

# WESTMINSTER ABBEY SERVICE FOR GENOCIDE CENTENNIAL

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**Assadour Guzelian**, London UK, 28 October 2015

On the evening of Oct. 28, 2015, an unprecedented ecumenical church service of historical importance took place at the Westminster Abbey, one of the most revered Christian churches in the world. The service was dedicated to the memory of the Armenian Genocide martyrs.



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More than 2,000 people attended, among them Prince Charles, representing the Royal Family; Serj Sargsyan, President of the Republic of Armenia, the Armenian delegation representing the Government of Armenia; the mayor of Westminster; representatives of the Government and the Parliament; ambassadors and diplomats; bishops and prelates of the Anglican, Catholic and Orthodox churches; Armenians living in the U.K., as well as representatives of Armenian communities worldwide.

Westminster Abbey is the most important church in the United Kingdom. Most of the events and functions of national and international importance take place there, including coronations, royal weddings, burials and requiems for important persons. It is also used to mark great historical events. There could not have been a better place to commemorate the memory of the martyrs of the Genocide in a dignified manner.

The event was organized and sponsored by Dr. Armen Sarkissian, former Prime Minister and current Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the Court of St James'. He belongs to the generation whose parents, grandparents and great-grandparents survived the Genocide. For him, as for so many others, the service - besides having a pure religious and political meaning - was a moral and emotional necessity, a purification of the soul.

Anglican and Armenian ecclesiasts recited prayers and read passages from the Bible. The hymns were sung by the choir of St. Yeghishe Armenian Church.

In his sermon the Dean of Westminster Abbey, John Hatt, referred to the story of Cain, who killed his brother Abel. Drawing a parallel, he mentioned victims of the Armenian Genocide, who lost their lives at the hands of criminals, whose hearts were filled with hatred. Recalling the newly sanctified martyrs of the Armenian Genocide, the Dean asked for their prayers and blessings for the salvation of our souls.



The representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London and pastor of the Royal Family, His Grace Lord Richard Charters, delivered a sermon befitting the occasion followed by the hymn dedicated to the memory of the martyrs of the Armenian Genocide.

Prayers were read by the children of Genocide survivors: Assadour Guzelian, Shake Major-Tchilingirian, Elen Adamyan and Ambassador Armen Sarkissian. Prayers were also read by pastors Christopher Shots, Vernon White and Baroness Caroline Cox.

The service was concluded when His Holiness Karekin II delivered his message, prayers and blessings, followed by the patriarchal hymn, the national anthems of Armenia and the United Kingdom.

This ecumenical service marked the befitting conclusion of all the events organized world-wide during 2015 to commemorate the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide. One could also add that after 28th October, the question of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide will start a new phase in the U.K.

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## **Charitable Gala Evening at Buckingham Palace**

"The Saving of Dumfries House" & "Yerevan My Love"



**(L-R) Mrs. N. Sarkissian, Ambassador Dr. A. Sarkissian, HRH the Duchess of Cornwall,**

**HRH the Prince of Wales, His Excellency Serzh Sargsian, Catholicos Karekin II**

**Photo taken during the first "Yerevan My Love" Gala Evening**

### **Assadour Guzelian, 27 October 2015**

HRH the Prince of Wales and Armen Sarkissian have been working to support two important charitable projects—Dumfries House in South West Scotland and Yerevan My Love, a heritage-led regeneration project in Armenia.

This year a special event took place at Buckingham Palace on 27th October 2015. HRH Prince Charles hosted a charitable Gala Evening for the benefit of British-Armenian charitable projects. The Gala Evening was attended by many dignitaries, including President of Armenia Mr. Serj Sargsyan, His Holiness Karekin II Catholicos and Supreme Patriarch of All Armenians.

The Gala Evening started at 6.30 pm with a reception followed at 8 pm by a special concert by the world famous Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra from St. Petersburg (1), conducted by Maestro Valery Gergiev (2). The Orchestra performed Debussy's Prelude a l'apres midi d'un faune, which Maestro Gergiev dedicated to the memory of Contessa Yoko Nagae Ceschina (5 April 1932 – 10 January 2015), a noted patroness of classical music. She was born in Japan and long-time lived in Italy.

Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations was breathtakingly performed by the orchestra and young soloist (cellist) Narek Hakhnazaryan (3), 1st Prize Gold Medal winner of XIV International Tchaikovsky Completion, 2011. Before performing his next piece Krunk (Crane, a migrating bird), Hakhnazaryan gave a brief background of the sad song, which reflects the nostalgic feelings of an Armenian away from his homeland! Narek's performance could only be described as mesmerising!

Accompanied by the orchestra the Grand Prix winner of XV International Tchaikovsky Competition, July 2015, Mongolian baritone Ariunbaatar Ganbaatar (4) brilliantly sang Tchaikovsky's Yeletsky's aria from Queen of Spades.

After Verdi's Overture to La Forza del destino and Wagner's Prelude to Lohengrin, Act I, masterfully performed by Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra under the magical baton of Maestro Valery Gergiev, the artistic part of the evening concluded.

In his speech Dr. Armen Sarkissian thanked HRH Prince Charles for his untiring efforts and dedication to both The Saving of Dumfries House (5) and Yerevan My Love (6) projects. He also thanked everyone attending the Gala Evening for their generous donations.

In his turn HRH Prince Charles expressed his gratitude to Dr. Armen Sarkissian and all the benefactors, particularly Haik and Elza Didizian and Vatche and Tamar Manoukian.

After His Holiness Catholicos of All Armenians blessed the tables, participants to the Gala Evening enjoyed a delicious 3 course meal.

