KEGHART.COM'S PROPOSED MEDIA GUIDELINES

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Category: Opinions

Dear compatriots,

As the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide approaches, we, the editors of Keghart.com, have produced guidelines for our global Armenian community to consult as we all prepare to contact the press to garner media coverage for the occasion.

These guidelines appear beneath our signatures in the form of two Keghart editorials.

We authorize the free reproduction of these editorials for you to publish in your church newsletters, blogs, Facebook pages or other avenues you may use to reach your parishioners.

Over the years, we have been fortunate to have so many talented and articulate Armenians effectively contacting the press. Even so, all of us can use a refresher now and then. As such, we hope you will find these tips to be useful as we all prepare to put our best feet forward for our centennial and our martyrs.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions, please reply to Keghart at Dikran@keghart.com or to keghart.editor@hotmail.com).

The texts follow.

Angeghdzoren,
Jirair Tutunjian, Minas Kojayan & Dikran Abrahamian
Keghart Editors
December 2014

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Part I

"LETTER TO THE EDITOR"

Editorial, 16 April 2014
http://www.keghart.com/Editorial-LetterToEditor

In a week or so we will gather for the 99th time to mourn and honor our martyrs and to condemn the criminal empire's descendant state which denies the crime. And on April 25th we begin our preparations for the monumental 100th commemoration of Turkey's failed conspiracy to wipe us from the face of the Earth.

As Turkey and its Diaspora, especially in Europe and in North America, gear up to do battle with the Armenians because of the upcoming centennial of the Genocide, the world can expect Turkey-originated books, symposia, panel discussions, meetings with government heads, "familiarization" trips for politicians and media, promotional stunts, etc. to deny the undeniable.

Among themselves, Armenians will, of course, condemn the vast crevasse between the historic truth and its stilted Turkish version. Other Armenians will take umbrage at the bare-faced Ankara lies and hit their computers to write rebuttals to the cynical Turkish tales.

But before responding, via the mass media, to Ankara fabrications, Armenian letter-writers should consider the below tips on how to write a "letter to the editor", which would stand a chance of being published or posted.

1. Make it snappy. Don't go over 200 words. Sound cool, collected, and well-informed. Make the editor's job easy by writing a crisp and intelligent letter. He or she would be grateful to you and be more inclined to publish your letter.
2. Don't sound angry, bitter or sarcastic.
3. Don't make negative personal comments about the Turkish source or the writer of the article.
4. Don't condemn the mass media for publishing the Turkish fabrication.
5. Stick to the point. Address what you find deplorable and false in the report, column or op-ed. Contradict the Turkish version with easy to grasp facts. This should not be difficult since the truth is on the side of the Armenians and there is a ton of accessible documentation backing the Armenian narrative.
6. Don't sound overwrought or short-tempered.
7. Don't assume everyone knows about the Genocide and the conflict between the Armenians and Turkey.
8. Cite non-Armenian sources when you want to establish the veracity of your facts and arguments.
9. The sources you quote should be well-known, respected, authoritative, and credible.
10. Anticipate the Turkish lobby's reply to your letter and pre-empt it.
11. Eliminate—as much as possible—adjectives and adverbs from your letter. Don't use exclamation marks to stress your point.
12. Stay away from words which are emotional…butcher, blood-thirsty, sheer brutality, bloody Sultan, etc.
13. Don't try to play with the heart strings of the editor or the reader. Let the facts speak for themselves.
14. Criticize Turkey, Ankara, and the Turkish diaspora lobby; don't criticize Turks.
15. Don't present the conflict as one between Christian Armenians and Moslem Turks.
16. Include, as briefly as possible, your relations' experiences during the First World War. Editors and readers often respond sympathetically to first-hand experiences.
17. Mention the David (Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora) and Goliath (Turkey) nature of the conflict. Present the multi-million dollar Turkish propaganda campaign versus the limited resources of the Armenians.
18. If you live in a country which recognizes the Genocide or (as in the United States and Canada) there are states/provinces which recognize the Genocide, mention that fact. Readers would be more inclined to recognize the Genocide if they learn that their government does so.
19. Don't inject the Azerbaijan conflict into your letter: it could confuse readers who are not familiar with the political conflicts in southern Caucasus and in Asia Minor.
20. Remember you are writing to non-Armenian readers. Your letter is not intended to impress your Armenian friends.
21. Rather than sending a comment to the media outlets' website, write to the editor of the publication. The former is often a hothouse of disinformation, inappropriate language, intolerance,

hate and anger by trolls. They have negligible impact on public opinion.
22. Make sure your letter is devoid of grammatical mistakes. A grammatically accurate letter will reflect well on you, your facts and your ideas.
23. Even if you have never written a 'letter to the editor', do write in this crucial year. One published letter can counteract thousands of dollars worth of Turkish falsehood and propaganda.
24. Whether your letter is published or not, a few days after mailing it, cc Armenian media and organizations thus sharing your effort and facts with as many Armenians as possible.

Part II
"Informing, Influencing 'Odar' Media"

Editorial, 30 April 2014
http://www.keghart.com/Editorial-Media

In early April Armenians living in cities where they have activist communities held demonstrations to protest Turkish complicity in the attack on the mostly-Armenian town of Kessab in northern Syria.

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.

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 compiled 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.