

# HAYTOUG

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## \* SOLIDARITY Համերաշխություն



ARMENIANS  
& KURDS:  
**TOGETHER**  
AGAINST  
OPPRESSION

WHO  
IS  
**VAHE**  
BERBERIAN?

WHAT  
DO  
**KURDS**  
HAVE TO SAY  
ABOUT THE  
GENOCIDE ?

DO YOU KNOW  
WHERE YOUR  
**CHOCOLATE**  
IS MADE?

INTERVIEW  
SPOTLIGHT:  
**ANOTHER**  
WORLD  
IS POSSIBLE



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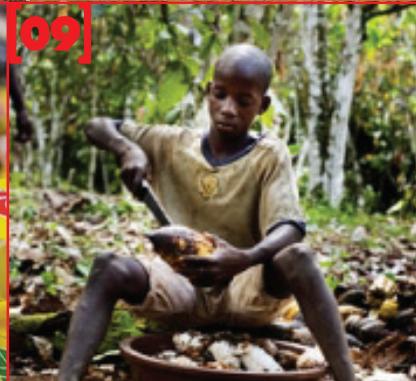
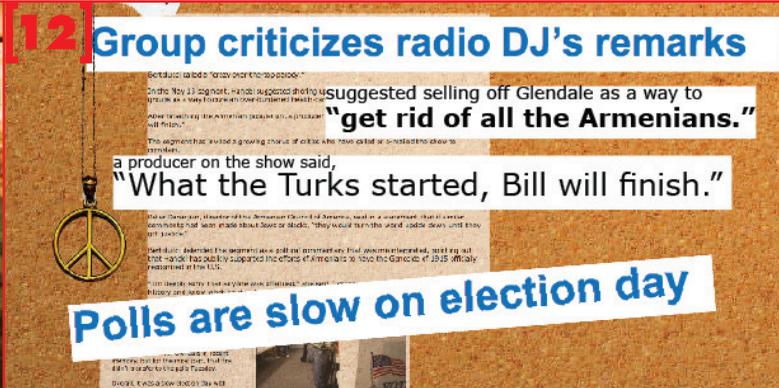
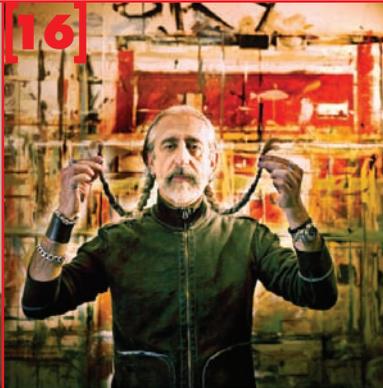
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For all Armenian Youth residing in Western America who strive for the national, social and economic liberation of the Armenian people. Haytoug is distributed free of charge within the community. Financial contributions may be made to the address below.

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# SOLIDARITY AND POSSIBILITY: DEFEATING THE BIG FISH

Human nature is often described as self-interested, egotistical and insular, where individuals do not have concern for anything outside of the realm which directly affects them. While it may seem logical and prudent for everyone to put their heads down and focus solely on their immediate desires, this is not the way to achieving positive and tangible change on any level. The attitude described above leads to the creation and intensification of dividing lines among people that should otherwise be unified.

For Armenians the need for solidarity exists on three distinct levels: amongst ourselves, with the struggles of our local American communities and within the sphere of transnational social issues and persecuted minorities.

Armenians in general need to make a much more earnest effort to communicate and coordinate with one another; especially regarding core national issues which are inarguable. For far too long, divisive, skeptical and outdated mindsets have laid obstacles, preventing full cooperation. It's high time we realize the importance and value of every active and motivated community member in matters which really matter.

Furthermore, as a Diasporan population we must mobilize ourselves to get involved in local issues that impact the areas which we inhabit—anything from movements advocating environmental consciousness to immigrant rights movements and the fight against local racism. Even in a diverse city like Los Angeles, we see intolerant and xenophobic sentiments expressed against Armenians. Hearing radio show hosts joke about “finishing what the Turks started”, or reading columns by school teachers who feel entitled to deride students for trying to maintain their culture and help their community, to experiencing a police department riddled with chauvinistic officers who stereotype and characterize civilians, shows that our plight is not much different from what Blacks, Hispanics,

Asians or any other minority group have gone through or continue to go through.

On a global level we must remind ourselves that issues such as genocide, oppressive labor practices and foreign domination—which are issues that have profoundly affected Armenians— affect the entire human race and people from all walks of life. We see that the same aggression carried out against the Armenian people by Turkey has also been repeatedly committed against the likes of the Greeks, Assyrians, Kurds, and even dissenting Turks. Thus, our call for justice is part and parcel of this broader struggle to, once and for all, put an end to the brutality of the Turkish state. This naturally aligns our cause with that of the Kurds. Of course, the movement for recognition of the Armenian Genocide has always been propelled by the understanding that failing to recognize past injustices will only contribute to history repeating itself. Thus amplifying the urgency with which we must speak out and take action against the current genocide in Darfur, in an effort to stop current and future atrocities.

When approaching Armenian issues from these perspectives, one that draws connections rather than divisions with other peoples, you lay the groundwork for solidarity and future collaboration. Such collaboration is important not only for the intrinsic moral value it wields but also for the broader bases of strength it can help build in achieving serious progress. The pooling of resources and collective power that is gained from coalition building should never be underestimated. In addition, allying with other groups has always been one of the ways Armenian activists have learned more about themselves and gained valuable skills for pushing our own movement forward.

Although we have a unique obligation to, first and foremost, serve our community, we also owe it to ourselves to stand with one another and to stand with others struggling against oppression.

Through solidarity we can prove the old proverb, “big fish eat little fish” to be wrong.

# ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

## AN INTERVIEW WITH KHATCHIG DERGHOUGASSIAN

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**1** Since at least the 1970s, the world has been undergoing a form of free-market economic integration commonly referred to as neo-liberal globalization. What is the extent to which Armenia itself has become a part of this process since its independence and what do you feel have been its main impacts on the country?

Armenia has fully embraced the neoliberal model. As in Russia—and, in fact, all of the former Soviet republics—it applied the “shock-therapy” approach to liberalize the economy and privatize everything. In the immediate aftermath of independence, more precisely between 1991 and 1994, the parliamentary faction of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) argued for an alternative approach, advocating for a gradual liberalization and a central role for the state in strategic decisions, as well as healthcare, education and social security. It was consistent with the ARF’s other main objective concerning the Constitution: creating a parliamentary system rather than the risk of concentrating too much power within the hands of the executive through a strong presidency.

The debate ended with the crackdown on the ARF by the end of 1994, a move that was necessary to open the way for the implementation of the “shock-therapy” model and a strong presidential system. The result has been a twofold concentration of wealth: geographical and oligarchic/monopolistic. The central perimeter of Yerevan is a developed urban zone with a high standard of living, whereas the periphery of the city (not to mention

outside of Yerevan) is almost completely underdeveloped—with here and there extravagant residences usually built by the new capitalist class, Diaspora Armenians, or some wealthy person living in Russia. This is the typical landscape of the so-called “creative destruction” type capitalism which was applied. And, indeed, as a consequence of the “shock-therapy” style privatization, a small oligarchy has become virtually the owner of the country.



The country’s economic policy follows closely to the orthodox guidelines of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, maintaining a straight fiscal discipline. Social concerns, including jobs, are non-issues as the free-market dogmatic belief is that growth is the magical solution to every challenge. The main objective of the Central Bank of Armenia is to ensure the flow of money, the only bloodline for the economy. This is broadly how Armenia became “part” of neoliberal globalization.

The tragic part is that once the model had been implemented successfully and structured the economic system, no real critical or alternative thought emerged. It seems as if everyone accepted it as the only possibility. Of course, Armenia’s bubble economy and double-digit—or at least high-level—growth from 2002 to 2008 could have been the main cause of this; while certainly no one predicted its inevitable decline (if not crash), at least not as strongly as to start formulating an alternative approach and build consensus and public support. No one really cared about the unfair income redistribution, the growing social discontent, the precarious conditions in the job market, the heavy dependence on remittances, the lack of value-added production, and the despair of the educated youth seeking to emigrate in hopes of finding a decent job and future.

Moreover, when the global financial crisis broke in September 2008, government officials in Armenia publicly expressed their faith in the strength of the Armenian economy, which was, supposedly, pretty well protected against the impact of the crisis. We are now witnessing how the crisis is strongly hitting Armenia and, yet, the measures taken to face the crisis are exactly the same ones that are at the root of the current debacle.

**2 What sort of effect, if any, do you feel the current process of globalization is having on the Armenian Diaspora? How do you feel we can properly adapt to these changes associated with globalization and move forward more effectively into the 21<sup>st</sup> century?**

The Diaspora has always been a global reality. Nevertheless, up until the late 1980s, the dominant narrative of Diaspora awareness was the conviction that, as the phenomenon did have a start—the Genocide—then it necessarily should also have an end—going back home. In this sense, I think that perhaps the most important impact of globalization on the Diaspora has been the emergence of a new Diaspora awareness based on a different narrative; one that accepts this transnational reality as a strong, and perhaps a strategically necessary one.

But I would say that globalization came as a later impact; the reality of the Diaspora underwent a structural change earlier, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with the massive immigration of Armenians from the Middle East—Lebanon, Syria and Iran—to the West—Europe, Canada and the United States. This “westernization” of the Armenian Diaspora gave a strong blow to the old center-periphery frame of the Diaspora, whereas the hope, or myth, of returning to the homeland vanished in the air with the independence of Armenia.

We are still trying to rationalize this structural change. We’ll see if anything practical will actually come out of it.

**3 Over the last two decades, the world has also seen the growth of an active global justice movement struggling against the damaging effects of neo-liberalism. Participants in this movement come together in gatherings such as the World Social Forum (WSF) which you have participated on behalf of the ARF. Can you tell us a little bit about your experience at such gatherings, and why you think it is important for Armenians to engage ourselves in this broader global justice movement?**

The interest for the WSF emerged during the ARF Bureau’s July 2002 seminar in Yerevan aimed at designing and implementing a socialist program in Armenia. But it wasn’t until January 2005 that, for the first time, a joint Armenian National Committee-Armenian Youth Federation delegation with ARF and AYF members from Armenia, California, Argentina and Brazil participated in the WSF in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The following year, in 2006, a delegation from Argentina and Brazil went to Caracas, Venezuela where the Forum was planned to take place. AYF delegations also participated in regional forums in the Americas and Europe.

The experience was very rich and important. Unfortunately, we failed to reach the wider circles of the AYF and ARF to

convince them about the importance of continuing such contact. Nor were we able to create a space of our own in the WSF, despite that in both Porto Alegre and Caracas the issues that we put forward—Genocide, Karabagh and Javakhk self-determination, social justice in Armenia, etc.—generated a great deal of interest and received support from known intellectuals and militants.

This may be because the WSF is mostly a Global South phenomenon—Latin America, Africa, some Middle Easterners, and India/South Eastern Asia, with an important intellectual/militant input from progressive sectors in Europe, Canada and the US—and that Eastern Europeans and former Soviet Union countries, including Armenia, find it too distant from a conceptual perspective. It is a pity because the “other world” that the WSF aims at is precisely where Armenia needs to see itself in order to start thinking about a radical reform of its deeply unfair and expulsive social order, the political institutions that perpetuate and legitimize this order, and the economic infrastructure that sustains and recreates it.

**4 What can Armenian activists learn from mass movements in Latin America, where we have seen in recent years a rise in popular mobilization, empowerment of marginalized groups, and electoral victories for candidates who reject the policies of neo-liberalism?**

The widely known “left-turn” phenomenon in South America is a very rich and ongoing experience that Armenian activists should study. They should study the way parties and social movements built alliances, worked first to build a wide social consensus for their program and then rose to power through a vast majority vote; the way social safety nets were constructed in order to face economic hardships after the collapse of the neoliberal model; the way workers occupied abandoned industrial plants and started to produce in a cooperative manner; the way private multinational companies came under scrutiny for investment promises they made but failed to accomplish; the way the doors were shut to the IMF and its policies; the way private and public capital created highly successful companies; the way the social agenda received priority; the way nationalization stopped being synonymous with failure; the way the power of the people stopped the privatization of their country’s natural resources; the way zero-hunger became an objective and food security programs were designed and implemented. All of these and many other developments have already generated a vast literature, documentary movies, research programs and so forth that Armenian activists should study to produce a critical/alternative thinking about the dominant, and failing, neoliberal model.

The most important characteristic of the South American “left-turn” is the commitment to democracy. Change took place peacefully, without military intervention, and without a call for arms or revolutions as was usually seen in the past. It is the power of the people that allowed South American leaders to implement long-term radical reforms, the aim of which ultimately would be to replace the dominant model of the Market Economy with the alternative model of the Working Society.

Armenia needs a radical reform of its political, economic and social system, including a constitutional shift to a parliamentary regime, progressive taxation to promote wealth redistribution and laws protecting jobs, insuring universal healthcare, education and social protection; not some so-called “color revolution,” whatever that means.

# ՈՆ Ուժ Է, ՈՆ Ախտ

Ժամանակը, իր թեթև ընթացքին մէջ, փախչելու վրայ է միշտ, առանց կենալու: Հիանալիօրէն, մինակը բնաւ չերթար: Այդ թեթև ընթացքին մէջ կը տանի այն ինչի որ հանդիպի, զայն յափշտակելէ ետք: Կարծեմ ապահով է ըսել, որ ժամանակը գող մըն է որ աշխարհի գանձերը կողոպտելով կը հարստանայ: Որչա՛փ հզօր թագաւորութիւններ, շինուած ներ, քաղաքներ, գեղեցիկ ճնունդներ եկած ու գացած են որոնց հազիւ մէկ տոկոսը յիշատակումի մնացեր է:

Այս բոլոր բաները մտաբերելով կը մտահոգուիմ: Դուք ալ կը մտահոգուի՞ք: Չէ՞ք վախճար որ տարի մըն ալ ահա անցաւ եւ գնաց, եւ ո՞վ գիտէ թէ զալիք տարուան մէջ ուրիշ ո՞ր մարդկանց գործողութիւններու վրայ մթնապատ վարագոյրը պիտի գաշուի եւ թողէ զուրկ ամէն մխիթարանքէ:

Իմաստութիւն. այս անբակտելի հիման վրայ դրած մեր սուրբ գործը ժամանակի կողմէ բնաւ պիտի չյաղթահարուի: Իմաստութեամբ բերած ազգասիրութիւնը, իբր մեծամուր պարիսպ, ժամանակը կարող պիտի չըլլայ խախտել զայն տեղէն այլ՝ անելի՛ պիտի հաստատէ:

Ի՞նչն էր որ մեր երիտասարդ սրտերը շարժեց եւ գրգռեց միակամ եւ միախորհուրդ մէկտեղ ժողովելու. հայրենիքի Սէ՛րը: Ու այդ սէրը իր հետ բերավ ընկերութիւնը, ուր անցեալի գրութիւններու մէջ նշած են. «Ընկերութիւնը կը կերտուի մեզմով, եւ այդ կառուցումը կը սկսի մեր մէջէն, որպէսզի կարենանք աշխարհի վրայ ազդել, եւ որպէսզի այդ ներգործումին արդիւնքը դրական ըլլայ» (Ասպարէզ Բացառիկ «Քալիֆորնիա հայ Երիտասարդի Մը Մտորումները» 2009):

Ուրախանանք եւ փառք տանք այդ ընկերութեան որ կազմուեցաւ անցեալին: Ներկային ալ իր պատշաճ գնահատանքը փոխանցենք որ կը ծաղկեցնէ այդ ընկերութիւնը: Իսկ ապագային՝ ապագային պիտի պատրաստենք հասունցեալ պտուղները որպէսզի վայելեն:

Ուստի, հայրենիքի սէրը կարեւոր առաջնահերթութիւն է ազգի մը ծաղկելուն եւ երջանկութեանը: Անշո՛ւշտ, նոյն կարքին ալ կարեւոր է Միաբանութիւնը: Միաբանութիւնը, կենսական է հայրենիքին պէտքերը գոհացնելու եւ կարօտը հոգալու համար: Երանի որ ձայն կարողութիւնը ունենար հայրենասիրութեան եւ միաբանութեան մեծաշահ օգուտները

ցուցնելու եւ բորբոքելու զանոնց սրտին մէջ: Այդ կը կարօտի կարողութենէս վեր պաշտօնի մը մէջ մտնել:

Հայրենի՞ք. չի կայ ասկէ անելի ցանկալի ու սրտի հանդիսական անուն մը: Ազգասիրին սրտին մէջ սակալն սաստիկ բոց մըն է, որ դժուար կը հալի եւ չի կրնար հանդարտիլ, եւ առիթի մը կը սպասէ վառած բոցը դուրս թափելու: Այս կրակը չի մարիր բացի՛ միայն մահով:

Որչա՛փ մարդ անպիտան եւ տգէտ ըլլայ, Հայրենիքի անունը բաւական կը սեպէ ու անունով կը պարծի օտարներուն առջեւ: Այս պաղին տաքը կամ ստորոտին գազաթը, խօսակցութեան ձեւ օգտագործելով, առաքինը միայն անով գոհ չըլլար: Գիտակցաբար իր մտքին զօրութիւնը, կարողութիւնը, եւ իր բոլոր ունեցած շունացածը, նաեւ իր անձը, կը նուիրէ հայրենիքին, ու անով կը ջանայ անունը անելի պայծառացնել: Իր ազգին ամէն թշուարութեանց պատրաստ է օգնելու: Կը հոգայ անոր ամէն մէկ կարօտութեան եւ կը ջանայ հալածել վնասակար թշնամին ազգին յատաշփոթութեան, մխիթարելով ազգակիցները եւ ոտքի կայնեցնելով զանոնք:

Շմարիտ հայրենասէրը իր Հայրենիքին մէջ բնակիցն ալ երջանկութիւն կը սեպէ: Հայրենիքին պաշտպանութիւնը եւ անոր փառքն ու պարծանքը պահելու համար իր կեանքն ալ բանի տեղ չի դներ, որովհետեւ իր յօժարութեամբ գոհ կ'ըլլայ անոր: Չի կայ ոչ մէկ սոսկալի դժբախտութիւն մը որ կարենայ ընկճել անոր հաստատուն ու ամուր միտքը եւ հոգին: Աւելի՛ն, ներմտութեան, տառապանքի, հալածանքի ժամերուն, կը կենայ անշարժ կատաղ քարի նման, ազգին բարիք ընելու քնով եւ ամէն բանին կը

յաղթէ: Այդ անձերու մահուան ատենը՝ բոլոր ազգին սիրտը, կսկիծը, ցաւը եւ տրտմութիւնը միատեղ գերեզման կը տանին: Իսկ անունը կը մնայ անմահ, ու դարէ դար կը պահուի:

Ժամանակը կը տանի իր հետ այն ինչ որ ատենին սեփականացուած է: Գուցէ արդէն տարաւ այս գրութիւնը, յետին անկիւններ ուր երբէք կարելի չգտնուի առանց նեցուկի: Հարցնեմ, թէ ի՞նչ պիտի ընես դուն քու թանկագին ժամովը: Պիտի ըլլա՞ս պտղածու կամ անտարբեր, ձգելով ժամանակի անխուսափելի ընթացքը իշխէ իր ուզած հիմով:

- Սարո Հարուն



# KURDS & ARMENIANS FINDING COMMON CAUSE

By Serouj Aprahamian

On September 2, 1938 an editorial appeared in the *Hairenik Weekly* condemning the Turkish government's brutal crackdown of its Kurdish population in Dersim. The editorial drew the following link between the common struggle for freedom waged by both Armenians and Kurds:

*"The case with the Kurds is a fight born of desperation, similar to the stand of the Armenians in 1918, a resistance which takes into account neither numbers nor odds. It is the natural instinct for self-preservation and self-determination to which all peoples aspire."*

Such an expression of solidarity with the Kurdish Cause was not an aberration but, rather, a direct extension of the ARF's rich legacy of standing shoulder to shoulder with all groups struggling against oppression. Drawing such links between other movements for social justice and the Armenian Cause is an important principle which deserves proper attention, not only for its moral and historical significance, but also for its political implications in today's context of Hai Tahd activism.

## Motivating Factors

There are two major underlying aspects behind the principle of solidarity. One is the moral aspect which considers freedom to be a social, rather than mere individual, pursuit. It is based on the belief that one can only truly be free when freedom becomes achieved for all others around them as well; for how can one truly be content and secure in their freedom if they are surrounded by suffering and injustice? This concept is perhaps best captured in Martin Luther King Jr's

famous quote, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

The other dimension for solidarity hinges on a more practical political calculation: the belief that by coming together with others around a common goal, one can help build a broader base of power and improve social conditions. Indeed, by pooling resources and manpower, movements which are able to collaborate with one another are logically much more likely to achieve victories. The

liberation against despotic regimes. Such groups included the Russians, Kurds, Persians, Assyrians, Macedonians and even ordinary Turks who suffered under the Sultan.

Within the Armenian communities of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurdish masses stood out as an especially important group to establish cooperation with. Like Armenians, Kurdish peasants lived a servile existence under Ottoman rule and faced similar levels of exploitation. The



*Mjo's Armeno-Kurdish fedayee group.*

smaller a group or movement is, the more central this consideration becomes in their hopes for pursuing justice.

## The ARF Legacy

In the history of the Armenian Cause, both of these dimensions have played a role in motivating initiatives to form bonds with non-Armenian circles. From very early on its existence, the ARF cultivated ties with other peoples who similarly struggled for

ARF sought to explain that both peoples had a shared interest in resisting Turkish tyranny and the brutality of Kurdish landowning chieftains.

Several early ARF World Congresses passed decisions calling for the establishment of relations with Kurds; the pages of *Droshak*, the ARF's official publication, commonly featured calls for peace with the Kurds; and *fedayees* such as Ishkhan, Vartkes, Goms, Roupen, Kevork

Chavoush, Rosdom and many others made attempts to build bridges with the Kurdish working class. Although these attempts did not bear full fruit, there were in fact a handful of Kurds who were courageous enough to go against their powerful chiefs and join with the ARF in its struggle against the Sultan. Kurdish figures such as Msto, Valad Nuri, Kerpela Abbas, and Hamzeh put their lives on the line and fought shoulder to shoulder with Armenians. There was even a mixed Armeno-Kurdish ARF group led by the *fedayee* Mjo.

Nevertheless, the lack of a revolutionary consciousness and the grip of the feudal clan system within the Kurdish community served as an obstacle to broad-based collaboration. Many Kurds succumbed to the divide and conquer policies designed by the Turkish state and participated in the massacre of Armenians.

Following the Genocide, however, as the Turkish government turned its genocidal focus against the Kurds, the ARF once again extended a hand of harmony and collaboration to the Kurdish people. Figures such as Vahan Papazian worked to bring Kurds together and help them organize resistance against the increasingly repressive policies of Kemalist Turkey. Due to Papazian's efforts, a first-ever national Kurdish league called *Hoybun* was formed in Lebanon in 1927. ARF leaders such as Garo Sassouni also allied in favor of the Kurdish struggle and the ARF officially raised the Kurdish issue at meetings of the Socialist International, beginning in 1925.

### Securing Solidarity

Thus, as can be seen, attempts at solidarity between Kurds and Armenians persevered even in the face of past Kurdish involvement in atrocities against Armenians. This was due to the fact that Kurds are a people whose fate has been inextricably linked to that of Armenians. Both have been victims of Turkish brutality and have had their national rights denied.

Just as Turkish authorities once viewed Armenians' call for equality and

democracy as a "threat" to their empire, Ankara today interprets the Kurdish people's demand for basic human rights as meaning "separatism." Just as the Ottoman authorities refused to recognize the national identity of Armenians and called them "Christian Turks," the Kurdish people have had to fight Turkey's attempts to officially classify them as "Mountain Turks." Just as they once did to Armenians, the Turkish government continues to suppress the language, history, and identity of Kurds; ransacks their schools and



cultural monuments; bans their political parties and newspapers; pillages their towns and villages; terrorizes their families and children; subjects Kurds to a policy of Turkification; and attacks their human rights workers and journalists.

There is no better example of the horrific consequences of allowing Turkey to get away with the Genocide than what is happening today to the Kurds. Allowing a crime to go

unpunished only tells the criminal that they can get away with the same crimes over and over again. We see this very clearly today in the case of Turkey's policy toward the Kurds.

In this sense, there is a moral imperative to show solidarity with the Kurdish people's struggle. At the same time, there is a tactical imperative to form cooperation with all those who share an interest in putting an end to Turkey's inhumanity. The strength of all movements demanding justice from Turkey would be amplified if such diverse groups came together around their mutual points of concern. Not doing so would only serve the interests of the Turkish state and continue the divide-and-conquer policy it has so long pursued.

In addition, as has been pointed out by academic Bilgit Ayata, dialogue between Armenians and Kurds has the potential to serve as a counterweight to the counterproductive approach being pushed on the state level between Turkey and Armenia. Instead of succumbing to Turkey's imposition of dominance under the guise of 'Turkish-Armenian reconciliation,' Armenians should seek common cause with the Kurdish people and ask themselves how there can ever be genuine friendship with a country that still systematically oppresses over 20% of its own population.

Although there have been many disappointments and negative experiences in the ARF's attempts to form coalitions with other struggles, there have also been many positive achievements. Indeed, some of the instances of collaboration with other liberation movements have undoubtedly formed one of the most remarkable chapters in ARF history. In this light, the benefits of collaboration should continue to be pursued, albeit carefully and with the vigilance that ensures that the rights of Armenians are never made expendable.

# IN MEMORY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE OF 1915 : A KURDISH PERSPECTIVE

*On April 24, 2009, the annual Armenian Genocide commemoration took place at the Georgia State Capitol. Over 100 Armenian Americans and anti-genocide activists were in attendance for the commemoration, which coincided with the issuing of proclamations by Georgia's Governor and Atlanta's Mayor honoring the victims of the Armenian Genocide. Featured speakers and guests at the event included Mrs. Carolyn Young—speaking on behalf of her husband, civil rights leader and former US Ambassador to the UN, Andrew Young—as well as Emory University Professor, Dr. Julieta Stepanyan-Abgaryan and ANC Georgia Chairman Sarkis Agasarkisian.*

*On hand were also members of the Kurdish American community of Atlanta. The following is a transcript of remarks offered at the commemoration event by Ara Alan, Secretary General of the Kurdish Youth Club and Director of the Kurdish Cultural Center in Atlanta, GA.*

We are gathered today on April 24th to commemorate the souls lost during the Armenian Genocide. We are gathered to deliver the cries of help from those who were silenced in 1915 by the Ottoman Turks. I would like to take a moment to remember all the victims of genocide across the 20<sup>th</sup> century; a century that has been darkened with their blood and silenced by our disregard.

Ottoman Turks led the way into the twentieth century by committing the first act of genocide. Their example was followed by many more, such as the Holocaust in Germany, Pol Pot in Cambodia, Rwanda, Kosovo and the notorious Anfal campaign by Saddam Hussein in Iraqi-Kurdistan.

I come and stand with our friends, the Armenians, because I understand your cause. I understand what it means to have genocide committed against you. I look to you with inspiration and pride. I wonder will our next generation be as courageous as you are. Like your grandparents, the crime of genocide has been committed against us, as well.

In Iraq, in the name of purification of a country, thousands of Kurds were taken from their villages and murdered in the deserts south of the country. This operation of genocide was name Anfal. Chemical weapons were used in this operation by Saddam Hussein. He used such illegal weapons to help scare and kill innocent villagers. They were used as a tool to round up the people.

Using strategic military planning, the Iraqi Army would attack a region in Kurdistan from three or more fronts. They would leave only one opening for the people to escape. Doing so, the Army would force the residents of the many villages in that region to congregate in one location. From there the villagers would be rounded up, shipped to concentration camps and systematically killed.

The Anfal genocide started in 1988 but it is without an end. The gassing during Anfal has acted as a mutagen and caused the DNA of its victims to change. According to the Health Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the ratio of

patients with cancer in the gassed populations is 5:1 when compared to non-gassed populations.

Many of the little girls exposed to the gassing in 1988 today give birth to children with down-syndrome or still-birth and they have very high rates of miscarriage; some have even become completely infertile. Incidents of breast cancer are much higher today in Kurdistan and cases of breast cancer are much more aggressive than in other countries, with a higher likelihood of death.

As result of the gassing many Kurds are dying today. Many are paralyzed, handicapped, blinded or bedbound. Many babies from the new generation are born with genetic diseases that result in their death or a life that is dependent on medical care, which is almost non-existent where they are born. In this way, the Kurdish genocide continues today into post-Saddam Iraq.

Dr. Gregory Stanton, President of Genocide Watch, has categorized genocide into eight stages. He has done so to help the international community use these stages as indicators and a warning sign of upcoming genocides. Strangely enough all genocides follow these eight stages.

They all start with classification of the target group, followed by symbolization, then dehumanization, organization, polarization of the society, preparation, actual extermination in the seventh stage—and then denial in the eighth.

It might come to you as a surprise; why would denial be part of genocide? According to Genocide Watch, denial is among the surest indicators of further genocidal massacres.

The perpetrators of genocide dig up the mass graves, burn the bodies, try to cover-up the evidence and intimidate the witnesses. They deny that they committed any crimes, and often blame what happened on the victims. In short, denial is a sign of justification of genocide and accepting it is a method of governance.

Turkey's 94 years of denial policy should come as an alarm to the international community. The denial of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 was followed by the Dermis massacre in 1937. In a similar fashion to the Armenian Genocide, and with the exact same justification, 78,000 Kurds were massacred in that city in Turkey. The denial policy once again allowed Turkey to destroy over 4000 Kurdish villages in the 1990s.

Just like the Ottoman Turks greeted the twentieth century with stains of genocide, our twenty-first century already has a stain: Darfur. Darfur stands tall, as a symbol of our failure to learn from previous genocides and our tolerance for genocide denial.

Genocides do not occur because one race of humanity is superior to the other. They don't occur because one nation has the right to eradicate another or that one religious view or political ideology is superior above those different from it.

Genocide occurs when one group appoints themselves as superior and the world turns a blind eye. Genocide occurs because we let it. Our silence is the fuel that genocide perpetrators use to burn the bodies and hide the evidence.

Let us not be silent... let us speak and condemn... let us bring those that deny to acceptance.

# THE DARK SIDE OF YOUR

# SWEET TREAT

By Nanor Aghamal

We have all seen innocent looking chocolate commercials with adorable kids laughing and having a good time while enjoying their chocolate bars. Some brands are represented by bunnies, some with oversized M&Ms, and some are so famous that they are known worldwide—brands such as Hershey, Mars and Nestle. Although they are competing brands they have a couple of things in common: they're most definitely delicious, and they have one dark secret—CHILD LABOR.

To give a brief overview, chocolate is made from cocoa beans which come from the cacao tree; without these seeds chocolate as we know it would not exist. So, where do these companies get their cocoa beans from? The answer for the most part is Ivory Coast. This leads to the most important question: how does Ivory Coast collect its cocoa beans? Ivory Coast (or Cote d'Ivoire) has one of the largest child labor systems and largest cocoa bean farms; 43% of the world's cocoa beans come from there.

One would never guess the irony, and inhumanity, behind these companies. Their largest targets are kids, yet the ones doing the hardest manual labor are children as well.

These children work in horrendous conditions providing the main ingredient of the chocolates that children around the world consume. They are under atrocious conditions and suffer from extreme abuse. From one end of the world to the other, the knowledge and whereabouts of where these products are derived from are ignored.

Children as young as the age of nine are trafficked into cocoa farms (with up to 15,000 children in each farm) and are forced to work there with very little pay or in most cases with no pay at all. So why do we continue to support them and buy their products?



The main way to fight back is to spread awareness and to boycott such companies that use child labor to get ahead. It will be hard to give up these chocolates, but the good news is that chocolates from stores such as Trader Joes, Whole Foods and some Target brands are free of child slave labor.

Ivory Coast is not the only source of cocoa seeds; however, it is the main one. The other sources are from Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon and according to UNICEF these sources also have children who do the hard labor of picking the cocoa beans. Although most people assume that slavery no longer exists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, numerous investigative reports suggest that the number of slaves at present is the highest it has ever been. UNICEF reports that nearly 700,000 women and children trafficked yearly.

Although these companies have been confronted about their questionable practices, they have not made the effort to change it—claiming that they do not own the farms and therefore do not deserve the blame or responsibility. What they do not comprehend is that they are the largest supporters of these farms, with the consumers of their chocolate second in line.

Most consumers do not know this dark side of these companies. As a result, it is up to those who are aware to do their task and take action by spreading the news.

*Nanor Aghamal is a senior at Hoover High School and an AYP Nanor Krikorian Scholar. Her above article was selected as the winning submission in the 2009 Haytoug High School Essay Contest.*



# KURDISH ACCOUNTS OF

## **Kurdish Accounts of the Armenian Genocide**

*The following interviews with Kurds in Anatolia were conducted for the documentary film "The Armenian Genocide," directed and produced by Emmy Award-winning producer Andrew Goldberg of Two Cats Productions (www.twocatstv.com).*

*The documentary featured short segments of some of these interviews and excerpts later appeared for the first time in their entirety in the Armenian Weekly (www.armenianweekly.com).*

*Given the rare insight these interviews offer into the perspective of present day Kurds living on the lands Armenians were murdered and forced from during the Genocide, the Haytoug editorial team felt it was important to reprint for our readers segments of the feature as originally published in the Armenian Weekly.*

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**Interviewee: Emin**

**Question: What have your parents told you regarding the Armenian genocide?**

My father and my mother talked about it. For instance, there was Menushehr. The Muslims had married her. She was saying it wasn't simply killing, it was genocide. They killed about 1.5 million Armenians.

Menushehr told me that, later, she became Christian again; she had become Muslim out of fear and bore three children. The ones who lived in the Mazidare and Dairik regions were all Armenians. They were the largest population in the area. They were killed and thrown in mass graves. People used to go, myself too, to scavenge for gold among their bones, for gold-plated teeth. I mean, when old people and our parents talk about it, they tell the facts. Half a million Assyrians and 1.5 million Armenians were lost or killed at that time. That is what I can tell you.

**Question: How old were you when you were looking for golden teeth in the mass graves?**

I was eight, nine. I was in school. In 1938, we would search the bones for gold. That is

what I have seen. What my parents were talking about was genocide: genocide of Armenians. The government ordered the genocide and the Mullahs made decrees in the mosques approving the killing of the Christians, and so, besides the army, the civilians also did the killing. This is according to my father and people of his time. I mean, it is what they were saying.

I mentioned the ones who became Muslim, they became Muslims out of fear. And the Muslims would marry them. Not the men, the women. Menushehr was my friend. She used to tell me about the genocide. Said, they would chain people in groups called "Armenian chains." Twenty to thirty per group, they would blindfold them and shoot them into mass graves.

Of course if the government finds out it will put us in trouble. It is doing it to us

in the air and let them fall onto their swords. The swords would pierce them or cut them in half. It was savagery. I haven't seen it with my eyes but we have been told.

**Question: Will Turkey admit to the Armenian genocide?**

A couple of days ago I listened to the Europeans [on the news]. They said the Turks and the Kurds too, not just the Turks, because the Kurds also had a part in the genocide, should ask for apologies from the Armenians. And that is fair. We should ask for apologies.

I will tell you what my father told me (my father is dead now). He was involved in it; he killed Armenians. He participated in the genocide. In our region we had 10 to 15 Armenian



*A Kurdish shepherd in Van.*

Kurds anyway. We are not historians but what we know cannot be denied: There was a genocide on them [Armenians]. Like the mass killing in Halabja [referring to the gassing of Kurds in Iraq by Saddam Hussein's regime]. Can anyone deny the fact? With the chemical attack 5,000 were killed in a second. This is a genocide.

They didn't use chemicals but used guns and swords. The woman [Menushehr] told me they would throw the babies up

villages. They either became Muslims or were killed.

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**Interviewee: Helem**

**Question: What have your mother, grandmother told you regarding the genocide?**

My grandfather talked about our neighbors who had seen terrible times. There was a village close to ours called

# THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Akrak. An Armenian village. They take them [the villagers] to another village called Chukhrek and slaughter them all and throw them in a grave. A boy had survived; his throat had a scar from the knife. He said, "They came and took us in the night, they started slaughtering us and throwing the bodies on top of each other. I slipped from underneath the pile."

He said, "I made it back home. My grandmother, who was 70 years old, was left behind, asked who I was. I told her it is me, Grandma. She said 'How did you survive?' I said, 'I just did, I don't know how.'" I mean, there are so many situations. I met a woman in Sultan Sheikhmoose, a village in Mazidare. She was Armenian in origin but turned Muslim. She said, Lad, we didn't know a word of a Muslim verse, we submitted to Islam but they still killed a lot of us. The killing had nothing to do with faith, they killed us because we were smarter, more knowledgeable, good businessmen, civilized.

Because of that they were seen as a potential danger and so were subjected to genocide.

They made decrees that killing Armenians was a duty, killing them was a virtue, that if you kill an X number of Armenians, the doors of hell will become the door of Heaven. Due to their naivete and ignorance, people started killing the Armenians, took their young girls and made them their wives, took their belongings. Meanwhile, the poor Armenians were telling them, "Don't do it, today it's our turn, tomorrow will be yours."

**Question: Do you see Turkey admitting to or doing something about the genocide?**

They deny it. They say they [the Armenians] have done it. That is strange. Even a child can tell you they are being dishonest. It is not something you can hide. The Armenians lived here and they are still here.

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**Interviewee: Mehmet**

All the orchids and gardens in Dairike, the marble homes, all belonged to the Armenians. The orchids, the olive farms, etc. They left and now it is in our hands. It is their land and their property. They are now out in Istanbul, in Europe or Damascus and we are feeding on their property. I am sure

they will find proof of ownership in the old records. There is a village, I forgot the name, Khanoke, the land there all belongs to them but now other villagers are using it. They weren't harming anyone, but the government started killing them. There is a gorge called "Christian Gorge." It is a deep gorge, where part of the genocide took place. They killed the people and threw them in the gorge. Right on those mountains, they would grab small kids, 6 months old, 1 year-olds, they would grab their arm and throw them into the gorge. Meanwhile they [the Turks] deny doing that.

**Question: Throwing people like that to their death is barbaric. Tell us more about their monstrosity.**

The monstrosity was committed by the government. When the republic was established they began doing it. They were also committing it during the Ottoman times. The genocide wasn't only here. It was all over the country, or wherever there were Armenians.

**Question: What does the Turkish government say about the genocide, and are they telling the truth?**

It says it's a lie and there is no such a thing. How could they deny such a fact, I don't know. The whole world is aware of it. To deny it is viscous in itself. They killed the Kurds and the Yezidis, too, not just the Armenians. They are barbarians.

**Question: It has been nearly 100 years since the genocide. How do you feel about it or when you remember it now?**

[He cries.] I am still under the grievance. The stuff our grandfather told us, I am still hurt by it. Where is humanity? When you ask me these questions my inside is shaking. We were like brothers. Our parents and grandparents were the same. We had no differences and we had the same enemy. What else can I say?

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**Interviewee: Farqin**

Many situations like that and a lot of mass killings took place at that time.

The village we visited belonged to Christians. There were 300 Christian households. When I was young, I would go to the village, about 25 years ago. There were brass works done there. They were making pots and pans from brass. It used to be the work of the Christians. There were 300 families. They all moved out and escaped in one night. They say that they put their valuables in pots and buried them in the ground. They told the Kurds, We trust you with our homes and property. If we return give them back to us. If we don't return then keep everything. My grandmother Aysha would tell us they didn't believe the Christians could move out so swiftly. In the morning, we saw that the village was empty. She said they sat there and cried. Why did they leave? Why was there a genocide? Who did it? Did the republic do it? It happened before the republic was formed. They [the army] told the clerics to tell the masses that whoever kills the Christians will go to heaven.

**Question: But the government policy at that time was to kill the boys and spare the girls.**

It was like that. They had two boys and one girl. There were also rumors that there was an epidemic that killed them, but in reality, as you said, the boys were killed and the girls were saved for marriage. When they would capture them in groups and kill them the way the Nazis killed the Jews in the concentration camps, they would tie them up with ropes, take them to Zere and kill them en masse. The attractive women were spared. The rest were killed.

**Question: What does the Turkish government say about the genocide, and are they telling the truth?**

My grandmother is proof. Not only Turkey but if a hundred other nations deny it, I wouldn't believe them. Go see Capson Valley. How could I believe the government? Go ask anyone in our district and they will tell you about the genocide of the Christians.



# WHAT'S GOING ON?

2009 IN LOS ANGELES 2009

## EDUCATION MATTERS: Greet melting pot with open arms

By GUY HERRICK  
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One of my students asked me to write a recommendation for a scholarship, something that I do for literally hundreds of students each year.

This one, however, had terms that were different from other organizations.



I have more than a hundred U.S. history textbooks in my classroom, and I am sure that there are some volume to the "Nation of Immigrants" that we live in.

There is no doubt that our country is an "imagine" of many different people, and it is a beautiful thing. Our nation — people coming from all corners of the globe and settling in our country. They have helped build our adopted country.

But for better or worse, several organizations in our area have a policy of not accepting students from other countries for choosing to come here.

Many believe this is an unreasonable restriction that prevents students from coming to our country. It is a sad reality that we live in, and it is a shame that we have to live with it. It is a shame that we have to live with it. It is a shame that we have to live with it.



From glendalenewspress.com and burbankleader.com

I know that there will be many in this community who will disagree with me, but my gut feeling — no, make that an absolute conviction — is that the Armenian Youth Federation, or any organization for that matter that dedicates itself to a "stick to your own kind" philosophy, is

**out of step with the professed ideals of this country.**

keeping the Armenian youth from assimilating."

I lacked the young lady requesting my letter if she knew about this stated purpose, and she answered that, yes she did, but it was not anything out of the ordinary. It was no different from the messages that were drummed into her by her family from the time she was able to understand spoken words.

In the years I have taught in a school district that has grown more diverse over the years, I have tried to understand the ethnic imperative that cautions/warns young people of the circumstances if they step outside of

After more than three decades of dealing with this, I must confess I am no closer to understanding it than when I first encountered it.

The whole attitude seems to me to be, in a word, Un-American.

Our country is about people coming together, not staying separate. Our country's official motto, E Pluribus Unum, "Out of many, one," says it all.

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ever choose to come to this great melting pot of a country if remaining ethnically separate is of such paramount importance.

I would respectfully suggest a different mission statement for the Armenian Youth Federation — one that honors both a heritage and freedom of choice with the same conviction. They are not mutually exclusive. And

What a shame, though, that they must be put

**through this for the sake of "preservation of culture."**

# BURBANK LEADER

## Attorney criticizes chief's hush order

Police chief's order for officers to keep mum about recent lawsuit is unconstitutional, representative believes.

By Christopher Goodson  
 Reporter for the Press-Telegram, June 2, 2008, 11:00 AM PT

### discrimination lawsuit against the Burbank Police Department



Police Chief Robert M. Kasper, center, with other police officials, including Burbank Police Officer Eric Espinoza, right, and Burbank Police Officer Robert Rodriguez, left, after the police chief's announcement of a discrimination lawsuit against the Burbank Police Department.

REPORTS

The lawsuit, filed Thursday in Los Angeles Superior Court, alleges racial, ethnic and racial discrimination incidents, and that complaints to the command staff were ignored with retaliation and lost promotions.

Karagiosian, who is of Armenian descent, was allegedly threatened by officers with his life in addition to a cadre of racial and ethnic slurs hurled his way

## Group criticizes radio DJ's remarks

Bertolucci called "crazy over the top story."

In the Nov. 13 segment, Handel suggested shoring up groups as a way to deal with overburdened health care.

After touching on the Armenian population, a producer will finish.

The segment had invited a growing chorus of critics who have called or emailed the show to complain.

a producer on the show said, "What the Turks started, Bill will finish."

suggested selling off Glendale as a way to "get rid of all the Armenians."

Malenkov, president of the Armenian Council of America, said in a statement that if similar comments had been made about Jews or blacks, "they would turn the word upside down and they get justice."

Bertolucci defended the segment as a poll on commentary that was misinterpreted, stating that Handel had publicly supported the efforts of Armenians to have the Genocide of 1915 officially recognized in the U.S.

"I am deeply sorry that anyone was affected," he said. "I am sorry for the history and know what the future is."

## Polls are slow on election day

...and the polls were slow to open, but the didn't start for the polls Tuesday.

Overall, it was a slow day on the poll and voters showed up in smaller numbers than expected.

"We were definitely not busy this election day,"

...at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Glendale, Calif. ... didn't know the location



Photo by the author for the Los Angeles Times. Photo by the author for the Los Angeles Times.

While some took to the polls to vote for a specific candidate, David Bryce, a retired Caltrans worker, said race played an integral role in his decision.

"There are too many -ians" at the ends of candidates' surnames, Bryce said. "I want to find the Jones, Smiths and Browns of Glendale."

"There are too many candidates in the race," he said. "I want to see fewer Armenians in Glendale public office," he said.

One voter said candidates' individual efforts made him feel obligated to vote.

"These candidates, they showed by me being," said Robert Smith, a candidate for the city council.

"I'm concerned about the traffic, the preservation of the city and the bad traffic, and that's why I came out and voted," he said.



# Այս Քարտեզով կը Կորսուիս

Այս վերջին տարուայ մէջ Հայաստանի արտաքին քաղաքականութեան հիմքերը ուժգին ցնցումի ենթարկուեցան: 2008 Մարտ 1-ի տխուր դէպքերը, տնտեսական տագնապի ճնշումը եւ գերպետութիւններու շահերու բախումը Կովկասի վերաբերեալ Հայաստանի քաղաքական ճկունութիւնը սանձեց եւ ստիպեց զայն առնել վտանգաւոր քայլեր որուն հետեւանքները տակաւին յստակ չեն բաց ազդեցութիւնն արդէն զգալի է բոլորիս: Աներեակայելի չէ որ այս ահաւոր ծանրութեան տակ Երեւանի կեցուածքը որոշ հարցերու շուրջ փափկանայ: Սակայն այն հարցերը որ ազգային շահերու կապուած են, օրինակ՝ Հայաստանի տարածքներու ամբողջականութիւնը (ներառեալ Արցախը) կամ Մեծ Եղեռնի ճանաչման եւ հատուցման գործ ընթացը, երբեք կարելի չէ ժամանակաւոր դժուարութիւններ մեղմացնելու համար սակարկութեան առարկայ ընել: Ապրիլ 24-ի նախօրեակին տեղի ունեցած անակնկալի զարգացումը ապացուցեց որ պաշտօնական Երեւանը այս նոյն սկզբունքով չ'առաջնորդուիր: Երբ ողջ հայութիւնը՝ աշխարհին մէկ ծայրէն մինչեւ միւսը, զբաղուած էր բողոքի ցույցեր եւ ոգեկոչման ձեռ

նարկներ կազմակերպելով Հայաստանի արտագործնախարարը ստորագրեց համաձայնագիր այն պետութեան հետ որ ոչ միայն կը մերժէ ցեղասպանութեան իրողութիւնը այլ կ'աշխատի անոր ճանաչման հակառակ: Արդէօք ի՞նչն էր այնքան շտապ ու հրամայական որ մինչեւ Ապրիլ 27 սպասել անկարելի էր: Դժբախտաբար Թուրքիոյ հետ համաձայնութեան մանրամասնութիւնները ցարդ գաղտնի կը մնան՝ երեւոյթ մը որ պէտք է խիստ մտահոգիչ ըլլայ մեր բոլորին որովհետեւ եթէ համաձայնութիւնը իսկապէս շահաբեր ըլլար Հայաստանի կառավարութիւնը պիտի օգտագործէր զայն ժողովուրդին առջեւ ինքզինք արդարացնելու: Պետութիւնը նուազագոյն լուսաբանութիւնները տալու իսկ կը դժուարանայ եւ իր ժողովուրդէն կոյր հաւատք կը պահանջէ. ան մեր կոյր հաւատքին արժանանալու երկար ճամբայ ունի, մանաւանդ երբ յիշենք Մարտ 1-ը:

Նախագահի ընտրութեան ընթացքին լարուած մթնոլորտ մը տիրած էր Երեւանի մէջ: Այդ մթնոլորտի արդիւնքն էր Մարտ 1-ի տեղի ունեցած կոիւները քաղաքացիներու եւ ոստիկանութեան միջեւ որ տաս զոհ խլեց: Այս դէպքը երբ



դիտուած պետութիւններու կամ միջազգային կազմակերպութիւններու ակնոցով Հայաստանի քաղաքական անկախութիւնը յայտնաբերեց եւ անոր վարկը իբրեւ կալուն գործընկեր փճացաւ: Եթէ առաջ Ատրպէյճանին կ'ըսէին «Տե՛ս Հայաստանի յառաջացած քաղաքական մշակոյթը եւ փորձէ ընդօրինակել զայն որպէսզի կարենանք անելի օգուտ բերել ձեզ» այլեւ «Հայաստանին նման խայտառակ չ'ըլլաք» ըսելու են: Այս տեսակի վերաբերմունքի առջեւ նորընտիր նախագահն, ով որ ալ ըլլար, միջազգային գետնի վրայ ինքզինք տկար պիտի զգար եւ առաջին գործը պիտի ըլլար օտարներուն մօտ այդ տպաւորութիւնը բարեփոխել: Հայաստանը նիւթական օժանդակութիւն կը ստանայ մի քանի երկիրներէ՝ մեծ մաս մը Ամերիկայէն, 2006-ին 326 միլիոն տոլար ստացաւ եւ այդ օժանդակութեան պայմաններէն մէկը այն է որ ընտրութիւնները առանց խախտումներով կատարուին: Քանի որ ընտրութիւնը միջազգային չափանիշներու չհասարեցաւ ԱՄՆը սպառնաց պակաս գումարներ դրկել: Պէտք է նշել որ Հայաստանը՝ բախտաւորապէս երկիրներու, ԱՄՆէն շատ օգնութիւն կը ստանայ մանաւանդ երբ հաշուի առնենք բնակչութեան թիւը որ 2006-ին մօտաւորապէս 3 միլիոն էր: Հետեւաբար սպառնալիքը խիստ լրջութեամբ ընդունուեցաւ իշխանութեան կողմէն եւ գործի անցան այդ մէկը չ'իրականացնելու: Սարգսեանը արդէն տարբեր առիթներով հանդիպած է արտագին գործերու քարտուղար Քլիմընտին հետ եւ մի քանի անգամ հեռախօսային զրոյցներ ունեցաւ փոխ-նախագահ Պալմերին հետ: Քոչարեանին ատեն ԱՄՆ այսքան հետաքրքրութիւն չցուցաբերեց: Այս շփումները ԱՄՆ-ուն քաղաքականութեան նոր վարքագիծը կը թելադրէ՝ այն որ մօտէն գործակցելով անելի դիրքին պիտի ըլլայ ազդեցութիւն ունենալ: Այսպէս՝ Մարտ 1-ի դէպքերէն տկարացած եւ ԱՄՆ-ուն ուշադրութեան անելի մեծ մաս գրաւող Սարգսեանը կը փորձէ գերպետութիւններուն գոհացնել որպէսզի անոնք նախընտրեն իր իշխանութիւնը, ժողովրդավարութեան հարցեր չբարձրացնեն եւ շարունակեն նիւթական օժանդակութեան ծրագիրները:

Մինչեւ անցեալ ամառ Հայաստանը ամէն տարի տնտեսական ան արձանագրեց թէեւ մեծ մասը Երեւան կեդրոնացած էր: Սակայն այս յառաջդիմութեան պատճառը դուռսէն եկած ներդրումներն էր: Որովհետեւ այդ ներդրումները նոյն թափով չէն շարունակուի տնտեսութիւնը նոյն թափով չ'աճիր: Կառուարութիւնը հանգագործութեան եւ շինարարութեան ընկերութիւններուն պարտքի դրամ տալէ ետք ստիպուած եղաւ ինքը պարտքեր վերցնել: Հայաստանին հնարաւորութիւնները սահմանափակ կը մնան քանի որ շրջափակումի ենթարկուած է: Ըստ ճանապարհային քարտէզին Թուրքիան համաձայնած է փակ սահմանը բանալ առանց նախապայմաններու: Պարզ է որ Թուրքերը սահմանը բանալու դրդապատճառ չ'ունին, իրենց տնտեսութիւնը Հայաստանի տնտեսութեան մօտաւորապէս 40 անգամն է՝ արտադրութեան առումով, եւ Հայաստանը մասնաւոր տնտեսական առաւելութիւններ չ'ունի որ Թուրքը կարենայ օգտուիլ անոնցմէ: Այստեղ Հայաստանը անելի շահելիք ունի. սահմանի բացումով Հայաստանի կախումութիւնը Վրաստանէն կը նուազի եւ կենսական ապրանքներու ներմուծումի նոր ճամբաներ կը

բացուին: Բայց այդ ըսել չէ որ սահմանի բացումէն ետք երկիրը անպայման բարելւաման երկար շրջան պիտի ունենայ: Հայաստանը կը տառապի տնտեսական հիւանդութիւնէ որուն դարմանը սահմանի բացումը չէ: Կաշառքն ու կողոպուտը Հայաստանի բարգաւաճման գլխաւոր արգելքներն են: Մենաշնորհութեան գոյութիւնը որոշ ասպարէզներէ ներս բացասական ազդեցութիւն կ'ունենայ տնտեսութեան վրայ որովհետեւ մրցակիցներու չգոյութեամբ շուկան կարողութիւնը չ'ունի անկողմնակից արժեւորում տալ լաւագոյն ապրանքը հովանաւորելով: Պետութիւնը անելի ջանք թափած է սահմանի բացման խնդրին շուրջ քան ազատ շուկայի ստեղծման անոր զարգացման եւ կարգաւորման խնդրին շուրջ: Սակայն ցաւալին հետեւեալն է՝ Հայաստանը Թուրքիան ճնշելու միջոց չ'ունի:

Հայաստանի կառուարութիւնը ինքզինքը դժուար կացութեան մատնած է: Ան համաձայնած է գործընթացի մը որուն արդիւնքը իրմէ կախեալ չէ: Պաշտօնական Երեւանը կապեր հաստատելու պատրաստակամութիւնը յայտնաբերած է ուրեմն այլեւ Թուրքիոյ կը մնայ սահմանը բանալ թէ չբանալ: Սարգսեանը յայտարարած է որ եթէ մինչեւ յաջորդ Հայաստան-Թուրքիա ֆութպոլի խաղը սահմանը չբացուի ուրեմն ինք Թուրքիա չ'երթար խաղը անձնապէս դիտելու, կարծես թէ իր բացակայութիւնէն Թուրքերը կը տուժեն: Իշխանութիւնը համոզուած է որ ճանապարհային քարտէզի կիրարկման պատասխանատուութիւնը Թուրքիոյ կը պատկանի: Այդ մէկը ճիշդ է, Թուրքիան սահմանը փակեց ուրեմն միայն Թուրքիան կրնայ սահման բանալ: Բայց ինչպէս քիչ առաջ ըսի, Թուրքիան սահմանը բանալու անապարանքի մէջ չէ: Ան կ'ուզէ աշխարհին ցոյց տալ որ Հայերուն հետ խօսակցութեան անցած է եւ ուրիշ երկիրներու միջամտութիւնը այդ մերձեցման վնասակար է: Ուրիշ խօսքով ան աշխարհին թելադրած է որ Հայոց Յեղասպանութեան վերաբերող հարցերը մոռնան որովհետեւ Հայերուն հետ պիտի լուծեն բոլոր առկախ խնդիրները: Միակ լաւ մանրամասնութիւնը այն է որ քանի որ արդիւնքը Թուրքերէն կախեալ է եթէ սահմանը չբացուի Հայաստանին չէն կրնար մեղադրել: Թուրքերը կը փորձեն հարցը կապել Արձախի հակամարտութեան խաղաղ լուծման՝ ի շահ ցեղակից Ատրպէյճանին: Այժմ ՄԱԿ-ի ապահովական խորհուրդի ատենապետութիւնը ստանձնած են եւ Արձախի հարցը պիտի փորձէն այդտեղ բարձրացնել: Յառաջիկայ ամիսներուն ընթացքին Հայաստանին վրայ ճնշում պիտի անելնայ:

Այս մարտահրավերներուն դիմաց իրաւունք չ'ունինք ետ քաշուելու: Թէեւ շատերս իշխանութեան առած քայլերէն վշտացած ենք, պէտք է որ Հայաստանին օգնութեան հասնինք: ԱՄՆ-ուն մէջ Հայաստանէն անելի քաղաքական ուժ ունի ամերիկահայութիւնը եւ այդ ուժը պէտք է գործածէ հայանպաստ քաղաքականութիւն զարգացնելու Ամերիկայի պետութեան մօտ: Այս կը նշանակէ Ամերիկացի քաղաքագէտներուն անդադար չիշեցնել որ Թուրքիան կը չարաշահի զիրենք հայատեաց ծրագիրներու մեղսակից դարձնելով եւ Ամերիկային դիրքը իբրեւ հաւասարակշռուած գերպետութիւն արատաւորելով: Հիմնական է չիշել որ մենք մեր պայքարը երկար շունչի վրայ կը տանինք եւ այդ ճամբուն վրայ խոչընդոտներու բազմութիւնը ակնկալուած է, մեզի կը մնայ միայն շրջանցել զանոնք:

- Ռազմիկ Հարուն

# VAAHE BERBERIAN THE ART AND THE ARTIST

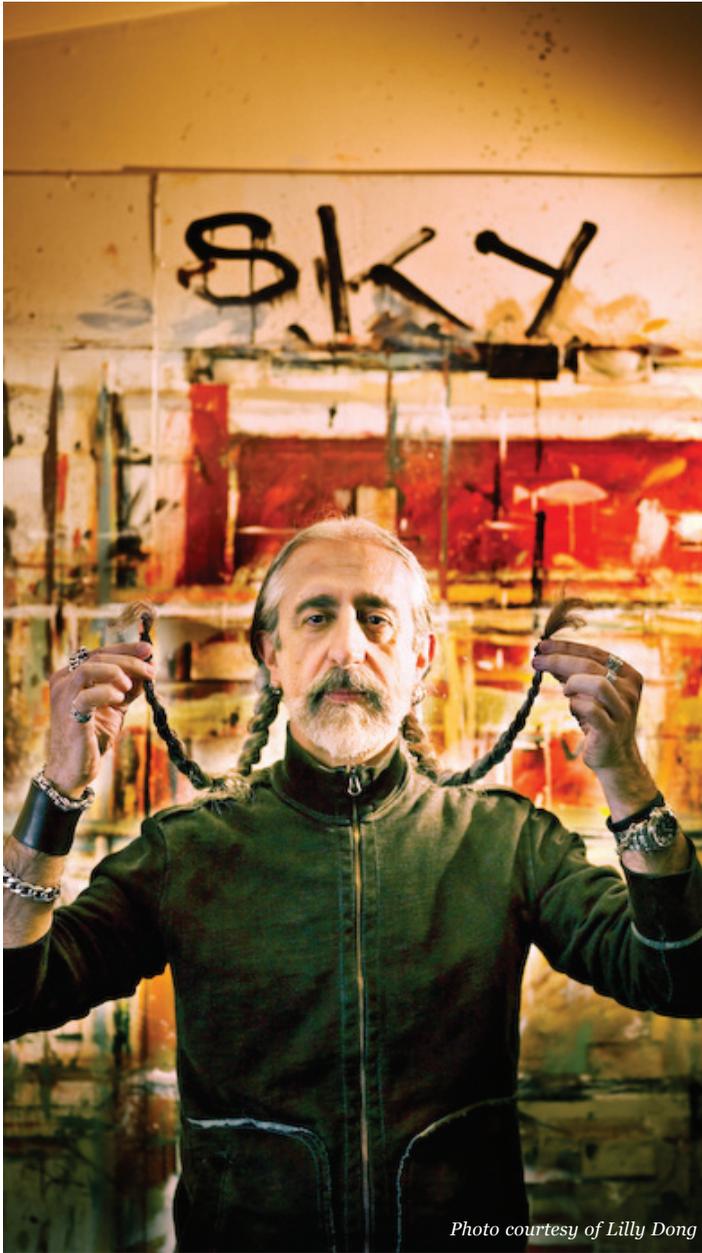


Photo courtesy of Lilly Dong



Photo courtesy of Mher Vahakn

It was my usual Thursday afternoon. I was at work about to go home when I received a text message from my sister inviting me to attend Vahe Berberian's one-man show titled 'Sugwyn'. At this point I knew very little about Berberian; just the occasional YouTube clip promoting one of his plays or a friend mentioning his name in passing. In spite of this, I decided to attend the show and see what all the excitement was about. At the show, I was blown away with his hilarious monologue. His fresh and unique perspective on society, life, and the Armenian community captivated the sold-out audience and filled the venue with laughter.

After the show, my curiosity led me to find out more about Vahe and his work. Thirty seconds and a Google search later, I discovered the diverse artistic talents of Vahe Berberian. To my amazement, his monologues are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the diverse mediums that he expresses himself in. He is also an accomplished painter, writer, director, and actor. His paintings have been displayed in international art exhibitions, he has directed and produced numerous plays, published several books, written screenplays, acted in movies, and performed in theatre. Berberian's paintings are sought after by notable collectors in the art community. In addition, his art has been featured in blockbuster Hollywood films such as *I Am Legend*, *Oceans 13*, and *Spiderman*.

Born in Beirut, Lebanon, Vahe grew up in the coastal Mediterranean city and spent the majority of his childhood and teenage years reading books. "The love of books is a major facet in the formation of my character," says Berberian. "I was very lucky to grow up in a house that was full of books. We literally had thousands of books in our home."

While growing up in Lebanon, Berberian began to participate in the local theater and became the youngest member of the theater company. "Everything that I loved: I loved painting, I loved writing, I loved acting,

I loved music, and everything else that I loved about art I found in the theater.”

He continued to hone his talents while living in Lebanon. However, with the politically sensitive environment of the Lebanese Civil War, he also became interested in politics and was an active member of the AYPF. “I was very involved in the Armenian community in Lebanon,” remembers Berberian. “In hindsight you might see a duality in this because how can one be a ‘flower child’ and care so deeply about politics. However, there was not dichotomy there. I was a hippy, but I was very much interested with the politics of it all.”

Reflecting upon his activities as a youth, Berberian elaborates, “I was writing songs, I was painting, but at the same time was very much involved in politics—especially leftist politics. I was a devout socialist. I had read a lot of socialist literature, and also I would read literature regarding Armenian politics and the Armenian armed resistance.”

At the age of 17, Vahe left Lebanon and travelled among communities in Europe. “I think in a lot of ways I discovered myself while I was traveling,” he explains. “It’s funny how you discover your identity when you are away from your immediate surroundings.” After briefly returning to Lebanon, however, due to the Civil War, he decided to move to Canada and eventually settled in Los Angeles, where he reunited with his theater colleagues and continued his education.

I had the opportunity to personally meet with Berberian at his studio to acquire a firsthand knowledge about his life and work. While I was in the studio, I was overwhelmed by the setting. Surrounded by paintings, art supplies, musical instruments, books, and murals, the space had a very enchanting atmosphere. As I absorbed all the art that was around me, I began to wonder where Berberian’s inspiration comes from.

“My inspiration comes from three things,” he replied. “First of all, people; interesting and lucid people inspire

me. Second is my surrounding. I feel very much attached to my lifestyle and the way I live. For me, my immediate surroundings are almost part of my art. Finally, art itself—as in literature, music, and good theatre. All these things have a profound influence on my art.”

Berberian went on to comment that as a result of being an active member of the Armenian community, his Armenian heritage has had a heavy influence on his art. He insists that, “The source of all evil and wrongdoing can be traced back to insecurity. Therefore, being secure with your national identity is a tremendously

**“IN HINDSIGHT YOU MIGHT SEE A DUALITY IN THIS BECAUSE HOW CAN ONE BE A ‘FLOWER CHILD’ AND CARE SO DEEPLY ABOUT POLITICS. HOWEVER, THERE WAS NOT DICHOTOMY THERE. I WAS A HIPPIE, BUT I WAS VERY MUCH INTERESTED WITH THE POLITICS OF IT ALL.”**

important part of who you are as an artist.”

Although Berberian creates art in many different mediums, he does not prefer one over the other. “At certain times I prefer one thing and at other times I prefer something else,” he explains. “It all depends on timing. It is almost like I have all these children that I love equally. However, if asked which one you like most, I answer the one that behaves.”

I could not help but notice certain common motifs in Berberian’s art. For example, several of his paintings feature fish and wheels. I wondered if these motifs represented a certain message that he was trying to project through his art. However, I learned that this was not the case. Berberian’s use of different motifs in his art is based on aesthetics.

“As far as my painting goes, I do not use symbolism at all,” said Berberian. “Whatever I use in my painting, I use it as a form by itself. Even when I use letters and words, I use them for their shape and not so much what they mean. If I wanted to say something specific, I would write it or use it in one of my monologues. The reason why I paint is because there are certain layers in my insight that cannot be expressed in any other way other than painting.”

Berberian’s art has gone through multiple stages. Initially, he started his career with an abstract style. He then transitioned to more figurative work, though, gradually transitioned back into the world of abstract art. Today, he considers himself as more of a minimalist and has been able to sustain a living as a full-time artist—a feat that is rarely accomplished in the art world.

“I consider myself very lucky for two reasons,” he points out. “The number one reason is the fact that I can live off my art. And number two, which is very important, when I was growing up, I thought of a successful artist as someone who would paint these incredible paintings and die of starvation. People would then discover his amazing work and say wow he was good, we have starved another one. I had a very romantic notion of a successful artist. I could never really imagine that an artist could become successful and actually enjoy the fruits of his labor.”

Reflecting upon his current career, however, he notes, “Now, with acknowledgment—I don’t like the word success—but with acknowledgment comes a sense of security. And with this security, your work as an artist becomes more raw and more honest because you are no longer worried about selling your work or making it more presentable. Therefore, your work becomes more real and that is very, very important to me and how I approach my work.”

*For more information about Vahe Berberian and his art, visit his official website: [vaheberberian.com](http://vaheberberian.com).*

# THE KURDISH STRUGGLE AGAINST GENOCIDE

By  
Allen  
Yekikan

The Turkish constitution does not recognize Kurds in Turkey, and so often labels them as terrorists—using them as a convenient scapegoat for military uprisings and other political issues. In Turkey “terrorist” is synonymous with Kurd. Turkey frequently argues that the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, is a terrorist organization and thus all Kurdish organizations face the threat of being banned for their real or imagined ties to the PKK.

In 1999, the death toll of Kurds killed in Turkish military operations increased to over

40,000. According to the figures published by Turkey’s own Parliament, 6,000 Kurdish villages were systematically evacuated of all inhabitants and 3,000,000 Kurds have been displaced.

The systematic military campaign against them was nothing short of the elimination of a people, a culture and a homeland. The oppression of Kurdish people within Turkey can be defined as genocide in various ways; cultural, linguistic and physical factors all play a part in the cleansing of the Kurdish ethnicity from Turkey itself, and are still embraced by the Turkish constitution.

To date, however, Turkey denies these genocidal campaigns. Below are some of the voices of Kurds themselves, as they struggle to bring the world’s attention to their plight and draw parallels between their suffering and that of the Armenians.

## **Ocalan Says Kurdish Struggle is Against Genocide**

Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan, under detention in Italy in December of 1998, defended his cause as a struggle against genocide. The Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which he founded in 1978, has fought for nearly three decades for self-rule in southeast Turkey, where they make up the majority. “Despite the history of the Kurdish people which goes back more than 2,500 years—the Republic of Turkey continues to deny the existence of this people or its identity—language and culture,” Ocalan said.

In a 1998 letter directed to the President of Armenia, Ocalan welcomed the Belgian Senate’s passage of a resolution recognizing “the reality of the Armenian holocaust” and stated, “Let us recall Hitler’s response to a critic of the ‘final solution’ of the Jewish problem: ‘Who complained about the Armenians?’”

## **Kurdish Parliament in Exile Recognizes Genocide**

On the 82nd anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, in 1997, the Brussels-based Kurdish Parliament in Exile passed a resolution recognizing and marking the Armenian Genocide. The resolution, signed by the parliament’s chairman, Zubeyir Aydar, condemned the Genocide and acknowledged the Ottoman government and their Hamidiye

collaborators—formed by some Kurdish tribes—for the crime against humanity.

“The Turkish State regime—from history to our days—has worked against the peoples—as if a guilty party—and with her committed genocides has changed the demographics of Anatolia causing the demise of many cultures and civilizations,” the resolution said. “The same policies are being applied in Kurdistan today. I call upon the world public opinion to become aware of this Turkish State policies and vehemently oppose it.”

### **Turkish Policies Genocidal, Says DTP**

Ahmet Turk, the leader of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) in Turkey was prosecuted in October of 2008 for

societal genocide” since the military coup of 1980.

The speech came after days of protests in south-eastern cities where hundreds of Kurds were arrested after clashes in various towns in the pre-dominantly Kurdish-populated south-east.

### **Saddam’s Destruction of the Kurds**

Between 1987-1988, Iraq’s deposed dictator Saddam Hussein slaughtered some 182,000 Kurdish civilians in Northern Iraq, using artillery, air strikes, death camps and poison gas attacks. During his trial in late 2006, Hussein legitimized the massacres in Anfal “as a legitimate counter-insurgency operation against Kurdish separatists at a time when Iraq was at war with Iran,” much like the manner in which Turkey seeks to justify its Genocide of Armenians.



***Kurdish children look on as a Turkish soldier patrols their community***

in Massachusetts to discuss the uneven relations between Turks, Kurds, and Armenians under Ottoman Rule. The panel dove deep into the nuances of the Armenian Genocide, presenting the gamut of issues connected to it, from the role of Kurdish chieftains in the execution of the crime, to the open possibilities for reconciliation between Kurds and Armenians based on a shared experience of oppression under Turkish rule. “Kurdish-Armenian dialogue carries a very promising potential for reconciliation that is very much open to the issues of truth-seeking and justice, which are often absent in Turkish-Armenian dialogue,” said one panelist, Dr. Bilgin Ayata from Johns Hopkins University.

### **Turkish Assault on the PKK**

Turkish warplanes have been bombing PKK installations in Northern Iraq since early 2008, when Turkey officially launched a ground incursion into northern Iraq, sending 10,000 troops across the border supported by air assets to neutralize PKK bases from which attacks against the Turkish military



***A Kurdish woman stands trial in Diyarbakir, 1991.***

denouncing the government’s policy regarding the Kurds as “cultural and societal genocide.” Speaking to supporters in the south-eastern city of Diyarbakir, Turk said the Kurds had suffered under “cultural and

### **Panel Discusses Relations Between Turks, Kurds, and Armenians**

On April 20, 2009 a panel comprised of Armenian, Turkish, and Kurdish scholars came together

were being mounted. Since they first began as small-scale cross border incursions in late 2007, these attacks have led to the deaths of thousands of Kurds, civilian and PKK alike. The first modern incursion into Northern Iraq, however, was launched in 1983 and has continued sporadically since.

### **Armenian Apology Causes Brawl in Turkish Parliament**

On December 30, 2008, Turkey's only pro-Kurdish political party, the Democratic Society Party (DTP) apologized to the Armenians and Assyrians for the 1915 Genocide. "Sensing the pain of the events in our hearts, we feel that we need to apologize," it's leader, Ahmet Turk said. "We are ashamed when we look at our Armenian or Assyrian brothers."

That same day, a member of the DTP requested in parliament that the Turkish legislature apologize to Armenians for the "events of 1915," which he described using

the Kurdish word for Genocide. His remarks caused an uproar, with members from the Republican People's Party and Justice and Development Party hurling personal insults at Kurdish deputy for "insulting the society in which you live."

### **"We remember, We Share Your Grief"**

On April 24, 2009, "Gunluk," the Kurds' only Kurdish-language newspaper in Turkey, featured a large headline above its logo that read: "We remember, we share your grief," in Armenian with Armenian lettering.

Gunluk was the only paper in Turkey to commemorate the genocide victims—not with a few words, but by dedicating the entire issue to the genocide. On that same day, the Human Rights Association of Turkey organized a commemoration calling for the truth to be revealed that a genocide was committed here in this country in 1915. Although a number of Turkish media outlets were present, none but Gunluk covered the event.



*A Kurdish supporter of the DTP flashes the peace sign during a Newroz celebration in Diyarbakir, 2009.*



# ANCA Opens its Doors to Kurdish American Youth Activists

In the Fall of 2008, a special all-day workshop for young Kurdish American activists was held at the headquarters of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) in Washington, DC. Young advocates for the Kurdish Cause from such organizations as the Kurdish American Youth Organization (KAYO), Kurdish Human Rights Watch, and the Kurdish Youth club came from various cities across the United States for the day long advocacy training.

The gathering served as another instance of the ANCA's ongoing commitment to reach out beyond the Armenian American community and find common cause with others struggles for basic human rights. Whether it be fighting to end the genocide in Darfur, promoting public service in American society at large, or allying with Greeks, Kurds, and others who have faced the brutality of the Turkish state, the ANCA has repeatedly proven itself prepared to extend a hand of solidarity to movements for social justice.

Welcoming remarks and the opening workshop was delivered by Aram Hamparian, Executive Director of the ANCA. Tying in the experiences of Armenians and other human rights struggles, Hamparian emphasized the importance of grassroots organizing as the key ingredient for making your voice heard in the American political process. "You can't outsource the Kurdish Cause," insisted Hamparian, noting how effective advocacy must be rooted in the community and centered around principles of authenticity, devotion, and intelligent action.

Delving into the nuts and bolts of everyday advocacy work was the ANCA's government affairs staff. They focused on how to best craft a message when dealing with elected officials and public representatives. In addition to offering various insights, they also discussed how to research information on members of Congress and track the activities of lobbying firms working for the government of Turkey.

Turning to the arena of media was the next presenter, ANCA Communications Director Elizabeth Chouldjian, who expanded upon the points raised about messaging in the previous presentations and focused on the basics of media outreach. Her workshop gave special

attention to the issue of utilizing technology and mediums such as the internet as part of an effective, overall grassroots strategy.

Finally, a power point presentation on how to empower youth was offered by Serouj Aprahamian, the then Director of the ANCA's Capital Gateway Program. After first enumerating the many reasons why youth play a critical role in successful community activism, Aprahamian discussed some of the strategies for educating youth and engaging them as active participants in the political process.

After the presentations, an open discussion ensued in which the Kurdish activists reflected upon some of the challenges facing their community. In addition to expressing their views about the apparent obstacles that stand in their way, they applied some of the themes discussed during the workshop and suggested numerous ideas for how to overcome them.

The young Kurdish activists were clearly inspired by the presentations and the willingness of the ANCA to open its doors to them. Admiration of the Armenian community's many achievements



in the area of advocacy and organization was repeatedly mentioned by the audience. Many insisted that the work of the Armenian community and the ANCA in particular, serves as a benchmark for their own aspirations.

Similarities between the Kurdish and Armenian people were also discussed by participants throughout the day, both in terms of cultural traditions and oppression faced at the hands of Turkey. "I am glad to see both our people put their resources together to fight for our rights and the injustices that have been committed against us by the Turks," said one Kurdish attendee from southern California. "I think having gatherings like this is a great way to create a long lasting bond."

Similar gatherings have gone on to be held with the ANCA and coordination with the young Kurdish American activists has continued into 2009.

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