

ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA  
35th Anniversary Gala, Los Angeles, CA  
November 2, 2007

**Remarks by Carolyn Mugar  
Introducing Rakel Dink**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Tonight, I have the exceptional honor to introduce to you our special guest, Rakel Dink. Rakel is here to accept the Assembly's Distinguished Humanitarian Award for 2007. It goes to her husband Hrant Dink – an Armenian hero, whose life inspired, and martyrdom shook millions of people around the world, and whose message of liberty, civility, truth and bridge-building across so many fault lines dividing humanity guides us today.

A year ago this week, Hrant was in America, talking about his life and work as an editor and a human rights leader, his community in *Bolis* and across the country we know as *Yergir*, his identity as an Armenian intellectual in Turkey, and Turkey's own search for political and social identity. He educated us like no politician or pundit on the sources and drivers of that complex process, the challenges of its potential failure, and the opportunities inherent in its success. He also shared with us his vision for dealing with, and even shaping it.

He was immensely proud of his heritage, and passionate in his mission. Knowing him made us proud to be his compatriots and contemporaries.

As a true intellectual, Hrant believed in the innate goodness of man, and the ultimate power of that goodness over similarly innate, but darker aspects of human character. He was a passionate believer in the power of conviction, and an outspoken opponent of extremism and violence in all forms.

Prosecuted and convicted under the infamous article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, and facing death threats for his professional and civic activity, he once noted: "I may see myself as frightened as a pigeon, but I know that in this country people do not touch pigeons. Pigeons can live in cities, even in crowds. A little scared perhaps, but free."

Hrant's life was violently taken away on January 19, 2007, in broad daylight, in front of his office at Agos, the newspaper he had founded and directed since 1996. He went on to join Krikor Zohrab, Taniel Varoujan, Roupén Sevag, Siamanto, and 240 other Armenian intellectuals and community leaders, whose freedom, and subsequently lives, were violently taken away in the early morning hours of April 24, 1915.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Presenting this award to Rakel, Hrant's wife and comrade, is a great honor for us. Her courage and composure in the face of her loss have touched and impressed the world. As she takes the stage to speak to us, her son Arat stands convicted under the same infamous article 301 of the Turkish penal code, for re-publishing his father's works.

Rakel,

As a woman, and an Armenian, I am incredibly proud to welcome you to this podium, to address us, and accept the Armenian Assembly's 2007 Distinguished Humanitarian Award to Hrant Dink.