

"END THE PERSECUTION OF ARMENIANS! SAVE KESSAB!"

Posted on April 8, 2014 by Keghart



Category: [Opinions](#)



Harout Kassabian, Toronto, 3 April 2014

Hundreds of people attended an April 3 rally at the Turkish Consulate of Toronto to voice their concern over Turkey's role in the destruction of the ancient Armenian village of Kessab in Syria, whose residents fled after rebels, who had come from Turkey, seized control. Armenian Youth Federation member Harout Kassabian delivered the below speech at the demonstration.--Ed.

"6000 refugees from Kessab are now in Latakia. Kessab has been practically destroyed." This headline was in the New York Times. Not in 2014, but in the May 2nd, 1909 issue. 105 years later, we have had to hear these heart-wrenching words again. The Turks, then and now, have made it their goal to attack and terrorize the lives of innocent Armenians. Shame on you Turkey!



Harout Kassabian, Toronto, 3 April 2014

Hundreds of people attended an April 3 rally at the Turkish Consulate of Toronto to voice their concern over Turkey's role in the destruction of the ancient Armenian village of Kessab in Syria, whose residents fled after rebels, who had come from Turkey, seized control. Armenian Youth Federation member Harout Kassabian delivered the below speech at the demonstration.--Ed.

"6000 refugees from Kessab are now in Latakia. Kessab has been practically destroyed." This headline was in the New York Times. Not in 2014, but in the May 2nd, 1909 issue. 105 years later, we have had to hear these heart-wrenching words again. The Turks, then and now, have made it their goal to attack and terrorize the lives of innocent Armenians. Shame on you Turkey!



This was sadly not the first and only evacuation of Kessab in our history books. The horrors of the Armenian Genocide, a nightmare which reached from one end of the Ottoman Empire to the other, reached the coastal town of Kessab. 5,000 people were deported and killed on their way to Deir EL-Zor. However, the strength and determination of the people of Kessab is clear. The survivors returned, and the town flourished and became one of the most vibrant Armenian communities of the Diaspora.

Over 100 years later, on the morning of March 21st, extremist foreign fighters launched a vicious attack on Kessab's civilians, forcing them to flee to neighbouring Latakia once again. Subsequent attacks occurred on March 22nd and 23rd leading to the eventual capture of the town. There are reports of mass looting of local residences and the desecration of Armenian Churches in the area.

Turkey, a member of NATO, has and continues to aid and abet extremist terrorist organizations. The official Al-Qaeda organization of Syria has freely entered the country through the Turkish border. Wounded attackers use Turkey as a revolving door to seek medical attention. This is a clear indication of Turkey's involvement with an organization, which is recognized as a terrorist group by the US State Department. Are these the type of actions Canada, the US, or other NATO nations would like to be associated with? This is unacceptable to us Canadians, and should be to the world powers as well!



Concerned Canadians have sent over 3,000 emails to Prime Minister Harper and their local Members of Parliament calling on them to urge Turkey to stop supporting terrorist organizations and to ensure that their NATO ally does not provoke further conflict in the region, threatening war on an unprecedented scale. We demand that Turkey ends its involvement with terrorist organizations. The implications of these events are serious and far-reaching. The future of the people of Kessab and the land itself is uncertain.

The words "a crime denied is a crime repeated" ring true here today. Turkey's continued persecution of minorities and suppression of its people has gone unpunished and the minorities of Syria suffer today. The Turkish government must secure and maintain its borders! End the persecution of Armenians! Save Kessab!



Our program concludes today with a message to all Armenians and supporters of peace in Syria around the world. This is a call to all Armenians. This is a call to humanity. The world needs to hear the truth. Erdogan and his government are criminals. Kessab needs our help. The people of Syria need our help. The vulnerable and innocent need us to take action. The people of Kessab were forced out of their homes with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. If they stayed to gather even the simplest necessities, they would have died. Those who were unable to leave are prisoners in their own homes, living the nightmare day after day. Their welfare and safety is unknown. Those who escaped the town cannot even leave the country because they do not have their passports or documents of identification. These people only want to live in peace. Return to their homes, cultivate their fields. If these acts are ignored and left unaccounted for, all will be lost at the hands of these terrorists. Please, invoke the intervention of our government, of the UN, of any other authority that you believe that can help us. Thank you to everyone for joining us here today. Our unity and commitment to raise our voices at the face of injustice must be an example to all. I would like to end my speech with the words of Hovhannes Shiraz:

Մենք խաղաղ էինք մեր լեռների պէս,
Դուք հողմերի պէս խուճեցիք վայրագ:
Մենք ձեր դէմ ելաք մեր լեռների պէս,

Դուք հողմերի պես ոռնացիք վայրագ:
Բայց մենք յաւերժ ենք մեր լեռների պես,
Դուք հողմերի պես կորչեցիք վայրագ:

