LIFE AND VISION OF HRANT DINK

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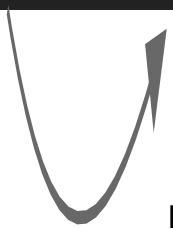
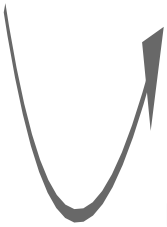


Dialogue and Support for the Vision of Turkish-Armenian Journalist Hrant Dink

> *Organized by Friends of Hrant:* ***Voices in Dialogue***
> *The keynote address was delivered by Phil Jenkins, Chair of Writers-in Prison Committee, PEN- Canada at Library & Archives in Ottawa on Saturday, Jan. 17, 2009*



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Canadians of Armenian, Turkish and Kurdish origin call for honouring Dink and supporting his vision.

Hrant Dink was persecuted for several years for his political views and he was murdered in a hate crime in front of his Istanbul office on January 19, 2007. He was the founder and editor of bilingual weekly Agos which championed the closely interlinked causes of the democratization of Turkish society and the revitalization of the Turkish-Armenian community. Dink was an outspoken defender of a new understanding of Turkey — a democratic and multicultural country at peace with its history in which Armenians and all of Turkey's minorities could assert their cultural identities. He wanted a public airing of the story of 1915 and was certain that when people of Turkey were fully acquainted with it, they would draw upon their compassion to seek truth and reconciliation.

We, Canadians of Anatolian roots, are encouraged by the increasing momentum of steps taken toward dialogue between Turkey and Armenia, and among peoples who trace their cultural roots to Anatolia in Canada and elsewhere. These dialogue initiatives were jolted into action by the outpouring of emotion demonstrated by over two hundred thousand Turkish citizens at Dink's funeral on January 23, 2007 in Istanbul. The two-year period since that massive show of support for solidarity has witnessed the energetic efforts of Turkish-Armenian dialogue groups across the globe,

and a wave of popular enthusiasm that paved the way for the historic meeting between Presidents Gül and Sargsyan in September 6, 2008. Most importantly, there is now an increasing frequency of contacts between Turkish and Armenian civil society and artistic groups, such as the much celebrated concerts of Istanbul-based groups Karde? Türküler and Sayad Nova Chorus in Yerevan last month.

While cognizant of the very real obstacles to reconciliation that lie ahead, we believe that the way forward lies in raising awareness of our shared heritage through cultural events and the creation of communication venues for Armenian, Turkish and Kurdish communities. These venues enable the sharing of personal and family stories as well as wider knowledge about historical events, in particular the attempts to eradicate the Armenian people and culture in Anatolia after 1915. In this context, we recognize the door-opening potential of civil society initiatives that have gained a new impetus by the recent launch of an apology campaign by a group of renowned Turkish intellectuals, which will run until December 2009 through which citizens of Turkey all around the world would have a chance to express their empathy with the pain of their Armenian brothers and sisters for the destruction of collective Armenian existence in Anatolia in 1915.

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