

SCHNELLER

MAGAZINE ON CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



EVS Evangelical Association
for the Schneller Schools

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Armenia

Collective trauma, diaspora and a lost war

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Cover photo: Children in Bourj Hammoud, the Armenian district of Beirut. (Martina Waiblinger)

Back cover: In front of the Cathedral of the Holy Mother of God (also known as Our Lady of Seven Wounds) in Gyumri, Armenia (Ulrich Waiblinger)

Dear Reader,

When you pick up this issue of the Schneller Magazine, you'll probably wonder about a few surprising changes. After 16 years and 64 issues, we have decided to create a new layout. We have removed the banners and boxes to give us more flexibility to present the pictures and texts more attractively on the small DIN A5 pages. Our graphic artist Martin Keiper is providing us with his professional expertise and we are immensely grateful to him.



You will probably also be surprised about the main feature in this issue. Armenia is situated in the Caucasus Mountains and not in the Middle East. Nevertheless, we wanted to take a closer look at this country. Our interest was triggered by the war in Nagorno-Karabakh in autumn 2020 which claimed thousands of lives on both sides. It ended with a ceasefire agreement which also re-opened old wounds for Armenians living in the Middle East. We wanted to understand why the loss of a comparably small parcel of land has plunged an entire people into collective despair. In this issue, Armenians from Germany, Dubai, Jerusalem, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and of course from Armenia itself write about what the Armenian identity means today. It becomes clear that the collective trauma of being wiped out as a people is just as present as before.

And finally, you will probably ask yourself why there is so little news about the Schneller schools in this issue. The reason is the Covid pandemic. In Jordan and Lebanon, events have had to be cancelled, projects postponed and schools are still closed. However, we are keeping close e-mail and phone contact with our partners there. As before, we are committed to supporting the two schools as they care for the poorest of the poor in their own special way, especially in times of the pandemic.

Please continue to show us and the Schneller schools your loyalty. In such difficult times, we are very much dependent on your support. On behalf of the editorial team, I would like to thank you warmly for this and for your interest in Schneller work.

Best regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katja Dorothea Buck".

Katja Dorothea Buck

Hope in spite of everything

I find it a bit difficult to organize and process all the thoughts and feelings that I've had over the past year. As the war unraveled in Artsakh, on top of the pandemic and explosion in Beirut, I struggled with the fact that both of my homelands were going through horrific ordeals.

My Armenian roots stem from my mother. But I grew up in Lebanon, and was constantly surrounded by an Armenian community. But having lived in Germany for the past three years, I was alienated from other Armenians around the globe. All I could do was follow news coverages (or lack thereof) last autumn, and try to talk to as many friends and family as possible, who could understand how I felt. Now, a few months later, I can clearly define the two biggest things I felt about Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) during that time: hopelessness and guilt.

Hopelessness because I could watch every bad thing that was happening to my fellow Armenians, and realize that no power in this world did anything to stop it. Here in the western world, we like talking about international politics and UN and human rights, but where were they, when people were killing each other for a small piece of indigenous land? Where were they, when young soldiers were being used to fight a war that wasn't theirs to begin with? Why did the world leaders do nothing? Why do we let them have so much power if they will just abuse it? These questions kept running through my head, right before falling asleep and after waking up.



Between 1915 and 1923, 70% of the Armenian population was in Byblos are a reminder of the fate of orphans who found a

The second emotion, that was pretty illogical, but a valid one nonetheless, was guilt. I felt guilty that my people were suffering, and I - living peacefully in Germany and complaining about my Zoom meetings for Uni - wasn't. I felt guilty that I had "escaped", while there were still so many people sending their sons to war, getting thrown out of their own homes, living day to day. There was nothing I could do! It was clear to me, that it wasn't my fault in any way, but I couldn't escape this feeling nonetheless.

The Bible verse of the watchword that was picked for the year 2021 is from Luke 6:36. "You must be compassionate, just as



Katja Dorothea Buck

killed. The child figures in front of the Aram Beikian Museum new home in Lebanon.

your Father is compassionate". It helped me cope with my negative emotions on the war, and take comfort in the fact that even though the world turns a blind eye to the bad things that happen, we, each individual person, can still be compassionate towards the people suffering.

Even though we won't change the world, we will change small things and the people around us, through our compassion. We shouldn't feel hopeless or guilty, on the other hand, we should see hope everywhere, because we see there is still good in people. In spite of what happened in Artsakh, we saw a wave of Armenians and people of other nations all around the

world standing in solidarity with the people of Artsakh, and doing everything they can to help.

We saw people writing articles about Armenian history and culture and sharing them as much as possible on social media. We saw people trying to preserve the heritage of the churches and monasteries in Artsakh through their craftsmanship. We saw people going out and demonstrating peacefully in the big cities of the world.

*So have mercy,
just as your Father
has mercy.*

Luke 6,36

We saw Armenians dancing and singing in spite of the sadness. We saw people, not donating millions, but just flying out to Armenia and preparing care packages for the victims of the war. It is the small things that each and every individual does, small acts of kindness and compassion, that will fill us with hope and joy for the year to come.

*Christine Maamarbashi comes from Beirut.
She is currently studying Protestant
Theology in Tübingen.*

At least we can listen

Why the Schneller Magazine is running this feature on Armenia

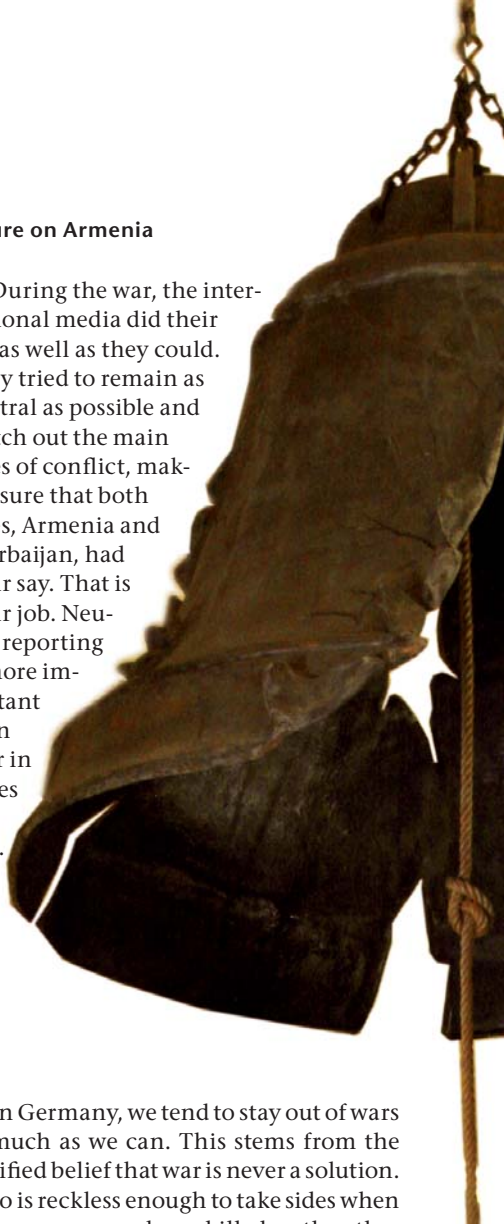
Those with no Armenian roots have difficulty understanding why the defeat in the recent war has been so traumatic for Armenians all over the world. In order to understand this, we must first listen.

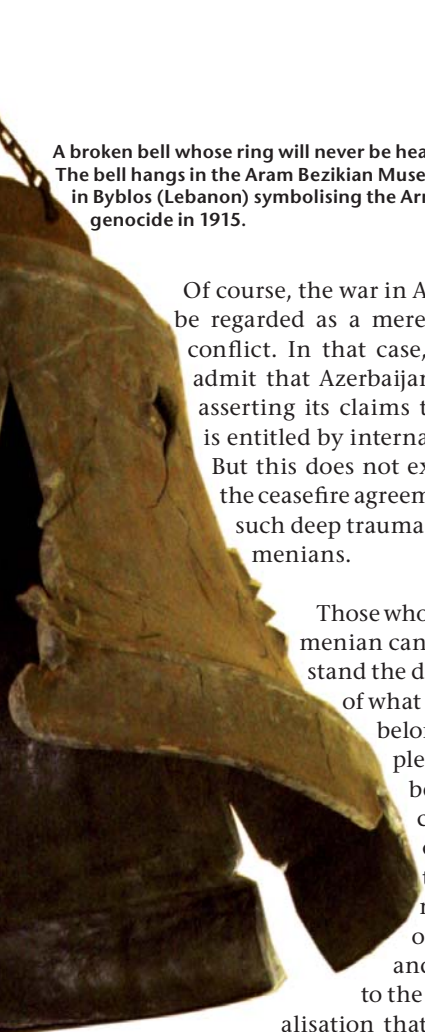
24 pages of this issue are devoted to Armenia. So much space has never been given to a feature before. And Armenia is not even part of the Middle East which is the region the Schneller Magazine usually reports about. When we decided to choose this feature in the editorial team, the war in Nagorno-Karabakh had just ended. Many of our partners and friends in the Middle East have Armenian roots. Their ancestors survived the genocide of 1915 and found new homes in Syria and Lebanon.

It is through them that we discovered how deep their despair is regarding the ceasefire agreement negotiated by Russia and how abandoned they feel because the world has so little sympathy for Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. None of them live in Armenia and hardly any of them have even been to the Republic of Artsakh, which is the name given to the former state of Nagorno-Karabakh since 2017. We heard about young Armenians who had avoided fighting in the war in Syria for so many years and managed to survive as a result. But in autumn 2020, they voluntarily went to the front to fight on the Armenian side. Many of them fell in the first days of battle. We had to admit we were simply unable to understand the deep-seated reasons behind their decision.

During the war, the international media did their job as well as they could. They tried to remain as neutral as possible and sketch out the main lines of conflict, making sure that both sides, Armenia and Azerbaijan, had their say. That is their job. Neutral reporting is more important than ever in times of war.

In Germany, we tend to stay out of wars as much as we can. This stems from the justified belief that war is never a solution. Who is reckless enough to take sides when just as many people are killed on the other side? On the other hand, a neutral stance does not prevent any wars either. There have always been wars raging somewhere in the world: wars of aggression, civil wars, proxy wars, wars over resources, wars as a diversion for internal problems, etc. This is the sad everyday reality in the 21st century.





A broken bell whose ring will never be heard again.
The bell hangs in the Aram Bezikian Museum
in Byblos (Lebanon) symbolising the Armenian
genocide in 1915.

Of course, the war in Artsakh can be regarded as a mere territorial conflict. In that case, one must admit that Azerbaijan was only asserting its claims to which it is entitled by international law. But this does not explain why the ceasefire agreement caused such deep trauma among Armenians.

Those who are not Armenian cannot understand the deep feeling of what it means to belong to a people that has been persecuted for centuries, that was almost wiped out in 1915 and that came to the painful realisation that the world did not care – and that world opinion is just as indifferent today when Armenians are attacked and Armenian cultural heritage is destroyed. Non-Armenians are unable to fathom the intensity of this collective trauma, even today.

But what we can do is listen when Armenians tell us what moves them and why they feel so hurt. When you really listen carefully, you will be shocked by what little is known about Armenian history in this country. You may come across expressions such as “the blood of martyrs” or “the fight of our ancestors”. These are

metaphors that do not readily pass the lips of a German. That’s fair enough. But those with German ancestors have a collective past and a different historical responsibility. No German can think and feel like an Armenian – and it’s not even necessary.

But listening is the least thing we can do for our Armenian brothers and sisters. Only then do we get an intimation what the war means for them. Knowing about the wounds and maybe also the collective grief for what has been lost are the basic conditions to find new ways into the future and to discover the points where we non-Armenians can encourage and support our Armenian brothers and sisters.

In no way does this mean that we ignore the victims which the war claimed on the Azerbaijani side. On the contrary. If we give our Armenian brothers and sisters space in this issue to voice their grievances, we do this in full knowledge of the suffering that this war has unleashed as a whole. We share the grief of all the mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters and children who have lost dear ones in the Artsakh war.

Katja Dorothea Buck

Fear of another genocide

For Armenians the Artsakh war was more than just an armed conflict

During a visit to St James Cathedral in Jerusalem, the South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu said that the Armenians are a chosen people because God tests humanity by sending catastrophes to the Armenians. In the past hundred years, there have been many catastrophes.

Tutu was referring to the devastating earthquake in 1988 which destroyed one third of Armenia and claimed almost 100,000 lives. After a series of massacres in Baku in 1990, the Armenian population of Azerbaijan fled to earthquake-ravaged Armenia. At the beginning of the 1990s, the war over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave cost many thousands of lives.

In 1994, Turkey and Azerbaijan imposed a land blockade on Armenia which lasts to this day. The blockade severely restricts Armenia's industry and growth. In the past years, oil-rich Azerbaijan used its resources to acquire billions worth of arms. On 27 September 2020, Azerbaijan supported by Turkish forces launched an offensive.

According to military experts it was the most lethal technological war of the 21st century. The bombing and shelling lasted 44 days. There are verified confirmations that internationally prohibited weapons such as cluster and white phosphorus bombs were used against military and civilian targets. But the deadliest weapon were drones which indiscriminately hit anything moving on the ground. The most horrible thing was that huge screens

were set up in public places in Baku where mobs clapped each time a drone hit an Armenian target.

100,000 people lost their homes and took refuge in Armenia. 10,000 homes were destroyed. Rockets were launched on Armenian border towns with warlike rhetoric laying claim to certain parts of Armenia, labelling them as part of "historical Azerbaijan" although Azerbaijan as a country is only a century old.

Captured soldiers suffered the worst fate. Azeri soldiers boasted on their social media and exhibited torture scenes and beheadings which included disabled civilians who were unable to leave their homes in time. All this happened in broad daylight with full coverage by the international media. The world was witness to this war of aggression equipped with first-class technology.

It sounded cynical to us to hear governments of other countries calling for a halt to hostilities. Nobody called for the UN Security Council to meet and the United Nations did nothing at all to stop the attack. The international media was full of reports about thousands of terrorists flown in by Turkey to fight alongside Azerbaijan but it was treated politically as a vignette. The European Union took a non-committal stance and repeated a call for ceasefire like a parrot. On 9 November, Russia sent 2,000 peace-keeping soldiers to monitor the ceasefire.

The human cost of this war has been catastrophic for Armenia with more than



Martin Keiper

members of their family. As a small country Armenia had to send its last reserves to save the country from being overrun. As if all this was not enough, hundreds died of Covid-19 in the last few months. The hospitals were unable to cope with the volume of casualties and sick.

The 20th century was traumatic for Armenians. Between 1915 and 1923, Armenia lost 70% of its total population. They were uprooted and dispersed all over the world. It also meant the destruction of much of the cultural heritage. The recent war brought back all these memories. After 100 years, the nightmarish feeling spread that it could all repeat itself again only with better technology and in less time.

Based on the Azeri declaration, the threat of genocide and extermination is very existential and present. We have witnessed the first chapter and more will follow if the apathy of the world stays the same. Because of their turbulent history, Armenians enjoy the sympathy of many people but it seems that sympathy is not enough. It is financial and political interests which shape the destiny of issues.

George Hintlian is a historian and lives in the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

All that remains of Artsakh after the war in autumn 2020 is a fraction of its original area (orange). The areas conquered by Azerbaijan in 1994 (yellow) are lost and there is no common border to Armenia any more. The only land connection to it is controlled by Russia.

6,000 killed. To this day, search teams are still looking for corpses on the battlefields. More than 8,000 were wounded and many who have lost their arms or legs and will remain disabled for life. Women have lost their husbands, children their fathers, parents their only son. Many lost two

We went to sleep in peace and woke up in war

Armenia mourns its dead and searches for perspectives

The war over Artsakh changed everything in Armenia in a flash. The hope with which Armenians looked to the future since the revolution in 2018 is now shattered and their dream of peace and freedom has evaporated. And many families must bury their sons.

Henrik was only 18 years old. The funeral of my friend's son was surreal. In drizzling rain on the "Yereblur" military cemetery, a sea of flowers, graves upon graves. Almost as a mark of defiance, one Armenian and one Artsakh flag fly together on each grave. Crying, sobbing, mourning people everywhere. Priests with their deep voices intoning the centuries-old funeral ceremony, trying to find words of solace.

Billows of smoke and the smell of incense. Henrik's mother, sinking into the mud, weeps at her son's grave; the father with a blank stare wipes away a tear; so many friends and relatives; in the background the staccato sound of machines digging fresh graves non-stop. Further away a military band plays melancholy music. Three fallen soldiers at a time laid out in coffins under the skies. Military honours before the parents trail behind the coffins of their children.



Henrik was the same age as my son. They started school together. He fell on the first day of the war. His body was only found six weeks later. Before that, his family lived through a nightmare of contradictory news. One said he was alive. Then the next came saying he was missing but still alive. Until the harsh reality was finally pronounced. Henrik was laid out in a closed coffin. There was not much of him left.

With all the many sobbing people at the grave, it almost seems to me as if I am an observer looking at the whole scene from a distance. Everything seems unreal, unfathomable. As in a trance I embrace the father, murmur a few words... what should one say? No words or gestures can soothe such pain.

We went to sleep in peace and woke up in war. Everything in you changes in a flash. There is a shift in values and your thoughts revolve only around the war.



A father mourns at the tomb of his son on the Yera-blur military cemetery in Yerevan. Many new graves had to be dug there.

Diacoma Charitable Fund

You wake up with the war, your thoughts and ears are full of war the whole day, and in the night, you try to find a little sleep, only to continuously wake up with a start and lie there restless. We've all heard a lot about wars. We've seen pictures in the news. But when the pictures show your homeland, when the dead are your brothers, sons or your fathers, then it's a completely different story. And when you finally understand that they are dying so that you can live in peace and freedom, it becomes almost unbearable. Yes, our only wish is to live a self-determined life in peace and freedom. Why are we Armenians not entitled to this human right?

Autumn 2020: During a lull in the fighting, a group of young conscripts sit around a camp fire. One has a guitar and starts singing. He sings an old song, one they already heard as children, a song that generations before them have already sung. A song that has become their song

today: "...don't cry, my mother, wait for me, I'll be back. I love you so much, I miss you my mother. I remember your words, love the land that is our home..."

The sad song ends with the thoughts of the dying young soldier "... he looks into the blue sky and remembers his home, the old poplar in the garden under which his mother waits for the letter. The sun sinks slowly on the horizon and the dying young Armenian sings the song of the Armenian mountains..." Looking into the eyes of the young men, there is no hate there. No, this is not what wild warriors look like. It's more like the pain of centuries of persecution. Those are the eyes of a persecuted people. It was only a few days ago, they had plans for the future, a life. But now they must defend the survival of the small Armenian people like so many generations before them.

Those Armenian eyes. They say they are really different from the eyes of other peoples. The French surgeon Patrick Knipper, who had rushed to Artsakh to help with some colleagues, said in an interview: „Every time I treat an Armenian casualty, I have the impression I am treating the entire people. The entire suffering of a people is mirrored in the eyes of one Armenian."

The generations born after 1945 in the Western world can simply not understand what it means to be hated, persecuted and murdered because of one's ethnic origin. But for us it is the reality which we must

live. We were a people that again looked into the future with so much hope after the revolution in 2018. But the dream of peace and freedom has reached its end, even our nationality is under threat today. The future looks bleak, there seems to be no perspective any more. Especially in times such as these, we should remember the faith of our ancestors and seek God.

Even if the situation appears hopeless today, even if it is the greatest tragedy for our people since the genocide and we are the generation in our centuries-old history that must experience these days – when our eyes look to God and to eternity, it puts everything in the proper perspective. We live on the path towards eternity and everything on this earth is ephemeral, even wars, borders and nations. This is the only way we will find peace. Or to quote



Diaconia Charitable Fund

The Diaconia Charitable Fund in the community in Jervesh, Yerevan, took in refugees from the Artsakh regions conquered by Azerbaijan. Many children are traumatised.

the poet Hovhannes Tumanyan: “There is only one path of redemption: through Jesus Christ who is deep inside each one of us.”

Baru Jambazian is head of the Diaconia Charitable Fund in Armenia.

A war and its preliminary history

1918: Armenia and Azerbaijan become independent states and both make claims to Nagorno-Karabakh.

1920: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh become Soviet Republics. Joseph Stalin announces Armenia’s renunciation to Nagorno-Karabakh.

1923: Nagorno-Karabakh becomes an autonomous region of the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan.

1962, 1965, 1967 and 1986/1987: In memos, the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh demand connection to Armenia. In 1989, 188,000 people live in Nagorno-Karabakh – 73.5% Armenians, 25.3% Azerbaijanis.

Up to **1990**, Azerbaijanis are expelled from Armenia and pogroms are waged against Armenians in Azerbaijan. A total of 500,000 people on both sides have to flee their homes.

1991: Nagorno-Karabakh declare an independent republic.

Beginning of **1992:** Massacres take place both in Azerbaijani and Armenian villages.

1994: First war over Nagorno-Karabakh ends with up to 50,000 killed and 1.1 million displaced on both sides. Nagorno-Karabakh and seven Azerbaijani districts are controlled by Armenian forces.

2 - 5 April 2016: armed conflicts between Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

2017: The Republic of Artsakh in the Nagorno-Karabakh region declares its independence (not recognised by the UN).

27 September 2020: Azerbaijan starts a so-called “counter-offensive” to “liberate” Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven districts occupied by Armenian troops.

9 November 2020: Ceasefire agreement. Further parts of the Republic of Artsakh and the seven districts controlled since 1994 must be cleared of Armenian troops. The war claimed over 7,000 deaths on both sides.

“We’ve been silent for too long”

Armenians living in Turkey must still conceal their identity today

Many Armenians who stayed in Turkey after the genocide in 1915 had to change their Armenian names and were officially islamised. Today, their descendants still fear that their Armenian roots become known. Derya Tamar A. from Rüsselsheim in Germany comes from a crypto-Armenian family.

How would you describe yourself: as a German with Armenian roots or an Armenian in Germany – or something totally different?
It’s a bit complicated. I was born in Rüsselsheim. My father came here from Turkey as a young boy. My mother only came to Germany after she got married, she was in her early twenties. We have a Turkish name and we’ve had Turkish nationality for quite some time. We could only change our name 20 years ago. Since then, we’ve had German passports. But I would definitely describe myself as Armenian. My

parents always told us as children that we are not Turks or Muslims but Armenians and Christians.

You don’t speak Armenian. Why not?

I can’t speak Armenian unfortunately. My family always spoke Turkish. But my great-grandparents still spoke Armenian and also had an Armenian name. After the genocide in 1915, many Armenians who survived and remained in Turkey had to give up their Armenian names and take Turkish names. They were also forcibly converted and officially had to live according to the rules of Islam. They had to suppress their Armenian identity. That’s the fate of crypto-Armenians.

Your family comes from Dersim in Turkey.

Today, the town is officially named Tunceli.

What do you know about your ancestors?

Dersim is a town where many Kurdish



privat



“For my ancestors it was a good thing to live in Dersim. A common history of suffering is what bonds Alevi and Armenians.”
Relatives of Derya Tamar A. in Dersim in 1965.

Alevi have always lived. Like the Armenians, the Kurdish Alevi from Dersim are viewed with disfavour in Turkey. We have that in common. For my ancestors it was a good thing to live in Dersim. Life was freer there, there were no evil eyes when you didn't go to the mosque or keep to Ramadan. In 1938, the Kurdish Alevi in Dersim suffered massacres. My ancestors witnessed it. Our common history of suffering is what bonds Kurdish Alevi and Armenians.

You also have relatives in other parts of Turkey. How do they deal with their Armenian roots?

They have always had to officially practice Islam. When we went on holiday to visit them, we first had to take our cross chains

“As soon as the Turks find out that someone has Armenian roots, it can lead to problems. For example, you lose your civil servant status or the licence for a business.”

off before so that no-one would see that we are Christians and Armenians. As soon as the Turks find out that someone has Armenian roots, it can lead to problems. For example, you lose your civil servant status or the licence for a business. It's terrible for sons who have to do their Turkish military service. When they find out that you are Armenian, you have to expect harass-

ment. So, crypto-Armenians in Turkey always say “don't talk about it outside”. The fear goes deep.

Do you talk with your relatives about it?

Yes, we very often talk about whether it's the right thing to keep our identity a secret for so long. In the meantime, some have chosen to be baptised. They have gone to court to win the right to bear their Armenian names again. That is the main condition before the Armenian church in Turkey can baptise someone. They would have tremendous problems if they baptised someone who has a Turkish name and his passport says he is Muslim. My uncle has started an association in Istanbul to care for the interests of crypto-Armenians in Turkey. There are at least over 100,000 crypto-Armenians. I think they should accept their identity. In Turkey there are Turks today who understand and who are open for these issues. Writers like Orhan Pamuk or historians like Taner Akcam write about it.

The war in Artsakh took place over 4,000 kilometres away from Germany. How did you live through this time?

The six weeks that the war lasted were very hard. For me, it was terrible that the war played no role in the German media or in politics. Europe and world opinion were silent. There are of course parallels that Germany is still silent when it comes to the genocide in 1915. For me, it was difficult to find any news at all. I found next to nothing in German. I don't speak Armenian and I didn't want to look at the Turkish news on the conflict. I always turned to the French media.

You've never been to Armenia and you have no relatives there. Why do you still feel a bond to this country and its people?

It is my people, my origin. It's unconditional love for my homeland. I am proud that the genocide was unable to destroy this passion in us crypto-Armenians. It's not just about a parcel of land. It's about the whole history and the suffering of the

"It is my people, my origin. It's unconditional love for my homeland. It's not just about a parcel of land. It's about the whole history and the suffering of the Armenian people. "

Armenian people. Everything will come out again, our whole family history. But it's so sad that most Germans don't know the first thing about the conflict. I don't blame them at all. But for me, it's difficult. For example, when I try to explain to my colleagues and friends why the war in Artsakh affects me so much. I had the impression that I couldn't talk about the actual history at all because I first had to do a lot of research work, for example why World War I or Stalin's politics still play a role today. After a time, I got tired of it and no longer wanted to talk to others about it. The disinterest of Germans in the Artsakh war has put a question mark on my Armenian identity in Germany.

What do you mean by that?

I'm very grateful to Germany for everything I've been able to achieve here and the way I can live here. In Turkey, as

an Armenian from Dersim, I would never have become an employee in a large security authority. But I'm disappointed that there's so little interest in our history here.

What about the bond between Armenians in Germany?

The Artsakh war improved things a little. Before, we were not really recognised by diaspora Armenians because of our Turkish name and the fact that we don't speak Armenian. The war has brought us together. We have started aid campaigns together, we have suffered together and have suddenly become accepted.

Recently, there has been repeated evidence of threats against Armenians in Germany.

Have you received any threats like these?

Yes. The threats are mainly sent through social media. After my first posts on the

"They wrote I would be immediately attacked if I ever went to Turkey. "

Artsakh war, I was immediately targeted by a Turkish military group. They wrote I would be immediately attacked if I ever went to Turkey. Of course, I informed my provider but they haven't deleted the posts.

Katja Dorothea Buck conducted the interview.

Oh, not a post-war trauma again!

A Turkish Armenian view on the war

There is no vaccine against the viruses of racism and nationalism. Before the Artsakh war, the Armenians living in Turkey were the scapegoat for many problems. The war has made their situation even worse. But with the new order that Russia has now created in the Caucasus, new prospects are also conceivable for them.

When Turkey fired up tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia, things became even more difficult for Armenians living in Turkey. And when the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev re-established the rules on the battlefield because of a conflict that had been frozen for 26 years, the world looked away.

Azerbaijan won but it also lost. Thousands of people died on both sides, thousands of mothers buried their children if they at all received the bodies of their children. Armenians and Azerbaijanis who failed to live together in Karabakh after the collapse of the Soviet Union have now paid the price for their diplomatic failures with astronomical losses.

Regarding the Armenians in Turkey, it is important to know about the eternal accusations pointed against the Armenian community. They are seen as traitors, guilty of the international political failure of Turkey etc. Armenians are permanently under pressure. No matter what the problem is, they are always the guilty party. It appears to be a way to make them ac-



Nalc

cept the few rights they have as a minority group.

Since the beginning of the 1900s, the common enemy of Turkey has obviously been the Armenians. Whatever the economic or political crisis or even in times of war, talk always focuses on the same targets, such as “powers outside Turkey”, and this means the diaspora Armenians; or the “enemies among us”, i.e. the Armenians living in Turkey. In 2007, the Armenian journalist Hrant Dink was massacred. In 2011, the young Sevag Balıkcı was murdered while he was doing his military service in the Turkish army. In fact, the survival of the Armenians after the genocide is the biggest failure of an extermination policy. The consequences of this failure



Despite the poor English, the message on the wall of an Orthodox Armenian church in the Istanbul district of Balat is loud and clear: "You are finish." BER is the name of a figure in a Turkish television series that plays on the nationalist feelings of the Turks. Many of these nationalists sign their graffiti with this name.

flying Turkish and Azeri flags and blaring loud nationalist anthems to instill the necessary fear. At the same time, the mass media, which is mainly under the control of the Turkish state, was spreading anti-Armenian news and the atmosphere was becoming more and more unbreathable.

Anti-Armenian slogans were written on the walls of Armenian schools and churches, but the investigations initiated by the police are like a never-ending process. It was not easy to be an Armenian in Turkey before the war, but now it has become even more difficult. Delal Dink, daughter of Hrant Dink, wrote in an article: "We cannot breathe". Much has been talked about the article and it has been shared very many times in social media. But the situation has not changed.

still have considerable influence on current Turkish policies.

But because of the economic crisis in 2020 and the dwindling power of the AKP ruling party, a scapegoat was again needed and was quickly found: the Armenians. It finally came to war between the neighbouring country of Armenia and the brother country of Azerbaijan over Karabakh. Turkey became party to this issue and the Armenians in Turkey again became the common enemy.

The well-known figures of the Armenian community, especially the Patriarchate, were put forward like pawns on TV screens. In the districts of Istanbul where Armenians live, cars were driven at night

After the Russian peacekeeping force entered Karabakh in November 2020 and the heads of state agreed on a ceasefire at the negotiation table, a new era began for Armenia, for Armenians and for Karabakh. Armenians living in Armenia see themselves on their own to face a reality they can no longer ignore. A new order prevails in the world and this order does not operate based on guilty conscience as it did in the 1915 genocide. Armenians have been forced to realise that, even if they are the first nation to accept Christianity as the official religion in the world and that it is surrounded by 3 Muslim states, these facts have no importance at all. The new order

is no reason to be among the first to be rescued from the fire.

On the other hand, nothing is going to change the geography. Azerbaijan is on one side and Turkey on the other. For a hundred years, the Armenian state has shut its eyes to the reality that they must communicate one way or the other with Turkey and Azerbaijan, even if they are at war or in denial of genocide. Armenia now has to face up to these things. It is a fact that economic and commercial relations with its neighbours are vital for the existence of an Armenian state in the South Caucasus. Neither Turkey nor Azerbaijan will move out of the region. And nor will Armenia.

In this new order, I think we will see the normalisation of diplomatic relations between the three countries in the not too distant future. When I say normalisation, I am not saying it will be friendly. But at a certain level, the lines of communication will be open. During this time, a historical task awaits the Armenians living in Turkey. They know both sides and could play a vital role both in economic cooperation and diplomatic relations. The Armenians in Turkey know the Armenian culture before the Soviet influence. This makes them both a gateway for Turkey to the West as well as to Armenia. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, can be included in this equation mostly as a partner of Russia.

During the war, the Turkish Armenians were reminded once again that they live a life of prisoners in Turkey. But that could change now. The Armenians in Turkey remained silent after 1915. They thought they could keep on leading their cultural and social life. But they are bleeding because Turkish politics have not changed.

Armenisches Patriarchat



The Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul is the spiritual centre for many Armenians living in Turkey.

But now the time has come for Turkish Armenians to re-evaluate their ideas about the concept of a nation and it is time to end the 100-year silence and bring stillness and calmness. They must find new solutions and they know that only too well.

The Armenian journalist Aris Nalci published the Agos magazine in Istanbul for eleven years together with the journalist Hrant Dink who was murdered in 2007. Today, he lives in Brussels. His articles are published in numerous Turkish, Armenian and English-speaking newspapers.

SECURING THE FUTURE

The Schneller Foundation – Education for Peace

For over 150 years, the name of Schneller has been linked to an untiring commitment to education for tolerance and peace.

The two Schneller schools in Lebanon and Jordan are open to children and young people from difficult backgrounds, whatever their religion. The schools offer a place of security and reliability and give them a chance for a better future.

The Schneller Foundation – Education for Peace was established in 2007 to safeguard this work in the long term and overcome economic downturns. Every year, the interest accruing from the Foundation's assets is channelled to the schools. The Foundation therefore has a lasting effect. A donation to the Foundation is tax-deductible.

You can also make a donation in the form of a bequest or a legacy to preserve your life's work beyond your life time.

Make your contribution to securing peace in the Middle East. With your help, children from broken families can receive sustainable prospects for their future lives through the Schneller schools – for many years to come.

Do you want to support the Schneller Foundation? We would be delighted to advise you.

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The Schneller Foundation regularly informs its donors in a newsletter about what's happening at the two Schneller schools. We will be delighted to send you the latest Foundation newsletter.



**EVS Evangelical Association
for the Schneller Schools**



The conflict is intentional. Hate is fuelled

Statement of an Armenian woman from Iran

The Nagorno-Karabakh issue is a complex one. It's a conflict that has lasted many decades and affected the lives of many generations. During this continuous conflict, people have lost fathers and then their brothers 10 years down the line. Now they do not want to lose their sons as well. When will this all end?

I will pose a question: Have you ever met a citizen of Nagorno-Karabakh? They're nothing like their politicians – Nikol Pashinyan on the Armenian side and Ilham Aliyev on the Azerbaijani side. Both nations are weary of this destructive conflict that has gone on for 30 years and neither Pashinyan nor Aliyev are popular among their people. Both nations are looking to live in peace alongside each other, but this is at complete odds with the intentions of the politicians. It seems as if the powers at play would like an ongoing and continuous conflict in the Caucasus region.

If you travel through Nagorno-Karabakh today, you might come across beautiful flower pots but if you look closely, you will notice that they are actually shell casings from the previous bombings. They have now been painted over and used as flower pots. If you walk through the streets, you will witness countless buildings that have been riddled with bullet holes, including hospitals and nurseries.

For people living in developed countries, it might be hard to believe that the children under 10 years old in Nagorno-Karabakh have witnessed two wars

in their lifetime, in 2016 and 2020 and have been forced out of their homes and communities. Children attend classes one day, and on the next day they're in underground shelters. Soon after that, their schools are closed for months on end, due to the war. But this is the brutal reality on the ground in Nagorno-Karabakh.

An Armenian citizen of Nagorno-Karabakh made this statement to a TV channel during an interview: "Even during all this conflict and war we must not forget one fact: because of this war, we will always owe a happy and joyful childhood to our children. Everyone who is contributing to the escalation of this conflict – that includes international organizations and individuals who are spreading hate and discrimination against the other race and are pushing their nations towards the belief that the only solution is war – they all want their children to grow up, turn into soldiers and kill people from their neighbouring nation."

When studying the conflict between Armenia and Turkish-speaking nations, the most prominent issues are ethnic discrimination and hatred. The Armenian genocide during World War I and the most recent war in 2020 both stem from the same root cause: ethnic hatred. All Armenians must be destroyed. The war does not end at the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenians have continuously been threatened by Turkish and Azeri officials, stating that the war will not end until the conquest of Yerevan - the Armenian capital. This rhetoric has also been echoed by



Witness of the centuries-old presence of Armenians in Iran: St John's Church in Sohrol near Tabriz whose origins go back to the 5th century.

Azerbaijani diplomats and celebrities. The spread of hatred went so far that Twitter was forced to ban the accounts of many of these individuals. In addition, Turkey and Azerbaijan, despite many warnings from UNESCO, have taken part in the destruction of historical Armenian monuments such as churches or ancient statues.

These are all small examples of the extent of racial and ethnic hatred aimed at Armenians and which is not confined to the borders of both countries. In 2004 during a NATO-sponsored training exercise for the military, Ramil Safarov, an Azerbaijan officer, killed an Armenian lieutenant by brutally beheading him when he was asleep. A Hungarian court sentenced Ramil Safarov to life imprisonment. In 2012, he was extradited to Azerbaijan to continue his sentence but on his return, he was pardoned and promoted to the rank of major. Since then, he has been celebrated as a hero.

The politicians' statements regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh have become stale. Countless historical documents prove that Armenians have inhabited these regions for thousands of years. The handing over of Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan by the USSR was a ploy to incite a continuous conflict and war in the region. The problem is that these facts have been echoed by both sides for decades, but it appears no one is willing to take concrete action or present a new perspective. This pointless cycle has gone on for years and led to the death of tens of thousands. I sometimes wonder why there seems to be not enough room for both nations on this wide Earth!

Argishtey is a pseudonym. The authoress is Armenian and lives in Iran. For security reasons, she prefers not to publicise her real name.

“So that my people can live in dignity in their homeland”

Why the war has also shocked the Armenian community in Lebanon

The fighting between Armenians and Azerbaijanis lasted six weeks and thousands of people were killed and many more were displaced. But two thousand kilometres away in Beirut, the war brings back bad memories.

At the heart of the conflict was the Nagorno-Karabakh region or the Republic of Artsakh. Artsakh is the ancient Armenian name for Karabakh, its population has been mostly Armenians for centuries. The recent military conflict and the war against Artsakh by Azerbaijan, Turkey and Islamist Jihadists has in fact been a matter of life or death for Armenians.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the two countries, i.e. the Republic of Artsakh and Azerbaijan, fought a bloody war over the region that has been the cause for further violence in the years since. Peace talks have taken place since then, but until recently, negotiations mediated by international powers failed time and again. No peace agreement was reached.

This recent war came to an end in November 2020, when both sides agreed to sign a Russian peace deal, where under its terms, Azerbaijan retains several areas of land that it gained control of during the conflict and Armenia withdraws its troops from them as Russian peacekeepers monitor the ceasefire.

But the main question is the following: Was this deal a fair one? As a result of this

war, the country's historical churches, monuments, cemeteries and even public buildings were damaged and many citizens died for no reason. Is history repeating itself? I can say most likely, yes, but in different ways in Artsakh. Whether it is Turkey or Azerbaijan, both have a tradition of historical hostility or aggression towards Armenians.

Turkey did it with the Armenian Genocide. The Turkish government during the 1915 acted barbarically towards the Armenian people which resulted in the displacement and suffering of an entire nation and the killing of more than 1.5 million civilians. Azerbaijan and its allies have done the same with the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh without realizing the fact that Armenian soldiers are protecting the beauty of being Armenian and are committed till the end to defend their land up to martyrdom. Those young soldiers have been passionately fighting at the front line to defend the right to live their lives in their homeland with dignity.

My intent is not to judge but to focus on and help those ordinary people in Armenia and Artsakh who are going through difficult times, yet they are strongly attached to their homeland and also to their national, cultural and Christian heritage. From an Armenian perspective living in the diaspora, I cannot but defend the right of my people in regaining their homeland because they have paid a high price in their struggle for peace and justice. I stand with my people as they struggle to stay



Souvenir saleswoman in front of the Sanahin Monastery in northern Armenia. The Armenian identity includes a deep inner attachment to Armenia – whether a person is born there or not.

alive with dignity and to continue to fulfil the mission of our great-grandfathers.

I believe that peace and safety can only be assured through the recognition of a free, independent Artsakh by the international community. We must put an end to this unjust conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh by stopping injustices. Mere talks or negotiations are not enough, slogans which express human rights are not enough, and even international law is not enough if this is not followed by any serious action.

Armenians who left Lebanon to join the war, like many others in the diaspora, felt it was their duty to go and fight. Some have donated and funded to support the humanitarian efforts.

We, as Armenians, are very concerned and upset because what has been happening was unfair. Our emotions lead to anger because our rights have been violated on many different levels. However, I'm so proud of the Armenian community around the world when I see their united call to action, men and women who join in hosting fundraisers, volunteering and joining the Armenian military to defend what is right. It is through this struggle for peace and justice that the Good is realized.

Liza George Titizian is Armenian and lives in Beirut. She is head of the library at the Near East School of Theology (NEST).

“Armenia is my homeland”

Armenians in Syria know only too well what war means

Amid all the complex geopolitical and strategic ramifications of this conflict, it is easy to forget the human impact of the fighting in Artsakh on the Armenian diaspora. No matter where they live in the world, they share the suffering of their Armenian countrymen in Armenia and Artsakh and the silence of the international community reminds them of the genocide in 1915.

I hate war. We all do. War is wrong for humanity regardless of who commits these acts. I know what it means to live in a state of war. I have experienced it myself in 2014 during the war in Syria which was escalated by Turkey and its terrorists. I know what each Armenian citizen thinks of Turkey and its allies. For me, being an Armenian in the diaspora means being in continual battle for national identity and justice, i.e., the recognition of the genocide of Armenians in 1915.

For me, Armenia is my homeland and Artsakh is part of Greater Armenia. This is where my identity is rooted and my sense of belonging is revealed. I don't understand why history is failing us as Armenians. First, the Genocide in 1915 and now the war in Artsakh. Who knows what else will happen in the future? Although I live in the Diaspora, pain and suffering in Armenia and Artsakh brings us together with our fellow Armenians all over the world. We have been longing for justice and peace all our lives. The most important question is when will Turkey and its allies recognize what they have done to the Armenians throughout history?

It seems that history is repeating itself over and over again after 105 years. The renewed fighting over the Nagorno Karabakh region vividly underscores the dangers inherent in the collapse of the international rules-based order. The involvement of the NATO member of Turkey in this dispute has been enormous. Rather than mediating between the two parties, the Turkish government escalated the war – a reaction which reflects ancient ethnic and religious enmities. The war in Artsakh, in my modest opinion, has been perfectly planned by the big powers. These powers have interests in this region such as oil, gas and gold. It was an armed conflict of international character that was triggered by Azerbaijan's massive offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh.

The international community must be made responsible for the failure of the peace process over the past 30 years. The international community failed to insist on the commitments the parties entered into after the four-day war in April 2016. There should have been a diplomatic solution in view of the humanitarian disaster because this conflict has already caused





View from the hill of Artsakh – once part of the historical Greater Armenia.

Araz B Photography

great scars and escalated other issues, making it impossible to return to the status quo.

This war is a crime against Armenian culture and the Armenian Christian people. Artsakh is an Armenian country and history confirms this. Since the start of war, Armenian civilians and buildings in Nagorno-Karabakh have been hit and bombarded with heavy guns. Moreover,

mercenaries from Syria and Libya were transported to Nagorno-Karabakh in order to kill Armenians and get paid for it. Why did the United Nations keep silent? Where was international law? Where was justice?

I can assure you that no-one and no power can bring us down to our knees. We all share the same passion our ancestors had for the blessed land of Armenia and for the Armenian identity. The Armenians of Artsakh are calling for peace, justice and the right to self-determination because it is their God-given right to live and prosper. They cannot live in a growing distrust and hostility with their neighbours. So, instead of building a bigger barrier between Armenians and Azeris, the international community must act to put an end to the ongoing dispute. In the end, the Armenian people must act as 'one' and put aside their differences and face their fate together, no matter what the circumstances.

Salpi George Titizian is an Armenian woman living in Kessab (Syria). The people living in this small town directly on the border to Turkey are nearly all Armenian.

In February 2014, jihadist forces overran Kessab, destroying churches and houses and displacing all 6,000 inhabitants. It was only months later that the people were able to return.

The good will win, eventually ...

Why diaspora Armenians fight the “good fight”

I can't speak about the Artsakh war on behalf of the 10 million diaspora Armenians, nearly 1.5 million of them living in the Middle East. But perhaps my story has some similarity to what my Armenian brothers and sisters think. We are all on the quest to find peace. I am very humbled to share my story, as the son of an Armenian Genocide survivor.

I was born in Beirut, Lebanon, which makes me a Lebanese-Armenian living with dual identities and histories - one filled with struggle and wars, to say the least. I sometimes wonder if the Middle East will ever know peace. This region constantly finds itself in an ethnic and denominational power struggle. If only all this pain and destruction was worth it. No matter how many people die and suffer, nothing seems to change.

Up until recently, I used to be stripped in every airport and interrogated, just because I had a Lebanese passport. A few things changed when I received my Cypriot citizenship, but it didn't seem to alleviate the pain and struggle which comes with being Armenian and Lebanese.

In the years since the Genocide, Armenians have learned to live and prosper in a diaspora, but never, not even for a minute, giving up on that hope that we will one day go back home. Even if home is not “reachable” at the moment, at least the republics of Armenia and Artsakh are, and I was fortunate enough to visit them several times.

The 44-day war of Azerbaijan and Turkey against Artsakh last year ended with over 5,000 young soldiers killed, church-

“No war can obliterate the beauty of Artsakh.”

The 9th century Davivank Monastery is located in the region allocated to Azerbaijan after the ceasefire agreement.



D'Ara/hchjan

es and monasteries destroyed, and hundreds uprooted from their homes. As I look back at this unfair war, I have a hard time accepting this “defeat”. The agreement which was signed at the end of the war took its toll on my personal and national identity. If this was a proxy war, why

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,

did it have to be in Artsakh, a small nation which has contributed so much to the world and is still living in the aftermath of its Genocide?

I have kept the faith.

2. *Tim 4,7*

When reflecting on the idea of how pain and suffering can bring people together, bringing

people to engage with their experiences of suffering and death can link them to hope, cutting through the despair. This war has been a major setback for Armenians, but it can still generate hope. Maybe wars and destructions have, on very rare occasions, served as forces for good. But violence generates more violence. What is most needed today, as Apostle Paul says, is “fighting the good fight”.

Today, as I look at a shattered Artsakh, I know that no war or physical force can eradicate its beauty, but that’s from a patriot’s perspective. From an Armenian’s perspective living in a scattered diaspora, I see bloodshed and unrest: a very high price we continue to pay, in our struggle for peace and justice. As a Lebanese and Middle Eastern, I am much too familiar with that feeling.

I don’t think my pain and struggle will ever go away and I might not, in my life-

time, see peace or fair retribution. Regardless, I will carry on fighting the fight for the Good.

Last year I learned that there might be an even bigger threat to Humanity than a pandemic and it is the continued spread of destruction, killing for the sake of power and cultural appropriation. Unity, love, and solidarity are needed now more than ever, and I know that many of you who supported Artsakh financially or through your prayers have seen the power of this solidarity.

“Fighting the good fight” is not easy, but it is worth it. Armenians have fought the good fight throughout history and even when they lost, they continued fighting, convinced that Good will eventually win. My very existence today and that of the 10 million Armenians in the diaspora is a testimony of that. I wouldn’t otherwise be here, telling you my story.

Hrayr Jebejian is General Secretary of the Bible Society in the Gulf. He is a recipient of the Ambassador of the Motherland medal from the Ministry of Diaspora of the Republic of Armenia.



Grown on the school grounds of the JLSS:
Trees turned into boards.

Wood from our own trees

Khirbet Kanafar (JLSS). In future, the carpentry workshop at the Johann Ludwig Schneller School (JLSS) can work with wood from its own grounds. Up until now, it was not possible to re-use the wood from the trees growing on the school grounds and which had to be felled for safety reasons. An alumnus of the Schneller school, who now works in the wood business, declared himself willing to saw the logs into planks for a reasonable price. Now, the JLSS has quite a large supply of wood. This saves costs which would otherwise have been used to buy materials for the carpentry training course. Now the school is considering whether it is a practical move to plant trees to cover its own wood requirements.

Aid supplies in stock

Khirbet Kanafar (JLSS). It seems that the Johann Ludwig Schneller School (JLSS) has made a name for itself among the aid organisations in Lebanon. Out of the

blue, the UN refugee agency UNHCR approached the school offering hundreds of mattresses, blankets and solar lamps. It was only a few hours later that everything was delivered free of charge to the JLSS where it was carefully stored. The schools can use the materials in the boarding home or, after covering its own needs, can pass them on to refugees in the neighbourhood.

Two years ago, a violent winter storm flooded the Syrian refugee camp in the Bekaa Valley. With funds from the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity and the Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools, the JLSS bought a lot of aid supplies for the victims of the flooding quickly and without any bureaucracy. We published a report about this in Schneller Magazine 2/2019.

New Archbishop

Jerusalem (EVS). Hossam Naoum will be officially inaugurated to the office of Archbishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East on Ascension Day, the 13th of May. He has been Bishop Coadjutor since June 2020 and since then, his predecessor, Archbishop Suheil Dawani, has introduced him to all the duties of his new office. Naoum will be the 15th Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem and the fifth Palestinian in this office.

After 14 years, Suheil Dawani will retire from the office of Archbishop on 23 April. The Jerusalem diocese is the sponsor church of the Theodor Schneller School in Amman. The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools is delighted to welcome a friend in Hossam Naoum who is well acquainted with Schneller work.

“Be open to what is coming your way!”

Alumni reminisce

Henrike Lillemor Jedamczik-Radke (32) was a volunteer at the Theodor Schneller School (TSS) in 2008/2009. Today, she is a social worker at a meeting centre for the elderly in Stuttgart.

I have fond memories of our Christmas party. “My” boys were all wearing Santa Claus hats and were dressed in their smartest clothes. Two of them, two brothers, had received suits from their mother especially for the party. By the way, it was a Muslim family. There was plenty of laughing, eating and singing. After what felt like

terest brought the haggled price down so much that I just had to take it in the end. Today I’m pleased I did.

I would love to see Khaled again. He was then in 9th grade – a young person who had already gone through unimaginable experiences. Despite all that, his childish joy shone through when he played football or he was planning a prank. It was beautiful to watch him laughing. Otherwise, he had very sad eyes. But all in all, I’d love very much to know what has become of the boys.

My time in Jordan changed me as a person, politically and professionally. It’s the real reason why I studied social work and then worked in the Youth Migration Service. There, I accompanied young refugees, mainly from Syria. My husband and I were also active in this area as volunteers. This is where I benefited from my knowledge of Arabic, which had sadly diminished quite a lot.

Basically, I would advise all those who are planning a long stay abroad not to have any specific ideas. Don’t google and don’t think you have to cram any special knowledge. Be open to what is coming your way. Get involved in an adventure that will leave its mark on you. There may be good days and difficult days but you will definitely not want to miss them.

a hundred portions of knafeh (Arabian dessert) and a lot of dancing, all the little Santa Claus fell into their beds.

Our trips were also great fun. What is even more precious for me today is the fact that I was able to see Syria before the civil war. I still have the pencil box which I bartered at the market in Aleppo. Actually, I didn’t want to buy it at all but my disin-



Henrike Jedamczik (centre) in the garden of the German-speaking congregation in Amman.

Uwe Gräbe



Quoted from Letters



Thank you for the new Schneller Magazine. It's really well done, both the concept and the layout! The various articles by those involved are extremely interesting.

For me, this issue is a small consolation for the trip to Lebanon which was cancelled because of Covid. I hope that things will be better in 2021.

Martin Weiss, Berlin

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I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Revelations 1,18



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