ARMENIAN RENAISSANCE DEBUT IN TORONTO

Posted on February 26, 2013 by Keghart

Category: Opinions

TORONTO--A roster of prominent local and Armenia speakers, at the maiden public gathering of the nascent Armenian Renaissance of Toronto (ART) movement on Feb. 8, 2013, called for a "One Nation" unified effort by the Diaspora and Armenia to help bring about a democratic, strong and prosperous Armenia. The nascent ART is a founding member of the new Diaspora movement whose aim is the peaceful promotion of good governance in Armenia.

The speakers--Aram Adamyan, Dr. Berge Minassian, Viken Attarian, and Dr. Zareh Ouzounian--all of Canada; David Grigoryan and Dr. Zaven Kalaydjian of the Washington-based Policy Forum Armenia think tank, and activists Yeghia Nersesian and Alec Yenikomshian of Armenia agreed that the Diaspora can help bring about positive and fundamental change in Armenian governance.

Adamyan, who also acted as MC, said that the separation, which had existed between Soviet Armenia and the Diaspora, continued following Armenia's independence, despite hopes that the Armenian nation would finally become one. He said the Diaspora has extensive and multifarious resources which Armenia desperately needs. It's time for Armenians in the Diaspora to connect through people-to-people links with their brothers and sisters in the Armenian homeland.

Dr. Zareh Ouzounian, one of the key figures in the establishment of Armenian Renaissance in Canada, said: "The very destiny of our nation is directly dependent on the survival of our motherland. Not the mere survival of the Armenian state, but its growth and development into a just, prosperous and powerful state."

He called for equal rights in Armenia, for truly democratic elections, improved governance and a responsible approach to environmental issues.

The words "change" and "hope" have reappeared in the lexicon of the Armenian street and dozens of civic and reform movements have already emerged and are starting to raise their voices, said Dr. Ouzounian. "Their sympathizers already number in tens of thousands...they are taking full advantage of modern technology and social media to raise their concerns," he added.

These reform movements have created a new structure in the form of an all-inclusive pre-parliament ("nakhakhorhrdaran") whose first objective is "to develop and to articulate the platform of policies to govern the New Future Armenia..." he said.

While pointing out that meaningful change can only come from within Armenia, a strong, committed and engaged Diaspora support "would go a long way in providing a supportive network, specific expertise and advice," said Dr. Ouzounian and added that the new, energized, engaged Diaspora is the Armenian Renaissance. Associate groups similar to ART are now sprouting in Los Angeles, Paris, Berlin, and Beirut.

He admitted that the Armenian Renaissance of Toronto and AR movements around the globe do not have precise medium- or long-term road maps of actions they would take, but that they are working

to develop strategies consistent with their mission. "Whether it is by organizing informative lectures and debates, whether by signing petitions or organizing protests, whether it is by participating with our individual expertise and skills, Renaissance will be an action network, and not a discussion forum," stressed Dr. Ouzounian.

"Wherever we live, the New Future Armenia is our collective responsibility. If we truly believe we are ONE Nation, we, in the Diaspora, have the right and the duty to support the grass-roots civil society movements that will shape the New Future Armenia," he said.

Viken Attarian, a prominent intellectual and community leader in Montreal pointed out to the audience that the challenge in Armenia, as elsewhere, is how to maintain democratic rule. Once established, democracy requires constant care and attention, otherwise it could vanish. Social activism, civic movements, the free exchange of ideas are signals of a healthy democracy. "The hundreds of thousands of Armenian citizens, who are committed to these ideals, are the guarantors of the flourishing democracy in Armenia," he said. Attarian cited the work of scholar and author Daron Acemyan, an Armenian citizen of Turkey as a key in understanding why certain contemporary states succeed while others fail.

Because for centuries many Armenians have lived outside Armenia, a significant percentage of Diaspora Armenians don't consider Armenia their homeland. "We should feel that we are a successful movement when most Diasporans regard Armenia as their homeland," he said.

He also defined the sharp difference between the concept of citizenship and nationality. Because for centuries many Armenians have lived outside Armenia, most Diasporans consider themselves citizens rather than members of the national group of the countries they reside.

Attarian drew the audience's attention to a prominent and worrisome difference between the Canadian Charter of Rights and freedoms and the Armenian Constitution. He said that there were so many exceptions or "notwithstanding clauses" in the Armenian Constitution that a future law could easily nullify the freedoms and rights "guaranteed" by the Constitution. He called for inviolable rights and freedoms to be imbedded in the Armenian Constitution.

Dr. Berge Minassian, a founding member of Armenian Renaissance, said that a state governed democratically and with the rule of law is essential to the survival of Armenia, and therefore to the Armenian nation. "We believe such a state will come about through the efforts of Armenians living in our homeland. The Armenian Renaissance movement is a reaction to the realization that Diaspora Armenians can buttress, support, and sustain the civil society movements for peaceful change taking place in Armenia."

Dr. Minassian said that positive change is necessary and urgent. "The Diaspora can't abdicate its responsibility to help those working in Armenia to effectuate democratic change."

Think tank Policy Forum Armenia's (PFA) David Grigoryan and Dr. Zaven Kalaydjian, who were

scheduled to address the gathering, couldn't attend in person due to a severe snowstorm in Toronto and the North American northeast. Speaking through Skype, they presented an informative forensic analysis of the 2012 parliamentary elections in Armenia and cited the various research activities, conferences, and reports that the PFA undertakes. Grigoryan said the PFA is comprised of more than 60 professionals across the globe who volunteer their expertise and time to study and analyze Armenian affairs. Through YouTube, environmental activist Yeghia Nersesian and Sartarabad spokesman Alec Yenikomshian offered a precis of their civic activities in Armenia.

Nersesian invited Diaspora Armenians to join Armenians in the homeland to realise a "renaissance of the Armenian nation." Echoing the other speakers, Yenikomshian also emphasized the key role of the Diaspora in rebuilding a progressive and democratic political system in Armenia.

Flyers, including the vision and mission statement of ART, as well as links to democratic, civic, environmental group websites, were distributed to the audience which had braved one of the worst storms in the city's recent history.

For videos and further details please visit the Armenian Renaissance website

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AR Declaration on Post-Election Developments

Call to Hovhanissian to Become the Champion of the People
February 28, 2013

The Armenian Renaissance extends its warm cooperation to the civic action movements in Armenia which are questioning the validity of the 2013 presidential election results and have assembled around Raffi Hovhanissian, rival to the authorities' candidate.

The daily mushrooming number of civic action group members, the tremendous support Mr. Hovhanissian is receiving all over Armenia and the absence of a spontaneous popular support for the candidate of the authorities testifies there is absolutely no relation between the official election results and the truth.

The only forces which have offered counter/opposing argument and support the election results are people and organizations outside the country, and who have sent congratulatory letters to the candidate of the authorities.

We re-assert that the Armenian government belongs to the citizens of Armenia and not to people who see the presidential office as a tool for their self-interest. Thus, their congratulations are meaningless, if the citizens of Armenia don't join them.

We are hopeful that Mr. Hovhanissian will not disappoint the people of Armenia, who in recent years

have elevated their self-consciousness as citizens, and abides by the will of the people, gathers around him all progressive forces, transforms the popular vote into reality, and pulls Armenia from its shortsighted and destructive path.

The Diaspora is following, with great interest, the progress being made in Armenia and is calling upon Armenia authorities not to resort to force or to conspiratorial measures.

«Հայկական Վերածնունդ» Սփյուռքյան շարժման հայտարարությունը Հայաստանում հետընտրական զարգացումների վերաբերյալ

«Հայկական Վերածնունդ» շարժումն իր ջերմ աջակցությունն է հայտնում Հայաստանում 2013թ. նախագահական ընտրությունների պաշտոնական արդյունքները վիճարկող ժողովրդական շարժմանը, որը ձևավորվել է ընտրություններում իշխանության թեկնածուի հիմնական մրցակից Րաֆֆի Հովհաննիսյանի շուրջ: Շարժմանը մասնակցող քաղաքացիների օր-օրի աճող քանակն ու Հայաստանի տարբեր բնակավայրերում Րաֆֆի Հովհաննիսյանին ցույց տրվող բուռն աջակցությունը և այդ պարագայում իշխանության թեկնածուի օգտին որևէ ինքնաբուխ զանգվածային քաղաքացիական միջոցառման բացակայությունը վկայում է նախագահական ընտրությունների պաշտոնական արդյունքների իրականության հետ բացարձակապես կապ չունենալու մասին: Իշխանությունների միակ հակափաստարկը ընտրությունների արդյունքները վիճարկող քաղաքացիներին մնացել է Հայաստանից դուրս գտնվող ուժերից՝ օտար երկրներից կամ կազմակերպություններից իրենց թեկնածուի անունով ընտրություններում իբրև թե հաղթելու կապակցությամբ ստացված շնորհավորանքները: Վերահաստատում ենք, որ Հայաստանում իշխանությունը պատկանում է միայն և միայն Հայաստանի ժողովրդին, այլ ոչ թե Նախագահի պաշտոնում իրենց շահերի սպասարկուն տեսնելու ցանկությամբ առաջնորդվող դրսի ուժերին: Ուստի նրանց շնորհավորանքներն առ ոչինչ են, եթե դրանց չի միանում Հայաստանի ժողովուրդը:

Հուսով ենք, որ Րաֆֆի Հովհաննիսյանը հուսախաբ չի անի վերջին տարիների քաղաքացիական ինքնագիտակցության կայացման բովով անցած Հայաստանի ժողովրդին և, հենվելով ժողովրդի կամքի վրա ու իր շուրջը համախմբելով բոլոր առողջ ուժերին, կկարողանա իրականացնել ժողովրդից ստացած քվեն և դուրս բերել երկիրն այս անհեռանկար ու քայքայիչ ուղուց: Սփյուռքում ուշադիր հետևում են Հայաստանում ընթացող զարգացումներին և գործող իշխանություններին խստիվ կոչ անում զերծ մնալ ժողովրդի նկատմամբ որևէ ուժի կիրառումից կամ սադրիչ գործողություններից: