

HAYTOUG

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EDITORIAL

On February 18th 2013, the unexpected happened. An Armenian public fed up with the status-quo, went out to vote and shattered all expectations. The people of Armenia rose above the bribes, corruption, and the oligarchy, to make their voices heard. The elections, which were still marred by fraud, resulted in the Barevoloution led by Heritage party candidate Raffi Hovanissian. The movement which was met by great excitement and enthusiasm by the public has since calmed, but the reasons that caused the uproar are still very much alive and the Armenian people are still hungry for change.

Elections matter. That's the reason the party in power does everything in its hands to rig and falsify the results in its favor. At the same time, true change will not come from a ballot box alone. It requires an educated and vigilant public, something no presidential candidate has ever focused or worked on in Armenia. Changing who's in office will not change the fundamental problems in our homeland, that takes organizing and activism. Continuous socio-economic hardships cannot be met with a rally every five years, but rather an alert public who is willing to carry the fight for a better Armenia on a daily basis. Our movement cannot wait for a candidate to come and liberate us, we must liberate ourselves.

Liberation will not come over night. Nor will it come immediately with the change of political scenery. Similar to an approaching storm, the movement builds slowly as we work to educate the youth, work with citizens, and protect the welfare of those who may not be able to protect it themselves. Like a hurricane once in full motion, no government, oligarch or corporation can stand in

the way of an awakened and active public.

Our history is long and full of hardship and resilience. However, the will and resolve of our people is unquestionable. As survivors throughout much of our existence, we must harness that strength and wisdom, combining it with the resources of a new generation ready for change. We should no longer struggle to survive, but work to thrive in our homeland. Changing who's in office will not change the fundamental problems in Armenia. That takes ORGANIZING and activism.

Again, voting is important. But the real work for a brighter future needs to take place all year round on the ground, not just pushing a button for a leader every couple of years. Changing who's in office will not change the fundamental problems in Armenia. That takes ORGANIZING and activism.

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STEAL THIS ELECTION!

Razmig Sarkissian

The 58% “solid majority” Serzh Sargsyan secured to win the 2013 Armenian presidential election against opposition candidate Raffi Hovannisian was achieved the same way past Armenian presidential incumbents have won their reelections: by lying, cheating and stealing.

But how did Sargsyan shore up such a large percentage of the vote, and how exactly does one steal a presidential election?

“Usually government and authorities are using a large arsenal of voting violations,” explained Sona Ayvazyan, executive director of Transparency International, a watchdog NGO that has fought against corruption in Armenia since 2003. Ayvazyan says that in the past, abuse of administrative resources, abuse of voter lists, carousel voting, ballot stuffing, falsification of ballot numbers, and many other factors have played a role in election fraud.

Thanks to watchdog media outlets, social media, a much more fed-up and vigilant voting public, and the hubris (or perhaps incompetence) of Sargsyan’s election-rigging-machine, examples of these types of voting violations were widely documented on February 18. Let’s take a look at some specific examples.

Vanishing Ink

Multiple voting has long been an issue in Armenia’s parliamentary and presidential elections. To prevent this, a temporary ink stamp for passports was recently introduced. You vote,

you get stamped, and if you try to vote again, authorities will see the stamp and prevent you from voting. Sounds like a good idea —until it was revealed that authorities used vanishing ink. Seriously.

Within hours of polls opening on February 18, complaints began to flood in from voters indicating that the stamp on their passports had disappeared. Technically, the ink is supposed to disappear after 12 hours, well after the polls have closed, except in most cases the ink was oxidizing within 1 or 2 hours. And for the impatient re-voters who wouldn’t want to wait a whole hour, the ink could be easily wiped off with a wet towel. Many posted videos of this phenomenon and documented it on social media.

Misuse of Voter Lists

If you’re an Armenian citizen living outside of Armenia, you may have voted in the past election without even knowing about it! Scratching your head? Misuse of voter lists, which contain the names of eligible voters in Armenia, is one of the main enablers of electoral violations in Armenia.

“Voters lists include people who have left the country years ago,” explained Ayvazyan. “If there are about 500-600 thousand people missing from the country, their names are on these lists. We have a concern that these names are being used for supplying votes for different candidates.”

Sometimes, a duplicated passport is used to impersonate people on these

voter lists. Lur.am, an Armenian media outlet, posted a video on election day of somebody attempting to vote with someone else’s passport. The man in the video is asked what his birthday is and can’t remember. As an election observer looks over the passport, the man snatches it and runs out of the building as the observer chases him outside.

Perhaps the most absurd example came from Yerevan, Avan, 1/8 polling station. According to Human Rights Armenia, “a woman had told the Chair of the Commission that the voters list contained information about her deceased husband despite the fact that she had submitted all the necessary documents in order to delete the name of her husband from the list.” The Chair then asked the woman if she was sure her husband had died.

Organizations such as Transparency International have long been calling for authorities to release the names on these voter lists, to see who exactly is said to be voting in Armenia, but, unsurprisingly, authorities have refused.

Carousel Voting

Carousel voting is the driving around of busloads of voters to different precincts to cast multiple ballots.

In a beautiful instance of investigative journalism, two reporters from Armenian media outlet Civilnet, armed with a camera, caught one of these busses full of voters at precinct 13/2 in Yerevan. The reporters approached the bus and videotaped a woman inside, standing

at the front holding what is clearly a voter’s list.

The woman opens the door, “What happened, children?”

“What lists are those?” the reporters ask.

The woman closes the door immediately. She then changes her mind and opens the door again and repeats, “What happened?”

“We are asking what those lists are.”

“We have no lists,” she emphatically states and shuts the door again. People in the bus begin to close the blinds on the windows. They clearly seem to be bothered by the reporters’ presence.

A new woman now opens the door and begins to yell at the reports, indignantly telling them that it was toilet paper that they saw. The reporters are obviously unconvinced, but there is nothing else they can do.

Ballot Stuffing

One of the most widely cited and troubling examples of electoral fraud documented from this past election was reported by Narine Esmaele, an American-born election observer with Transparency International, in Artashat, precinct 17/5.

At around 2:30pm, Narine and another observer named Ardag Hambartsumian noticed a large group of people trying to enter the polling station, which has a maximum occupancy of 15 people.

In her official testimony Narine explained, “I asked the assigned cop to stop them and all of a sudden around 30 men entered and surrounded the

ballot box. I walked up and grabbed the arm of one of the men who was holding on to the box and he pushed me against the wall and held my hands. He kept me there until it was over.”

“I saw the commission’s secretary had opened the box and one of the other men poured in a bag full of ballots,” her testimony went on to say. “I estimated around 400 [ballots] since the count was at 500 about 20 min before hand and it seemed to have doubled. They ran out and everyone in the room pretended like nothing happened.”

Narine’s written and Youtube testimonies have been widely spread by the media and Hovannisian’s campaign as proof the election was stolen from him. Her testimony also prompted calls from Amnesty International among other groups urging authorities to investigate voter fraud and intimidation. Ironically, she is currently under investigation by Armenia’s authorities for her testimony.

These are only a few of countless violations that were reported by the people of Armenia. The Raffi for President website lists 107 election violations that they recorded, and many other websites have similarly exhaustive lists.

While this all may be disheartening to learn, the possibility for change does exist. For Ayvazyan, the key is in making “citizens stronger, to develop a society gets them out their apathy and puts trust in their power.”

With the popular protests that have spread across Armenia since Sargsyan’s February 18 electoral win, it truly seems that this shameful election was the straw that broke the camel’s back. The citizens of Armenia have seen and had enough.

AN ELECTION MONITOR'S ACCOUNT

Narine Esmaili

As the Armenian Presidential Elections come to a close, many assumptions can be made. One can say that the fraudulent electoral process is not shocking and is rather expected for a Post-Soviet nation. Others may assume that the citizens of Armenia are apathetic and unwilling to put an end to the oligarcial rule of the country. However, both are simple assumptions that have no real meaning. Yes, Armenia is a young country striving to avoid further economic and even violent trouble from her neighbors, but it is unfair to assume that even a devolving nation has not earned its wings for freedom and democracy. I was an observer for the Presidential elections that took place on Monday, February 18th. I witnessed many horrible things that day but I also witnessed hope in regards to democratizing Armenia.

When I first entered my assigned polling place in the village of Ardashad, I was greeted harshly and told to sit down and do my business without disturbing the work of the Central Electoral Commission or CEC, the governing body of the elections. Oppressing observers from their right of walking freely and watching the election is against both Armenian and international law. In fact, in a perfect world, the CEC and the observers would work together in harmony in order to stop any cheating or wrongful campaigning in the polling place. The members of the CEC, who expressed extreme loyalty to Serzh later on in the day, seemed to be apprehensive about the fact that two

observers from Yerevan were ready to take control of the situation and take note of any cheating. My reporting partner, Artak Hambardzumyan and I took note of carousel voting from the very start of the day. Carousel voting is a cheating process in which the same voters come back over and over again with different or false passports in order to vote for people abroad, the deceased or relatives that did not make it out to Election Day. However, it seemed as though our efforts to stop the cheating were getting in the way of the Republican Party proxies and their wonderful friends in the CEC.

Around 2:30 pm a group of 25-30 men entered the polling place and encircled the ballot box. I asked the police officer stationed at the door to ask the men to leave since the limit of voters in the room was 15. The officer ran out of the room at this point. I tried to approach the men, but one of them pushed me against the wall as to stop me from interfering with their task. I saw the secretary of the CEC open the ballot box. One of the men then dumped a large bag full of ballot into the box. Since the ballot box seemed to have doubled from the original amount of 500 voters at 2:00, I assumed around 400-500 ballots were added. The representative proxies, the other observers and other CEC members pretended nothing happened. My partner Artak and I were even harassed by the police and other 'friends' of the Republican party from further reporting what happened. However, the damage was done; I re-

ported the crime to my work organization Transparency International, to the OSCE, Civilnet, and various other news organizations within Armenia.

Election day proved that the Armenian people want a civil, free, and transparent society in which the government can be held accountable for their actions. The aftermath of Election Day reports as well as the protests and demonstrations exemplify this fact. The people are also weary of international organizations from further feeding to the political in-

district, the incumbent Serzh won by minute margins. After Serzh was an-



nounced the so-called winner of the elections, tens of thousands of people from all walks of life entered Freedom

speech given at these demonstrations in Freedom Square near the Opera acknowledges all the individuals that refused to take bribes and voted for whoever he or she wanted. Also, the martyrs of March 1st, 2008 are consistently recognized to remind the people that the fight against corruption is incessant and has transcended the last election to present day Armenia. It is hard to imagine living without such freedom, considering that the United States is fairly free and transparent, but I can truly see now that the saying of the old quote, "The revolution is not an apple



terests of the Republican Party. One of my co-workers, a brave activist named Lena, disturbed the OSCE conference that deemed the Armenian elections are smooth and fair (even after they saw what happened in my district). She read the distress of the Armenian people and brought international attention to that fact that the people are prepared for a civil society in which international bodies can proudly say they have relations with.

In many regions in which fraudulent activity took place, including my own

Square for three consecutive days to demonstrate that they do not want Serzh to represent Armenia to any further extent. Rather, they wanted the Heritage party and the leader, Raffi Hovannissian, the righteously elected President, to rule.

The Armenian people are not apathetic as some may easily assume, but rather they are awake and ready to demand their right to a democracy. The amount of people at each protest and demonstration is remarkable. It is as if the entire city of Yerevan is ready for anything. Each

that falls when it is ripe. You have to make it fall," is true. Armenia is ready to make that apple fall and the more help they get from the Diaspora in regards to support the better!

I encourage anyone interested in experiencing Armenia and gaining a perspective of the opinions and social processes of the Armenian people to sign up for Birthright Armenia. Without the Birthright Program, I would not have had the opportunity nor the financial means to have had this experience or impact.



AN INTERVIEW WITH RAFFI HOVANNISIAN

HAYTOUG: As a child growing up in California, did you ever envision that you would be here?

RAFFI: Armenia was very far away from Fresno, but I grew up singing the songs and dreaming the dreams of a united homeland. I never doubted that a free and independent Armenia was not just the dream of my grandparents, but a reality I would see with my own eyes.

HAYTOUG: What is the inspiration behind “Barevolution”?

RAFFI: During the campaign, I shook the hands of hundreds of thousands and said “Barev.” I wanted them to know that I believed in them, even if nobody else did, and if they believed in Armenia anything was possible. On election day they acted on that belief heroically. As we said barev to that belief, we now say barev -- and parev -- to a new Armenia.

HAYTOUG: What message would you give to your diasporan supporters?

RAFFI: Words into action.

HAYTOUG: What was the reason behind the hunger strike?

RAFFI: This was not just a hunger strike. It was a strike against the lies, fraud, and fear that has corrupted our republic for too long. This was a process of personal and political purification.

HAYTOUG: What are your demands from the Armenian Government?

RAFFI: To recognize the Armenian people’s victory of February 18, and obey the will of the citizens.

HAYTOUG: How can the youth in the diaspora help or contribute to the “Barevolution”?

RAFFI: Come on down.



Զգոյշ Գործի Հայաստանում

Վերժինի Թուլումեան

«Յեղափոխութիւնը կանգ չի առնի ոչ մի խորտակիչ ուժի առաջ, քանի գոյութիւն ունեն կեանքի տանջանքները, նա միայն կը փոխի իր ձեւը՝ յարմարուելով նոր պայմաններին եւ երբեք իր էութիւնը»։ Ռոստոմ

Ահա հասած ենք 21-րդ դար, երբ համաշխարհայնացումը գլոխը առած գացած է : Մենք սկսած ենք շեղիլ հայու իսկական տիպարէն եւ փնտրելու ինքնութենէն ու այսպիսով Հայ ազգային եւ մշակութային արժեքները կանգնեցուցած ենք հսկայ զագրելի պատկերի մը առջեւ: Մենք դարձած ենք կեղծիքներով առաջնորդուող:

Մենք՝ Հայ սփիւռքի զաւակներս, հասակ նետեցինք անառակ որդիի պատմութենէն բխած դասերով, ուր զաւակն էր ապերախտը: Սակայն այսօր պատկերը շրջուած է ու կը տեսնենք, թէ ինչպէս «հայրենիքի հայրը», կը դաւաճանէ իր որդիքը՝ Հայ ժողովուրդը եւ անոր իրաւունքները: Հայրենիքում Յեղափոխութեան գարունն է եւ այն անկիւնադարձային պիտի ըլլայ հայութեան համար: Արդէն փոփոխութեան փոթորիկը կը փչէ Հայաստանի բոլոր կողմերէն տարբեր պահանջներով եւ հեռանկարներով: Հայութիւնը հաւաքաբար դէմ յանդիման կը գտնուի բռնաբարուած իր իրաւունքներու փաստին եւ բերանը ջուր առած աշխարհի լռութիւնը խզելու անհրաժեշտութեան առջեւ:

Ընտրութեան օրը՝ Փետրուար 18ը, զուգահիւսեցաւ Փետրուարեան Ապստամբութեան օրուան, երբ Հայ ժողովուրդը ոտքի ելած էր մերժելու համայնավարներու բռնակալութիւնը: Այսօր մեր ազգը նորից ոտքի ելած է հայրենավաճառ իշխանութեան դէմ, որն իր բռնակալութեամբ ժողովուրդը հասցուցած է այնպիսի մի թշուառ վիճակի, որ միայն թշնամին կը հասցնէր: Մարդիկ այլեւս դժգոհ են այս կացութենէն եւ քաղաքակիրթ աշխարհին մէջ այսպիսի ընթացք չեն հանդուրժեր:

Փետրուարի 18-ին Հայը կրնար ունենալ սովորական օր մը ու լռութեամբ կուլ տար անարդար ընտրութիւնները, սակայն նրա ճնշուած կամքը պոռթկաց եւ ազատատենչ հոգին աղմուկ բարձրացնելով՝ «Հայաստանը մերն է» բողոքեց: Պարոն Նախագահ եւ սիրելի՛ կառավարութիւն, դուք եւ մենք պիտի գանք ու անցնինք, բայց Հայաստանը յաւերժ պիտի մնայ, ուրեմն ԶԳՈՅՇ ԳՈՐԾԻՐ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆՈՒՄ:

Ժողովուրդին կամքով էր, որ գերութեան շղթանները փշովեցին: Ժողովուրդին կամքով էր, որ Շուշին ազատագրուեց:

Ժողովուրդին կամքով էր, որ Արցախն ու Հայաստանը միացան: Եւ ժողովուրդին կամքն է, որ մենք ունենանք Ազատ, Անկախ, Միացեալ եւ Արդար Հայաստան:

THE SLEEPING GIANT IS AWAKE

When the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) election observers held their press conference on the morning after Armenia's presidential elections to congratulate Serzh Sargsyan's victory, the cynical among us folded their hands and cleared their throats to smugly say, "I told you so, nothing is going to change in Armenia."

And then everything changed.

During a question and answer session after the observers shamelessly called the February 18 elections free and fair with few irregularities, a group of young Armenians broke through a crowd of security and interrupted the entire press conference.

Lena Nazaryan defiantly broke free from the grip of a security guard and, holding an iPad in hand, began to read the activists' prepared statement on behalf of the people of Armenia.

"Dear political tourists, we have had enough of your efforts to legitimize the fraudulent elections," began the statement, and so began the post-election movement that has awakened the people of Armenia from a deep-Soviet slumber of cynicism and inaction.

By then, media outlets and social media websites were already ablaze with reports of election violations, fraud, intimidation and falsification of ballots. Everybody knew that Hovannisian was the real winner of the elections, and nobody was going to be quiet about it.

In the days that followed, crowds of hundreds surrounded the OSCE's main office and demanded they immediately leave the country for doing such a terrible job monitoring the elections.

Thousands gathered in Liberty Square for multiple rallies organized by a defiant Hovannisian, announcing that he had truly won the elections and that the time for justice had finally come. He offered Sargsyan the ultimatum of holding a second-round runoff, or a recount of the ballots.

Within a week, students at Yerevan State University began a massive boycott of their classes, marching around the city urging more students from other schools to join in. Protests had spread to the Diaspora as rallies in Los Angeles and New York were organized in front of local Armenian embassies demanding free and fair elections for the people of Armenia. Serj Tankian even wrote Sargsyan a letter stating, "Those who steal elections from my people are domestic enemies that need to be punished."

On February 28, Hovannisian announced a victory tour across the country. He visited cities and villages up and down Armenia, where thousands upon thousands of people turned out in rain, sleet and snow, to congratulate Raffi and to demonstrate their people power.

Hovannisian began to call this new movement the Barevolution. Under-scoring the power of love and peace in popular movements, Barevolution is a pun on the Armenian word for 'hello,' barev. It emphasizes that the movement is based on the power of people, and that it symbolizes the coming together of a strong civic society.

While some organizations and heads of states, such as Barack Obama, obliviously congratulated Serzh Sargsyan, a number of NGOs and international organizations began releasing data

challenging the results and sounding the alarm for massive fraud.

Policy Forum Armenia released a report stating that "Our results strongly indicate that the final outcome of the February 2013 election was subject to massive manipulations and interference and did not reflect the free will of the Armenian citizens."

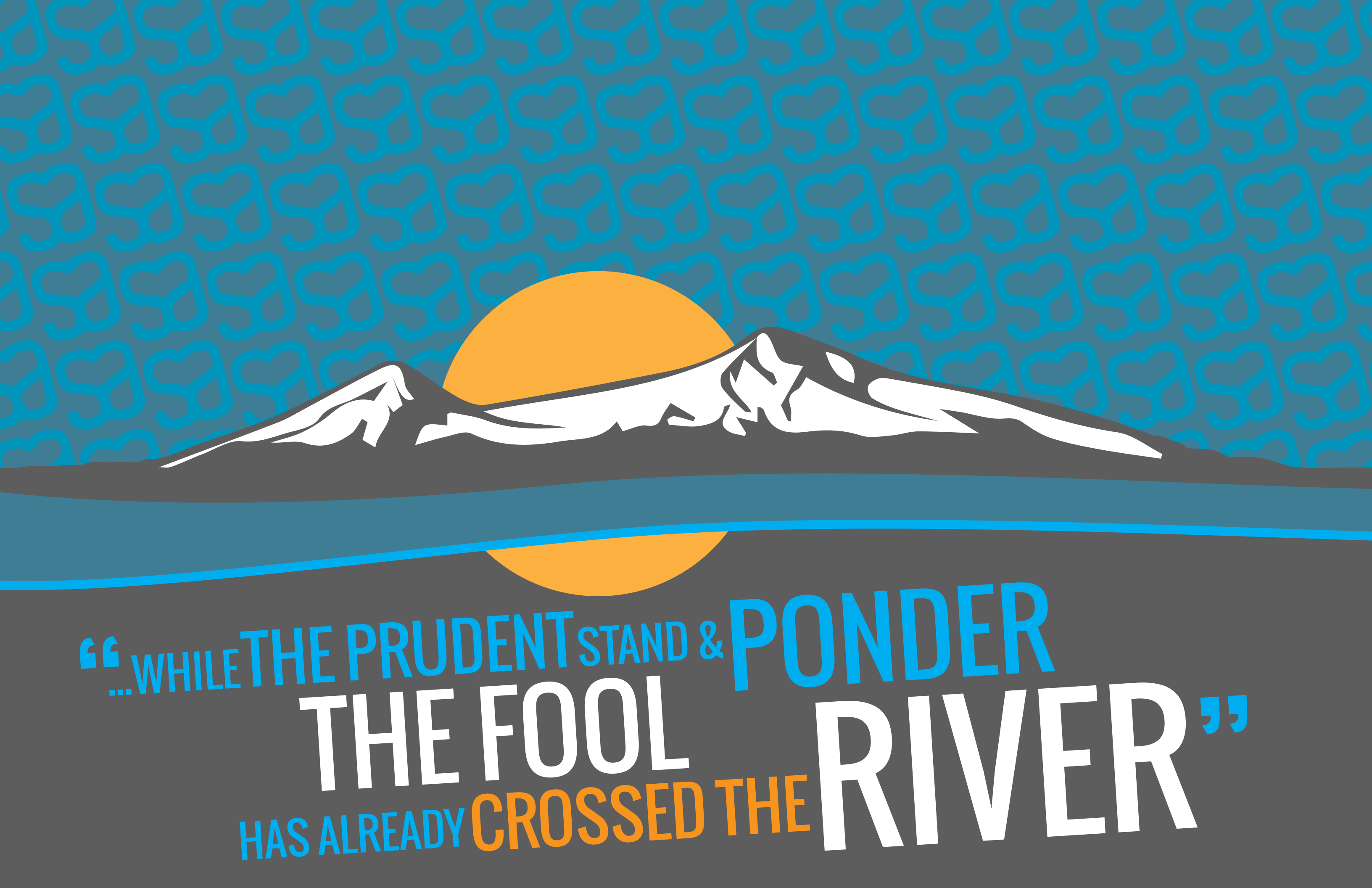
Amnesty International also released a report condemning the human rights violations that took place throughout the elections, and urged authorities to look into election violations.

On March 11, Hovannisian embarked on a 20 day hunger strike that ended on Easter. Sitting in Liberty Square, thousands came out to visit him, from musical artists such as Ruben Hakhverdyan and Bambir, to countless political leaders. He even prompted a hunger strike in solidarity in Los Angeles, led by local activist Ara Manoogian.

Hovannisian and Sargsyan have planned to meet for a second time to discuss their differences ahead of the presidential inauguration planned for April 9th. Hovannisian has stated that he will allow Sargsyan to be inaugurated as president over his dead body.

Raffi Hovannisian may have been the one to remove the lid off Pandora's box, but he is only the spark that lit a fuse that has been anxiously waiting to be lit. This movement is of the people by the people, who have for too long been denied the right to rule their homeland. While many obstacles still stand in the way, the pillars of a new democratic Armenia are being built. The people of Armenia are finally awake and they cannot be lulled back into sleep.





“...WHILE THE PRUDENT STAND & PONDER
THE FOOL
HAS ALREADY CROSSED THE RIVER”



www.SoseandAllen.com

Sosé & Allen's Legacy foundation will continue Sosé & Allen's vision by establishing programs and supporting existing programs aimed at bridging the gap between Armenia and its Diaspora, through emphasis on education, repatriation, and volunteerism within the homeland.

Contributions can be made to:

Sosé & Allen's Legacy Fund
104 N. Belmont St. Suite 313
Glendale, CA 91206



Rise Ararat!
fire-source of our people
While we look at you,
we wait...

The meek and the brave
have risen again
proud of the songs that
we sing.

But the shovel has long been
without employ
Turned into
the master of a single ditch
And it's been so long now that we've
been bored
of your words, your
podium pitch.

The ships have been prepared!
Look, it watches us from afar -
Wasn't it our God?
Wasn't it our only Mountain?

It was my exit...

The lights are on past midnight
Pain has fallen to our hearts-

Look!

Ararat is foaming at its mouth!

The ground begins to
gently shake
it's had enough of us...

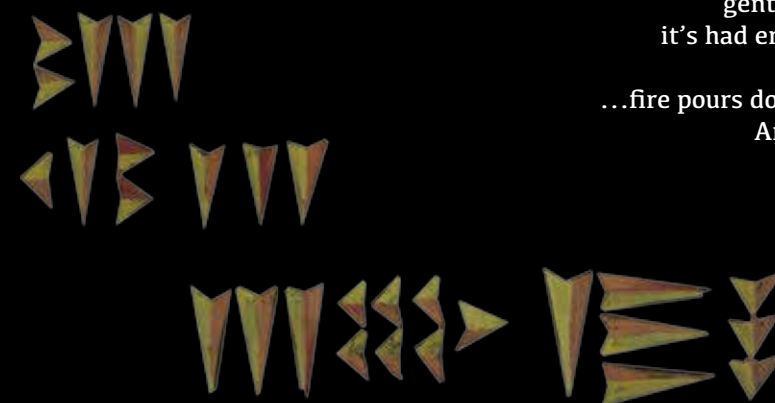
...fire pours down the foothills of
Ararat.

Pandemonium in the streets
Burning ears and burning nose
It's good that we are
not yet blind
staring from a distance
all this time.

Riddles passed from
word to mouth
We may solve it...
...we may win.

But we're late...

...and we've known,
that we'll never have a king again.



artHaroutioun.com

Artwork by DavidMkrtchyan.com

OUR FLEETING DIASPORA

Apo Sahagian

This was a difficult article to write. Because it deals with the present and future of the Diaspora, many people will naturally disagree with its premise. And though there are statements within the article that I myself have not yet fully come to terms with, I did want to write it nonetheless: for the sake of argument and alternative perspective.

One of these days, we're going to wake up and find our Diaspora has gone. There are certain ways that moment is going to transpire...

For almost a century now, our Diaspora has prospered, growing in influence, presence, and numbers. But what is all that worth when at the end of the day those same achievements lead you further from home than closer to it? What if our actions are only meant to sustain the Diaspora and not to actually lay the path of the 'veratartz'(return) to Armenia?

The Arab Spring not only exposed the dictatorships of the Middle East, it also exposed the fragility and sadness of the Armenian Diaspora. Syrian-Armenians are running away to Armenia by the thousands, effectively bringing the community's history to a probable end. Yet, Armenia is only a transit country to most- somewhere to land and take-off again for someplace further west.

Swept away by this promise of the west that haunts most people coming from the east, the Syrian-Armenians are understandably moving along because of their disbelief in Armenia and certain belief in the riches of the west. I hope for their sake that these often hollow promises do come to light.

But where does this leave the Diaspora? With bombs falling on their heads, Syrian Armenians still seek to once more drift from one foreign land to another, all the while overlooking their own homeland. This overlooking of Armenia is a sad reflection that despite the Diaspora's achievements, communities in the Diaspora have not laid the path of Veratartz. With all the assistance, contributions, and dedication it has given to Armenia, we still have not bared any actual fruit; the Diaspora has failed to anchor Armenians to Armenia.

I'm a son of the largest traditional Diaspora organizations. I've spent countless hours in their embrace, and have learned priceless principles as an Armenian. But never did I encounter a statement of Veratartz- not as an official policy. Of course, young idealists did utter a word or two about abandoning the Odarastan and heading to Hayastan. However these same words and aspirations were never sincerely, actively, and formally spoken by the

organizations themselves. Hence, what was the point of their achievements, activities, and persistence? Was it to remain on foreign lands, surrounded by foreign cultures, under foreign governments? Was it not to prepare the coming generations of the complexities of life in Armenia, the hardships, the advantages, the disadvantages, the final destination nonetheless? If that's not the case- which is it not- then its fair to say that the Diaspora has achieved nothing. Flashing official Genocide state-recognition at my face as Diasporan achievements won't do much when Diasporans are hesitant about returning to Armenia, and Syrian Armenians themselves abandon it considering they just arrived from hell.

Many will put the blame on Armenia itself, which is the easiest thing to do: that Armenia is run by a bunch of oligarchs whom will cheat the incoming Diasporans, that local Armenians themselves are abandoning Armenia so why should Diasporans leave the comforts of the West and head into the hardships of Armenia, etc. Most (though not all) of these concerns are legitimate and worthy of long contemplations. However, some of the blame should also be shoved unto the Diaspora for never tackling these issues.

How is it that an infinitesimal group of

“ But where does this leave the Diaspora? With bombs falling on their heads, Syrian Armenians still seek to once more drift from one foreign land to another, all the while overlooking their own homeland.

overweight -Sovietized oligarchs have intimidated the millions-strong Diaspora and its organizations? This Diaspora which time and time again adapted to changing realities, confronted difficulties head-on in foreign environments, prospered even under dictatorships (in the Middle East), and grew considerable sway in tough political arenas, this Diaspora cannot take on a couple of leftover Brats whom reminisce about the long-lost Soviet Union? How is it that our Diasporan organizations can influence the policies of foreign countries yet cannot have a single ounce of influence in Armenia's politics (especially in foreign policy and national issues)? I find it hard to believe that a diminutive roundtable of Mafiosos have the awe to intimidate the Diaspora to complete capitulation. How about the Diaspora begins lobbying in the Azkayin Joghov for the betterment of our independent Republic, to enhance the lives of the farmers in border villages whom face daily snipers from neighboring Azeri soldiers, to improve the economy so that the emigration halts, and to pave the way for the Diaspora to return home, among many other issues that need solutions.

We need to realize that the Diaspora is not going to last, as the Syrian-Armenians' tragedy is showing us. Its fate does have a last chapter, an inevitable end. Luckily we have a choice on how we want out. Either we go out as soaring victors or souring losers. The Diaspora must now go forth into its last fight, a final stand, and an epic conclusion. In most stories of legends and heroes, the protagonist goes out in self-sacrifice. This battle will be the Diaspora's May 28.

If the cornerstone of the Diaspora has been to uphold our heritage, then it is crucial that we comprehend that the only way to win the battle of upholding



our Armenian heritage is to return to Armenia...en masse. Its time to begin officially laying the path to Veratartz, in economic and social terms; its time to look at Armenia's government in the eyes and declare that we are no longer sending tons of money, we are sending ourselves...we are the hard currency. Its time to populate Artsakh and the Armenian countryside. It's time to create economic veracities to make all this possible. If not, then we're heading for the other way out.

Assimilation long ago crept into the Diaspora and it will take its toll gradually and effectively. Each new generation will be less Armenized- no need to argue about this. If the Diasporan organizations carry on the same route as they have- which do not realistically and efficiently direct us to Armenia-, combined with the ever growing assimilation, then they are only crafting their own coffins. The Diaspora cannot be sustained; it is not a machine. It is a fabric of human beings instilled with human patterns. Eventually, it will succumb to its humanity; it will wither away...quietly.

To our forefathers whom were slaughtered out of the mountains during the Genocide, the Diaspora was most likely a depressing reminder that the homeland was lost and our nation would have to roam the earth with no place to

call home. Today with an independent Armenia I believe that our forefathers- whom were more or less the architects of the Diaspora- would pack up their belongings and return home, locking behind them the days of the Diaspora.

One of these days, we're going to wake up and find our Diaspora has gone. And I'm going to walk out to my balcony, feel the highland breeze swirl around me, stretch my arms in the enclosure of the sunlight, and gaze into the bittersweet magnificence of Ararat. For a minute or two I will remember our journey of return. How the Diaspora succeeded in collecting its children and re-placing them in the bosom of their motherland. I will be home.

Or, I will walk out to my balcony, gaze into Ararat and think of how I was one of the last ones who got out Armenian. I will remember the time when the Diaspora began to falter because it had no laid direction as to where it wanted to go, what it needed to do. I will be home...they will be lost.

I do realize the language of the article is peppered with idealism and naivety, and that such qualities often are blinded by passion and innocence. Yet maybe it is with such rash emotions that we can get somewhere. I leave it to you to decide the path.



We Are Few BUT NOT FOR LONG

By Loosi Azarian

We are few, but we are Armenian. For decades, Armenian students at colleges and universities across the nation seeking companionship and a sense of community have come together to form Armenian clubs, much as Armenian diasporas from all over the world.

As these students laughed, sang, and cried, together, they not only created homes away from their familial homes, but a new Armenia on each campus. These tight knit communities helped foster Armenian culture and helped promote it to Armenians and non-Armenians alike. As the number of Armenian students at universities multiplied, these students organized and mobilized.

Each Armenian Student Association is comprised of a passionate group of individuals who choose to set aside from their studies to promote Armenian leadership, scholarship, culture, and advocacy.

And yet, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The All-Armenian Student Association provides an avenue through which the individual ASA's communicate with one another and create a dialogue that promotes coordination. It consists of collegiate Armenian organizations from colleges all over the state of California.

The All-ASA creates a medium for sharing ideas and developing large-scale projects with tangible results. It aims to unify the respective organizations, promote higher education, enhance leadership and professional development, provide services to the Armenian community, promote Armenian culture, and advocate for the Armenian cause.

As leaders of the next generation, it is up to us to promote cohesiveness in the community. Although we are

few, and because we are few, we must strive for greatness together. The All-ASA is unique in that it unifies all students interested in promoting the Armenian cause. Because it is so inclusive, students work productively to achieve progress. Through the many interactions within the organization, a collective student voice has emerged.

Last year, representatives from all constituent schools boldly decided to make a large structural change to the All-ASA. A committee was formed in order to assess the types of amendments that would need to be made in order to strengthen the All-ASA. After much deliberation, a draft was presented to the member organizations and voted on in June. The umbrella organization, which

had previously existed as a confederation of individual schools, was transformed into a federation with a Senate and centralized Executive Board.

These changes have facilitated planning and have ultimately increased the sense of unity in the organization. The new structure allocates the executive board with logistical tasks and allows school representatives to concentrate on developing concrete plans of action. Although the year is far from over, there is an undeniable momentum that has swept over the large umbrella organization.

On January 31st, students all across California participated in a sit-in organized in protest of the continuous repression of justice. For the second year in a row, students placed red tape over their mouths and allowed their

presence to do much of the speaking. This event would have been successful at any individual campus. Instead, there were several protests occurring simultaneously all along California. These students were united in their purpose, in their message, and in their course of action.

More recently, on March 8th, the Homeland Welfare Committee of the All ASA hosted an art show held at a cafe in Historic Downtown Los Angeles. ARTivism, as the exhibition was entitled, displayed artwork by over 30 local artists and was attended by over 400 art enthusiasts and supportive community members. These attendees had the opportunity to interact with the artists and to purchase their artwork. Through this promotion of the arts, the All-ASA raised \$3500 for ONEArmenia, a non-profit organization that is currently working to raise aware-

ness on domestic violence in Armenia. ONEArmenia brings together activists in bridging efforts to fund projects through transparency and efficiency.

The success of these events validate the magnitude of what the student population can accomplish. Their success highlights the importance of collaboration and support.

And with the realization of these realities, we are eager for more.

There are currently 16 student organizations involved with the All-ASA. Among them, are:

- University of California Los Angeles
- University of California San Diego
- University of California Santa Barbara
- University of California Irvine
- University of California Berkeley
- University of California Davis
- University of California Riverside
- California State University Northridge
- California State University Long Beach
- California State University Pomona
- Occidental College
- University of Southern California
- Glendale Community College
- Pepperdine University
- Armenian Youth Federation
- Armenian Revolutionary Federation's Shant Student Association.

Although the All-ASA currently only encompasses the collegiate Armenian organizations in California, we are excited about the general trend towards expansion.



We are few, but we are Armenian, and if we work collectively, we can accomplish greatness. There are Armenian students all over the nation, and all over the world, with the same passion and drive. With dialogue, coordination, and the World Wide Web, we can move mountains. While there will undoubtedly be challenges along the way, these are challenges we whole heartedly accept.



power.

The Armenian communities of the Middle East, throughout their history in the region, have carried an affinity with the tumultuous politics and affairs they have been dealt. Their integration within their adopted country has been stable, only to be torn by the same terror that has gifted them with war and devastation. Armenians have long been a key minority in Syria. The initial Armenian presence in Syria was established by those fleeing Seljuk invasion of the Byzantine Empire, creating a promi-

nent Armenian quarter in the city of Aleppo in the 11th century. In the 14th century, Cilician Armenians, witnessing the fall of their kingdom, relocated to Aleppo, setting the foundations of the first organized community institutions. During the Ottoman Empire, Anatolian Armenians sought economic opportunities within the cities of Greater Syria. Armenian presence bolstered after the Armenian Genocide in the 20th century, with most of the death marches led through the Syrian Dair el-Zor desert. Prominent Armenian communities in Syria are in Aleppo, Damascus, Kess-

ab, Latakia, Yacoubiyah, Qamishli, and Ras al-Ayn. Known for their gold and silver craftsmanship, Syrian-Armenians held an influential role in the economy. Before the conflict, 120,000 Armenians resided in Syria, with nearly 80,000 in Aleppo.

Armenia's Minister of Diaspora, Hranush Hakobyan, approximated that nearly 6,000 Armenians have arrived in Armenia since the outbreak of the fighting in March of 2011. The Armenian government has provided basic resources to these refugees, such as offering them visas and expediting their passports. Some public schools are offering schooling to refugee children following the Syrian curriculum. Yet, Armenia has limited emergency housing that has already been exhausted. Jobs are scarce and business prospects are difficult to establish. The community of refugees has been struggling in stabilizing their lives in Armenia. The influx of Syrian refugees has brought forth questions of the homeland's relationship with it's diaspora. Does the domestic agenda of Armenia encourage the return if Diasporans, either voluntary or as a result of conflict? Does the Armenian government prefer to keep diasporan's in their separate realms, where they can provide remittances and lobby their host states on their behalf? Syrian Armenians living and working in the homeland present benefits to the state, as the skilled businessmen bring forth economic opportunities and new concepts to the embattled country.

The term diaspora may often be equated with displacement. These are not mutually exclusive, as one may preclude a notion for the other. A population is displaced when they are deracinated, uprooted from their ancestral lands and forced into migration. The displaced usually maintain hope that they will eventually return to their homeland. Yet, within diasporic communities, even the concept of the homeland may seem elusive, as there are political connotations and definitions that clearly define the correct terms of their national territory. Thus, with a sizable generational gap and pre-existing political and social difficulties in the homeland, this return home may not always fit within the

traditional desires of Syrian-Armenians. Although they are returning to live in their homeland, they are leaving behind an uncertain fate in their adopted host countries. Their attachments to the ways of life they have grown accustomed to are naturally difficult to overcome as they re-root themselves. This brings forth one of the focal aspects of any diasporic community: the concept of memory.

Aside from the facts and figures we are constantly being given, there is a strong human aspect to the Syrian crisis. It is a human tragedy, where lives are lost, livelihoods are destroyed, and memories are changed. The concepts of time, place, and memory are deeply imbedded into our Armenian identity, for we have constantly had to either change them or defend them. The city of Aleppo, the very place that adopted my great-grandparents when they were refugees, will be changed, not only in structure or governance, but it will change in the memories of the people. Memory will become deceptive, as the events occurring presently will mold and shape it. Memories will mend together the individual and collective past. They will define the nuances of the communities our ancestors lived in and will connect them to the communities that we created. It is through memory that our cultural traditions, norms, and values have been transmitted. The destruction of cities, schools, and churches also deprives the people of their recollections. Our origins, his-

tory and heritage are linked together through an attenuating strand between the individuals and the collective. For it is the individuals that form the collective, and it is the collective, through shared ideologies and goals, that create a community.

Through their tumultuous past, Armenians have developed the gift of double consciousness. Our identities are divided into multiple sectors and we have learned to weave them into a fabric that displays our individuality. In a sense, we have cultural double vision, we always look at the trials and tribulations of our one identity through the lens of the other. For Syrian-Armenians, a refugee living in Yerevan will always see their position from a strictly Syrian perspective. Their longing for home will be for Aleppo or Damascus. They will frown at the unavailability of familiar foods at the grocery stores and will yearn for the lives they left behind. Conversely, that same refugee will view the conflict in Syria from a strictly Armenian perspective. Their concern will be for their Armenian schools, churches, and businesses. Upon their return, their longing for home will once again revert back to the elusive land of their forefathers. Our segmented conception of self is limiting, but it allows us to dismantle the negatives.

We are a nation of immigrants. If it is not physical relocation, we have mentally been all over the place. Throughout our past, we have seen incorporations



our adopted homelands are not always going to be as welcoming as they have been. The Syrian diaspora was one of the most stable and well-established enclaves of Armenian communities. Today, it is at its near point of decimation. We will never be comfortable in our individual realms lest we learn to be a collective. We need to give rise to a modern community of Armenians, one with a hopeful vision of creating a genuine community in our ancestral territories. Geared with our memories and double consciousness, modern Armenian diasporan communities have all the pieces in place to allot their individual for the benefit of the collective. Where will Armenians be in 2100? We can plan to answer all of our questions, but we need to first develop a coherent vision, one that truly believes that a physically separated set of populations can become a genuine community.



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Կեանքը ունի իր մարդկային, ժողովրդային եւ ազգային երեսները... Ճակատագրական իմաստով որոշ մարդիկ, ժողովուրդներ եւ ազգեր կ'ապրին անսպասելի եւ կամ տնօրինուածը... Դարերու ընթացքին, Հայ ժողովուրդի կեանքին մէջ տեղի ունեցած բազմատեսակ հալածանքներն ու անմարդկային ջարդերը փորձեցին մեր ժողովուրդի քրիստոնէական հաւատքն ու ազգային ոգին մեռցնել... Սակայն Հայ ժողովուրդի խոր հաւատքը, աննկուն կամքն ու ջանասիրութիւնը, անգամ մը եւս հաստատեց ու ապահովեց անոր գոյատեւումն ու պայծառացումը, յաջորդող սերունդներու հետեւողական եւ նորանոր աշխատանքներով:

Հայոց Տեղասպանութիւնը՝ ջարդերու գազաթնակետն էր...

Յաջորդաբար՝ Արցախեան ազատագրական պայքարը, Սումկայիթի ջարդերը, Պարսկաստանի, Իրաքի, Լիբանանի քաղաքացիական պատերազմները, հետեւանք դարձան աշխարհատարած ցիրուցան Հայութեան ստեղծման... Սակայն կրկին Պայքար եւ յաղթանակ, վերահաստատուելու եւ գոյատեւելու...:

Պատմութիւնը նոր էջ մը կը բանայ Հայ ժողովուրդի կեանքին մէջ... Սուրիա-Սուրիահայութիւն...:

Տեղասպանութենէն մազապուրծ ազատած եւ Սուրիոյ այրող աւազներուն վրայ տողանցելէ եւ կեանքի ու մահուան միջեւ պայքարելէ ետք, մեր մեծ մայրերն ու մեծ հայրերը կայք հաստատեցին, որպէս երկրորդ հայրենիք նկատուած, Սուրիոյ զանազան քաղաքներու եւ արուարձաններու մէջ, ուր ապրեցան եղբայրաբար զիրենք սրտբաց հիւրընկալած տեղական արաբ ժողովուրդին հետ:

Հայրենագուրկ եւ տեղահանուած մեր ժողովուրդը՝ տարիներով պայքարեցաւ ու փորձեց լաւագոյնս գոյատեւել իրեն վիճակուած՝ տնտեսական, ընկերային եւ հոգեբանական դժուարին պայմաններու մէջ, առանց յուսահատելու եւ կամ յանձնուելու դաժան ճակատագրին, այլ փոխարէնը, զօրացաւ ու հիմնեց Հայկական նոր օճախ մը հարուստ իր՝ եկեղեցիներով, վարժարաններով եւ կազմակերպութիւններով, որոնք նպաստեցին տարիներու ընթացքին Սուրիահայութեան գոյատեւման եւ

ինքնահաստատման:

Այսօր երկար ամիսներէ ի վեր Սուրիահայութեան ընկերաքաղաքական, տնտեսական եւ անապահով կեանքի պայմանները նեղ կացութեան մատնած է՝ աշակերտն ու աշխատաւորը, տան հայրն ու մայրը, հոգեւորականն ու մտաւորականը ...: Երկրին մէջ միասնական ու նուիրական ոգիով ազգայնականներ եւ դեկավարներ, տեղական ուժերով փորձեց մասամբ պահպանել երկրին ապահովութիւնը. Սակայն, համայն հայութեան բարոյական պարտքը դարձաւ ձեռք երկարել տագնապահար մեր ժողովուրդի զաւակներուն, որոնք յոյս եւ կամք պիտի փոխանցէին Սուրիահայ մեր եղբայրներուն եւ քոյրերուն, գոյատեւելու եւ պահպանելու սրբազան գաղութ մը կորուստէ եւ թալանէ:

Սփիւռքի տարածքին գտնուող Հայկական գաղութներու մէջ ծայր առին բարեսիրական եւ դրամահաւաքի զանազան աշխատանքներ եւ ծրագիրներ, որոնք կազմակերպեցին մշակեցին, իսկ գործին հաւատացող ժողովուրդը անմիջակապ օգնութիւններով ձեռք երկարեց եւ նիւթաբարոյապէս օժանդակեց նուազագոյն լուծմայով իսկ:

Կազմակերպութիւններ, միութիւններ, եկեղեցիներ եւ վարժարաններ փութացին իրենց աշխատանքներով եւ դրամահաւաքներով, ամենօրեայ մտահոգութեամբ, ձեռնարկել Սուրիահայութեան օժանդակութեան ի խնդիր, եղբայրական ձայն բարձրացնել եւ ըսել « մենք միշտ ձեզի հետ ենք եւ կը մնանք... »

Հայութիւնը մենք ենք: Սուրիահայութիւնը մեր մեկ կարեւոր մասնիկն է եւ ան մեզի կը պատկանի իր լաւ եւ դժուարին օրերով... պարտինք տեր կանգնիլ այն գաղութին ուր մեր պապերը իրենց աւագոտ ոտքերը թօթուելով, նոր յոյսերով յառաջացան, դար մը ամբողջ, կերտելով քրիստոնավայել եւ Հայավայել նոր գաղթօճախ մը, որ նոր օրերու հպարտութիւնն ու հարստութիւնը դարձաւ մեր ժողովուրդին:

Անցեալի խաղաղ օրերը եւ բարգաւաճ անցեալը շուտով պիտի վերադառնայ՝ մեր սիրելի Սուրիահայութիւն...

Ընկի. Սոնա Մատարեան

The State of the Diaspora: Memory, Identity, and Community through the Syrian-Armenian Experience

Nare Kupelian

Over generations, the strands of Armenian identity in diasporic communities began to weaken and the plasticity and persistence of Armenian culture was tested. The generational modifications displayed the development of our communities over time and space. Reduced to mere semantics, defining a diasporan community will introduce the concept of separated groups with a similar national origin that populate different regions, maintaining a link to their common homeland. Yet, the Armenian case seems to bring about a deeper social reality than the simple definition allows. We have experienced the cultural fragmentation that occurs with generational transitions. We have collectively feared assimilation, but accepted it as a means of advancement and survival within our localities. We have adopted our innate sense of longing and nostalgia, vying for face-to-face contact with our roots and attempting to imbed ourselves in the homeland. Do we, as Armenians, require a greater sense of intimacy within our communities? Does our distancing and separation invigorate a more aggressive sense of identification?

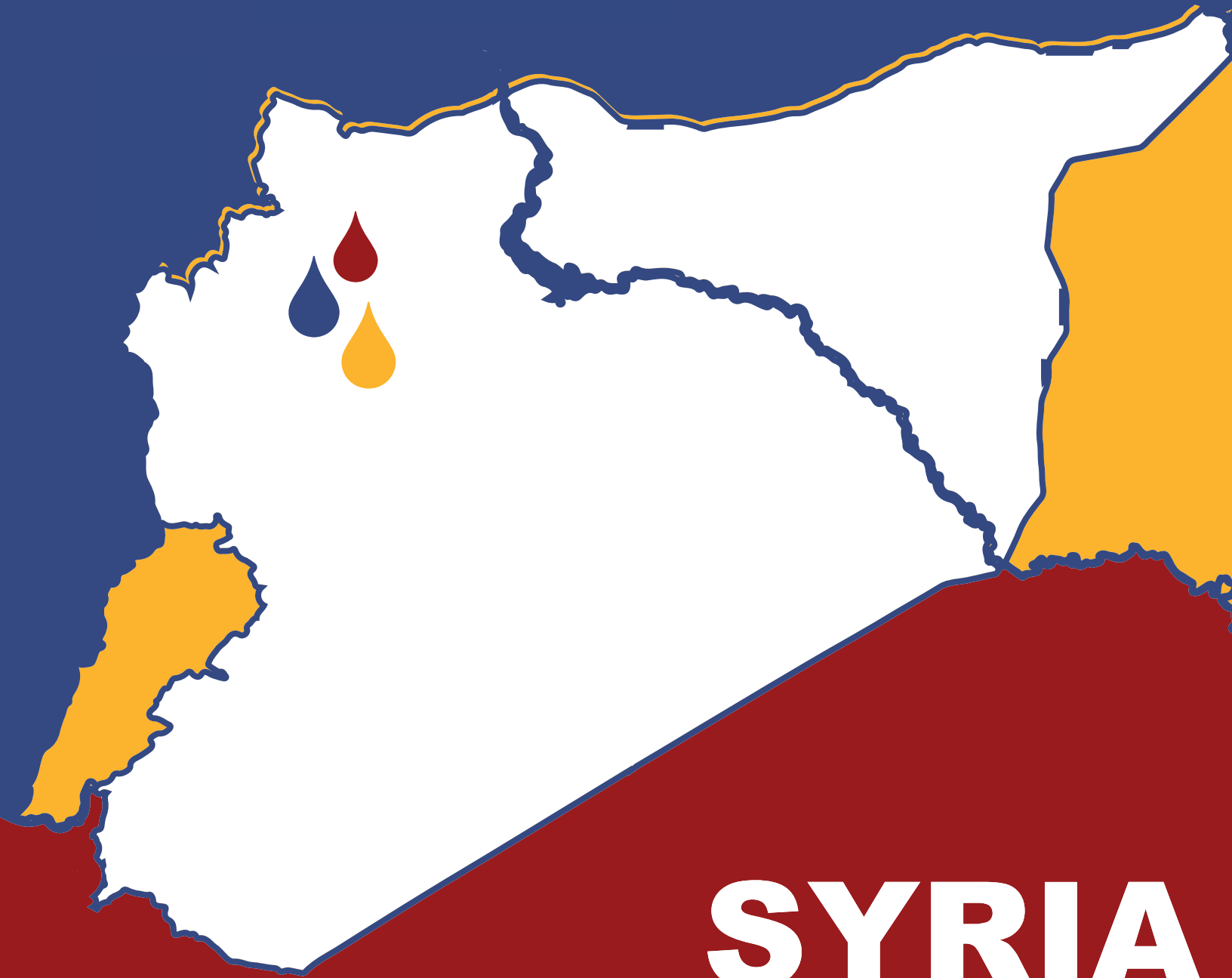
As a physical community, Armenians face great variations. Yet, our common identity constitutes a core that was once a building block and now a foundational pillar of our various groups. In our interconnected world, we now have access to communication and relations with other sub-populations of Armenians, creating a higher degree of diasporic unity that our ancestors could not achieve beyond the regional level. This concept brings about other questions: How are sub-populations to maintain solidarity with their counterparts, across state and institutional lines? Will we ever see a systematic, integrative system that will create these lines of solidarity between groups? Will the diaspora ever act as a transnational third-party that can play a significant political and social role in the homeland? The questions regarding our solidarity and general community are highlighted with the introduction of conflict.

When conflict erupts in a host state, their effects are shed on the ethnic Armenian population, the behaviors of their transnational ethnic diasporic

community, and the relationship between the host state and the homeland. The singular ethnic group, incorporated within the larger framework of their state's conflict, becomes entangled into a transnational push-and-pull. Co-ethnic populations feel a sense of responsibility to ensure the stability and sustenance of the communities at risk. Those entrenched into the conflict witness the disintegration of their community institutions and the dismantling of their established political clout. These collective forces, in turn, pressure the homeland's domestic agenda to seamlessly organize the reintegration of those who return. Often times, as in the Armenian cases, diasporan's return to a political and social atmosphere that they deem hostile, seemingly not in line with their traditionally transferred grandiose visionary ideals. In 2003, we witnessed this pattern with the Armenian community in Iraq, after the U.S. invasion of the country. Presently, we are seeing this scenario unfold with the prominent Armenian community in Syria, engulfed in a heated Civil War between the ruling Ba'ath Party and the forces seeking to remove them from

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