

**Issue No.18, December 2010**

***My fellow Armenians and friends***

We are once again at the outset of a new year and it is time for individuals who are conscious of their responsibilities to look back and evaluate their work and actions over the year both in their personal life and career. In my case however there is an additional responsibility, one that I assumed five years ago and consider the most important of my obligations (responsibilities), one that supersedes my personal life and career.

Looking through the back issues of Lradou, we come across a brief listing of achievements that confirm, within the confines of my ability, maximum work and assistance both at a personal and collective level.

My announcement in the Armenian language papers Artsakank and Azad Tzayn last month was neither accidental nor premature. To quash the rumours making the rounds in our community and taking into account the large number of individuals and organised groups urging me to seek re-election, I decided it was the right time to clarify my position.

With this issue of Lradou, I present to you the report for the last quarter of 2010. You will be able to vouch for yourselves that it was a fruitful period full of activities and achievements. To avoid being repetitive, I will only refer to cultural events we organise annually involving top performers from Armenia. We consider such events an integral part of the activities organised by the Representative's Office and we will save no effort in our quest to introduce Armenian culture to the non-Armenian public, and to further strengthen the cultural ties between Cyprus and Armenia.

You are probably aware that as from October 2010, Armenian language lessons are being delivered on a weekly basis at the University of Cyprus. We are hopeful that

this will serve as the first step towards the creation of a Chair for Armenian Studies at the University of Cyprus with a specialised library of its own.

I also wish to inform you, that over the last year, I have continued having high level meetings and discussions concerning our two historic and cultural sites – the Melkonian Educational Institute and the St. Magar Monastery.

Finally, I would like to inform you that Mr Gagik Ghalatchian, Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to Greece and Cyprus, was on our island last month on a two day working visit. Mr Ghalatchian was making the preliminary arrangements for the official visit to Cyprus of the President of the Republic of Armenia, Mr Serj Sarksyian, scheduled for January 2011.

My dear compatriots

Together with my congratulations for the New Year and our Christmas, I convey to you all, my earnest wish that we greet the New Year united in our pursuit of new ideals, and that 2011 is a productive and successful year for all of us.

Vartkes Mahdessian

Representative of the Armenian community in the House of Representatives

## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

Dear Community members,

My five year term of office as Representative of the Armenian community is drawing near to its end.

As you are all aware, the last five years have been a period of continuous work for the realization of beneficial programmes for our community.

By cooperating with all factions of our community, I have tried to find solutions to outstanding problems through solidarity.

I have offered assistance, within my capabilities, to any compatriot seeking my help, always acting in an impartial manner.

I have aspired to bring our community into the cultural and public life of Cyprus by inviting Armenian artists and at the same time I have done my utmost to protect our cultural and historic sites.

I have studied carefully and followed closely the educational system of our community and the measures I have taken to bring about improvements have started to bear fruit.

With faith, enthusiasm, clear targets and transparency in my work, I set forth determined to give my best for the well-being and prosperity of our community.

Taking into account the achievements of the last five years and the encouragement I have enjoyed from the majority of the members of our community, I have decided to put forward my candidature for the elections in May 2011, seeking re-election for a second five year term, in order to continue offering my services for the benefit of our community.

Vartkes Mahdessian

Representative of the Armenian community in the House of Representatives

November 2010

## **QUARTERLY REPORT**

The last three months of the year were very productive as regards the granting of **Temporary Residence Permits**. Reverting back to its former policy, the **Aliens & Immigration Unit** processed applications which were properly completed and complied with existing laws within a period of three months.

We have been informed that individuals with **Russian citizenship** need not apply anymore to the **Cyprus Embassy in Moscow** to obtain **visit visas**. Instead, the visit visa will be issued through the company issuing travel tickets.

**Citizenship:** Two members of our community, one from Nicosia and the other from Limassol, having completed ten years of lawful residence in Cyprus received **Cypriot citizenship** in early December.

**Seminar “the input, rights and protection of minorities in Cyprus”:** The seminar, organised jointly by the Ministry of Justice and the Office of the Ombudsman, took place at the Cleopatra Hotel in Nicosia on Monday, 11 October, with the participation of the three Representatives of the Religious Groups in Cyprus. The seminar, organised within the framework of the European Union’s “Diversity Against Discrimination” programme was presided over by Mr Petros Markou and attended by the Minister of Justice Mr Loucas Louca, the

ombudswoman Mrs Eliana Nicolaou, government officials, representatives of official bodies and organisations of the three religious groups and interested individuals. The morning session started with the addresses of the three Representatives of the religious minorities in Cyprus, Messrs Antonis Hadjiroussos, Vartkes Mahdessian and Benito Mantovani. In his address, Mr Mahdessian expressed the gratitude of the Armenian Community of Cyprus towards the Government of the Republic of Cyprus for the generous support it provides to the Armenian Church and schools and for the protection of Armenian culture in general. He also thanked our Cypriot compatriots for their fraternity and close ties with the Armenian community. There followed addresses by Dr Patrick Thornberry, Dr Anthony Madella and Dr Tim Potier, who each analysed the input and rights of the religious minorities to and within the political, social and cultural realms of Cypriot life, stressing at the same time the importance of preservation and protection. The afternoon session consisted of a cultural programme, with the Sipan Dance Ensemble representing the Armenian community and receiving rave comments. The presenter for the afternoon session was Gabriella Petrides, the parliamentary assistant to the Armenian Representative.

**Official visit to Cyprus of Hovig Aprahamian, Chairman of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia:** At the invitation of the President of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus, Marios Garoyian, the Chairman of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, Hovig Aprahamian, paid an official visit to Cyprus from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of October, accompanied by his wife and a delegation consisting of more than 20 members. The visit was aimed at developing further the ties between the two assemblies and strengthening further the cooperation between the two countries in the political, economic and cultural fields.

In the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, the Chairman of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia and his delegation were the guests of Mr & Mrs Vartkes Mahdessian. Archbishop Varoujan and representatives of official bodies and organisations of the Armenian community were also present.

In the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, Hovig Aprahamian had a meeting with Marios Garoyian at the House of Representatives, followed by a press conference. Later in the morning he had a meeting with the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Demetris Christofias, who reiterated that the relations between the two countries were very cordial. Next stop for Hovig Aprahamian and his delegation

was the Nareg School in Nicosia where he was warmly welcomed by the staff and students, followed by a visit to the Green Line and a meeting with the Mayor of Nicosia, Eleni Mavrou.

After the official lunch given in his honour by Marios Garoyian, Hovig Aprahamian visited the village of Lefkara where he had a meeting with Mayor Andreas Sossilos.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of October, the Chairman of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia and his delegation visited the Melkonian Educational Institute, making the rounds of the deserted school. Later in the day the official party visited Dherynia and met with the Mayor of Famagusta, Alexis Ghalanos, within sight of the occupied and deserted town of Famagusta.

It should be noted that at all meetings, functions and visits, the Chairman of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, Hovig Aprahamian, was accompanied by the Representative of the Armenian community in Cyprus Vartkes Mahdessian.

**Official meetings:** On Tuesday, 19 October, the Representative of the Armenian community in Cyprus, accompanied by the Representatives of the Maronite and Latin communities, had a series of meetings with the leaders of the five parties in Cyprus to discuss with them inherent problems related to the post of the Representative of a Religious Minority and ways of bringing about improvements. It should also be noted that the three Representatives have also been looking into the legal aspects of the law concerning representatives of religious minorities for some time now.

**The visit of the Republic of Armenia Civil Servants Committee (RACSC):** A three member delegation of RASCS led by Chairman Manuel Badalian arrived in Cyprus on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November for a three day visit. During their stay, the delegation held a number of meetings with members from different departments of the Ministry of Finance with Masis der Partogh attending as translator. On Thursday, 4 November, the members of the delegation were the guests of Mr & Mrs Vartkes Mahdessian.

**Ara Gevorgian's concerts marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus:** The months of meticulous planning and hard work preceding Ara Gevorgian's concerts marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus culminated in resounding success. Ara Gevorgian and his Orchestra, accompanied by the Cyprus Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Garen Durgaryan and together with the graceful dancers from Armenia and the Sipan Ensemble, gave the audience a phantasmagoric evening to be cherished for a long time.

The concerts on Saturday, 20 and Sunday, 21 November took place at the Strovolos Municipal Theatre and drew full houses. About 200 official and high-ranking guests on Saturday and another 60 on Sunday had the opportunity to listen to and witness Armenian music and dance at its best. Congratulatory letters and telephone calls expressing admiration have since been streaming in.

We are grateful to the President of the Republic H.E. Demetris Christofias for attending the opening concert on Saturday, a few hours after returning from New York, accompanied by the first Lady.

We are grateful to Ara Gevorgian for the unforgettable experience of being swept away by the music, the music we have come to love in the renderings that bear the stamp of his unique talent and creativity.

We are grateful to maestro Garen Durgaryan for welding diverse groups of musicians into one ensemble and inspiring members of the Cyprus Symphony Orchestra to play Armenian music so convincingly and impressively. And all this with three rehearsals only!

We would like to thank singers Sona Gargaloyan, Marios Charalambous and Marie-Louise Kouyoumdjian, laoudo player Larkos Larkou and reciter Parsy Zartarian. Their performances enhanced the evening, giving it a different dimension.

We would also like to thank our beloved Janna Tahmizian and the dancers of Sipan Ensemble, as well as the elegant dancers from Armenia and their leader Elen Grigoryan, whose presence added spectacle to the music.

Finally, we would like to thank the members of our community and guests from other countries for the large turnout for both concerts. Your presence gives us spiritual satisfaction and encourages us to continue organising such events.

On their last two days on our island, the artists from Armenia visited the seaside resorts of Ayia Napa and Larnaca. Happy, grateful and with the best of impressions, they returned to Armenia on Tuesday, 23 November.

**“The cultural heritage and rights of the religious minorities after a solution”:**

On Wednesday, 24 November, the Representatives of the three religious minorities were invited to attend the bicomunal meeting at the Ledra Palace which would be discussing the subject “**The cultural heritage and rights of the religious minorities after a solution**”. These meetings are organised by the Ambassador of Slovakia, take place every month and bring together representatives of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot parties to discuss different issues.

Addressing the meeting, the Representative of the Armenian community in Cyprus Mr Vartkes Mahdessian emphasized that the Romas or other groups of immigrants cannot have the status that the three minorities have. The Armenians of Cyprus have a history of over 1500 years on the island and are constitutionally recognised as a religious minority. With the creation of the independent and bicomunal state in 1960, historical and religious considerations gave the Armenian community of Cyprus no alternative but to opt for inclusion within the Greek Cypriot community. Mr Mahdessian also raised the issue of language. The language of Armenian Cypriots is Armenian and they cannot have the same fluency in Greek that Greek Cypriots have. Consequently this has a detrimental effect on their chances of employment in the government, particularly when there are no provisions for taking this fact into account. As for the participation of the representatives of the three religious minorities in the work carried out by the House of Representatives, Mr Mahdessian considered it ceremonial and called for measures to make their participation more effective.

After Mr Mahdessian’s address, Mr Alexander Hadjilyras, Press Officer of the Representative’s Office, gave a power-point presentation of the history of the Armenians in Cyprus.

**Congratulations to Simon Aynedjian:** On the 8<sup>th</sup> of December, the Armenian Representative Mr Vartkes Mahdessian sent a letter to Mr Simon Aynedjian, owner and editor of the **Gibrahayer e-magazine**, congratulating him and his associates, for winning the award “best Armenian internet news media” in the “annual competition for news media of the diaspora” organised by the Ministry of

Diaspora of the Republic of Armenia. In his letter Mr Mahdessian wishes **Gibrahayer** continued success and realization of higher aspirations.

### **Other events:**

- On Saturday, 6 November, Mr & Mrs Vartkes Mahdessian attended the dinner marking the reopening of the Armenian Club of Larnaca. In his address Mr Mahdessian congratulated all those involved in the reopening of the Club and in particular the members of the new Committee, wishing them an active and successful term. The festive atmosphere of the occasion was further enhanced when Mr Mahdessian announced his decision to seek re-election in the upcoming elections for the post of Representative, in order to continue to offer his services to the community with the same zeal and devotion.
- On Sunday, 21 November, Mr & Mrs Mahdessian attended mass at St Asdvadzadzin Church, Nicosia, on the occasion of the feast of the Virgin Mary and the blessing of the offering.
- On Friday, 26 November, Mr Mahdessian attended the artistic evening at the Pasydy centre organised by the Cyprus-Hungarian Friendship and Cultural Association. The proceeds of the evening would be used to help the people in the flood stricken areas of Hungary.
- On Monday, 6 December, Mr Mahdessian attended a commemoration of the “achievements of Spyros Kyprianou”, on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus and organised by the Spyros Kyprianou Foundation. It should be remembered that Spyros Kyprianou was the first politician to raise the issue of the Armenian genocide officially at the UN General Assembly in 1965.
- On Wednesday, 8 December, Mr Mahdessian attended the seminar “The path towards social inclusion – the role of Non Governmental Organisations” organised by the University of Cyprus. The main discussion evolved from the working paper “Social and Educational exclusion and inclusion, processes among vulnerable groups”. Mrs Vera Tahmazian, Principal of the Nareg Schools in Cyprus, also attended the seminar and delivered a short address.



- On Tuesday, 14 December, Mr Mahdessian attended the Christmas gala of the school for deaf and dumb children, Nicosia, in his capacity as member of the House Committee on Education.
- On Friday, 17 December, Mr Mahdessian accompanied by Father Momig Habeshian paid a visit to the Central prison in Nicosia to meet Armenians imprisoned there and to congratulate them on the occasions of the New Year and Christmas
- On Friday, 17 December, Mr & Mrs Mahdessian attended the Christmas gala of the kindergarten and lower classes of the Nareg school, Nicosia, which took place in the new multi-purpose hall of the school.
- On Monday, 20 December, Mr & Mrs Mahdessian attended the Christmas gala of the Nareg school, Limassol.
- On Tuesday, 21 December, Mr & Mrs Mahdessian attended the Christmas gala of the school for blind children in Nicosia.
- On Saturday, 25 December, Mr & Mrs Mahdessian attended mass at St Stephanos Church, Larnaca, on the occasion of the feast of St Stephanos and the blessing of the offering.
- In the evening of Saturday, 25 December, Mr & Mrs Mahdessian attended the annual dinner-dance of A.Y.M.A. at the Hilton Hotel, Nicosia, having received a special invitation for the event.