

Webinar examined Diaspora support of the Republic of Armenia

On April 17-18, 2021, the Armenian American Mental Health Association (AAMHA) hosted a two-day online global conference on Armenian identity and mental health. Part of this was an unprecedented two-hour panel that gathered the heads of six leading U.S. Armenian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to discuss this timely question: *“How can Diaspora professional groups best support the Republic of Armenia in these stressful times?”*

Since the “peaceful revolution” in the Republic of Armenia in 1988, Armenia now faces dark days with covid-19, the Azeri invasion of Artsakh, and civil unrest in Yerevan. Fortunately, the global Diaspora of 8 million Armenians includes many talented individuals and groups eager to support the 3 million Armenians in the homeland.

Raffi Jamgotchian is an international business executive, cyber-security expert, and President of the Northeast Region of the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America (AESA). The AESA was formed in 1983, and its Northeastern Chapter in 2009—with the mission to bring together STEM professionals and students in Armenia and the USA. AESA now hosts a speaker series, annual Mentor Forum, and a dynamic program of education and services by forging partnerships between dozens of institutions in the USA and Armenia.

Dr. Lawrence Najarian is an ophthalmologist and President of the Armenian American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO). Formed in 1994 in Greater New York, AAHPO is a 501(c)3 medical philanthropy that brings together medical doctors and other health professionals and students. AAHPO offers vibrant and diverse projects to promote the health of Armenian communities in the USA and Armenia—including telemedicine, mentoring, continuing medical education (CME), annual missions to Armenia, and support of health care in Armenia.

Dr. Harold Takooshian is a professor at Fordham University, and Executive Officer of the Armenian Behavioral Science Association (ABSA). Since ABSA formed in 1987, it has grown into a network of 800 Hye behavioral scientists and students in the USA and now Armenia. Its diverse programs have included publication of 7 directories, hosting timely regional and national symposia in 30 cities, and awards to 32 outstanding Hye scientists. In 2020, with Yerevan State University, ABSA installed the first chapter in the Trans-Caucasus region of Psi Chi, the international honor society for psychology.

Dr. Ani Kalayjian is a professor at Columbia University, and founder and President of Meaningful World (MW). Since 1988, after the earthquake in Armenia, teams of MW volunteers have provided humanitarian trauma relief to communities in Armenia, 48 other nations, and 26 U.S. states. Experts also conduct and publish research on trauma intervention. The MW website invites students and experts to get involved in its diverse projects globally and at United Nations. The next MW mission to Armenia is this April 28, 2021 for post-war recovery and installment of the first Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Stella Petros is a clinical social worker and President of the AAMHA. Since it was formed in California in 2006, AAMHA gathers mental health professionals for diverse projects to promote mental health in California and Armenia. Since the attack on Artsakh in 2020, 203 psychotherapists have volunteered to connect with colleagues in Armenia, including weekly consultation teams using zoom or Facebook.

Dr. Aleksandr V. Gevorkyan is a professor at St. John’s University, and officer of the Armenian Economics Association (AEA). Formed in 2006, AEA is a global nonprofit association promoting Armenian scholarship in economics, and closer ties between the Diaspora and Republic. It hosts regional and global conferences, and publishes the Armenian Journal of Economics.

Harut Sassounian is a noted expert on Armenian affairs, columnist, and Editor of the California Courier. To increase Armenian identity among Diaspora Armenians, he described a bold new plan described on the web (www.HyeID.org) to issue Hye ID cards to Diaspora Hyes, for a proposed Diaspora Armenian Parliament of democratically elected representatives world-wide.

Dr. George Gharibian is a psychologist, professor at Alliant International University, and Chair of this AAMHA conference. As the discussant for this panel, he emphasized the importance to develop ways to promote identity, mental health, and Diaspora support for the Republic. He encouraged diverse groups to know of each other's efforts, and collaborate when feasible.

A list of these groups' websites appears below. A 120-minute video of this panel is available at the AAMHA Facebook page below. For any questions on this panel, contact George at George.Gharibian@Alliant.edu or Harold at takoosh@aol.com.

The websites of these associations offer details:

1. AESA: aesa.org/ aesa-ne.org
 2. AAHPO: <https://aahpo.org/our-history/>
 3. ABSA: <http://file-id.org/130831/13203>
 4. MW: <http://meaningfulworld.com/> <http://drkalayjian.com>
 5. AAMHA: <https://aamhawest.org/>
 6. AEA: <http://aea.am/mission-and-vision/> <http://aea.am/dfd0421/>
 7. HyeID: <https://www.hyeid.org/en/>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/aamhawest.org>





Recording **LIVE** on Facebook



Armenian American Mental Health Association

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