

Armenian Community Quarterly Newsletter

**Produced by the Office of the Armenian Representative
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My fellow Armenians and friends

The final quarter of 2008 was a very active time for our office, with many successful events as well as state and official visits abroad.

In October, I attended a conference in Strasbourg for the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities as the only Representative from the Religious Minority groups of Cyprus.

A meeting organised by the Society of Pensioners took place at the Utudjian Hall in November, where senior members of our community were briefed about their rights and the latest developments on legal issues. The Justice Minister of Armenia, Kevork Danielyan, and his Deputy, Emil Babayan, visited Cyprus and later in the month, Cyprus President Demetris Christofias inaugurated the new Nareg building in Limasol. I also accompanied the President of the House of Representatives, Marios Garoyian, who paid an official and historic visit to Armenia.

Later in November I joined the official delegation headed by the Catholicos of Cilicia, Aram I, during a visit to the Vatican where we were received by Pope Benedict XVI.

On the cultural side, the performance of the Cadence Ensemble at the Latsia Town Hall was a great success.

Opening a new chapter in our community's history, we organised the first gathering of Armenians living and working in Paphos on December 7 that coincided with the anniversary of the devastating earthquake in Armenia in 1988. Holy mass and a memorial service was held at the Ayios Georgios Greek Orthodox church and a reception followed at the St George hotel where members of the community elected a representative committee.

All the abovementioned activities and events are organised with the aim of preserving our national, educational, cultural, religious and social identity.

I wish you all a healthy new year in 2009, with the hope that all your wishes come true.

Vartkes Mahdessian

Armenian Representative in the Cyprus House of Representatives.

3-MONTHLY REPORT: The Office continued to deal with issues related to work and residency permits, where applications for those who have stayed for four years are getting stricter. It is now very difficult to renew visitor's permits for those who have stayed for more than 6 months, as requirements include bank guarantees and bank accounts, medical and health insurance, as well as proof of financial independence.

Four more cases of naturalisation were approved and more cases are expected to be approved in the near future.

STRASBOURG CONFERENCE: A conference organised by the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities took place in Strasbourg on October 9-10 that coincided with this institution's 10th anniversary. Through his participation at the conference, Mr Mahdessian made some recommendations as regards the functions of the Framework Convention. During the drafting of the final declaration of the conference, Mr Mahdessian pointed out that while referring to the major events of the 19th and 20th centuries, such as the two World Wars, the Jewish Holocaust, the Cold War, etc., there was no mention of the term "Genocide". Some delegates put forward their arguments but 'Genocide' was finally accepted into the document.

During the conference, Mr Mahdessian raised the issue of the difficulty to attain public posts and some other legal obstacles. He also attended an exhibition where Cypriot Armenian artist Tatiana Ferahian had an exhibit.

COUNCIL OF SENIORS: More than 60 senior citizens attended a special seminar held at the Utudjian Hall on November 2. The event was organised by the members of the Council of Elders, Anahid Eskidjian and Elsie Utudjian, in cooperation with the Cyprus Society of Pensioners. The General Secretary of the Society, Costas Skarparis, explained the rights and benefits of senior citizens, as well as future developments of interest to pensioners. He was accompanied by Markos Tsiftes and Christos Philippou and discussion followed.

JUSTICE MINISTER'S VISIT: Armenia's Minister of Justice, Kevork Tanielyan and Deputy Minister Emil Babayan visited Cyprus on November 3-5 at the invitation of their counterpart, Dr Kypros Chrysostomides. Mr Mahdessian attended some of the meetings where issues of mutual concern were discussed by the two ministers. Mr Danielyan and Mr Babayan were also received by the President of the House of Representatives, Marios Garoyian, and visited the Armenian Prelature in Nicosia. Mr and Mrs Mahdessian hosted a private dinner for the two officials, was attended by Archbishop Varoujan, the Ambassador of Armenia, Justice Ministry officials and community representatives.

NAREG NEW BUILDING: President Demetris Christofias inaugurated the new building of the Nareg Elementary School in Limassol on November 5, built on the site of the old school house. A large group of members of the community attended the event, as did community and school officials. In his speech, Mr Mahdessian recalled the efforts of his predecessors, Bedros Kalaydjian and Dr Vahakn Atamian, during the planning stage of the project.

HOUSE PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO ARMENIA: On November 11-14, the President of the House of Representatives, Marios Garoyian, accompanied by the

Armenian Representative, Vartkes Mahdessian, paid an official and historic visit to Armenia. The existing warm relations between the two countries were strengthened even further as a result of this visit, as the Cyprus House President was received by all the leading officials of the state – President of the Republic Serzh Sarkissian and Prime Minister Tigran Sarkissian, National Assembly President Hovik Abrahamian and Foreign Minister Edouard Nalbandian. Mr Garoyian addressed the National Assembly where he reiterated Cyprus' support towards the young Republic of Armenia.

On November 12, the Cyprus House President and Mr Mahdessian paid tribute at the Genocide Memorial Monument at Dzidzernagapert where they laid flowers and Mr Garoyian planted a 'memorial tree'. The following day they visited Etchmiadzin and the museum of the Holy See of Armenia, before returning to Cyprus.

VISIT TO THE VATICAN: On November 22-26, His Beatitude Aram I Catholicos of Greater Cilicia paid an official visit to the Vatican on the invitation of Pope Benedict XVI, accompanied by representatives from the communities of Cilicia's domain, including Mr and Mrs Mahdessian. The purpose of the visit was to re-establish the strong foundations on which the relations between the Vatican and the House of Cilicia are based. The delegation also paid a visit to Armenia's Ambassadors to the Holy See, Tigran Samouelian.

'CADENCE' IN CONCERT: Mr Mahdessian and the Representative's Cultural Committee invited the 'Cadence' Ensemble from Armenia that gave a single and unforgettable concert at the Latsia Municipal Hall on November 28. The unique programme started with contemporary orchestrations of Armenian classics by Gomidas, Sayat Nova and Khatchadourian. The second part picked up a different tempo with Tango by Piazzola, works of music that Cadence is so famous for. The group of five artists also visited the Nareg school in Nicosia, the Armenian prelature and church, the grounds of the Melkonian Educational Institute and other sights, while the founder of 'Cadence' and lead pianist Armen Babakhanian gave an interview to Armenian Radio that was broadcast on CyBC on December 13.

ARMENIANS IN PAPHOS: The first-ever gathering of Armenians in Paphos took place on December 7, organised by the Prelature and the Armenian Representative's office. The event coincided with the 20th anniversary of the earthquake that devastated Armenia and started with Mass, followed by a memorial service at the Ayios Georgios church, by kind permission of Bishop Georgios of Paphos. A reception followed at the nearby St George hotel, where more than 100 people attended, with Representative Vartkes Mahdessian addressing the gathering. Also present were the chairmen of the Church and Lay committees of the Prelature, Sebouh Tavitian and Dr Antranig Ashdjian.

Various issues were discussed at the meeting, including a need for a day-school for the children of Armenian workers living in Paphos, more frequent church services and community life within an Armenian surrounding.

OTHER EVENTS: Representative Mahdessian sent the following congratulatory letters on behalf of the Armenian community of Cyprus:

- on October 2 to the leadership and the players of the **Anorthosis** refugee football club that achieved great success in the European championships;

- on November 10 to Cypriot Armenian artist **Tatiana Ferahian** for winning a gold medal at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Fine Arts exhibition;
- on November 10 to **Vera Tavitian** for being elected to the central committee of the Armenian Relief Society (HOM);
- on December 10 to Republic President and chairman of the Armenian chess federation, Serzh Sarkissian, when the **Armenian men's chess squad** won the 38th World Olympiad.

Veteran Scoutmaster **Artin Anmahouni** was honoured on October 15 by the Senior Scouts Association of Nicosia that celebrated its 25th anniversary. Mr Mahdessian attended the event and congratulated Mr Anmahouni for his years' of dedication to the Scouting movement.

On October 22, Mr Mahdessian attended the **opening of the Alpha Bank branch** in Aglandjia and congratulated Senior Manager Gregoris Timbalexis for the success of the branch and for appointing **Vicken Parikian** as Branch Manager.

On December 19, Mr Mahdessian and Rev. Momig Habeshian visited the **Central Prisons** and met with Armenians held there.

On December 25, Mr and Mrs Mahdessian attended Mass at the **Sourp Stepanos Armenian church** in Larnaca on the occasion of the St Stephan name day.

On December 25, Mr and Mrs Mahdessian attended the annual dinner dance at the Hilton Hotel organised by the **AYMA club**.

Vartkes and Maggie Mahdessian
congratulate all Armenians in Cyprus
on the occasion of the New Year and Armenian Christmas
wishing them Health and Happiness

and convey to all the people of Cyprus and Armenia wishes of
progress, prosperity and peaceful resolution
