

# REACTIONS - KESSAB

Posted on April 5, 2014 by Keghart

## ՅԱՅՄԱՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ

Արեւմտեան Միացեալ Նահանգներու հայութիւնը կը գտտապարտէ Սուրիոյ հայարնակ ֆեւսպի վրայ թուրք պետութեան ձեռակցութեամբ կատարուած յարձակումը, անընդունելի կը դնէ անոր բնակիչներու տեղահանումը եւ կը պահանջէ Մզիտակ Տունէն ու աշխարհի պետութիւններէն՝ կարուկ քայքէր առնել զուրս բերելու գինեայիները ֆեւսպէն, ինչպէս նաեւ՝ դիւրացնելու տեղահանուած քեսապցիներու տուն վերադարձը:

Մեր համայնքի հայութիւնը իր ամբողջական զօրակցութիւնը կը յայտնէ համայն սուրիահայութեան ընդհանրապէս ու մասնաւորապէս ֆեւսպի հայութեան, վստահեցնելով, որ պիտի շարունակէ հարաւոր ամէն միջոցներով, եւ որեւէ աշխատանք չիսնայելով, աջակցիլ անոնց վերադրելու ճիգերուն:

Հայ համայնքի առաջնորդներն ու ներքոյիշեալ կառոյցները շտապ զուսարուած հանդիպումի մը ընթացքին խորհրդակցեցան անմիջական ու հեռակայ օժանդակութեան ու զօրակցութեան միջոցներու մասին, վերահաստատելով սուրիահայութեան օժանդակութեան իրենց յանձնառութիւնը: Որոշուեցաւ անմիջապէս Սուրիահայութեան Օժանդակութեան Միացեալ Մարմին (SARF) դիմել որ յառաջիկայ օրերուն անմիջականօրէն սուրիահայութեան, ու յատկապէս քեսապահայութեան կարիքներուն համար շարունակէ իր ազգօգուտ հանդանակային աշխատանքը, որուն անկասկած պիտի զօրակցին մեր համայնքի ազգակիցները:

Հայց-Առաքելական Եկեղեցւոյ Հիւսիսային  
Ամերիկայի Արեւմտեան Թեմ  
Հայց-Առաքելական Եկեղեցւոյ Ամերիկայի  
Միացեալ Նահանգներու Արեւմտեան Թեմ  
Հիւսիսային Ամերիկայի Հայ Կաթողիկէ Առաջնորդարան  
Հիւսիսային Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանական Միութիւն  
Սոցիալ Գեմոկրատ Հնչակեան Կուսակցութիւն  
Հայ Յեղափոխական Գաղտնակցութիւն  
Ռամկավար Ազատական Կուսակցութիւն  
Հայ Բարեգործական Ընդհանուր Միութիւն  
Հայ Օգնութեան Միութիւն  
Քեսապի Ուսումնասիրաց Միութիւն

Մարտ 25, 2014 Լուս Անճելլա

Category: [Opinions](#)



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 **Kessab under attack**, 27 March 2014

"I am trying to reach my acquaintances in Kessab but failed to find any of them," said Arminé Amadouni, 83, in a sad voice during a telephone conversation. Amadouni, who lives in Beirut since 1965, used to spend three to four months in the mostly Armenian populated Syrian town Kessab every year. "I used to enjoy my Kessab from May to September. I'd go there with a friend of mine, who has a private house with a beautiful garden, to relax. Now what is left from Kessab? That is really sad," says Amadouni.

A brutal three-day attack by Al-Qaeda's Al-Nusra Front and Ansar Al-Sham started early Friday morning, 21 March, and took the lives of 80 people. Rebels crossed the Turkish border and attacked Armenians living in Kessab, looted and occupied their homes and stores. The majority of the population of Kessab was evacuated by community leaders to safer villages.

On Tuesday night, Armenians of Kessab made an appeal to Armenians across the world:

"This is a call to all Armenians. This is a call to humanity. The world needs to hear the truth. Erdogan and his government are war criminals. We need your help. We need you to take action. Our lives depend on the chance that you will do something to make sure we too don't die. We were forced out of our homes and our town with nothing but the clothes we wear. If we stayed to gather even the bare necessities, we would have definitely died. Most of us cannot even escape because we don't have our passports or documents of identification. Please, invoke the intervention of your governments, of the UN, of any other authority that you believe can help us. All we want to do is live. If you ignore this, we all will die a horrible death at the hands of these terrorists, by being butchered in cold blood like many other Armenians in Aleppo, Yacoubiyeh, Ghenemiyeh and around Syria." "If Kessab people were not informed to leave their houses, the world would have silently witnessed yet another genocide and stood by while the media gave them yet another version of lies."

Ever since the Syrian civil war erupted three years ago, many Syrians have taken refuge in the town. According to Syrian Armenian community activist Nersess Sarkissian, many Armenian families had to move to stay with relatives and friends while others have sought refuge in the Armenian church. Sarkissian, in an interview with the Armenian-American community's publication, the *Armenian Weekly*, added that the Aleppo Armenian Prelacy as well as the Red Crescent is providing relief and assistance to these families in Latakia. An estimated 2,000 Armenians fled to Latakia after the Friday attack.

The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) has called on US President Barack Obama to pressure Turkey to stop facilitating attacks by extremist foreign fighters on the northwestern Syrian town of Kessab. In a bitter letter issued 24 March, ANCA Chairman Ken Hachikian addressed the president: "The US has the power to stop Turkey's provocations and assistance to these radical

groups and send a clear message that targeted military strikes against innocent civilians is unacceptable under any circumstances and a clear violation of international law. We call on you to direct Secretary of State John Kerry, US Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey Francis Ricciardone, and US Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power to immediately press Turkey to stop facilitating attacks on civilians in Kessab and investigate Turkey's reported assistance to foreign fighters associated with US-designated terrorist groups. We, furthermore, ask your assistance in directing need-based humanitarian aid to the victims of the onslaught on Kessab as soon as possible."

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan confirmed reports that the Turkish military had shot down a Syrian fighter jet Sunday, 23 March. The fighter jet crashed in Kessab. According to Ankara, it came under fire after crossing the Turkish border.

Kessab is an Armenian-populated town in northwestern Syria with an Alawite Arab minority. It is administratively part of the Latakia Governorate, located 59 kilometres north of the port of Latakia and three kilometers away from the Turkish border. Kessab is one of the most popular summer destinations in Syria, 800 metres above sea level, with a dry climate and a surrounding of mountains and beautiful valleys. The command of the deportation of Armenians during the 1915 genocide reached Kessab as well, and the deportation took place in two directions: one towards the desert of Deir Al-Zor and the other towards the south to the Jordan desert. As a result almost 5,000 Armenians —the majority of Kessab's population at that time —were killed during the deportation process. After the ceasefire, Armenians who survived the genocide returned to Kessab in a process that lasted till 1920. French troops entered into Kessab to establish peace after which the Turkish army took over in 1938 and Kessab became part of Turkey and many Armenians left the town to Lebanon. Shortly, with the efforts of the Armenian community in France, Kessab was separated from Turkey and became inside the Syrian boundaries. Currently, there are three Armenian schools, three Armenian churches and a cultural centre in Kessab.

In an opinion piece dated to December 2013, entitled "Nearly a century after the Armenian Genocide, these people are still being slaughtered in Syria," renowned English correspondent Robert Fisk wrote: "And now, almost unmentioned in the media, these ghastly killing fields have become the killing fields of a new war. Upon the bones of the dead Armenians, the Syrian conflict is being fought. And the descendants of the Armenian Christian survivors who found sanctuary in the old Syrian lands have been forced to flee again —to Lebanon, to Europe, to America. The very church in which the bones of the murdered Armenians found their supposedly final resting place has been damaged in the new war, although no one knows the culprits."

Fisk was speaking about the Armenian Genocide Martyrs Church, a memorial that was damaged at Deir Al-Zor last year by Turkish fighters who joined Al-Qaeda affiliated fighters in Syria.

While the attack on Kessab was not yet over, on Monday an Armenian Catholic church, Zevartnots,

in the district of Nor Kyugh in Aleppo was attacked by rockets, destroying its dome.

Last year, an Armenian church was vandalised in Aleppo by the Free Syrian Army and a mortar shell fell outside the Holy Translators Armenian National School in Damascus and two other shells fell on school buses, killing two students and a passer-by. In the past three years, since the Syrian uprising began, several buses loaded with Syrian-Armenians came either under fire, or were targets for robbery or kidnapping. As for Armenian community in Syria as a whole, once numbered at some 120,000, the Armenian youth were being dragged into the civil war.

In September 2012, the leaders of the three Armenian churches in Aleppo —Catholic, Orthodox and Evangelical —issued a joint statement aimed at clarifying the position of the community: "As the bloodshed continues unabated what adds to our anguish are the unsuccessful attempts of presenting the Syrian Armenians as taking part in the armed battles of the current Syrian crisis or trying to actually drag them into such a conflict," the statement said. "We reiterate today, that the peaceful coexistence that the Syrian Armenians have cultivated throughout the decades continues, and it will definitely stay against all kinds of violence and armed collisions."

The Armenian community in Syria has enjoyed broad cultural autonomy and benevolent ties with the Alawite regime —a relationship often cited as part of the government's policy of courting the country's ethnic and religious minorities to counterbalance the Sunni majority. As the civil war erupted, the majority Sunni Free Syrian Army issued repeated assurances that minorities would not be harmed, and calling on Christians to join its fight against the government. However, the case has changed and Islamist fighters started to target Christian minorities for their support of the regime. The Armenians of Syria, like many other Christians living there, do not support the revolution against Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad.

As a result of the present civil war in Syria, over 9,000 Syrian-Armenians left to Armenia, while other 8,000 have settled in Lebanon.

## **US Congressmen's Letter to President Barack Obama**

March 28, 2014

The President The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing to express our serious concerns regarding credible reports that Islamist rebels entering from Turkey this past weekend were involved in attacks in the Latakia region of Syria, specifically the town of Kessab, which is a predominately Armenian populated area. Such actions shock the conscious and must be resoundingly condemned.

As the Wall Street Journal reported on March 26th, "For Armenian-Syrians from the town of Kassab

in Latakia, which rebels overran this weekend, the Turkish involvement reminded them of a dark chapter in their history: the Armenian genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman empire in 1915." These tragic developments are accompanied by disturbing reports of Armenian homes being looted and occupied. When coupled with a mass exodus of the Armenian community, these events are far too reminiscent of the early days of the Armenian Genocide, which took place nearly 100 years ago in Ottoman Turkey under the cover of World War I.

At the beginning of the 20th century, nearly 6,000 Armenians lived in Kessab. However, the July 1915 deportation of the Armenian population at the hands of the Ottoman Turks resulted in the loss of nearly 5,000 lives. Now, ninety-nine years after their initial deportation, another expulsion of Armenians is a telling reminder about the dangers of genocide denial and Turkey's failure to address its genocidal legacy.

With the Christian Armenian community being uprooted from its homeland, yet again, we strongly urge you to take all necessary measures without delay to safeguard the Christian Armenian community of Kessab. We also believe that now is the time to redouble America's efforts to ensure that all minority communities at risk in the Middle East are afforded greater protection.

Thank you for considering this urgent request.

Sincerely,

FRANK PALLONE, JR. Member of Congress

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