

## Armenian Bar Association Annual Scholarship Program

LOS ANGELES -- The Armenian Bar Association is pleased to announce that it is accepting applications for its Fifth Annual Scholarship Program. The Program is designed to support meritorious students of Armenian descent attending, or accepted for admission to, an approved law school in the United States, Armenia or elsewhere. Recipients must demonstrate an outstanding academic record as well as a strong commitment to the Armenian community, particularly in humanitarian and/or law-related endeavors. The Scholarship Program is primarily funded by donations and by fundraising events hosted by the Armenian Bar Association. In addition to the Scholarship Program, the Armenian Bar Association supports Armenian law students through its varied programs and events including the mentorship and internship programs and presentations by legal scholars.

"Last year, we awarded three scholarships under the Scholarship Program, and we are very glad that we can continue to support Armenian students studying law. The Armenian Bar Association is committed to helping students who have shown superior academic achievement and who contribute to the Armenian communities in which they live," said Christine Engustian, co-chair of the Armenian Bar Association's Grants Committee. Amy Hoogasian, co-chair and Nana Chibukhchian are also on the Grants Committee.

Students interested in applying for an Armenian Bar Association scholarship should obtain an application at the Armenian Bar Association's website ([www.armenianbar.org](http://www.armenianbar.org)).

The application deadline is March 31, 2010. The application must either be postmarked by March 31, 2010 or if e-mailed, it should be received no later than midnight (PST) of March 31, 2010.

The Armenian Bar Association is the largest organization of Armenian lawyers in the world.

## Turkish Prime Minister Blasts Karabakh Mediators

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cated that the Turkish parliament, in which his Justice and Development Party has a clear majority, will not ratify the Turkish-Armenian normalization agreements signed in October unless the Minsk Group efforts yield a breakthrough.

According to "Today's Zaman," Erdogan also reiterated his government's claims that a recent ruling by Armenia's Constitutional Court runs counter to the Turkish-Armenian protocols. Ankara is particularly unhappy with the court's conclusion that the deal can not stop Armenia seeking broader international recognition of the Armenian genocide.

Turkish-Armenian relations were reportedly on the agenda of a Sunday phone conversation between Presidents Abdullah Gul of Turkey and Dmitry

Medvedev of Russia. Citing Turkish diplomatic sources, "Hurriyet Daily News" reported that Gul raised Ankara's concerns about the Armenian court ruling with Medvedev and urged Moscow to press Yerevan to address them.

"We need a clarification as to whether the court ruling will shadow or restrict the protocols," the paper quoted Gul as saying. It said he also called on Russia to step up the search for Karabakh peace.

Erdogan similarly tried to get the Russians to seek greater Armenian concessions to Azerbaijan for the sake of the Turkish-Armenian normalization when he visited Moscow last month. However, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin publicly told him to drop the linkage between what Moscow considers two separate processes.

## Letter to the Editor

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government making unnecessary concessions with which the people of Armenia do not agree. No one at that meeting will say, this is not the government the Armenian people chose, this is not what the people of Armenia want. No one at that meeting will speak with the interests of Armenia in mind. And consequently, no one will question the fundamentals of the U.S. strategy.

And that is exactly what the U.S. government, PACE, and other foreign powers want to hear. The silence regarding the ruling regime will condone it. The fundamental problem will be ignored. The game will be played, and all of the players will leave feeling they read their lines well. And Clinton will report saying she now understands better the concerns of the Armenian Diaspora. And the U.S. and other foreign powers will continue to

push forward, based on poor information and false assumptions.

Civil engineers building a bridge must take into account not only how to build a bridge that will stand, but how to build it so it will last, so it can be maintained, updated and repaired. The job is not compromised with poor materials, plans, or construction, nor is it rushed or allowed to be built on eroded river banks. Yet, relations between two nations with hundreds of years of complex history are being wheeled and dealed. The U.S. and other foreign powers are building a bridge for their own interests, but how long it will stand, if it stands at all, is yet to be seen. And if and when it begins to crumble, the investments of those who built it will begin to fall as well, and they will scratch their heads and wonder why.

Vahe DerMardirosoian  
Los Angeles

## Analyst Richard Giragosian

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*formulating such change? Are the people looking for new faces, new approaches, to the entrenched and systematic problems that exist?*

Let me point something out to start. When we talk about Armenia being so small, in terms of population and territory, from an American perspective, it's usually conveyed as a negative. And it is a negative. But we always forget that there's a positive side as well. Being so small means it's much easier to implement real lasting change if and when there's the political will or the political opportunity. Once we embark on true democratic and economic reform in Armenia, then it won't be long until the country really takes off. Because it's so small the country is conducive to real progress. The impact from real change will be doubled or tripled.

Sadly, despite the end of apathy, there's still an entrenched cynicism. No political party or figure is playing the socio-economic card of injustice. There's no real populism. There's no real grassroots political activity. People are used to this and are cynical and frustrated. But, if and when a true leader tries to emerge, or a true democrat tries to maximize this, then I think, people are waiting for such an opportunity.

The real hope I have is that the system can no longer sustain itself. We have a political stalemate and if that was all, the system could maintain its power. But it's the economic crisis on top of a political stalemate that will tip the scales. It will be forced to change from the pressure from within. But we don't know what direction Armenia will go. It may go more authoritarian with a new elite that's even worse, or, finally, we may have a new elite that has not derived from the Nagorno-Karabakh War and may take the country in the right direction.

The real problem is not the opposition, nor even the government; it's the system. Until the system is forced to open up, the opposition will only be marginalized, cannot be truly effective and the authorities won't listen or care. But at the same time, I don't think the authorities will be able to maintain their hold over the closed system and cracks are already appearing, like we see between the Republican Party (Hanrapatakan) and Prosperous Armenia (Bargavatch). For the first time in recent Armenian history we see infighting within the government itself. This confirms to me that the crisis is serious and the system is in danger of imploding.

It's not only a clash over dwindling resources. It's about Armenian politics and politics here revolves around presidents – the first, the former and the current. That's what this is about, and in many ways the bigger threat to Sargsyan isn't Ter-Petrosyan, but Kocharyan.

These divisions even surfaced during the events of March 1, 2008. Most

interestingly, if we look at the instruments of power that the government has, that any state has, they no longer have a monopoly on that power. In other words, there were divisions within the police, security service, that revealed and reflected divisions within society and that scared the former president much more than the people camped out in Opera Square. Now there's mistrust and a lack of reliance, even on the instruments of power. And I think that's a good thing for democracy and the ordinary Armenian citizen.

*On a personal note, you have been living and working in Armenia for three years. What positives and negatives, in terms of progress and development have you observed; especially in the public sector?*

To me the most obvious positive development is ironically a result of the worst experience I have observed – March 1st – because, in my opinion, March 1, 2008, changed Armenia in two ways. The Armenian people changed because of March 1st. They are no longer as apathetic, no longer content with complete political disengagement; they are reaching a tipping point. And there is no possibility of returning to the pre-March 1st status quo, in my opinion.

The second interesting development coming out of March 1st is that, if the Armenian people have changed, the Armenian government has changed demonstrably. It enjoys much less legitimacy and is more unpopular than any preceding Armenian government. It is much weaker as a result. And I believe that this combination is a good development for instituting real change in Armenia, in a positive way.

In terms of civil society, we have a dynamic civic society. We also have in general a lack of momentum, if you will. We see the same faces, the same people, who are faced with brick wall imposed against civic society activity by the state, by various official and oligarchs, who are getting tired of smashing their head against a brick wall.

The negative development in civil society is that we see a new Russian style, pro-government, NGO camp emerging; cheerleaders for the government within civil society.

At the same time, I also retain a sense of hope and optimism in the next generation, which has now come of age, not within the Soviet system, but within the independent Armenian system. They are much less likely to be bought off or co-opted and are much more frustrated by the status-quo and much more pissed-off at the lack of opportunity.

You know, most of those who left Armenia were the ones who could. Many who are here now, in the younger generation, have decided to stick it out and have not yet given up. And I really think that the future of the country rests in the hands of that generation, not mine and not the older one. This is the optimism that keeps me going.

(End)

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