



ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA

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ARMENIAN COMMUNITY, ASSEMBLY HOLD MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR HRANT DINK IN WASHINGTON

State Department Official Hails Dink for Bridging Armenians, Turks

Washington, DC – More than 200 members of the Armenian community in the Washington area attended a memorial service Tuesday night for slain journalist Hrant Dink, whose tragic death last week sent shock waves throughout the Armenian community. A senior U.S. State Department official attending the service called Dink “a proud son of the Armenian people,” who advocated for understanding and dialogue between Armenians and Turks.

Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried expressed awe and admiration for Dink, saying that he “stood for a civic virtue higher than hatred, higher than ethnic stereotypes, higher than fears and repression and ignorance. His was a vision of a better world.”

“The measure of how our world falls short must be judged by his murder at the hands of an ignorant, hate-filled nationalist,” he continued.

Turkish journalists, who have been reporting extensively on Dink’s assassination, also attended the memorial service, broadcasting news of the commemoration to various media outlets in Turkey and beyond.

Bishop Vicken Aykazian, Legate of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America (Eastern) and Diocesan Director of Ecumenical Relations, presided over the memorial service with Reverend Father Vertanes Kalayjian at St. Mary’s Armenian Apostolic Church.

“I had the honor of [Hrant Dink’s] personal friendship,” said Bishop Aykazian, who is also president-elect of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC). “But more than being my personal friend, he was a friend to all Armenians, in Turkey, and in the Diaspora Armenian communities throughout the world.”

“Hrant Dink called upon the world – and Turkey in particular – to acknowledge and admit the truth of the Armenian Genocide,” the Bishop continued. “Not to shame or humiliate the Turkish people, but to engage our two neighboring people in a fruitful dialogue for the betterment of their relations.”

Reverend Father Kalayjian said that Dink was a man who put his life on the line for his beliefs and convictions. He read, in tribute, a heartfelt poem authored by Adam Garrie of UCLA.

Executive Director Bryan Ardouny said that the Armenian Assembly grieves Dink's tragic death and calls upon people of goodwill to denounce his assassination and join the Assembly's efforts to ensure that the cycle of genocide and its denial ends.

"We remain deeply concerned with Turkey's continued failure to adopt standards and practices of both domestic and international conduct that would reverse and overturn the climate of intolerance, prejudice and repression as exemplified by Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code which precipitated this crime," said Ardouny.

"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," he added.

Alen J. Salerian, M.D., a longtime friend of Dink's, said that "[Dink] is more than a hero, he's more than a heart. He's a brain, he's a peacemaker, he's an orphan who became a father and husband and a loving citizen."

The Armenian Assembly of America is the largest Washington-based nationwide organization promoting public understanding and awareness of Armenian issues. It is a 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt membership organization.

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Editor's Note: The full text of the remarks made by Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried, Bishop Vicken Aykazian and Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, are attached to this release and also available on the Assembly Web site at www.aaaainc.org.

Adam Garrie's poem is attached and also available on the Assembly Web site.

Photographs:



Caption: Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried addressed members of the Armenian-American community at the memorial service on January 23 at St. Mary's Armenian Apostolic Church in Washington, DC.



Caption: Bishop Vicken Aykazian, Legate of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America (Eastern) and Diocesan Director of Ecumenical Relations, presided over the memorial service. Bishop Aykazian and Dink were lifelong friends having attended the same seminary school together.



Caption: Reverend Father Vertanes Kalayjian led the memorial service for Hrant Dink at St. Mary's Armenian Apostolic Church in Washington, DC.



Caption: Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny called Hrant Dink a catalyst for mutual understanding, tolerance and dialogue.