

CRAG Report

March 2006

Campaign For Recognition Of The Armenian Genocide

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Armenian Community and Church Council of Great Britain



Chairman's Word

Following the successful campaign of the 90th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in 2005, as well as the notable achievement of recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Edinburgh City Council in November, CRAG has moved into its second phase of planning short and medium term projects to enhance its political campaign throughout the UK for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide as well as counter the denial efforts of Turkish Government and its supporters in trying to steer away the attention of politicians and journalists from the truth.

I am pleased to announce that over the last few weeks, several members of the Committee for Commemoration of 90th Anniversary of Armenian Genocide - a cross community committee formed by the ACCC for the 90th commemoration, have joined CRAG to continue to help promote our cause. I am also pleased to be able to welcome other new members from the younger generation in the community.

The younger generation is in a position to be able to devote time and expertise by channelling it through CRAG to focus on driving our political and educational campaign forward with the objective of securing official recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Government in the UK.

The consistency with which, CRAG was able to plan, coordinate and successfully implement over 20 substantial events during the course of last year, is evidence that through dedication, persistence and cooperation our community is capable of achieving its common goals. Edinburgh is an outstanding example of successful cooperation between communities, political, religious and educational establishments working closely for a single objective. The recognition of Armenian Genocide not only emphasises the importance of acknowledging history and political responsibility but also highlights our awareness of the danger facing minorities and people that due to circumstances are in the vulnerable position of being subjected to genocide by more powerful groups and the importance of preventive measures and adherence to international law in order to safeguard the future of humanity.

It is important to appreciate that in order to be successful CRAG has to work with a professional approach. While voluntary efforts are most welcomed and desirable, we can not ignore that in a fast moving 21st Century society and an

extremely complex political environment we must also utilise the professional services of lawyers, publicists and journalists as well as the power of media. To succeed and make an impact we must be prepared to invest our energy and money where tangible results are plausible. At the same time we must be objective and analyse the outcome in detail for continuous improvements and learn from our mistakes. These are the principles with which CRAG has been operating over the last few years.

This year our efforts will be focused on securing further recognitions within and out of the UK, develop a working relationship with the London Boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow for related projects, develop the relationship with Genocide Watch by engaging in genocide related projects with a broader scope, implement related projects encouraging involvement of the community and youth, associate with EU political forums and engage in projects relating to Turkey's accession talks, resume publication of **CRAG - Report** and Commemorative Events.

Every member of CRAG as well as the ACCC and Bishop Nathan Hovhannisian are extremely pleased and grateful to be at the receiving end of sponsorships, support and generous donations of several individuals in our community. Special appreciation is extended to a few, who have contributed continuously allowing for CRAG to function with the aforementioned professional approach. As part of the ACCC our accounts are audited annually by a professional team on behalf of ACCC, providing detailed report on consistency and justification of expenditure and funds. CRAG has also enjoyed the cooperation of the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia and HE Ambassador V. Gabrielyan in relation to parallel events organised in Armenia.

I would ask you sincerely to continue your support and generosity to help facilitate our plans. In return CRAG promises to operate independently with an open agenda and willingness to cooperate with every person or organisation for our common goal.

Should you be interested with our projects or would like to be included in CRAG email-shots, please contact the CRAG or the ACCC.

Raffi Sarkissian
Chairman

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

Wednesday, 19 April 2006 at 7 PM

Commemoration of 91st Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide – Ealing Town Hall attended by the Mayor of Ealing Councillor Michael Elliott.

Saturday, 22 April 2006 at 11 AM

Commemorative March:
Starting at Marble Arch, ending at the Cenotaph.

Sunday, 23 April 2006 at 11 AM

Memorial Service (Hokehankist) at St Yeghiche Church led by HG Bishop Nathan Hovhannisian.

OVERVIEW of CRAG EVENTS in 2005

In his message to mark the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on 24 April 2005, HG Bishop Nathan Hovhannisian recalled the solemn memory of the thousands of Armenians living in Constantinople who were rounded up and force-marched into detention by the Ottoman authorities. This gruesome episode, the Primate of the Armenian Church underlined, constituted the startup to the Armenian Genocide in which well over one million Armenians had their lives deleted brutally.

CRAG, the Campaign for Recognition of the Armenian Genocide, a part of the Armenian Community and Church Council of Great Britain, joined hands with the Committee for the 90th Anniversary, and responded to the challenges with a series of commemorative events.

The year witnessed powerful lectures from three internationally well-known and well-versed academic speakers. They were Dr Tessa Hofmann, Professor Richard Hovhannisian and Dr Vahakn Dadrian.



There were also a series of activities centred round the week of 24 April 2005. Those included the Commemorative Evening at Ealing Town Hall on 22nd April, with Stephen Pound, MP, and Councillor Michael Elliott, now Mayor of Ealing, as main speakers.

There was the Requiem Mass on 24 April 2005 at St Yeghiche Church in the presence of ecumenical representatives from the Churches of England and Ireland, the Roman Catholic Church, the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church and the Apostolic Nunciature. Messages of solidarity were read on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, and on behalf of Archbishop Gregorios from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Greek Orthodox Church in London, as well as from the Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland and the Council of Oriental Orthodox Churches.



This was followed by a Commemorative March of over 1500 participants from St Yeghiche Church to the Cenotaph. The key speaker at the Cenotaph was Dr Charles Tannock, Conservative MEP for London and Vice-Chairman of the Human Rights Sub-Committee



at the European Parliament, who pledged his unwavering support on both the British and European levels in helping Armenians secure recognition of the genocide in the UK and on the European level.



Furthermore, there was a musical commemorative concert at LSO St Luke's by The Sinfonietta of Oxted on 14th May, where Lord Avebury addressed the audience with a message on the "unspeakable epidemic of hatred and cruelty in which over a million people were murdered, both directly and as a result of the vicious treatment they were subjected to by the deliberate policy of their rulers. It is fitting that we should be marking this 90th Anniversary of the Genocide with a concert, so that in our minds we can not only contemplate the grisly fate of million martyrs, but also the task of healing and closure which still lies ahead".

At an International Conference on 'Criminal Law of Genocide' held at Nottingham Trent University, Raffi Sarkissian, Chair of CRAG presented a paper entitled 'A Contextual view of the Crime of Genocide' and at Exeter University (addressed by Dr Vahakn Dadrian and Raffi Sarkissian) as well as a gathering at the Temple of Peace in Cardiff, Wales, organised by Eilian Williams of Wales-Armenia Solidarity and at the Augustine United Church in Edinburgh, Scotland, organised by the CRAG Scottish Committee.

The most remarkable achievement of the year, however, was the official recognition on 17th November of the Armenian Genocide by the City of Edinburgh Council. A Labour Group Motion proposed by the Leader, Councillor Donald Anderson, seconded by Councillor Chris Wigglesworth, was passed by a clear majority. The Motion supported the view that the Ottoman actions against Armenians during the period 1915 onward did constitute genocide. Held at City Chambers, three deputations from three Turkish organisations presented arguments against the Motion. The two Armenian deputations that followed the Turkish presentations were from the Campaign for Recognition of the Armenian Genocide (CRAG) and from the Armenian Community & Church Council of Great Britain (ACCC). The speakers from the Armenian deputations were Dr Hagop Bessos, Chair of the CRAG Scottish Committee, Dr Donald Bloxham, lecturer of History at the University of Edinburgh and author of a recent book on Ottoman Armenians and the Genocide, who presented the historical arguments, and Dr Harry Hagopian who concluded with both the legal and political arguments in favour of the Motion and against any allegations at denial.



Other commemorative activities organised by CRAG, or supported by it, included a Memorial Service held at St Margaret's Church on 27th October, presided over by HG Bishop Nathan Hovhannisian and conducted by Revd Canon Robert Wright, Rector of St Margaret's Church.

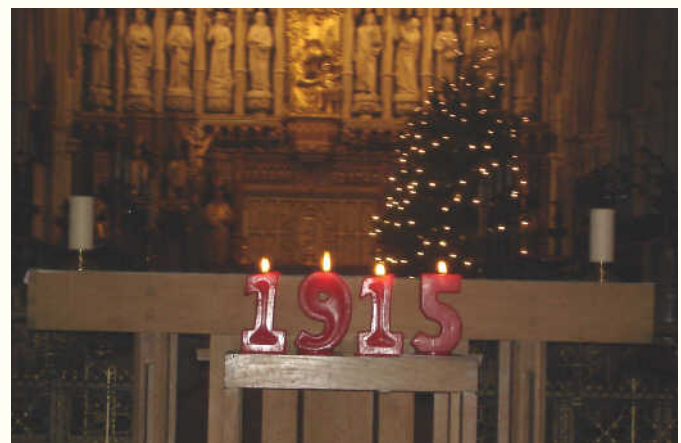


In addition, the Armenian Church joined the Church of Ireland on 13th November for Ecumenical Vespers that focused on the Armenian Genocide. In the midst of a full congregation at St Bartholomew's Church in Dublin, Their Graces Bishops Michael Jackson, Peter Barrett and Nathan Hovhannisian remembered the Armenians who were killed by Ottoman Turkey under cover of WWI.

On the 29th and 30th October 2005, JAF (Jeunesse Arménienne de France) organised the first conference of Armenian youth in Europe in Marseille. Held under the patronage of His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of all Armenians and Mr Vartan Oskanian, Foreign Affairs Minister for the Republic of Armenia, the conference was a pan-European meeting for Armenian youth. Fifteen countries partook in the two-day conference, including representatives from Armenia and Turkey, and Dr Harry Hagopian concluded the two-day conference with a discussion on Turkey's accession into the European Union, and the way forward for Diaspora Armenians. The UK delegates consisted of Teni Shehian and Huby Saroukhanoff, the latter speaking about the UK Armenian community and the various organisations and institutions in London.



The Closing Commemorative Event at Southwark Cathedral on 1st December, organised by CRAG and sponsored by Jo and Raffi Manoukian, wove together the efforts of the whole year. A full cathedral witnessed Baroness Caroline Cox and Ex-Ambassador David Miller join a host of ecumenical religious leaders including the Rt Rev Geoffrey Rowell, Anglican Bishop in Europe and HG Bishop Angaelos from the Coptic Orthodox Church, as they assisted with the readings and prayers for this commemorative occasion. The evening also included evocative artistic performances by Tatevik Khatchatryan, Aram Avedian and Anais Heghoyan, as well as Thought for the Year 2005 by Huby Saroukhanoff and The Story of Isgouhi, a Genocide Survivor, by her granddaughter Tamara Tchelbakian.



Doubtless CRAG could not have successfully organised many of those events without support of its friends, benefactors, artists, speakers and workers as much as the Armenian Church, the ACCC and other organisations. All came together to make the 90th anniversary a preamble for the next decade of recognition. **The Executive Board of CRAG extends its sincere gratitude to all supporters and volunteers alike for an extremely fruitful and successful year.**

INTRODUCTION

This is a **Press Communiqué** from *Wales-Armenia Solidarity* focusing on the statement made on 2 March 2006 by Sir Menzies Campbell, the new leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Commons.

This position by the Liberal Democrats is not new, and represents a consistent tradition on the Armenian Genocide. Such a position has often underlined by Lord Avebury, who has spoken at CRAG functions over the past years, as well as by Councillor Jenny Dawe at the Edinburgh City Council, whose party

supported unanimously the Motion for recognition of the Armenian Genocide in Edinburgh on 17 November 2005.

But this statement also comes at an appropriate time when the Armenian Genocide marked its 90th anniversary in 2005, and when the genocide as a human rights violation is being debated in the context of Turkey's negotiations for accession to the EU.

WALES-ARMENIA SOLIDARITY PRESS RELEASE

2 March 2006

"The events of 1915-16 - a crime against humanity" - The leader of UK's third biggest Party

An important step forward to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide in the UK took place today. In a reply to Wales-Armenia Solidarity, Mr Menzies Campbell, Leader of the UK Liberal Democrat Party (the third biggest party in the UK) wrote:

"We believe that the events of 1915-16 did indeed constitute crimes against humanity", thus following the moral leadership shown by the politicians of Wales, (including the Welsh Liberal Democrats) since 2001

This will have great implications for British unconditional support for Turkey's EU ambitions if, as expected, the Liberal Democrat Party hold the balance of power following the next general election in the UK

The Policy Officer of the Welsh Liberal Democrats, Dewi Knight, had previously written in a reply to Wales-Armenia Solidarity:

"The Welsh Liberal Democrats believe that the UK government should acknowledge the Armenian experience of the early twentieth century as a genocide. The Labour government refusal to recognise it as such is, and has been, highly disappointing.

Speaking at the Armenian Memorial Day service in 2001 in Cathays Park, Jenny Randerson, Welsh Lib Dem AM for Cardiff Central said:

"The Armenian Genocide, which began in 1915, bore all the hallmarks of genocide and was the first such event in the 20th Century.

We must work together to ensure that this is fully recognised, because recognition - and commemoration - are the vital steps which ensure that it never - ever - happens again."

Turkey's movements towards human rights reform is to be welcomed but there is much to do before Turkey can become a full member of the EU. It will take a long time for negotiations to allow Turkey's entry to the EU, time that Turkey should and must use to guarantee that faith minorities, ethnic minorities and other minorities have full rights at all times throughout the country. Turkey must meet the same standards as other EU states".

** Wales-Armenia Solidarity is an organisation that is partly funded by CRAG, London*

*Kindly support this **Early Day Motion** by writing to your MP or visiting her / him in the surgery so they sign this EDM. The more signatures, the better the impact on the House.*

EDM 1454 (24.01.2006)

ASSYRIAN AND ARMENIAN GENOCIDE IN 1915

Sponsor: Stephen Pound, MP

That this House is appalled by the genocide committed against the Assyrians in 1915 in their ancestral homeland by the then ruling government of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, the Committee for Union and Progress, a genocide which led to the mass exodus of the Assyrians from their millennia-old native soil and resulted in the deaths of approximately two-thirds of the Assyrian population and one and a half million Armenians and the destruction of many Assyrian and Armenian villages and national and religious institutions; recognises the suffering of the Assyrian and Armenian people during the genocide of 1915, and accepts that the suffering of victims of genocide is augmented and perpetuated by indifference and denial, and that genocide prevention can only be achieved by learning

from history and recognising and condemning previous acts of genocide; calls upon the UK and Turkish governments publicly and officially to recognise the Assyrian and Armenian genocide of 1915, and encourage other members of the international community to take similar steps, thereby fulfilling the obligation of international co-operation enshrined in the preamble to the 1948 Genocide Convention; and urges the UK Government to call on the European Union to make official Turkish recognition of the 1915 Assyrian and Armenian genocide one of the pre-conditions for Turkey's membership of the EU.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=29864&SESSION=875>

As you will have noted, CRAG and its Executive Board have been busy in 2005 in their efforts to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

Throughout last year, we did not ask our friends and supporters to make any donations toward our efforts. However, we come to you today and request that you use the form below to make a generous donation that would help keep us active for 2006.

Yes, I wish to support CRAG in its efforts to gain recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Kindly accept herewith my donation.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Amount donated: _____