

# INFORMING, INFLUENCING 'ODAR' MEDIA

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 **Editorial**, 30 April 2014

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Such a demonstration was held also in Toronto on April 3. More than three-hundred Armenians—almost half of them under 30—converged on the downtown address of the Turkish Consulate to condemn Turkey.



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The Armenian Youth Federation (AYF), which organized the rally, deserves our congratulations for a job well done.

Carrying Canadian and Armenian flags, the passionate but disciplined crowd delivered a simple and strong message: Turkey should stop facilitating attacks by extremist foreign fighters on Kessab and in other parts of Syria. Despite provocation by a small group of Grey Wolves counter-demonstrators, Armenians remained on message. A woman from the Grey Wolves danced in glee to draw the Armenians into a confrontation, but failed to do so. Armenians did not approach the security cordon, which separated them from the Turkbeijan agent provocateurs.

The AYF had informed local media of the rally, but there was almost no media presence and none from the city's highly competitive six dailies.

Why not? Why the apparent indifference to the plight of 6,000 Syrian-Armenians by Toronto's media? Several demonstration attendees muttered that the media are not interested, unless there is the potential of violence. Overstated, but with some truth. There could be a dozen reasons why reporters were not there, none of them the fault of the AYF. Getting coverage for protest rallies are among the most difficult, perhaps because such demonstrations often question the status quo which the establishment media and business like to maintain. As well, some news stories—no matter

how well pitched—are not covered because editors might believe they run counter to the nation's foreign policy objectives. Armenia's foreign policy runs counter to NATO's wishes and mainstream media are hostile to Syria's Bashar Assad. Much of the Western mainstream media give a pass to the extremists fighting Assad, hoping the former would bring down Syria's leader.

A major aim in why we will commemorate the centenary of the Genocide next year is to draw the world's attention to Turkey's crime and denial. To do so, we need positive media coverage. If we don't rouse the interest of the media, we will have failed.

How do we get the media's attention for the tragedy that was perpetrated upon the Armenian nation one-hundred years ago? It's a tough assignment.

Newspapers are mostly about news or something new. In the city room, last week's news is as dead as a doornail.

Here are some tips which should help attract media interest to the century-old tragedy:

1. Personalize the Genocide. Find the children of survivors who can tell the story of their parents and relatives in a few but powerful words. Approach media outlets in the area where the person you want to profile resides and drive the local angle.
2. Find a link between the Genocide and the community you live in. For example, talk about non-Armenian citizens who spoke about the Genocide at the time and perhaps helped Armenians. Honor these friends of Armenians.
3. In the months prior to April 24, 2015 invite media, particularly neighborhood publications, to events you are organizing. Unlike previous years, the whole year is open to coverage.
4. Try to inject something current in your articles and releases.
5. The cliché doesn't exaggerate: a picture is worth a thousand words. Lend media some of the graphic Genocide images. Send photos whose authenticity can't be challenged. Don't send, for example, fictional photos such as the line of crucified Armenians from the "Ravished Armenia" silent movie or the famous painting of the molehill of supposedly Armenian skulls.
6. Don't assume journalists know about the Genocide. With the decline of mainstream media, many journalists know far less about international politics than their predecessors. Armenian information officers should spoon-feed the media the facts of the Genocide and Ankara's denialist stand. Provide unimpeachable sources—in print or on the Web.
7. The focus should be on the government of Turkey, not Turks. Don't mislead by making the Genocide a story about religious differences...In these days of extreme religious sensitivities and obsession with political correctness, the Christian/Muslim narrative would not only present an incomplete picture but also be a self-defeating exercise.
8. Armenians telling the story of the Genocide should recognize righteous Turks who helped Armenians or contemporary Turks (Ragip Zarakolu, Fethiye Çetin, Orhan Pamuk, Taner Akcam, et al) who speak on behalf of Armenians.

9. The campaign to inform the media should start long before April 24, 2015. Folders containing a variety of news releases and photos (or electronically) should be sent to the media. The news releases would be about Armenians; their history; celebrated Armenians; the millennial homeland now occupied by Turkey; the Genocide; the slaying of Armenian writers and priests; the acts and words of the murderous Young Turk triumvirate; the brazen denialist policy of Turkey; the declarations of the International Association of Genocide Scholars; quotes by famous (non-Armenian) people about the Genocide... They should not be longer than 300 words.
10. Put the Genocide in universal context. Point out that it was the precursor of the Holocaust... Include the famous Hitler quote. Mention other modern genocides. Point out that the Genocide is also relevant because it's causing instability in the Southern Caucasus.
11. Have a designated person/committee as the source for centennial information.
12. The news releases should stick to the facts and avoid emotive/sensational words. Use adjectives and adverbs sparingly. They should be grammatically correct and succinct: short sentences, short paragraphs.
13. Don't write a sob story. Let the facts tell the story.
14. Anticipate the editors' resistance that "it's an old story" and pre-empt it with sharply-written and eye-catching headlines, text and photos. Make sure the first sentence of the piece, called 'lede' in journalese, 'hooks' the reader.
15. When writing about the tragedy, remember that readers need to see a shape to the story, a completion, something hopeful to look forward to. Tell readers what Armenians have done and are doing to force Turkey to come clean. Speak of how refugee communities rose from the ashes to not only survive the tragedy, but to go on to thrive all over the world as good citizens in the countries that accepted them. Praise these countries for their hospitality.

With your help, 2015 should be an interesting year for the Armenian nation.

See also [\*Letter to the Editor\*](#)

