


MEET ARMENIAN HUMAN RIGHTS CHAMPION

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Ara Khachig Manoogian, nephew of His Beatitude Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, was born in 1965 in Pasadena, California to immigrant parents, Khachig Evan and Sylva Natalie Manoogian. His maternal grandmother was a direct descendant of the Bagratuni Dynasty, who ruled over the Armenian Nation from the 9th to 11th century. His maternal grandfather was Shahan Natalie who was the mastermind behind the executions of the Turkish leaders responsible for the Armenian Genocide of 1915, and those that conspired with them.

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After receiving his education in the United States, Ara traveled to Armenia for the first time with his parents in 1989 as a videographer to document a project that the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America had undertaken in Armenia's earthquake zone. This first visit for Ara was a rebirth into the Armenian culture. During this visit, Ara learned first-hand what difficult lives many of the common citizens of Armenia were living. Many approached him asking how to immigrate to America.

From 1992 to 1997, Ara made numerous visits to Armenia, a place which called to him and occupied his thoughts and dreams while in the United States. For the most part, Ara documented on video, in pictures, and journals what he saw in Armenia. He spent most of his time talking with and visiting common people, staying their homes in order to better understand who they were and what was

needed to make their lives more bearable.

In 1998, after studying the information collected over an 6-year period, Ara chose to make his home in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabagh), which he had first visited in May of 1993, during an armed territorial conflict the Armenians there were having with their Turkic Azeri neighbors on all of their borders. He chose the city of Martuni, as he found the people there the most honest, straightforward, and most selective of whom they would allow into their lives. Martuni was also where the most powerful leaders of Artsakh were from, thus a good place to conduct in-depth studies of the people to better understand what the makeup of a present day leader was.

In 1999, Ara's family established the Shahan Natalie Family Foundation, Inc. a California non-profit corporation, and in 2000 registered a sister organization in Artsakh. Its mission in Artsakh would be to deal with social, economic, cultural, and educational issues. The organization was welcomed by the NKR Prime Minister Anoushavan Danielian, who thought that a \$12 million proposal for the educational system in Artsakh would be profitable for everyone. Thus the Shahan Natalie Family Foundation became the 3rd Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) ever to be registered in Artsakh, following the Red Cross and the "Hayastan" All-Armenian Fund since the government was formed in 1990.

Over the last 8 years, Ara has also been involved with advocacy to defend the rights of the common citizen in Armenia and Artsakh when faced with undue prosecution by corrupt officials. He has been involved in rectifying corrupt [adoption](#) practices in Armenia. As a result, the Armenian Parliament adopted new laws to better regulate the adoption process. Joining with the Investigative Journalists of Armenia [Hetq](#), he has also been involved with investigative work involving the [trafficking of women and children from Armenia to the United Arab Emirates](#) . He has also coordinated and monitored direct and indirect aid to the people of Artsakh.

For more information about Ara Manoogian, you can visit www.aramanoogian.blogspot.com

