

# CALIFORNIA ARMENIANS TO DENOUNCE OBAMA'S BETRAYAL

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Harut Sassounian, Publisher, The California Courier, 21 April 2011



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The news of the planned Armenian protest must not have been well received by the White House. Neither the President nor his staff would want to come to a major city to launch his reelection campaign, in the face of disenchanting voters who question his credibility in front of TV cameras. Until this week, White House officials had paid little attention to a March 28 letter from ANCA chairman Ken Hachikian, inviting the President or a Cabinet member to participate in the annual commemoration by laying a wreath at the Armenian Genocide Monument in Montebello, California, on April 24. Given the prospect of a major protest rally on the occasion of the President's visit on

April 21, Democratic officials asked ANCA Western Region to send a follow-up letter, inviting the President to stop by the Genocide Monument in Montebello, situated minutes away from his appearance in Culver City.

It is highly unlikely that the President would make such a gesture to respect the memory of genocide victims on April 21, particularly since three days later he will be issuing a statement on the 96th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, in which once again he will shy away from using the word genocide.

The dangled carrot of a presidential visit to Montebello should not deter the Armenian community's resolve from showing up in large numbers outside the President's fundraiser in Culver City. In fact, whatever interest the White House may be showing regarding the Armenian community at this time might well be due to the planned protest.

It is not realistic to expect that the President will acknowledge the Armenian Genocide in the next two years, nor do so if reelected for a second term. Under these circumstances, rather than begging him to use those two "forbidden" words, at every campaign stop Armenian-Americans should raise serious questions about Pres. Obama's credibility and suitability to lead the nation for another four years. Should Armenian-Americans continue to remain silent, they would be encouraging all other elected officials to deceive the community with empty promises.

The Armenian Genocide Community Task Force, the organizing body of the April 21 rally, has issued an urgent call to action, asking Los Angeles Armenians to participate in large numbers in order to let Pres. Obama hear the community's "profound disappointment at his failure to honor his campaign promise" and "deliver justice to the Armenian people." In its announcement, the Task Force pointed out that a large turnout would not only send a loud and clear message to the White House, but also publicize Armenian political demands among millions of people around the world who would be watching the presidential visit on national and international television.

It is salutary that prominent Armenian-American musician Serj Tankian will be participating in the April 21 protest. Moreover, Tankian posted a message to his 570,000 facebook fans, urging them to support the protest: "On Thursday, April 21 at 3 p.m., everyone in Southern California is urged to join in a public protest urging President Obama to uphold his promise and recognize the Armenian Genocide. This issue has always been of extreme importance to Serj and his family."

Special arrangements have been made to provide transportation to the public by buses starting at 1:30 p.m. from St. Mary's Church in Glendale, Rose & Alex Pilibos School in Hollywood, and Ferrahian High School in Encino. Those planning to drive to the rally should arrive around 3 p.m., at Sony Studios, 10202 W. Washington Boulevard in Culver City, California.

The larger the number of participants, the more visible their presence and the more audible their voices will be at the rally.

