discussed, including ones involving CLE associated presentations.

Organizers of the Summer Reception include Yelena Nersesyan, who has brought in a special energy and creative thinking to our group, Denise Darmanian, without whom the ArmenBar would be sorely lacking, and Gary Moomjian. Special thanks go to Lisa Boyadjian whose assistance from the West Coast has been invaluable and of course to Chairman Garo Ghazarian, whose enthusiastic support is greatly appreciated.
On October 26, 2013, members of the Armenian Bar Association gathered at the Alex and Marie Manoogian Museum in Southfield, Michigan for a luncheon and tour of the magnificent museum. Armenian Bar Board member Kathy Ossian organized the event. Members from as far away as Toronto, Canada were in attendance. They were joined by members of the Armenian American Bar Association of Detroit, including its President Sevahn Merian, Rebecca Simkins, and Katrina Desmond.

On March 6, 2014, under the auspices of the United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, International Visitor Leadership Program, three distinguished judges from Armenia visited the Los Angeles Superior Court. From left to right, Judge Marine Melkonian, First Instance Court, Judge David S. Wesley, Presiding Judge of the Los Angeles Superior Court, Judge Davit Balayan, Court of General Jurisdiction, Judge Kristineh Mkoyan, Administrative Court of Appeals and Judge Zaven V. Sinanian, Los Angeles Superior Court.

The Armenian Bar Association extends its heartfelt appreciation to the George Ignatius Foundation and to its trustees, Michael Amerian, Walter Karabian, and George Phillips, Sr., for their generous and steadfast contributions which have helped us reach our educational, public outreach, and Armenian rights watch and protection objectives.
Several hundred dignitaries, public officials, and guests joined the Armenian Bar Association on October 10, 2013, to celebrate, honor and recognize the career and service of Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Peter Espinoza. His first column of respect was comprised of nearly 40 judicial officers from the federal and state courts who had come to pay homage and respect to one of their own. This truly special event played out in full regalia during the Armenian Bar Association’s Annual Judges’ Night Dinner at the Phoenicia Restaurant in Glendale, CA.

The Master of Ceremonies for the evening was Armenian Bar Association Chairman Garo B. Ghazarian. After welcoming remarks by ArmenBar Board member Gerard Kassabian, Ghazarian was introduced by Los Angeles Superior Court Judge and former Armenian Bar Chairman, Judge Zaven Sinanian. Judge Sinanian recognized Ghazarian for leading the organization toward unprecedented heights of public service and achievement. Sinanian also took a few moments to express his heartfelt thanks to the evening’s guest of honor, Peter Espinoza, who was a mentor to Judge Sinanian when he first took the bench more than 10 years ago.

In his opening remarks, Ghazarian stated, “Tonight, we thank Judge Espinoza and his colleagues on the bench for their public service, for their activism, for their commitment to the ideal that in order for our civil society to progress, we must have a strong and independent judiciary.”

In an unprecedented show of Armenian community unity and cohesion, usually only accomplished for April 24th commemorations, Chairman Ghazarian thanked and acknowledged the presence of Armenian Revolutionary Federation Central Committee Chairman, Dr. Viken Hovsepian, Armenian Democratic League Central Committee Board member, Dr. Raffi Balian, Armenian General Benevolent Union Vice-President, World-Wide Board of Governors, Mr. Sinanian Sinanian, and Armenian National Committee Western United States Chairwoman, Attorney Nora Hovsepian.

Ghazarian then called upon Presiding Judge of the Los Angeles Superior Court, David Wesley, to address the rapt audience. Wesley described the enormous challenges that face the California judiciary today, noting the massive budget cuts that have been imposed upon the court system. But, despite those setbacks in funding, he explained that the California courts are still seen as a model for judicial excellence across the country. (continued on page 17)

Armenian Bar Honoree, Judge Peter Espinoza

Armenian Bar Chairman Garo Ghazarian
He thanked the judges in attendance for maintaining the highest levels of judicial performance in these difficult times.

Special guests in attendance included Dave Weaver, the Treasurer of the City of Glendale, Rafi Manoukian, Glendale City Councilman and Board of Director of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority, Ara Najarian, Montebello City Councilman, Jack Hadjinian, the leadership of the Glendale Police Department and Chief Jim McDonnell, who is the Chief of the Long Beach Police Department and President of the California Association of Chiefs of Police. Chief McDonnell spoke of his background as a child of Irish immigrants and how the diversity of America, being a nation of immigrants, has strengthened the country.

Another very special guest for the evening was Judge Fred Rotenberg of the Los Angeles Superior Court, currently sitting in Glendale, California. Judge Rotenberg was a guest of honor at the Inaugural Judges’ Night last year. Judge Rotenberg thanked the Armenian Bar Association for bestowing on him with the public recognition for his work as a judge. He stated that he shares a common history with the Armenian community in that he, like many in the audience, saw their parents and grandparents endure extreme hardship. Judge Rotenberg’s mother, Helen, is a Holocaust survivor and was present at last year’s Judges’ Night event. Judge Rotenberg stated that he understands how these experiences impact a person’s life and he is mindful of this in his work as a judge.

The highlight of the evening was the honoring of Judge Peter Espinoza. Ghazarian explained to the audience that the Judges’ Night dinner was originally scheduled to take place a week earlier, but that it was delayed because Judge Espinoza would still be in Armenia at that time. Ghazarian fondly recalled that Judge Espinoza, through his activism in the Chicano movement, his respect for cultural diversity borne of his own roots as a Mexican-American, his understanding of the cause for civil and human rights brought to the forefront by people such as Cesar Chavez, has enriched California’s judiciary to make it truly reflective of its citizenry.

Ghazarian added that Judge Espinoza has been so highly respected as a member of the judiciary that California’s governors often consult Judge Espinoza for his recommendations for new judicial appointments to the bench. Ghazarian then welcomed Judge Espinoza to the podium to a standing ovation.

Judge Espinoza began his remarks by acknowledging several members of his family who accompanied him to the event, including his wife, two of his children and their wives and a grandchild. He reminisced about his youth growing up in East Los Angeles and reminded the audience that before Hollywood, Glendale and the Valley, the origin of the first Armenian community in Southern California was in East Los Angeles and Montebello. He recalled meeting many Armenians in his childhood. He mentioned that he never thought he would ever visit Armenia at that time.

(continued on page 18)
But that trip he never thought he would take, he explained to the guests, recently became a reality because of the outstanding work of his daughter, Elizabeth Espinoza. Judge Espinoza’s daughter is a volunteer for the United States Peace Corp and she has been teaching English in the small village of Shatin in Southern Armenia for the past 15 months.

Judge Espinoza also recalled that during his trip to Armenia, he learned that toasting is an important part of a social gathering. In keeping with that grand tradition, Judge Espinoza gave two beautiful toasts in honor of his daughter Elizabeth and to Raffi Hovannisian. He asked the guests to raise their glasses in a “genatz” or “cheers.”

Upon the conclusion of Judge Espinoza’s remarks, Garo Ghazarian, Armen K. Hovannisian and Edvin Minassian presented Judge Espinoza with an original work of art from artist, Seroon Yeretsian, eloquently inscribed with poetic words of thanks for Judge Espinoza’s life work in public service and the promotion of civil and human rights.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Zaven Sinanian

Judge Espinoza told the audience that the recent visit to Armenia that he and his wife Dyanna took far exceeded his expectations and he urged everyone in the audience to “come to Armenia” to experience its rich history, its beauty and to aid the Armenian people to realize their full potential. He also explained that while the capital of Yerevan is a major cosmopolitan city that reminded him of Mexico City, he alerted the audience that life in the Armenian villages is far different and that the people there need assistance with infrastructure and other basic necessities.

He fondly recalled that a highlight of his trip was when he got to meet and visit with Raffi Hovannisian, the founder of the Armenian Bar Association and Armenian Presidential candidate. Judge Espinoza mentioned that he had read the best-selling book, *Family of Shadows*, written by Raffi’s son, Garin, and he very much wanted to visit Raffi. Chairman Ghazarian was able to arrange a meeting and Judge Espinoza was inspired by Raffi’s and his wife’s Armine’s commitment to the people of Armenia. He likened Raffi’s work to that of a modern-day Martin Luther King or Cesar Chavez.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Fred Rotenberg

In an interview following the event, Chairman Ghazarian stated: “I am so proud of the Armenian Bar Association that once again we were able to recognize and honor the best and brightest of our judicial and legal community, like Judge Peter Espinoza. The outstanding response from a diverse cross-section of our community to our Judges’ Night represents another major milestone for our organization and the Armenian community. We look forward to carrying on this tradition for years to come.”
In December, 2013, the Armenian Bar Association in collaboration with the Loyola Armenian Law School Students’ Association (ALSA), the Loyola Law School and all local ALSAs organized a resume and career networking day. It was the sequel to the Armenian Bar Association’s Informational and Networking Event held annually at the Southwestern Law School. The program consisted of presentations by a panel of attorneys from various fields of legal practice. Among the panelists were Armenian Bar Members Robert Baronian, Garo Kamarian, Tigran Palyan, Armen Sefyan, Board of Governors Member Saro Kerkonian and Executive Board Member Hovanes Margarian. Following the panel presentations, students participated in mock interviews conducted by the panelists and were critiqued and given further advice as to how to present themselves as job candidates. The program ended with a networking lunch to allow students to continue interacting with the panelists. “Law school students need a thorough understanding of what an employer seeks when hiring an associate attorney. Mere knowledge of the law is not sufficient in the current highly competitive market. It is our goal to give these students the extra edge they need to obtain the best jobs available and grow within our profession. The more successful our next generation is the more pride they will bring to both our profession and our community,” stated Hovanes Margarian.

Panelists at the Loyola Law School event from left to right Saro Kerkonian, Tigran Palyan, Bob Baronian, Garo Kamarian, Armen Sefyan, and Hovanes Margarian.
The Armenian Bar Association’s 3rd Annual Networking and Information Event for Law Students at Southwestern Law School took place on February 1, 2014. The program consisted of presentations by the Honorable Judge Jacqueline Chooljian, the Honorable Judge Amy Hoogasian, Chairman of the Armenian Bar Association Garo Ghazarian, Vice-Chairman Armen K. Hovannisian and attorneys Anya Artan, Patrick Baghdaserians, Robert Baronian, Milene Chraghchian, Ellin Davtyan, Alice Yardum Hunter, Saro Kerkonian, Hovanes Margarian, Aram Ordubegian, Tigran Palyan and John Tehranian. Following the presentations students had an opportunity to speed network with the panelists and develop mentorship and internship contacts.

"We live in an environment where the employer is looking to its employees to increase its bottom line. Prospective applicants must demonstrate to the law firm of their choice that they possess both the legal skills and the drive to help grow the firm’s reputation and revenues," stated Garo Kamarian. The Armenian Bar Association encourages all of its attorney members to attend similar events and become a resource for the future generation of attorneys. All attorney members and law school students can become more involved with the association through volunteering at events such as the Loyola Law School event.
Beginning in 2012, Southwestern Law School partnered with the Republic of Armenia's Ministry of Justice to create an opportunity for an American-trained lawyer to work with the Ministry to cultivate Armenia's legal system. The inaugural Southwestern Armenia Fellow, Garen Nazarian, began his term in Fall of 2012 and is currently in his second term. The Armenian Bar Association and some of its leading members serve on the steering committee of the fellowship project. As the Southwestern Armenia Fellow, Mr. Nazarian continues to use his expertise in criminal law to advise the Ministry of Justice, work with various groups to educate and implement concrete changes in Armenia's legal system and help train the next generation of legal professionals. A few examples of Mr. Nazarian's recent accomplishments and efforts include:

- Advising in several instrumental areas, including: Key components of the Criminal Procedure Code; selection of judges to reduce potential bias or appearance of partiality and increase objectivity and transparency in the selection process; and reforms in legal education mandated by the 2012-16 Strategic Program for Legal and Judicial Reforms in the Republic of Armenia, including introduction of clinical education.

- Teaching trial advocacy at various locales, including Armenia's School of Advocates, the French University and the American Bar Association office.

- Setting up a book reading project in the prisons.

At a special reception on March 7, 2014, hosted by Armenian Bar Board member and Southwestern Alumnus Gerard Kassabian at his Beverly Hills law offices, approximately 100 supporters of this unprecedented and unique endeavor gathered to celebrate the partnership and hear about recent developments. The event featured an update from Mr. Nazarian from Armenia via Skype, welcoming remarks by Mr. Kassabian, an opening address by Southwestern Vice Dean and ArmenBar member Anahid Gharakhanian, congratulatory comments by Southwestern Dean Susan Westerberg Prager, an inspirational delivery by Armenian Bar Vice-Chair Armen K. Hovannisian, and an elegant closing by long-time Armenian Bar stalwart Robert Philibosian.

We hope you enjoy the photo gallery of the event on the following pages.
Southwestern Reception Photo Gallery

The exquisite office suite of Board Member Gerard Kassabian doubled as a classy backdrop to the reception.

Southwestern Vice Dean Anahid Gharakhanian draws a smile of approval from Dean Susan Westerberg Prager.

Dean Prager gets serious about the important work of the legal fellowship program.

Armenian Bar Vice-Chairman Armen K. Hovannisian offers words of appreciation for the generosity and leadership of Gerard Kassabian.

With rapt attention, (r-l) Judge Zaven Sinanian, Jack Berberian, Robert Philibosian, and Vice Dean Gharakhanian.
Southwestern Reception Photo Gallery

Steering committee members (l-r) Armen K. Hovannisian, Robert Philibosian, Dean Prager, Vice Dean Gharakhanian, Vahe Yacoubian, and Gerard Kassabian (not pictured, Judge Socrates Manoukian and Judge Dickran Tevrizian, retired)

Smiling faces, courtesy of the meaningful projects and fun times provided by Southwestern and the Armenian Bar Association.
A trio of Armenian Bar Association board and active members -- Saro Kerkonian, Fred Mesropi and Sara Bedirian -- formed the centerpiece of a special presentation at Glendale Law School focusing on the ways and means for law students to maximize their job placement opportunities and to hone their professional skills. The event was held on March 10, 2014, at Glendale Law School and was organized in cooperation with Italian American Lawyers' Association, the Glendale and the Pasadena Bar Associations.

The program began in a crowded room of more than 100 participants drawn from the students and faculty of Glendale Law School. With rapt attention, the students eagerly listened to the panel introductions on the concepts and benefits of bar association membership and the importance such organizations hold in the legal profession and in the life of an engaged practitioner.

At the core of the evening presentation were the Armenian Bar Association representatives, Fredrick Mesropi and Saro Kerkonian, who, in motivating and inspiring fashion, offered the audience a primer on the fulfilling professional and personal benefits of joining bar associations. Mr. Kerkonian, a member of the Board of Governors and the Chair of the Armenian Rights Watch Committee, spoke briefly of the history and mission of the Armenian Bar Association and its founder, Raffi K. Hovannisian. Mr. Kerkonian described the great success of two recent events that were held jointly with the Armenian law student organizations of Loyola Law School and Southwestern Law School for purposes of hands-on mentorship and effective resume preparation. He also shared the unique opportunities which bar associations often avail their members, citing his own experience of participating on a legal panel with two California Supreme Court justices.

Frederick Mesropi, a Deputy District Attorney of Los Angeles County, delivered his unique perspective as a public servant and the significance of bar association membership. Without the necessity of business-generating possibilities as a government prosecutor, Mr. Mesropi nevertheless made a compelling case for public servants' continued involvement in professional organizations and engagement in community education projects. In addition to helping create professional connections, Mesropi stated, his experience with ArmenBar has led to meaningful relationships and lasting friendships with other members.

Pasadena Bar Association members Heidi Bitterman and Christopher Chaplin spoke on the topic of how bar association membership may assist in mastering the students' craft in the law. Both stressed the fact that bar associations provide exposure to attorneys in different practice areas and would provide resources for exchanges and consultations spanning the gamut of the areas of law. As bar association members, the students were told that they would be in a good position to learn from premier practitioners either speaking at continuing legal education events or networking functions.

Professor Delores Yarnall of Glendale Law School was introduced to the attendees by Dean Darrin Greitzer who expressed appreciation to the students and speakers. Professor Yarnall emphasized what Mr. Kerkonian had earlier stated, namely that there is a vast number of different ethnic and specialized bar associations which provide value and meaning to their members. She spoke of her personal favorite, the Cowboy Lawyers' Association, and how they were celebrating their 25th anniversary this year. She mentioned that members go on exhilarating trail rides with sides of sumptuous catering and wine tastings in a relaxed atmosphere, which helps promote relationships with peers and opponents alike, all the while helping to create and maintain professional civility.

Damian D. Capozzola, President of the Italian American Lawyers' Association concluded the event by talking about how bar associations can help you land clients. Mr. Capozzola stated that bar association membership would also provide general networking meeting opportunities and allow for people to interact with their peers and have access to partners, general counsel of corporations and key people in law firms, which could lead to client opportunities.
On the weekend of October 25-27, 2013, members of the Armenian Bar Association from across the country converged in the City of Fresno, California to recognize and honor California Court of Appeal Justice Charles “Chuck” Poochigian and several members of the Fresno judiciary for their outstanding dedication to public service.

The Association’s pilgrimage to Fresno, one of the oldest Armenian-American communities in the United States with its roots dating back to the late 1800’s, started off with a Friday evening dinner at the century-old Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church. ArmenBar members sat side by side with Fresno Armenians, young and old alike, enjoying authentic Armenian cuisines and shared ideas and their vision for the future of the community in Fresno at the Church’s Annual Bazaar.

On Saturday, October 26th, distinguished Professor of Armenian Studies at Fresno State University, Barlow Der Mugrdechian, guided Association members on a four hour tour of the many historic sites of Fresno County. The tour included visits to the epic statue of David of Sassoun that adorns the Civic Center. This was followed by a visit to the Ararat and Massis Armenian Cemeteries located on the west side of the city. Members paused to reflect on the immense contributions of notable figures, such as world literary giant William Saroyan, Armenian hero, Soghomon Tehlirian, and the members contemplated the struggles of their ancestors at the tombs of the very first settlers of the Armenian community in Fresno.

The tour next took the attendees for a visit to St. Gregory’s Armenian Church in Fowler, where parish Father Yeghia Hairabedian greeted the delegation and told of the history of the church congregation which boasts a presence in the community for over 100 years and described the current activities and continued service to the community. From there, the group moved to the ever-popular Simonian Farms, where the attendees had a chance to pick fruit in a tribute to Armenian farmers who brought with them the talents they developed in their hometowns of Kharpert, Moush, Bitlis, Van and Dickrangerd to make the Central Valley of California one of the greatest food producing areas in the entire world. The tour was capped with a visit to Fresno State University’s Armenian Studies Department. There the guests had a chance to observe firsthand the many outstanding programs the university has developed in educating students in the Armenian language, history and culture. Chairman Ghazarian stated that “We are thankful to Prof. Der Mugrdechian for taking his valuable time to educate us about the rich and vibrant history of Fresno.”

Following the tour, Armenian Bar members were invited to attend a private reception and tour of the recently constructed California Court of Appeal, Fifth Appellate District. Located in Fresno’s “Old Armenian Town” section, the attendees had the unique opportunity to hear Justice Poochigian, along with Presiding Justice of the Fifth Appellate District, Justice Brad Hill and the highest sitting Armenian-American Jurist in California, Supreme Court Associate Justice Marvin Baxter, greet the Armenian Bar and guide the guests to the Court’s library, conference room and pointed out the unique architectural features of the building which conjure images of beautiful Yosemite National Park in many of its architectural motifs and details.

On Saturday evening, a highlight of the weekend took place, when the Association hosted its Judges’ Night dinner gala in the grand hall of Holy Trinity Church. The event drew nearly two hundred guests representing a broad cross-section of Fresno’s legal community. Several prominent law firms, including Lozano Smith, Baker Manock, Dowling Aaron, Coleman & Horowitt, McCormick Barstow and Tomassian, Pimentel & Shapazian served as sponsors for the festivities. Joining the law firms as sponsors were Fresno Armenian families that are very active in and have served the Fresno community for generations, including the Apkarian, Messerlian, Parnagian and Poochigian families.
Former ArmenBar board member and Los Angeles attorney, Garo K. Hovannisian served as the evening’s Master of Ceremonies. Mr. Hovannisian welcomed the guests and invited Father Vahan Gosdanian to give a blessing. Hovannisian then drawing a parallel to a teacher at a boarding school, whose students refer to him as “Oh captain, my captain” and hailing him as an inspiring leader who sets an array of examples of public service by his deeds, welcomed ArmenBar Chairman Garo Ghazarian to the podium to deliver his remarks.

Ghazarian solemnly opened his presentation by asking that all those present rise for a moment of silence to reflect on the memories of those who are buried in the Armenian cemeteries of Fresno, and honor the sacrifices made by those earlier generations of Fresno Armenians who out of the ashes of the Armenian Genocide, built a vibrant community for all those who came to America in the years and decades which followed. Chairman Ghazarian stated, “Why are we here? Why did the Armenian Bar decide to come to Fresno? Is it because Fresno needs us? No, it’s because we need Fresno.”

Ghazarian urged the young and old lawyers of Fresno to renew their commitments to not only the legal canons of their profession, but also to the moral canons of being Armenians. He said, that whereas speaking, reading and writing in Armenian are wonderful traits to possess, they are incomplete, and not being proficient in these abilities, does not preclude those from being Armenians. To be an Armenian, Ghazarian continued, “one needs to feel the need and urgency in his or her soul, and be of service to the Armenian community and to the Armenian Cause – Hye Tad.”

Finally, Chairman Ghazarian thanked Fresno for giving the Armenian Bar its founder, Raffi K. Hovannisian, and concluded by pointing out that, we as Armenians, owe a debt of gratitude to the United States, our adopted homeland, for all the opportunities that are available to us, to excel as human beings, and to do so, while maintaining our identities as Armenian-Americans.

The audience was treated to a musical interlude by talented Fresno tenor Berdj Apkarian. Thereafter, in a surprise presentation, retired California Supreme Court justice, Armand Arabian, presented a personally inscribed copy of his autobiographical book, “From Gravel to Gavel” to Justices Baxter and Poochigian. Justice Baxter was then invited to the podium to address the guests and say a few words about the evening’s honoree Justice Poochigian.

A native of Fowler, California, Justice Baxter eloquently described that while the first Armenians to the Central Valley were given refuge from the horrors of the Ottoman Empire, they were not exactly welcomed with open arms. He recounted how the ancestors of Fresno’s Armenian community had to endure the outright discrimination that came with restrictive land covenants and preclusion from many social and fraternal organizations. He recalled how this differential treatment resulted in the phenomenon of the Armenians living closely together and forming the social organizations and fraternal bonds that would help the community survive to the present day. Justice Baxter praised the Armenian Bar for recognizing and honoring Fresno’s native son, Chuck Poochigian.
The evening’s most compelling remarks were made by Armenian Bar former Chairman and current Vice-chair, Armen Hovannisian. A founding member of the organization, Vice-Chair Hovannisian gave a moving and deeply meaningful tribute to Justice Poochigian highlighting his adherence to the values that his forefathers brought with them to Fresno from Armenia nearly 100 years ago which, as Hovannisian poetically explained, has rightfully earned Justice Poochigian a reputation of honesty, integrity, and hard work and the recognition of being a “Judge’s Judge” among jurists and the Bar. Mr. Hovannisian then asked several Fresno County judges who were present to stand and be recognized for their lifetime achievements and dedication to the administration of justice, including Superior Court judges Brian Arax, David Kalemkarian, Debra Kazanjian, Edward Sarkisian, Houry Sanderson, John Vogt, and James Aaron (retired).

Humbled by the honor, Justice Poochigian praised Armen Hovannisian and the Armenian Bar Association for all of its worthy accomplishments over the years in service not only to the Armenian-American community, but also to Armenia. Justice Poochigian was then presented with a painting by Glendale artist, Seeeroon Yeretsian, with an inscription recognizing Justice Poochigian for the extraordinary example he has been to his community.

Chairman Ghazarian concluded by stating: “The memories made by the Armenian Bar’s pilgrimage to California’s Central Valley and the Armenian-American community are all but engrained in the minds and hearts of those who were fortunate to be able to spend the last weekend of October, 2013, in Fresno. We look forward to and vow to soon return home to Fresno in the near future.”
IMAGES FROM THE GALA DINNER BANQUET IN FRESNO

Fresno’s best, including Gerald Tomassian, Judge Brian Arax, Steven Shahbazian, Daniel Bacon, Judge David Kalemkarian, and Berj Apkarian

Judges Sinanian and Hoogasian with Judges’ Night Master of Ceremonies, Garo K. Hovannisian

New friends and old: Kent Klassen, Armen Hovannisian, Barret Arakelian, Gerald Tomassian and Robert Sahatdjian

Presiding Justice Brad Hill and Jim Shekoyan sharing good times and pleasant conversation
Armenian Bar Association Vice Chair Armen K. Hovannisian and Board Members welcome and salute Fresno’s judges

Monument to the victims of the Armenian Genocide and Armenian hero, Soghomon Tehlirian, at the Masis cemetery
MORE HIGHLIGHTS FROM FRESNO

“Fresno is a good place. It’s the world, and how good can the world be in any case, wherever you go? How much different from Fresno is Paris? If you are there, you are there, and you can see and feel a culture, and you can see and feel a culture in Fresno, too.”

William Saroyan

Laurie Avedissian (center) flanked by colleagues and Chairman Ex-Officio Edvin Minassian, Vice-Chairman Armen K. Hovannisian, and Justice Marvin and Mrs. Jane Baxter

Justice Marvin Baxter tells the Fresno story and introduces Justice Poochigan

Fresno’s Hygo Ohannessian, Sose Vogt, Judge John Vogt, Armen Hovannisian, and Sevag Tateosian

Justice Chuck Poochigan and Gerard Kassabian

Judge Zaven Sinanian, former L.A. County District Attorney Robert Philibosian, Gerard Kassabian and Mark Poochigan
Editor's Note: Award-winning author Viken Berberian presents this first-hand account of the rousing inspiration provided by the founder of the Armenian Bar Association to the citizens of Armenia. S.K.

It was New Year’s Eve 1989 and throngs of Armenians descended on the Opera House in Liberty Square. They were celebrating the dawn of a new year and the prospect of a state free of Soviet tyranny. I happened to be in Armenia at the time, researching my graduate thesis. Citizens gathered in the square for many reasons. One was to test First Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev’s commitment to his policies of restructuring and openness. Twenty-five years later, there is little sign of that openness among Armenia’s ruling elite, and the only restructuring taking place is the destruction of historic buildings to erect new ersatz residential complexes, most of them too expensive for residents to rent or buy, and so Liberty Square has turned into a hotbed of political unrest. Sleeping on a bench across from the Opera House was Raffi Hovannisian, the leading opposition candidate in February’s rigged presidential election. Mr. Hovannisian went on a hunger strike for three weeks to protest the official results, demanding the resignation of the incumbent president, Serzh Sargsyan.

“This is not just a hunger strike, but a boycott against lies and fraud,” he told his supporters at a rally in Liberty Square in Yerevan, the capital. “If on April 9, Serzh Sargsyan takes his fake oath on the Constitution and the Holy Bible, and the Supreme Patriarch blesses the candidate, who mocks the people, then that will happen over my dead body.” Since the presidential election, the opposition has held a number of peaceful rallies across from the Opera House, under the banner of Barevolution, a play on the word barev, which means “hello” in Armenian. Ordinarily, no one says hello to strangers when walking Yerevan’s gray, traffic-congested streets.

It is difficult to elicit a smile from a curmudgeon in these forbidding times, and so ever since the election was pilfered by the authorities, as elections routinely are with the smug certitude of a hammer pounding a nail, I, too, have been traipsing this mirthless metropolis, saying hello to strangers. They mostly stare back, disconsolate, hopeless.

I should disclose that I am neither an activist nor a Panglossian idealist. But having come to live in Armenia to research and write my novel, I felt it was my duty to offer Mr. Hovannisian, on behalf of my family, a pink rose, which he gingerly placed on a bench covered with a knitted tricolor flag of the Armenian Republic. If George Orwell survived a shot in the throat by a fascist sniper, surely I could muster the courage to walk past a pro-government storm trooper to offer a polite flower. There was no wind whistling pandemonium. The rose neither cringed nor cowered. I suppose in an alternate reality, I could have suffered a bullet wound and “shriveled up to nothing” and lived to write about it the way Orwell did. But that’s not what writers in the English language do these days. We are mostly craven individuals.

On my next visit to the Opera, the flower was no longer on the bench where Raffi, as Mr. Hovannisian is popularly known, had left it. Raffi, too, had abandoned his bench and tent.

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He stood on the steps of the Opera, speaking forcefully from the bottom of his lungs, denouncing the spurious election. He skewered the corrupt cabal that had helped engineer the incumbent’s win, largely against the will of the people, and so the struggle was set between David, whom no one expected to win, and Goliath, whom the majority wanted to lose, except that somehow he didn’t.

Why this unfair battle matters to me is because I want to see my ancestral homeland governed according to democratic principles. Why its outcome should matter to the rest of the world is because Armenia is part of a security alliance dominated by Moscow, and more than two decades after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, is one of its last bastions where Russian soldiers still have a military presence. Russia has no plans of letting go of the South Caucasus anytime soon. In 2008, it invaded Georgia in support of the breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Last year, it continued major military sales to Azerbaijan, delivering dozens of attack helicopters to a country that has threatened war with Armenia. At the same time, as part of its “balancing approach,” it has delivered an undisclosed number of attack choppers to its regional ally and protectorate, Armenia.

Russia’s economic footprints across the southern Caucasus are disproportionately large, just as they were during the Soviet era. Bilateral trade between Russia and Armenia is on track to surpass $1 billion, and the trade balance, conveniently, is heavily in favor of the former. Armenia’s dependency is particularly noticeable in the energy sector, with more than 80 percent of its energy infrastructure under Russian control. The palpable difference is that during the communist era, Armenia had a thriving manufacturing base, most of which is now gutted. Factories that once employed thousands have turned into oxidized carcasses and sit abandoned around the periphery of the capital and in the countryside. Along with Russia, Iran has emerged as an erstwhile trade partner. Armenia’s other frontiers are with Georgia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan, an oil-rich dictatorship that lost a war with Armenia in 1994 over the autonomous republic of Nagorno-Karabakh.

A small, landlocked country with a population of 2.9 million, Armenia has few regional allies to turn to, with the exception of Russia, and so the consequences of regime change and continuity are always discussed closely with Moscow. It is as if Big Brother had never left. Yet sanctioning sham elections every five years risks feeding popular discontent, which is why agitated crowds trickled into Liberty Square on the president’s inauguration day.

It was not always so.

During the Soviet era, the Opera and Ballet Theater complex was hailed as an enduring symbol of the country’s cultural heritage. It has since evolved into ground zero for simmering grievances. Built in a neoclassic style that critics, including my three-year-old son, have compared to a wedding cake, it can attract both demonstrators and concertgoers. My family attended a number of performances at the Opera after we moved to Armenia from France two years ago. The old Paris Opera House, with its Marc Chagall fresco, was never home to such ferment, at least not when we lived there. The most politically engaged I felt in Paris was during a citywide metro strike. It forced me to ride my bicycle to work past the old Opera. Now I occasionally brave a cantankerous crowd around the Yerevan Opera to catch a glimpse of the revolution.

The president may have achieved a crushing second five-year mandate, but when speaking to ordinary citizens, one gets a sense of his bruising defeat. “Those crooks stole the election from us and everyone knows it,” said Arayig Khachatryan, a cab driver and former air force pilot who served in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. His growing sense of apathy is characteristic of the larger population. “What’s the point of protesting when nothing changes and the majority of the people continue to live in abject misery and fear?”

(continued on page 33)
Five years ago, mass protests against electoral fraud outside the Opera resulted in fatalities. In a bid to quell civil unrest, police broke up a tented camp in the square, killing ten people.

A state of emergency and a media blackout swiftly followed. The opposition leader and first president of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, led those rallies, alleging electoral fraud, yet his reelection in 1996 was also marred by flagrant violations.

Twenty-five years have passed since the Liberty Square rallies in the twilight of the Soviet one-state. Raffi, the most vocal critic of the incumbent president and his team’s failed economic policies and entrenched corruption, greeted supporters on a bench in Liberty Square. On my fourth visit to the Opera, the once-portly Raffi had slimmed down into a svelte Giacometti.

He was in his second week of fasting and looked considerably more upbeat and fit than the protagonist of Franz Kafka’s The Hunger Artist. I threw several salted peanuts into my mouth, feeling guilty. I felt I had betrayed not just Raffi but the undernourished writer in Knut Hamsun’s feverish 1890 novel, Hunger. I had turned soft during my sojourn in Armenia, feasting on bonchiki and deep-fried pirojki.

I walked toward a gaggle of kids and elderly people. Their eyes bore the hallmark of apathy. But unlike most of the pedestrians I encountered in the city, at least they responded to my hello with a barev. Perhaps the revolution was in our midst, and we could still overthrow the guards in the control tower in Bentham’s panopticon, flooding us with their blinding light and propaganda. During a speech that followed, I punched the air with my fist. I looked up to make sure that I had not injured an imaginary dove flitting above; my hand recoiled, propelled by its own volition against the forces of determinism. I kept it in my coat pocket during the rest of Raffi’s talk on the rule of law and the finer points of democratic liberalism. On my way back home,

I bought another paper cone of peanuts from one of the babushkas hawking cornucopias of nuts and seeds.

She, too, had voted for Raffi. “Do you know anyone who hasn’t?” she asked, and took my two hundred drams.

A former foreign minister, the U.S. born and educated Raffi presents a stark contrast to the more staid Sargsyan, a veteran of the Nagorno-Karabakh war, who, perhaps unsurprisingly, commands a bigger following in the army than his rival. “I voted for Sargsyan,” said Hamlet Martirosyan, a resident of Stepanakert, the capital of the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh republic. “He has a CV, a biography that goes back to his years in the military. I can see him sitting down with world leaders like Obama and Putin and being taken seriously.”

Raffi’s trajectory is a story in contrasts. He received a masters degree from Tuft’s Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and a law degree from Georgetown University. In the mid-to-late 80s he worked as an international lawyer and civil litigator at Whitman and Ransom, among other firms.

He settled down in Armenia in 1989 and was appointed the first foreign minister of the republic in 1991.

His democratic-reform-oriented politics aspire to create a country governed by the rule of law, and a foreign policy that is decidedly less Russia-centric than an Armenia under Sargsyan has been. U.S. embassy cables released by WikiLeaks show that he has repeatedly urged U.S. officials to balance their geopolitical aims with support for domestic democratic reform.

Where the turnout was closer to 50 percent, Raffi captured the majority of the votes.

According to official figures, Raffi received 37 percent of the votes, compared to 59 percent for Sargsyan. Yet a report from the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) reveals a different reality.
The OSCE found a close correlation between high voter turnout and the number of votes received by Sargsyan.

The national voter turnout average was 60 percent. In those voting stations where voter turnout exceeded 80 percent, which seems implausibly high, Sargsyan received more than 80 percent of the votes.

“The tendency of higher results for the incumbent observed at the majority of the stations with high turnout raises concerns regarding the confidence over the integrity of the electoral process,” concludes the OSCE report. The upshot: there was ballot stuffing.

An ad hoc poll I conducted with a sample of more than one hundred pedestrians and taxi drivers in Yerevan, the capital city with the lowest poverty rate in the country, delivered an even more damning verdict against the reigning president: nine out of ten people I spoke with said they and their families had voted for the leading opposition candidate. Many did so even after accepting bribes to entice them to vote for the incumbent. “They were handing out five thousand dram (thirteen U.S. dollars) notes, and we really need the money,” said Gagik, another cab driver, in his runty Lada. “So I took it, my entire family did, but then we voted for Raffi. My friends did the same, but for what? This hunger strike is useless. It will not change anything. The election was a sham.

It was already decided upon in Russia before it happened. Everyone knows it’s fraudulent, and here world leaders have been congratulating Serzh. It’s shameful.”

The catalysts for change are obvious. Economic collapse is the main reason why the country has lost more than a quarter of its population since 1991. Thirty-five percent of the population is poor, 19.9 percent is very poor and 3.7 percent is extremely poor, according to the World Bank and the National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. In just three years (2009-2011), some two hundred and fifty thousand people became poor. A million people have left the country in search of better economic prospects. The running joke is that soon there will be no one left to protest at Opera Square. “How am I supposed to protest when I drive sixteen hours a day? I make three thousand drams ($7.50) at the end of the day,” said Samson, another taxi driver in this land-locked country overflowing with cabs. “I don’t have time to go to the Opera House. No one has time for revolution.”

But what about barevoulition? I asked. Haven’t you heard about it? No, he confessed. Bar what? Barevolution, I said. It means “Hello, Revolution.” He shrugged. The term was coined by Raffi’s campaign manager, the twenty-eight-year old Alec Mouhibian. We met on the last night of Raffi’s hunger strike near the Opera House. Raffi’s son, the sagacious Garin Hovannisian, introduced us, happy that the hunger strike would end as planned the following morning. Mr. Mouhibian said he would soon return to his native California after months of campaign strategizing.

I wanted to ask how he came up with the idea of a five-syllable campaign slogan, mostly in English, when it was so distant from the average Armenian’s sensibility; but then again, everything about Raffi’s campaign was unorthodox and of literary dimensions. He was his own antihero, billowing and shrinking with the tragic crowds. 
Before I faded into the night, I observed on the bench, next to a bible and a bouquet of flowers, a copy of a memoir by the Pulitzer Prize-winning dramatist William Saroyan. It was appropriately titled *Places Where I’ve Done Time*. Like Saroyan, whose statue loomed not far from us, on Moscovyan Street, Raffi’s family hailed from Fresno, California. It seemed that politics, California, and literature were inexorably linked that evening.

Soon after, a compact priest with a beard half his height walked into Raffi’s tent with a companion who was holding a basket full of Easter eggs. Fifteen minutes later they came out without the basket. There were less than forty people around the tent, and I had to hurry back home with a box of imported organic milk I had bought from the pharmacy for our toddler.

Back in our home, another rebellion beckoned. I said goodbye to the listless square and the tireless campaign staffers now disbanding from the area around the tent. As I walked past the Opera, several police officers were surveying the grounds from under their oversize Soviet-era caps. *Barev tsez,* I said. Hello to you. *Barev, barev,* they responded. Could it be that this hello was fraught with the kernel of a future revolution? It was hard to tell. I still greet strangers in the city, hoping to shake them from their apathy, goading them on toward a new, triumphant song and destiny, not just another requiem to democracy. *Barevolution. Barev, barev.*

*Viken Berberian is the author of the novels, The Cyclist (Simon & Schuster) and Das Kapital (Simon & Schuster). His short story, Le Plagiaire, appeared in the French journal Revue Décapage (Flammarion / Gallimard) last this year.*
October 18, 2013, Beverly Hills, California – Following its inaugural Seasonal Soiree in August, the Summer Soiree, the Armenian Bar Association held another successful Seasonal Soiree; the Fall Soiree on Friday, October 18, 2013. This time the Armenian Bar Association collaborated with the Armenian American Medical Society (AAMS) that took place at the Beverly Hilton Stardust Penthouse Hall and Rooftop Balcony where over 350 guests enjoyed a unique educational and social evening surrounded by paintings and sculptures by world renowned artist Emil Kazaz with a backdrop of spectacular views under a clear sky and a full moon. “The event was a big success in terms of collaboration of professional organizations and welcoming the artistic realm into our professional gatherings,” said Armen K. Hovannisian, Co-Vice Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Armenian Bar Association.

The evening began with Minimum Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) presented by the Armenian Bar Association. The one-hour MCLE seminar began with welcome remarks by Vicken Sepilian, M.D., FACOG, President of the AAMS, and Gerard V. Kassabian, J.D., LL.M., Member of the Board of Governors of ArmenBar. Dr. Sepilian and Mr. Kassabian explained the importance of the collaboration between these professional organizations to allow for the exchange of legal and medical information that relate to both professions. “This collaboration between the Armenian Bar Association and AAMS and other organizations will ensure our mutual continued successes,” said Edvin Minassian, Chairman Ex Officio of the Board of Governors of the Armenian Bar Association.

After thanking the event co-sponsors City National Bank and Ameria Group, Inc., Gerard V. Kassabian introduced the moderator of the seminar, Hon. Zaven Sinanian, Judge of the Los Angeles County Superior Court. Judge Sinanian welcomed the guests and introduced each of the MCLE speakers with their short biographies.

The first MCLE topic entitled “How to Avoid a DUI and its Consequences” was presented by Felipe “DUI Warrior” Plascencia, a criminal defense attorney who specializes in driving under the influence cases (DUI). His presentation was focused on what to do when pulled over or arrested for an alleged DUI offense. In his presentation, Mr. Plascencia complimented ArmenBar’s very own Michael R. Amerian, Deputy Los Angeles City Attorney and member of the Association’s Board of Governors, with whom he worked to resolve numerous DUI cases.

The second MCLE topic entitled “Handling and Avoiding Medical Malpractice Claims” was presented by Nora Hovsepian, a medical malpractice and personal injury attorney. Her presentation focused on ways to reduce the chance of a medical malpractice claim against a medical professional.

The third MCLE topic entitled “Defending a Federal Healthcare Fraud Prosecution” was presented by Garo B. Ghazarian, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Armenian Bar Association, Dean and Law Professor at the Peoples College of Law and a criminal defense attorney. His presentation focused upon the rights and obligations of a medical professional when under investigation by the authorities.

After the educational seminar, the guests were welcomed to a cocktail reception featuring paintings and sculptures by the artist Emil Kazaz. The artwork was provided by Airian Dome of Fine Art and Kazaz Gallery under the spectacular direction of Monet Arian Kazaz. The distinct style of Emil Kazaz is instantly recognized in the art world. The artwork showcased was a preview of an upcoming art exhibit by Emil Kazaz. Over 50 paintings and bronze sculptures of varying sizes were beautifully displayed throughout the hall where guests were given a chance to view and chat with Emil Kazaz during his book signing. Airian Dome of Fine Art and Kazaz Gallery welcomed the guests and made a brief presentation about the background of the artist Emil Kazaz and his special artwork. The guests enjoyed the artwork with an assortment of hors d’oeuvres and cocktails while listening to classical and smooth lounge music.

The diverse group of guests that attended the Soiree comprised of legal and medical professionals as well as city officials, business professionals, artists, members of media, students and supporters.

Board member Gerard V. Kassabian stated, “I want to thank the Armenian Bar Association Board who entrusted me to organize the inaugural Seasonal Soiree series of events. Tonight, thanks to the collaboration of the AAMS we hit another home run in terms of attendance and fundraising for both organizations!”

The Armenian Bar Association is a 501c3 tax-exempt organization and has members and board members throughout the USA, Canada, Armenia and other countries. The Armenian Bar Association is approved by the State Bar of California to provide Minimum Continuing Legal Education credits to State Bar of California licensees.

The Armenian American Medical Society is a 501c3 tax-exempt organization that has members and board members throughout the USA, Canada, Armenia, and other countries. The Armenian American Medical Society is approved by the Medical Board of California to provide Continuing Medical Education credits to Medical Board of California licensees.
On Sunday, February 23, 2014, Armenian Bar Association Chair Garo Ghazarian was invited to speak during a memorial service honoring the memory of Armenian Army Lieutenant Gurgen Margaryan who was axed to death in his sleep during a NATO training program in Hungary by an Azeribaijani soldier Ramil Safarov. The memorial service was organized by the United Young Armenians and took place before the Azeri consulate in Los Angeles. Chair Ghazarian spoke of the ongoing disregard by the Azeri government of the ceasefire in Artsakh. He spoke of the international community’s condemnation of the Azeri government’s pardon of the axe murderer Safarov. Following the address to the audience, Chair Ghazarian participated in an interview with Armenia’s H1 news channel.

Dear President Obama:

The Armenian Bar Association has written to you in the not too distant past regarding issues of monumental importance to your Armenian-American constituents about the plight of freedom-deserving people here and around the world.

What is at stake now is the very foundation on which our country rose to positions of domestic stability and worldwide leadership: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

More so than ever before, this letter comes to you in the most exigent of circumstances and with the utmost urgency calling for your immediate attention.

With this communication, we bring to you the collective concerns and expectations of our hundreds of members and thousands of supporters, from our lawyers, judges, law professors and law students, to, indeed, the common concerns of the one million Armenian Americans, buffeted by the good wishes of more than ten million Armenians of the world.

We ask that the United States of America, our Congress, and specifically your Administration, take concrete steps to ensure the now-shattered safety of the Armenian inhabitants of Syria, and in particular those of Aleppo and Kessab.

The restraint which you have shown, thus far, has unfortunately led to more, not less, bloodshed and dislocation in Syria. It has caused the peaceful Armenian community of Aleppo to be victimized and the entire region of Kessab to be evacuated. Most of those fleeing have done so with only the clothes on their backs and the fear in their hearts. The few who have remained behind have been taken as hostages by the Syrian rebels.

These calamities are reminiscent of the tragic circumstances leading up to the Armenian Genocide, which you so eloquently spoke about and readily and accurately referred to as a historical fact, while campaigning to be elected president of our country. You promised to recognize the Armenian Genocide once you were elected president, but that’s a different story deserving of an audience with you before the Genocide’s Centennial on April 24, 2015.

For now, it must be said that your Administration's continued and tacit approval of the upheaval in Syria has wrought further despair upon the Armenians in that country. This, Mr. President, frankly speaking, does not become our great nation.

How many towns, villages and cities must be destroyed and how many thousands of Armenians must be homeless, yet again, for human rights and innocent lives to once again become our top priority?

Will the additional slaughters of civilians, or murders of children, or rapes of women cause you to reconsider your position? Would further pillaging and uprooting of Armenians from their ancestral homes finally remind you of the Armenian Genocide and history repeating itself while our government sits idly by?

Thus far, the silence and the inaction from the White House and our State Department have been, with all due respect, unacceptable.

We can no longer be satisfied with statements such as “We are doing all we can behind the scenes and are working quietly with our Allies.” We have heard that before and it defies the reality of the present catastrophe for innocent civilians. Good faith negotiations and traditional diplomacy are not going to save the last remaining Christians in their native lands.

Our country’s principal ally, not so ironically, Genocide-denying Turkey, is complicit in this most recent dispossession of Armenians from their homes and homeland.
The incursion from Turkey into the town and villages of Kessab in Syria, and the ensuing carnage, the reported killings, and the taking of Armenians as hostages, should be met with your condemnation and strategic plan of recovery, restitution and return.

We ask that you voice your support to our concerns in meaningful ways; we call for your intervention with U.S. allies in the region on our behalf and in support of the safety and security of the displaced Armenians of Syria in Kessab, Aleppo and beyond; and finally, we ask that you act with great urgency, conviction, and in a manner befitting the leader of the free world.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Respectfully,

Garo B. Ghazarian
President & Chairman

Edvin Minassian, Chair Ex-Officio
Armen Hovannisian, Vice-Chair
Harry Dikranian, Vice Chair
Sara Bedirian, Treasurer
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Executive Committee,
Board of Governors,
Armenian Bar Association

WESTERN DIOCESE OF THE
ARMENIAN CHURCH HONORS
ARMENBAR BOARD OF GOVERNORS
MEMBERS SARA BEDIRIAN AND
GERARD KASSABIAN

On the evening of December 7, 2013, Armenian Bar Association Board of Governor members Sara Bedirian and Gerard Kassabian were honored for their outstanding community service during the 10th Annual Christmas Gala Dinner held at the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church in Burbank, California.

Over 500 guests were in attendance to see the special presentation presided over by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian who presented Ms. Bedirian and Mr. Kassabian with a plaque recognizing their exceptional efforts to assist others. The presentation of the plagues was preceded by a video presentation featuring Ms. Bedirian and Mr. Kassabian.

Ms. Bedirian is the Treasurer of the Armenian Bar Association and has been a member for over 20 years. She is serving her second term as a Board of Governor member. She is a solo practitioner in the City of Glendale.

Gerard Kassabian is a member of the Board of Governors of the Armenian Bar Association. He is presently in his first term as a board member and he has already spearheaded several very successful events for the Armenian Bar Association, including the ever popular “Soirees” which have been held in Beverly Hills and have drawn over 300 guests. He has also hosted events aimed at providing support for the Armenian Bar Association Southwestern University Law School, Armenian Justice Ministry Fellowship.

ARMENBAR AND THE ARMENIAN
AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
TEAM UP FOR A MEDICAL-LEGAL
CONTINUING EDUCATION BONANZA

On Saturday March 15, 2014, Armenian Bar Association Chairman Garo Ghazarian and Board members Michael Amerian and Ray Aghaian were featured guest speakers at the Armenian American Medical Society’s Third Annual Continuing Medical Education Conference held at the Glendale Hilton Hotel.

Over 100 medical professionals were in attendance for the educational program. Ghazarian and Amerian provided a dynamic medical-legal overview of a drunk driving case from both the prosecutorial and defense perspectives. The audience was informed about legal standards that apply in impaired driving cases. They were educated about the different ways law enforcement measures a person’s blood alcohol levels. Ghazarian and Amerian also described some of the intricacies of a trial of a drunk driving case.

Ray Aghaian’s presentation concerned white collar criminal issues that sometimes arise in the medical field.

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian joined by the evening’s honorees Sara Bedirian and Gerard Kassabian and other members of the Armenian Bar Association at the Western Diocese’s 10th Annual Christmas Gala Dinner
AN UPDATE ON CASES WHERE ARMENBAR PARTICIPATES AS AMICUS CURIAE
AND OTHER CASES THAT INVOLVE ISSUES OF CONCERN TO
THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY

MOVSESIAN—US SUPREME COURT
REJECTS WRIT OF CERTIORARI

The United States Supreme Court denied a petition for a writ of certiorari from the En Banc decision of the United States Court of Appeals, Ninth District, upholding dismissal of the case of Movsesian vs. Victoria Versicherung.

The Armenian Bar Association participated as an amicus curiae in the case asking the High Court to overturn the Ninth Circuit’s decision finding that California Code of Civil Procedure section 354.4(c), which extended the statute of limitations for bringing claims under life insurance policies issued during the period of the Armenian Genocide, was preempted by the federal government’s power to determine matters of foreign policy under the theory of field preemption.

ECHR vs. PERINCEK

The Armenian Bar Association recently sent a letter to Switzerland’s Ambassador to the United States following the decision of the European Court of Human Rights striking down a Swiss law that made it a criminal offense to deny the crime of the Armenian Genocide. The letter is reprinted here in its entirety:

Mr. Manuel Sager, Ambassador of Switzerland to the United States of America
Embassy of Switzerland
2900 Cathedral Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Ambassador Sager,

On December 17, 2013, a Chamber judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (hereinafter, the “ECHR”), in the case of Perinçek vs. Switzerland (application no. 27510/08), held that Article 261bis, paragraph 4 of the Swiss Criminal Code violates Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The majority judgment is neither final nor binding and the delay to refer the decision to the Grand Chamber of the Court expires on March 17, 2014.

The Armenian Bar Association is the largest, most diverse group of Armenian-American judges, lawyers, law professors and students united by the greatest—and often elusive—universal interest, namely justice. We vigorously condemn what we consider as a blatant travesty of justice.

Given the powerful dissent of Judges Vučinić and Pinto de Albuquerque, we are confident that the Grand Chamber of the Court will agree that the case deserves further examination, to reverse the majority decision and deliver a just final judgment, upholding Swiss Law.

With this non-final ruling, the ECHR casts a shadow of doubt on the veracity of the Armenian Genocide. Under the guise of protecting freedom of expression, the court tramples on universal values against inciting hatred, and abuse of rights. The judgment also risks creating an unfortunate legal precedent for all abhorrent versions of denial and hate speech, thereby establishing a blueprint of immunity that would encourage future perpetrators of genocide.

The decision further enhances the credibility of individuals such as Mr. Doğu Perinçek, who has been convicted to life in prison in Turkey, under conspiracy and various other charges.
The Armenian Bar Association thanks the following annual sponsors for their generous contributions and continued support:

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AIMS AND STRUCTURE

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COMMITTED TO SERVE

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 by-laws, 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.

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

ARMENIAN BAR ASSOCIATION

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