

**ENCYCLICAL OF HIS HOLINESS ARAM I, CATHOLICOS OF THE
GREAT HOUSE OF CILICIA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE 90TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE**

ARAM

Servant of Jesus Christ and, by the will of the incomprehensible God and by the selection of our Nation, Chief Bishop and Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia

Pontifical greetings with the love transmitted by Jesus among us, and blessing with the right of our father, St. Gregory the Illuminator, to the consecrated diocesan prelates, the bishops, the archimandrites and priests, the National Representative Assemblies and the Executive Councils, the vestrymen and the members of board of trustees, the charitable organizations and the servants of Armenian literature, the teachers and the workers of the press, and all our faithful children of the Armenian nation scattered throughout the world,

May the peace of God the Father, the love of His Only Begotten Son, and the grace of the Holy Spirit be with all. Amen.

The year 2005 is the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Therefore, this year is not an ordinary date in the contemporary history of the Armenian people, and it must not be one for each and every Armenian and the Armenian people as a whole.

For all Armenians, the year 2005, in the first place, must become an occasion to look at the past and to remember and reemphasize once again the unique place, meaning and message of the year 1915 in our history. Indeed, is there any Armenian on this earth, who does not know that, in 1915, Ottoman Turkey, by taking advantage of the turbulent situation created by World War I, carried out its horrific plan to completely annihilate the Armenian people, massacring more than one and a half million Armenians? Are there any Armenians on this earth, who have not learned from their very childhood, with profound revulsion, about the massacres committed by Turkey against the Armenian people in the most barbaric manner, from Constantinople to the distant provinces, from historical Armenia and Cilicia to the deserts of Der Zor? Indeed, numerous generations were raised with the torment and vexation caused by the Armenian Genocide. Belonging to a massacred nation deprived of its rights profoundly affected the formation of the Armenian identity over the past 90 years.

The Armenian Genocide is an undeniable historical fact not only indelibly recorded in black letters on the pages of our people's history but in those of world history as well; it has clearly found its place too in the governmental-diplomatic archives of the very same country having committed genocide -- Turkey. The studies written in recent years by both Armenian and non-Armenian historians, with their comprehensive and scientific approach, documentary evidence as well as eyewitness testimonies, further underscored the irrefutable fact of the Armenian Genocide, while shedding further light on its inner folds.

For the Armenian people, the year 2005 must become, besides an occasion to once again

remember and reevaluate the past, a marvelous opportunity to look toward the future and demand the justice due them for a genocide which the world has let remain unpunished. Collective memory in the life of a people is vital. Collective memory is a force that constructs a people's history, strengthens its existence, ensures its continuity and crystallizes its identity. The past must not be forgotten. However, at the same time it is necessary to render memory into a demand for justice. Owing to the systematic and persistent efforts of our organizations and individual Armenians, one part of the international family has recognized the first genocide of the 20th century, the Armenian Genocide. On this occasion, we express our deep appreciation to all the nations, governments, religions, churches and organizations, which are defenders of justice and supporters of the world to acknowledge this collective crime committed against the Armenian people. But, above all, the just demand of our people is for genocidist Turkey itself to recognize the genocide planned and executed at the government level by its predecessors against the Armenian people.

The Armenian people demands justice for the violation of its human and national rights. The Armenian people shall always continue to demand justice, no matter what difficulties it may face. No Armenian has the right to remain aloof from our national struggle to gain that justice. The national demand for justice is one of the most sacred and top-priority obligations of every Armenian. The 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide is a challenge directed at our people to refresh its collective memory and revitalize its demand for justice, with deep faith, firm will and bright vision.

The Armenian Church has always been by its people's side, even in the direst of conditions. It has been the firm protector of its people's rights and the staunch defender of its just cause. The Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, in particular, having been subjected to massacre along with its people and having experienced the horror of exile, always remained with its people, from the towns and villages of Cilicia to the deserts of Der Zor and the rest of the world. Although having walked the road to Golgotha, this centuries-old Holy Pontifical See reorganized its life with the spirit of resurrection, like its people and with its people, and vitalized its mission. For 90 years, it addressed the spiritual and physical needs of its people having become uprooted from its ancestral lands; it played a decisive role in the formation of various communities; it built churches and schools; it became the devoted disseminator of spiritual, moral and cultural values, as well as constituting the intrepid torchbearer in the pursuit of the just rights of its people. And today, the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, faithful to its Christian calling, the mission of its faith and national vow, is pursuing the rights of its people with renewed faith and resolution, demanding justice from the world. Now, with this saintly Pontifical Encyclical, we proclaim the year 2005

THE YEAR OF NATIONAL DEMAND FOR JUSTICE

With the message and challenge arising from the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, it is necessary to qualify the year 2005 in the collective life of our people. Therefore, besides the usual programs, this year must become a year full of initiatives, events and accomplishments designed to leave a trace in our life, open a new page in our

struggle to achieve justice, and lead our people toward a bright future.

Thus, it is with this faith and vision, this thought and expectation that we direct a Pontifical appeal from the Monastery of the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia in Antelias to our people, suggesting to them:

First, the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide must be marked with pan-national scope, joint effort and broad popular participation, as well as with close and harmonious cooperation between Armenia and the Diaspora. Our people must remain above partisan, political, denominational or other kinds of dissension, and rally around our overall national supreme interests and priorities. They must present themselves to the world as one nation, with one collective demand for justice.

Second, the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide must be observed in an organized manner and with solemn dignity in all our communities, large and small, near and far. The efforts to be carried out on this occasion and the programs to take place must correspond to the internal setup of the given community and the unique conditions surrounding it. Each community, each organization and each Armenian individual must actively and fully participate in making this important event a worthy entry in the contemporary history of our people. Third, the present world is totally different in relation to the recent past. The conditions, concerns and challenges surrounding us have a different nature, emphasis and scope. Therefore, it is necessary that the pan-national observance of the 90th anniversary be organized with different standards, viewpoints and approaches. It is necessary to resort to such effective means and modus operandi, which will make our people's demand for justice modern and consonant with the concerns and objectives of the international community.

Fourth, the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide must become an occasion for our Diocesan Prelates, Executive Councils, all our organizations, institutions, associations and the faithful subject to the spiritual care of the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, to participate in the pan-national commemoration of this extremely important anniversary with the highest degree of responsibility and dutifulness, making it a singular event for the strengthening of our national struggle for justice.

Fifth, dear sons and daughters of the Armenian people, don't forget Der Zor; don't forget that our fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, passed through Der Zor 90 years ago. Some remained in the burning sands of Der Zor and today they belong to eternity as martyrs. Others, in turn, having gone through the misery and bitter experience of Der Zor, became scattered throughout the world, formed families and organized communities, becoming heroes in terms of the faith and will of the Armenian people to survive in alienating diasporan environments. Let us not forget that we are the children of our courageous, martyred and resurrected people, which experienced and survived the ordeal of Der Zor. Therefore, Der Zor must remain a permanent and dominant presence in our life and our struggle for justice. For each and every Armenian, Der Zor must become a living reminder of the Armenian Genocide and a source of inspiration and strength in our

national struggle for justice. On this occasion, we appeal to our people to go on a pilgrimage to Der Zor, with allegiance to our one and a half million martyrs, in order to renew our Christian and sacred national vow.

Now, with this Pontifical Encyclical, we exhort all the Diocesan Prelates and Executive Councils of the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia to immediately begin work and, in cooperation with the religious, communal, political, partisan, charitable, cultural, educational, athletic and other national institutions found within the confines of their respective dioceses, to observe the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide with pan-national scope and unified effort.

May the unfading memory of our myriad martyrs be blessed with incense and prayer.

Respect and honor for the Armenian people living and struggling with allegiance to the sacred legacy of the martyrs.

May you live with the Lord, gain strength with the Holy Spirit and be blessed forever.

**ARAM I
CATHOLICOS OF CILICIA**

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