

IN SUPPORT OF ARTSAKH FIGHTERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

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✖ Staff, 27 July 2016

TORONTO--"I went to Artsakh to encourage our brave fighters but returned encouraged far more by their attitude and commitment to our just cause," said [Khoren Mardoyan](#), a Toronto resident who toured Artsakh for three days in late June to distribute sleeping bags, night vision goggles, thermal cameras, binoculars and other necessities to the young men on the front lines. "The borders of our homeland are in good hands. We, in the Diaspora, should continue to support our brave warriors," said Mardoyan, Advisor to the Minister of Diaspora of Republic of Armenia to Canada.

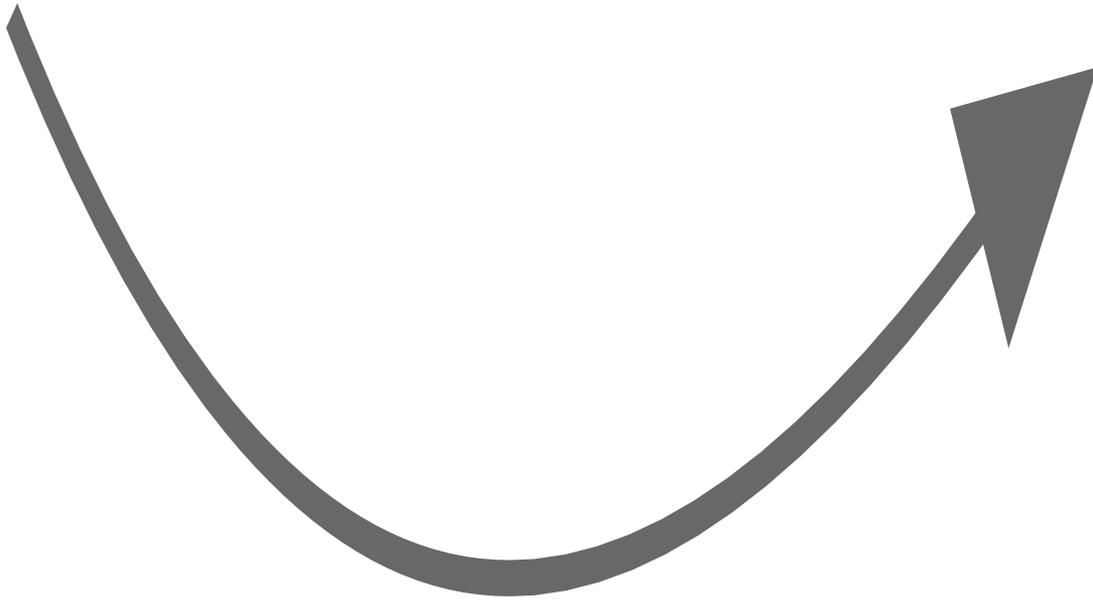


Mardoyan, who served with the Artsakh Defense Ministry before settling in Toronto, said his recent trip to Artsakh was in response to the Four-Day War in early April. When he heard of the attack by the Azeri forces, Mardoyan contacted former Armenia and Artsakh residents who lived in Toronto to devise a plan to help the Armenian fighters. Quickly a group of 35 was formed to determine how to aid the men on the front lines. The group decided to donate night-vision goggles, thermal cameras, binoculars, and sleeping bags. Meanwhile, through the donations of the four Armenian churches in Toronto, summer and winter clothes were purchased, in addition to shoes. Nine boxes of tooth paste, tooth brush and other daily necessities were donated by the Armenian Canadian Medical Association of Ontario (ACMAO). Mardoyan supervised the shipping of the goods in advance of his trip. In late June he flew to Yerevan and then proceeded to Artsakh arriving in Berdzor (the first Artsakh town across the border from Armenia) on June 26.

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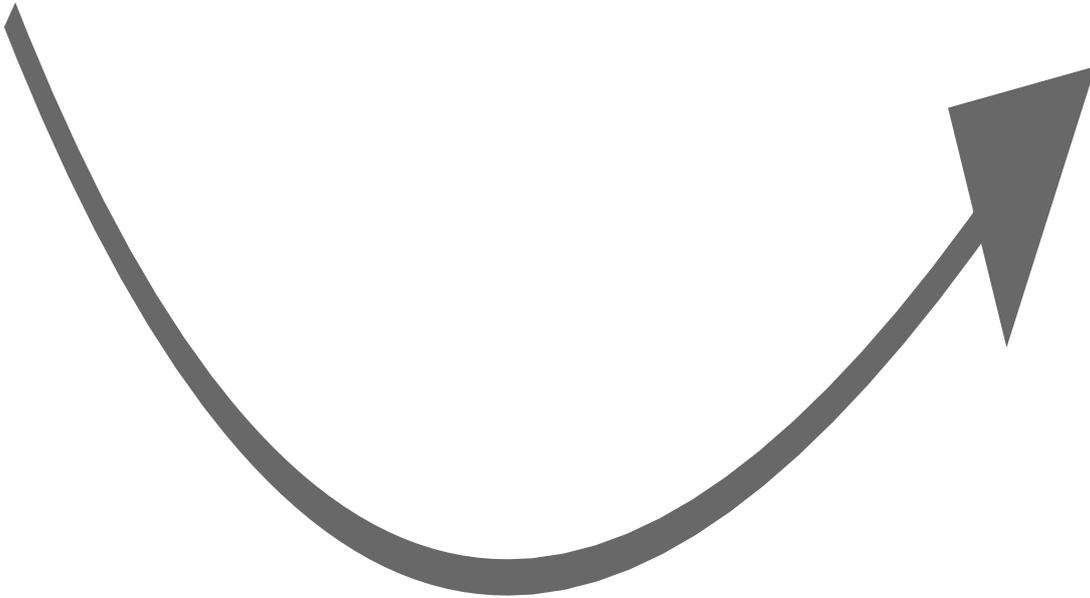
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In Berdzor Mardoyan met some 150 people who had just fled the fighting in Madaghiz, Talish and Mardakerd. He distributed winter and summer clothes and shoes to the recent refugees and heard about the most-recent Azeri barbarity. He was also interviewed by Artsakh TV where he explained his mission. The following day, in Stepanagerd, Mardoyan met Prime Minister Bako Sahagian and Defense Minister Levon Mnatsaganyan of Artsakh and explained his humanitarian project. Both officials expressed their deep appreciation to the Canadian-Armenian community and gave Mardoyan "Thank you" certificates to distribute to the four Toronto churches. He then proceeded to

the military unit in Mardagerd, southeast of Artsakh, and met the commander and his regiment on the front lines and distributed sleeping bags and night vision goggles.

Mardoyan's next stop was Karvajar positions where he distributed additional sleeping bags, especially for the units serving in the Omar Pass which has the severest winters of the region, reaching minus 40 degree Celsius. After spending the night in Karvajar, Mardoyan returned to Yerevan.

In the capital of Armenia Mardoyan got together with the families of the recent martyred soldiers (Armenag Ourfanian, Robert Abadjian) and handed them the money his group had raised.



He also explained that in the upcoming year they will receive monthly checks through the individual donations of the 35-man group in Toronto.

Summing up his observations of the young fighters he met in Artsakh, Mardoyan said: "Our men have a martial attitude; they have high morale and say they are eager to take back Kedashen, Shahumyan, Ardvashen..."

In the fall Mardoyan will present an account of his trip at Armenian churches in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver.

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