REMEMBER SUMGAIT VICTIMS

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Category: Opinions

Day of Remembering of the Armenian victims of the massacre in Sumgait
Statement by Hon. Jim Karygiannis, Former MP, Member of Toronto City Council

It is with a deep sense of reverence that I remember with you, the Sumgait pogrom against Armenians, that took place in Sumgait, Azerbaijan, in late February 1988.

The pogrom took place during the early stages of the Karabakh movement. In 1988, for three days in a row, from February 26 until February 28, Armenians, living in the City of Sumgait, were targeted by mobs made up largely of Azerbaijanis. The attackers hunted Armenians down on the streets and in their homes to injure, kill, rape and pillage. The pogrom or massacre, resulted in the death of hundreds of people and tens of thousands of refugees fled to Armenia and Karabakh.

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According to western media reports, the atrocities in Sumgait were unprecedented in scope in the Soviet Union. The number of victims has never been fully determined.

In the Armenian national consciousness, the pogrom was immediately linked to the Armenian Genocide.

On February 28th, Armenians living in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenian Diaspora around the world pause to remember. On this solemn occasion, we pay homage to the victims and express solidarity with the survivors and their descendants. In so doing, we are reminded of our shared commitment to ensure that acts like this will never be repeated again.

The occasion is especially poignant for me.

In 2012, I was one of 82 international observers from 20 different countries who travelled to Nagorno-Karabakh to witness the Presidential election.

As the descendent of survivors of the Pontian Genocide, I believe it is important for us to remember

the lessons of history and uphold the values we hold dear - peace, freedom, democracy and respect. In so doing, we will develop a deeper understanding of our duty and responsibility to our fellow man to ensure that we live in peace and harmony.

This is a day we solemnly acknowledge as we work toward a more just and tolerant future for all mankind.

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