



ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA

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January 26, 2007

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the Armenian Assembly of America, I am writing to convey our profound shock and grief for the brutal murder of Hrant Dink, the courageous editor and human rights advocate assassinated in Istanbul, Turkey on January 19, 2007. I also write to express our deepest concern with Turkey's continued failure to adopt standards and practices of both domestic and international conduct that would reverse and overturn the prevailing climate of intolerance, prejudice and repression in the country, which precipitated this crime.

Mr. Dink was assassinated for his political and civic views, and for the courage to express them openly. As a citizen and journalist, he championed the cause of democracy and freedom in Turkey. As a prominent member of Turkey's Armenian community, he worked to build bridges between the two peoples and the two neighboring countries of Armenia and Turkey through tolerance, goodwill, and dialogue.

Mr. Dink's murder was an attempt to intimidate and silence the growing momentum in Turkey toward greater respect for human rights and freedoms. One of 18 journalists killed in Turkey in the last several years, and one of the dozen, including the 2006 Nobel Prize laureate in literature Orhan Pamuk, to be charged and prosecuted under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code restricting the freedom of expression, Mr. Dink was serving a suspended sentence, and was fighting another legal battle in the Court of Appeals for having spoken publicly about the Armenian Genocide. He had received numerous threats and needed the protection of his country's authorities. He instead was stigmatized and prosecuted.

In your State of the Union addresses you have consistently placed great emphasis on freedom. Hrant Dink embodied this ideal, which was violently extinguished. We must act boldly in freedom's cause and as you have indicated "challenge the enemies of reform, confront the allies of terror, and expect a higher standard from our friends." If the "advance of freedom" is truly "the great story of our time" and America "will lead the cause of freedom," then in line with this vision, we must take action to ensure that minorities at risk in Turkey are afforded every protection.

The murder of Hrant Dink challenges America and the rest of the civilized world to stand up against political violence, and the atmosphere that fosters it. Full and impartial investigation of this crime will be important, but not sufficient. It must be followed by the

repeal of Article 301 from Turkey's Penal Code, and a good faith effort by the Turkish state toward full compliance with its obligations under the EU negotiating framework, as regards human rights, civil liberties, respect for minorities, and ethnic and religious tolerance. For Turkey's Armenian minority, the neighboring Republic of Armenia, and Armenians worldwide, this also entails Turkey's acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide and redress of its consequences. Extending full diplomatic relations and opening the border with Armenia would be the right steps in that direction.

We call upon your Administration to bring its leadership, weight and authority to urge Turkey's compliance with these norms and commitments.

We also call upon you to support a Congressional resolution honoring the memory of Hrant Dink and deploring his assassination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hirair Hovnanian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Hirair Hovnanian
Chairman
Board of Trustees