

# CALL FOR DIALOGUE - HRANT DINK TRADITION

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## Press Release



### **Call for dialogue and support for the vision of Turkish-Armenian Journalist Hrant Dink**

Ottawa – January 18, 2010

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Hrant Dink was persecuted for several years for his political views and he was murdered in a hate crime in front of his Istanbul office on January 19, 2007. He was the founder and editor of bilingual weekly *Agos* which championed the democratization of Turkish society and the revitalization of the Turkish-Armenian community. Dink was an outspoken defender of a new understanding of Turkey — a democratic and multicultural country at peace with its history in which Armenians and all of Turkey's ethnic and religious minorities could assert their cultural identities. He wanted a public airing of the story of 1915 and was certain that when people of Turkey were fully acquainted with it, they would draw upon their compassion to seek truth and reconciliation.

We, Canadians of Anatolian roots, are encouraged by the increasing momentum of steps taken toward dialogue between Turkey and Armenia, and among peoples who trace their cultural roots to Anatolia in Canada and elsewhere in the diaspora. A burgeoning movement of civil society initiatives in Turkey and have gained momentum in the last three years, including an apology campaign by a group of renowned Turkish intellectuals last year through which citizens of Turkey all around the world had a chance to express their empathy with the pain of their Armenian brothers and sisters for the destruction of millennia-old collective Armenian existence in Anatolia in 1915. Most importantly, there is now an increasing frequency of contacts between Turkish and Armenian civil society, artistic groups, and academics such as the much celebrated concerts of Istanbul-based groups *Kardeş Türküler* and *Sayad Nova Chorus* in Yerevan last year, the conferences and workshops organized through the collaboration of the International Hrant Dink Foundation and various Turkish universities, as well as the exchange projects involving Armenian and Turkish journalists and filmmakers.

World renowned Canadian award-winning journalist Naomi Klein will continue this tradition when

she presents the 2010 Hrant Dink Memorial Lecture on Freedom of Expression and Human Rights at Bogazici University in Istanbul on January 23rd.

While cognizant of the very real obstacles to reconciliation that lie ahead, we believe that the way forward lies in raising awareness of our shared heritage through cultural events and the creation of communication venues for Armenian, Turkish and Kurdish communities both here in Canada and globally. These venues enable the sharing of personal and family stories as well as wider knowledge about historical events, in particular the attempts to eradicate the Armenian people and culture in Anatolia after 1915. In this context, we recognize that the door-opening potential of civil society initiatives that have the courage to cross mental and emotional boundaries, whether through artistic or academic endeavors, have to be not only vigilant, but also act as a collective conscience. Strokes of pen movements may open or close borders, but unless there is real work on the ground, work that is carried forth with dedication and a genuine motivation to unravel truths, to find ways to educate, to create pockets of dialogue and a healing path, border crossings cannot become a reality.

### **Voices in Dialogue**

Ottawa

[friendsofHrant@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofHrant@gmail.com)

