

# BRIEF NEWS FROM LEBANON

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Hamo Moskofian, Beirut, 26 August 2010

## **CELEBRATION OF THE HEROIC DEFENSE OF MUSA DAGH IN ANJAR**



It has become a national tradition to celebrate the anniversary of the heroic defense of Musa Dagh (Musaler) all over the Armenian Diaspora and in Armenia. The descendants of the heroes and heroines, who were settled in the malaria- and trachoma-infested town of Anjar, in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon by the French authorities, have turned the town into an Armenian paradise. Musalertsis have written one of the brightest pages of modern Armenian history, immortalised in Franz Werfel's world-famous novel.

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On the morning of August 22 thousands of Armenians from all over the world joined the Anjar community to commemorate the 95th anniversary of the Musa Dagh epic and the 70th birthday of Armenian Anjar. Holy Mass was conducted by His Holiness Catholicos Aram I of the Cilicia See, and was attended by the President of Artsakh Bako Sahakyan, Republic of Armenia Minister of Diaspora Hranoush Hagopyan, Ambassador of Armenia Ashot Kocharian, Lebanese MP Hagop Bagradounian, Hrant Markaryan, the head of ARF in Armenia, public and cultural figures.

At the end of the Holy Mass, the traditional "herissa" was blessed and distributed to the participants of the annual event. Once again Anjar residents demonstrated, to the visitors, the town's famous

## Meeting with the Maronite Patriarch

His Holiness Patriarch of the Maronites of Antakia and the Orient, Mar Nasralla Boutros Sfeir, welcomed a three-man delegation to his summer quarters in the mountains above Beirut on August 25. The delegation, including Mgrditch Bouldoukian, Michel-El Khoury and Hamo Moskofian travelled to the more than thousand-year-old summer resort of the Maronite Patriarchate in Diman, in northern Lebanon.



Maronites, originally Catholic Syriacs, settled here a millennia ago. The mountainous region, which greatly resembles Karabagh-Artsakh, offered the community a sanctuary where they could defend themselves against the Mamluks of Egypt, the Ottoman Turks, and other invaders. After the fall of Cilician Armenian last capital Sis to Sultan Baibars of the Mamluks (1375), thousands of Armenian captives--on their way to Egyptian slavery, escaped to this Maronite-inhabited region, where many of the descendents still live.

The Maronite Church uses Syriac and Aramaic languages in its liturgy. Thousands of speakers of these ancient languages were massacred or forcefully Islamized and Turkified by Ottoman Turks and Ataturk's Turkish Republic.

The Maronite Patriarch was informed about the many offspring of convert Assyrians, Syriacs, Arameans we had met during a recent visit to Germany.

The ageing but always energetic Cardinal Sfeir received the delegation with great cordiality. He listened with interest about the suffering and fate of Christians in Turkey in the distant past and in modern times. We asked for his blessings and assistance concerning this very important issue. He thanked us and invited us to meet him again. His Holiness also gave immediate instructions to have the meeting filmed and distributed to as many Lebanese TV channels as possible.

The one-hour meeting was soon telecast in Lebanon, where viewers were informed of the details of the meeting with the Maronite Patriarch.

