# HRANT DINK: MEMORY AND HOPE

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**Category:** Opinions

**Fatma Müge Göçek PhD, University of Michigan, 17 January 2008**

A year has gone by since you were murdered, Hrant, and the newspaper announcing your assassination is still on my desk. I decided to put it away only on the day that justice on your case is delivered. That still has not happened; so it remains.

We in Turkey and the world still await the day of reckoning. The Turkish state still seems determined to obfuscate the delivery of that justice; it still wants to protect those within who turned you into a target; it still believes that the interests of the state should come before the rights of the citizens; it still awards more respect to immoral agents of power and violence than to moral individuals who seek and deserve justice. So the newspaper is still on my desk.

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The year since your murder has been filled with grief, pain and shame. Grief from your loss; pain that they targeted especially you among all of us because you were the minority member, the Armenian, and still had so much to offer everyone, enemies as well as friends; and shame that though we all had to fight against prejudice and discrimination, we members of the majority (the "white Turks") should have been with you in the frontline taking them on. In the end you shamed us in life and in death too.

I think your friend Etyen Mahçupyan captured it best when he said at your memorial in Canada: "Hrant was so genuine that he put us all to shame, and that is why his enemies could not tolerate him." I too believe that indeed was the case: among all of us, you truly were the only real Anatolian. For you were the one passionately in love with the land, with the soil itself. You still seemed viscerally connected to it in a way we did not seem to be: whenever you were away from it, you constantly talked (more than any of us) about missing it; you were always singing the songs, talking about the food, and reciting the poetry as if to constantly celebrate its existence, as if to remind and convince yourself that it was still there, that you were grateful for it in spite of all that had happened to you all in the past.

I thought that because of that awful past you might mention it less, love it less; but it was the opposite. Then, of course, you kept saying that the water would always seek the crack in the soil, and all the soil the Armenians wanted from the Turkish state was enough to be buried under. After all your yearning love, that indeed is exactly where you

ended up.

Yet you were so vibrant that it is still easy a year later to construct conversations with you in my mind's eye. After all, one does not really need to articulate the response other than to think about positive energy, conceptualise things constructively, move them forward - and there is Hrant's reply for you...
It is no wonder that so many centres and activities in Turkey and around the globe have taken root around your name; even the Turkish and the Armenian studies associations in the United States shockingly came together for the first time ever at the annual Middle East Studies Association meeting in Canada and held a joint memorial panel in your honour (and deciding to boot to hold such joint panels in the future). All this is undoubtedly thanks to the way that your work and example have projected their positive energy around the world. This is just the beginning, I am told; but did it have to be at such a cost?
What now to do about what Turks' call the derin devlet - the deep, dark state? That awful, spineless government refusing to take action? The shame they all bring upon us Turkish citizens by not letting or enabling this murder case to be solved? "Come on, Müge", you would probably say, "give them time and they will."

Yes, Hrant would know, being the sage he was, that his murder case would be solved eventually, just as he would be certain that one day the nightmare in Turkey - of the lack of accountability and transparency, of the obfuscation of justice, and of the abrogation of freedom of thought - will disappear; so that Turkey will finally become a country where everyone lives happily as equals, as true genuine Anatolians like Hrant, with Hrant.

That dream, Hrant's dream, lives on because Hrant taught us to dream along with him before he was so unjustly murdered by forces that are still protected by the state. Yet dreams like his, like ours, do not die, ever. And hopes in such dreams last much longer than fear instilled through murders. Until then, the newspaper remains on my desk.