

Armenian Community Quarterly Newsletter
Produced by the Office of the Armenian Representative
in the House of Representatives of Cyprus, Mr Vartkes Mahdessian
9 B&C Kastorias Str., Ayia Paraskevi, 2002 Strovolos
Tel. 22 454540, Fax. 22 424642, e-mail: office@armenianmp.com

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My fellow Armenians and friends

In the last two editions of *Lradou* I expressed serious concerns about two issues that have had a direct impact on the present state and future survival of our community – the Melkonian Educational Institute and the Magaravank Monastery.

I had initially planned to start my introduction to the present edition of *Lradou* with my best wishes for the new school year, but the events of the past month oblige me to refer to the signing of the Armenia-Turkey protocols and the subsequent dilemma that arose, whose rapid development created a new crisis both within Armenia and in Diaspora communities.

On the 28th of September, I received, through the Armenian Embassy in Greece, an invitation from the President of the Republic of Armenia, Serzh Sarkissian, to attend a pan-Armenian conference in France, together with other representatives of political and community organisations. Due to other commitments, instead of France, I joined the meeting taking place in Beirut on the 6th of October.

Needless to say I witnessed the frustration of the Armenians of Lebanon and the tense atmosphere during the meeting. Generally, the speeches cautioned the leadership of Armenia about the dangers hidden behind the protocols that determined the establishment of diplomatic relations, especially as regards the issue of the Genocide, the return of historical lands and the right of self-determination for Artsakh.

I believe that we cannot approach a matter of such critical importance to all Armenians with sentiment alone. If we are to establish diplomatic relations, let us be vigilant and remain firm in our demands for our rightful claims and recognition of the Genocide. Let us stay clear of extreme emotions and move ahead, step by step, while not jeopardising the everlasting link between Armenia, the Diaspora and Kharapagh. There is no power in the world that can cause us greater harm or destroy us, than what we can do to ourselves by disagreement, intolerance and short-sighted politics. We should therefore, be wise and cooperate in order to continue with our efforts to maintain our national identity and with our struggle for the Armenian Cause. Only time will evaluate the results of these latest developments.

As regards to official events in the past three months, I accompanied President Demetris Christofias on his state visit to Armenia from July 5th to 7th and during September 2 to 4 the President of the House of Representatives, Marios Garoyian, on his visit to Lebanon. More details about these visits are available in the following page of this *Lradou*.

As I had informed you in the last issue of *Lradou*, the world famous Komitas Quartet will perform at the Pallas theatre in Nicosia on Saturday, October 31, as part of our Cyprus-Armenia cultural programme. Details are available within this newsletter and the public is requested to secure tickets in advance from the Armenian Representative's office.

On Wednesday, November 18, a workshop and public discussion will take place at the Utudjian Hall of the Armenian Prelature in Nicosia on "Prevention of Addictions" to be presented by neurologist and psychologist, Dr. Kyriakos Veresies. Youngsters over 10 years old and parents are urged to attend.

I hope you appreciate these events that aim to enrich our community and cultural life, by supporting them with your presence.

Vartkes Mahdessian

Representative of the Armenian Community in Cyprus

3-MONTHLY REPORT: One more case of naturalisation was concluded in August, due to the perseverance and personal intervention of Mr. Vartkes Mahdessian. The applicant's file was frozen for some reasons, despite to the fact that she had lived in Cyprus for many years.

CYPRUS PRESIDENT VISITS ARMENIA: The President of the Republic of Cyprus, HE Demetris Christofias, was in Armenia on a state visit on July 6 and 7, accompanied by a high-level delegation, including the Armenian Representative, Mr. Vartkes Mahdessian.

The heads-of-state meeting between Mr. Christofias and his Armenian counterpart, Serzh Sarkssian, reinstated and further strengthened the close relations between the two countries. President Christofias confirmed in his statements that Armenia has a strong ally and friend within the European Union.

The Cyprus President also had meetings with Prime Minister Dickran Sarkssian and Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian. Upon his arrival in Armenia, Mr. Christofias and the First Lady also visited the Holy Cathedral and museum at Etchmiadzin and were received by Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenia.

The President and all the members of the Cypriot delegation paid their respects to the victims of the Genocide and visited the Dzidzernagapert

memorial, after which they also visited historical landmarks such as the Madenataran and the historical Garni and Keghart shrines.

GENOCIDE CONGRESS IN LEBANON: The Armenian National Committee of the Middle East and the Haigazian University organised a conference on “The Armenian Genocide and International Law” held in Beirut during September 2 to 4, where more than 80 historians, intellectuals and political leaders were invited.

The guest of honour was the President of the Cyprus House of Representatives, Marios Garoyian, who was accompanied on his two-day visit by Armenian Representative Vartkes Mahdessian.

In his keynote address, Mr. Garoyian said that justice can only be secured through recognition, condemnation and activation, adding that national aims can only be achieved through collective efforts and cooperation.

On September 3, Aram I Catholicos of Cilicia received Marios Garoyian, upon whom he bestowed the Order of Chevalier in appreciation of his continued contribution to all Armenian issues. The ceremony at the Holy See of Cilicia in Antelias was attended by the Armenian Representatives of Cyprus and Lebanon and other Armenian community officials from Lebanon.

During his visit, Mr. Garoyian also met with the President of Lebanon, Gen. Michel Suleyman and the Speaker of Parliament, Nabih Berri.

Upon his return to Cyprus, Representative Mahdessian sent a letter of congratulations on behalf of all the Armenian community of Cyprus to House President Marios Garoyian for being bestowed with the Order of Chevalier noting that the Armenians of Cyprus follow with great interest his efforts and actions to the benefit of the Armenian nation.

OTHER ACTIVITIES: On July 3, Mr Mahdessian met Defence Minister Costas Papacostas to review issues related to national service;

- on July 9, the Armenian Representative and members of the Melkonian Alumni association met with Interior Minister Neoklis Sylikiotis where they discussed issues related to the Melkonian school;
- on July 27, the same delegation had a similar meeting with the Rector of the University of Cyprus, Dr. Stavros Zenios;
- on September 7, Mr. Mahdessian discussed issues of importance to the community with Justice Minister, Loucas Louca;
- on September 22, the Armenian Representative had a joint meeting with the two AKEL Euro MPs, Kyriakos Triantafyllides and Takis Hadjidemetriou, to brief them on developments regarding the Armenian community of Cyprus;
- on September 27, Mr. and Mrs. Mahdessian attended the annual celebration of the consecration of the Sourp Kevork Armenian church in Limassol.

On September 30, a special ceremony took place in the main hall of the Armenian Prelature in Nicosia, where veteran Scoutmaster Artin Anmahouni received the Order of General Antranig, the highest of its kind bestowed upon a civilian by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia, for his generous donation to the army. The honour was bestowed upon Artin Anmahouni by Ambassador Vahram Gazhoyan, representing Defence Minister Seyran Ohanian. Also present at the ceremony were Representative Vartkes Mahdessian, Archbishop Varoujan Hergelian, and other members of the church lay and executive committees.

LAWS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

Ministry of Finance – various grants and aid

The Ministry of Finance has over the years contributed financial aid to all entitled Cypriot citizens and permanent residents.

Some of these grants are:

- University subsidy, EUR 2,562.90 per year, with an additional EUR 854.30 per student for families with at least three children;
- Annual grant of EUR 409.99 per unmarried child up to 23-25 years old who are living with their parents, regardless of family income. This amount is subject to an increase in the case of low-income families and those with multiple children;
- Ex gratis (only once) grant of EUR 3,417.20 – 5,125.30 to large families for the purchase of a car, based on family income and welfare benefits;
- Grant of EUR 15,377.41 – 18,794.62 for the purchase of a vehicle for physically handicapped persons by birth or as a result of an accident;
- Annual grant of EUR 3,417.20 for the blind (twice yearly);
- First-home grant to build or buy a house or apartment, with the condition that this will become the main home of the family for 10 years, it is no more than 250 sq.m. and the approval by the Town Planning Commission secured after 01.05.2004. The amount of the grant is subject to the type and value of the new home.

Needless to say that all grants and subsidies require a formal application. For more information contact the Ministry of Finance (Tel. 22-804023 or 22-450046) or any Citizens' Bureau in Cyprus.

We kindly request all readers of *Lradou* to inform the Representative's Office of any address change