

## 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](mailto:office@armenianmp.com)

### **Issue No. 9, October 2008**

#### *My fellow Armenians and friends*

I hope that you have all returned revitalised from your summer holidays.

On the occasion of schools reopening, I would like to wish all students the best of luck in their new year and advise them all to study hard and reach their goals so that in the future they may continue to higher education and maintain a high standard that Armenian students are known for.

In the previous edition of Lradou I had referred to the three-day visit of HH Aram I Catholicos to Cyprus on July 21-25, details of which are contained in this edition.

In September, the Council of Europe's expert committee on the Regional and Minority Languages Charter visited Cyprus with whom I had several meetings.

Also in September, a conference took place at the Holiday Inn in Nicosia on "Diversity and Equality in Religion and Against Religious Discrimination," an event organised by the Social Welfare Service. In my address to the meeting, I presented some facts and opinions and made some suggestions that were positively accepted by the other delegates.

In October I will be in Strasbourg to take part in the conference organised by the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, where I will be the only Representative from the Religious Minorities of Cyprus. Also taking part will be NGOs that have fundamentally contributed to ensure that the Framework Convention is respected and implemented.

On Sunday, November 2, I am organising a meeting for the elderly at the Utudjian Hall for pensioners and seniors to learn about their rights.

This edition of Lradou also contains a leaflet promoting the single performance of the Cadence Ensemble quintet at the Latchia Municipal Hall on November 28, headed by Armen Babakhanian on the piano and accompanied on the flute by Nvart Galileia, an Armenian from Greece.

For some time I have been concerned that we need to do more to strengthen the feeling of national identity and belonging among our youth. Beyond our language and history, the new generation must also learn about our rich culture and art and we are starting a new programme, the Armenian Arts School, details of which you will receive very soon.

I urge you all to support all these events and initiatives and take advantage of these unique opportunities that are being offered. There is a lot that we can do together for the benefit of the present and future generations.

***Vartkes Mahdessian***

*Armenian Representative in the Cyprus House of Representatives.*

**3-MONTHLY REPORT:** After a much-deserved summer break, the Representative's Office resumed work to assist individuals in processing their residency or work permits. All cases submitted by July have been completed and forwarded to the relevant authorities. Those travelling for holidays in August were cautioned to have the original of their permits with them at all times, as in a number of cases they only had the receipts that caused problems at the airport. However, once again Mr Mahdessian intervened to resolve these cases. Mr Mahdessian has also been in contact with the Ministry of Interior for outstanding citizenship applications.

**CONGRATULATIONS & NOTE OF THANKS:** On July 18, the Armenian Representative sent a congratulatory note to Harout Tahmazian for his appointment to the executive body of the Pan-Armenian Games World Committee.

On September 22, Mr Mahdessian expressed warm thanks on behalf of all the community to Alexandros Hadjilyras for the commendable work he had done to compile the 'Chronicles' series profile of the Armenians in Cyprus that was distributed free of charge by Politis newspaper on Sunday, September 14.

**CONDOLENCES:** On September 10, Mr Mahdessian sent messages of condolences on behalf of all the Armenian community of Cyprus to Bishop Sebouh Sarkissian at the Armenian Prelature in Tehran, to Bishop Papken Zarian in Isfahan, to Bishop Nishan Topouzian in Adrbadagan and to Kevork Vartanian, Representative of the Armenians in Northern Iran, on the tragic news that 17 Iranian Armenians had died in an accident while travelling to eastern Turkey.

**MEDIA INTERVIEW:** On July 8, the Armenian Representative gave an interview to Cyprus News Agency reporter Maria Phyli, which was also transmitted on the public network and was published by Greek and English-language media. In the interview, Mr Mahdessian expressed his views on the Representative's symbolic presence in parliament, but that he had chosen not to take the issue any further due to the sensitive juncture of the political peace talks to find a fair and just solution to the Cyprus problem. He made suggestions how the Representative's role could be improved and called for the establishment of a Commissioner for Minority Issues. He also raised issues of concern of the community, such as the inability of young people to secure government jobs due to examinations where they will have to compete with native Greek speakers, the protection order on the Melkonian School's estate and the current state of the Saint Magar Armenian monastery in the occupied north.

On September 16, Mr Mahdessian also took part in a television report on Mega TV about the news of claims from survivors of the Genocide and the settlement proposed New York Life Insurance and AXA life insurance companies.

**VISIT OF CATHOLICOS ARAM I:** HH Aram I Catholicos paid an official visit to Cyprus on July 21-25 and followed a programme of meetings coordinated by the Representative's Office. On July 22, Aram I was received by the President of the Republic, Demetris Christofias, by the President of the House of Representatives, Marios Garoyian, and the head of the Autocephalus Orthodox Church of Cyprus, Archbishop Chrysostomos II.

The Holy Father was accompanied to all his meetings by Representative Mahdessian, Cyprus Prelate Archbishop Varoujan Hergelian, the vice president of the Cilicia Catholicossate's executive council Hagop Ateshian, the Chairman of the Church Administrative Committee Sebouh Tavitian, the Chairman of the Church Executive Committee Dr Antranig Ashdjian and the Holy Father's aide, Fr Torkom Donoyian.

The discussions at all the meetings were held in a warm environment and focused on the Armenian community of Cyprus and its close ties to the Republic of Cyprus government and the Church of Cyprus. Aram I was the guest of honour at a banquet hosted by Chrysostomos II and a lunch hosted by Mr and Mrs Vartkes Mahdessian.

**MEETINGS / EVENTS:** The Armenian Representative had several meetings and attended the following events:

- While on holiday in the U.S., Vartkes Mahdessian had the opportunity to meet with a three-member committee of the Melkonian Alumni Association of California.
- On September 15, Mr Mahdessian attended the “World Peace Day” celebrations hosted by the Embassy of Slovakia where he met President Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat
- On September 13, Mr Mahdessian sponsored and co-hosted the Eurovision song contest star Sirousho at the Dot Club in Nicosia, attracting many young Armenian people who saw her perform “Qele, Qele” on stage in Cyprus.

**COE VISITING GROUP:** On September 18, the Armenian Representative met with the group of experts from the Council of Europe Commission for Minority Languages, whom he thanked for the support they have shown to the Armenian community of Cyprus and discussed with them various aspects of language and culture. He explained how the preservation of the Armenian language is vital to the survival of the community, especially after the closure of the Melkonian school, and acknowledged the firm support of the Cyprus government. He also raised some issues of concern, such as financial aid to Armenian students attending private schools, issues related to military service and assistance to Armenian immigrants. He also emphasised the need for a Minority Rights Commissioner. The Commission delegation praised the Representative for his hard work and in particular for the publication of the Lradou newsletter that also publishes translated excerpts from Laws of the Republic of Cyprus.

**RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY & DISCRIMINATION:** On September 24, the Armenian Representative took part in a panel discussion on “Diversity and Equality in Religion and Against Religious Discrimination” organised by the Social Welfare Service and which was attended by the Latin and Maronite Representatives, the Human Rights Ombudsman, as well as Church and NGO officials. In his speech, Mr Mahdessian explained the differences between the Armenian and the other two recognised religious groups, saying that these are centred on the use of the Armenian language and religion. The Western Armenian language has been recognised and is under the protection of the Charter on Minority and Regional Languages and the Armenian community of Cyprus maintains the Armenian language as its mother tongue. Due to minor liturgical and calendar differences, the Christian identity of the Armenian is often questioned, while there is no regard to the fact that Armenians were the first to adopt Christianity as the official faith of the state. On the other hand, maintaining Armenian as the mother language hampers the prospects of young men serving in the National Guard to apply for officer cadet training, while the presence of churches only in the three main towns and the exclusion from the House Defence Committee cause concern for discrimination and racism. Mr Mahdessian added that it is imperative that the history of the three religious groups be included in the government history books, while he recommended that the public television station broadcast Armenian language bulletins on its RIK2 channel and also some documentaries.

## **LAWS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS**

### **Ministry of Commerce Industry and Tourism**

#### **Incentives for women to start up a business**

This programme aims to assist women aged 18-55 who plan to start up their own trade, manufacturing or tourism related business. The programme includes incentives for training and investment in order to start small and efficient enterprises. The deadlines for applications are announced by the Ministry.

To qualify for a grant or financial aid the applicants must be female, permanently living in Cyprus for at least one year, aged 18 to 55, unemployed at the time of application, with a valid Limited Company. Franchises are excluded and applicants can only submit their offers for one project at a time.

The maximum government assistance can match up to 50% of the proposal's budget, reaching no more than EUR 70,000 for a manufacturing unit and up to EUR 50,000 for the other sectors, while the money will be deposited in the form of a bond in the company's bank account.

Further information is available from 22 867180.