CANADIAN MP IGNORES THE GENOCIDE…AGAIN

Posted on January 16, 2018 by Keghart

Category: Opinions

Keghart.com Editorial, 16 January 2018

Most Metropolitan Toronto Armenians live in the northeast and eastern part of Canada's largest city. Three churches, the Toronto Armenian Centre, the Armenian day school and many Armenian businesses and residences are in this area. And right in the heart of the northeast is the Don Valley East federal riding. The MP representing Don Valley East is Yasmin Ratansi, a member of the ruling Liberal Party. Of East Indian background but born in Tanzania, she has a loyal following among East Indians who make up more than ten percent of the district's population.

Like other Liberal MPs, at year-end Ms. Ratansi mails a free desk calendar to residents of her riding. The black-and-white calendar lists Canadian, religious, ethnic, cultural, civic, and other holidays and commemorations of MP Ratansi's choosing.

The 2017 calendar had a host of holidays and commemorations listed but not the Genocide of Armenians. When contacted last year by a Keghart.com reporter about the glaring omission, MP Ratansi promised to look into the matter. But early this January, when the 2018 calendars were delivered to Don Valley East households, the Genocide of Armenians was once again absent, although the Ukrainian Holodomor (genocide) and the Holocaust of the Jews are listed.

The Ratansi Calendar recognizes sixty-nine occasions, including such vital "holidays" as Valentine's Day, Halloween, International Transgender Day of Visibility, International Day Against Homophobia & Transphobia, World Oceans Day, Police and Peace Officer's National Memorial Day, World Teacher's Day, World Animal Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, World AIDS Day…

But to be fair to Ms. Ratansi, we have to point out that her promotional calendar doesn't list Groundhog Day (Feb. 2) or National Pink Shirt Day (Feb. 28).

The Ratansi Calendar lists nine Jewish and four Muslim religious occasions. Also mentioned are the Independences Days of Philippines, Pakistan, and India. The birth of guru Nanak Jayanti, the Lantern Festival, St. Patrick's Day, Diwali, and Vaisakhi are also recognized in Ms. Ratansi's made-to-order calendar. The Orthodox Christmas and New Year are mentioned but these religious holidays are not particularly Armenian. We share them with a dozen or so Churches. And to be technically correct, the Armenian Church is not a member of the Orthodox Church. The Armenian Church calls itself "Apostolic".

A few weeks ago a Keghart reader sent an email to Ms. Ratansi asking for an explanation re the omission of the Genocide in the 2017 and 2018 calendars. The letter reminded Ms. Ratansi of her 2017 promise to look into the matter. MP Ratansi has not replied. Ken Lister, her constituency assistant, said it can take anywhere from one to three months for her to reply. Ms. Ratansi must be one busy MP, although she has the time to go halfway around the world to Taiwan. The trip cost?

$6,123.81.

Why would MP Ratansi ignore the most important national day of Armenians? Is it because she was the chair of the Canadian-Azeri Interparliamentary Friendship group? She has visited Azerbaijan on a "search mission", according to her. The trip was sponsored by the Embassy of Azerbaijan. While the cost of such trips is public (see: the Taiwan trip in the previous paragraph), her Azerbaijan trip tab is unavailable.

Per its notorious "Caviar Diplomacy", the Azeri government makes a habit of doling visiting diplomats and politicians with hand-woven carpets, Czech-made coffee and tea sets, executive briefcase. It also hands as much as $2,500 honorariums for "hail to Aliyev and Azerbaijan" speeches by visiting politicians. Was Ms. Ratansi beneficiary to such Azeri *largesse*? We don't know. Does Ms. Ratansi ignore the Armenian Genocide because she is close to the Turkish community and has been feted at such occasions as the Turkish Mant banquet organized by the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations?

Ms. Ratansi was born to an East Indian community in Tanzania. Most probably she is descended from indentured labourers who were brought to Africa by the British colonial authorities more than a century ago. In her native Tanzania, Ms. Ratansi was a member of a doubly persecuted minority: she was not only Indian but also an Ismaili Muslim—a sect which some Muslims scoff as inauthentic. According to her, Tanzanians called the local Indians "blood suckers". Discrimination finally forced her to leave for Britain, eventually settling in Canada in 1974. When she arrived in Canada, she had to go through the predictable obstacles a newcomer faces, especially as an ambitious brown-skinned woman. We are certain that during the many years she has represented the Don Valley East riding Armenian organizations and spokesmen have familiarized her with the Genocide. Thus one would think with her background, experience, and knowledge she would be extra sensitive to the pain of a minority which has suffered centuries of discrimination and was victim to one of the bloodiest racial persecutions of the 20th century. Knowing that Turkey continues to deny committing genocide, MP Ratansi, one would expect, would be outspoken in her condemnation of Ankara's denialist policy. But alas, that's not the case. According to MP Ratansi, Halloween is more worthy of recognition than the Genocide of 1.5 million Armenians. She must have really enjoyed the "manti" the Federation of Canadian-Turkish Associations regaled her with at the residence of a local Turk.

Things go better with *raki*, MP Ratansi?