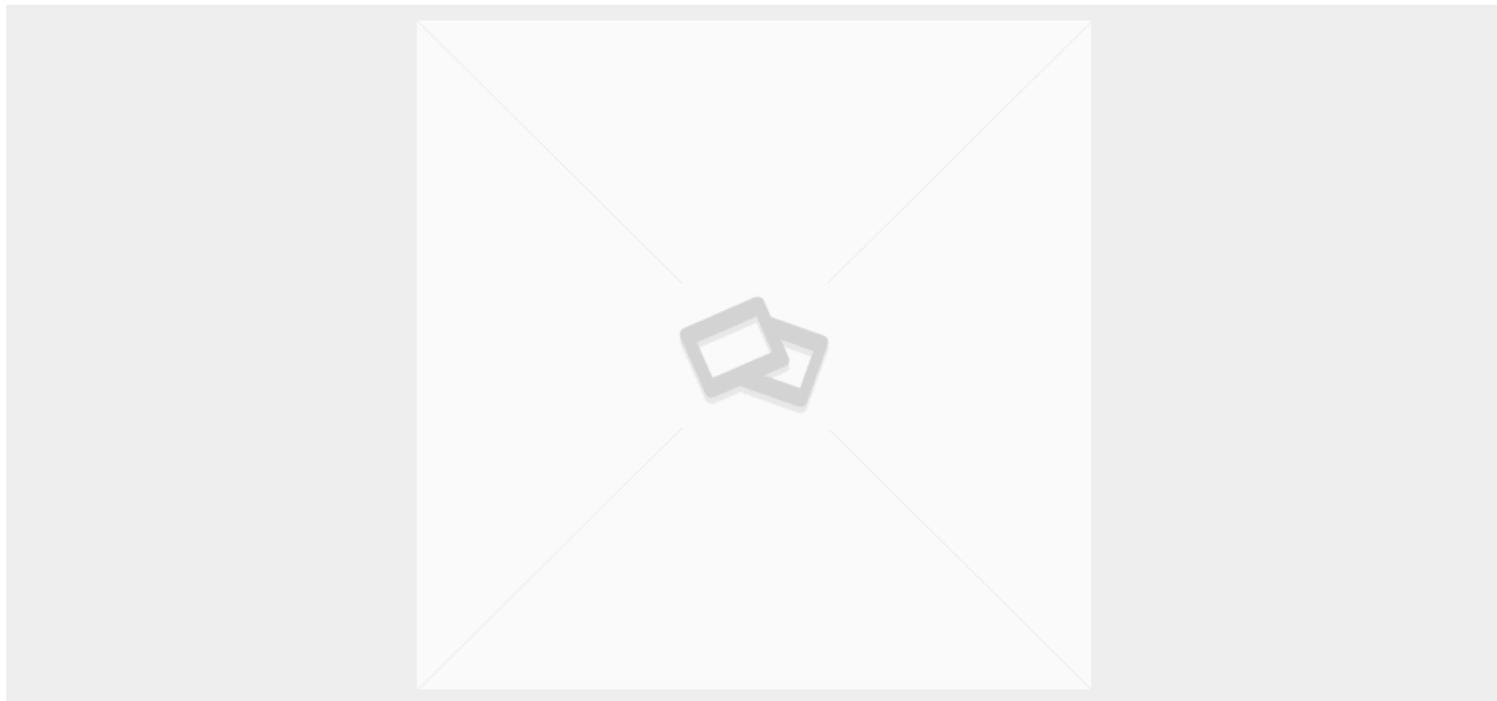


REFLECTIONS ON THE OCCASION OF HONOURABLE HRANUSH HACOBYAN'S VISIT TO CANADA

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By Jirair Tutunjian, Toronto, 5 March 2009

The following is part of an exhaustive discussion that took place in 24 April Forum generated during and following the visit of the Minister of Diaspora of Republic of Armenia to Canada. The author's permission is obtained to post it in Keghart.com

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Let's remind ourselves that we are all Armenians who love our homeland. Let's start from there. We are not here to score points and take our egos on a soaring ride.

A couple of footnotes to what has been discussed so far:

1. Helping Armenia and pursuing genocide recognition are not mutually exclusive endeavours. In the past 20 years, Diaspora Armenians have helped Armenia, and continue to do so. In the past 20 years, Diaspora Armenians have also lobbied and gained genocide recognition in at least 20 jurisdictions, not to mention making millions of *odars* familiar with Turkey's crime.
2. After decades of intensive efforts, we might be an inch away from U.S. recognition. If we succeed, other major nations could follow America's example. With that kind of clout under our belts, we can start making well-articulated demands from Turkey. This is no time--if there ever was such a time--to reduce our genocide recognition campaign.
3. As Turkey plays a transparent game of divide-and-conquer (court Armenia; denigrate the diaspora and call one of its major parties "fascist"), we should not allow Ankara to decide the agenda. In plain words, Turkey is blackmailing the Armenian nation.
4. Despite mismanagement and brazen corruption in the homeland, Diaspora Armenians have not lost faith in their homeland. We might feel that the various Armenian governments have not been to our liking, but we have kept the faith, hoping the situation would change. We can't change Armenia's government. We can't fight the oligarchs, the mafia hoods and their scandalous Hum vies. That's the job of Armenians living in Armenia.

This is not a new scenario to Diaspora Armenians. For 70 years, many of us, including Hunchaks, Ramgavars, Parekordzagan, did not approve of the Soviet regime, but our love and support of Armenia remained unflinching. Moreover, more than 100,000 Diaspora Armenians left their newly settled homes in the Middle East and elsewhere to live under butcher Stalin's regime just because

they wanted to live in their ancient homeland.

5. Allow me to say the following at the risk of being misunderstood by some that I am chastising Armenians of Armenia for not recognizing the pain of Diaspora Armenians.

--Diaspora Armenians lost not only 1.5 million family members, but we were dislocated from a land, which was our home for nearly a millennia. Although the number of our dead was fewer than that of Holocaust victims, I believe 1915 has a heavier blow to Armenians than the Holocaust was to Jews. Jews didn't lose their homeland. In fact, the Holocaust provided the best justification for the creation of Israel.

--Because of the dislocation we lost our culture, our folklore, our links to our past.

--Most middle-aged Diaspora Armenians (they are the ones who run Diaspora organizations) are children of orphans. A whole nation was raised and preserved in foreign shores through the efforts of orphans who had survived the genocide. Orphans who knew nothing about how to raise children since they had not experienced family life. The psychological damage of this Diaspora tragedy is incalculable. Diaspora is a civilization whose wounds would take many more decades to heal.

--After the genocide, Diasporans had to survive in diverse cultures--Arab, French, Latin American, North American--with negligible communal support. We faced discrimination, and even hostility, but we kept our identity, and dream of an independent Armenia.

--Many middle-aged Diaspora Armenians are double exiles. First, they lost their homeland in Western Armenia. Then 40 or 50 years later, when they had built fragile nests in various Middle Eastern countries, they had to dislocate once again because of economic and political pressures.

I know of a man--admittedly an extreme case--who went to Egypt after the genocide. Because of the troubles there, he moved to Palestine, where he got married. In 1948, the family moved to Cyprus because of the troubles in Palestine. A few years later, the Greek/Turkish conflict forced them to immigrate to Britain. Finally, lack of opportunities in Britain, drove the family to North America.

--After dreaming of an independent Armenia for seven decades, we discovered that those who rule the motherland are, more often than not, a bunch of crooks. Apparently, some of them even make fun of Diaspora's "naiveté", its lack of Armenian culture, its fairy-tale optics of the motherland. To add insult to injury, some of these characters consider us cash-cows.

Armenians of Armenia who criticize Diaspora Armenians' preoccupations should get a better grasp

of the dominant Diaspora psychologies.

The above is not intended to get into a competition as to whose cross is bigger--that of Diasporans or those of Armenians living in Armenia.

It's not easy being Armenian. It's even harder to remain Armenian 7,000 miles from the homeland, especially when the ruling classes in Yerevan behave as if they are feudal warlords or cheap hoods in a Clint Eastwood movie.

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