



PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Megan Reid

TEL: 416-250-9807

Reflections on the 25th Anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of Armenia from the Zoryan Institute

Today, on this 25th anniversary of Armenian independence, we can look back with pride and remember that Armenia was the first Soviet republic that through a referendum, declared its independence from the Soviet Union. During that turbulent period, Armenia had to start the challenging process of its own nation building and the formation of its own institutions.

On March 25, 1991, the President of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrossian, sent an official letter to the Zoryan Institute asking it to “make its resources and experience available to the Presidium’s Department of Research and Analysis... Assisting our newborn state in ways consistent with its mission would be a logical and enriching new phase for the Institute...” The Institute responded to this need by sending its then director, Gerard Libaridian, and several of its staff members to Armenia to help organize this new department. Among other things, the Institute assisted the government in its research for a new constitution for the fledgling Republic

Reflecting on Armenia’s development over the past 25 years, we appreciate that the country has made major advances in building institutions, including military and integrating itself in the world community. However, it still has a significant way to go to overcome the many shortcomings in its nation building process. The state must uphold the rights and dignity of each individual. It must provide its citizens an equal opportunity to participate in nation building and ensure their personal security and development. In doing so, the state must instill confidence in society that their children will have a brighter future in their own homeland.

As an institute which analyzes the forces and factors that shape the Armenian reality, and as an international human rights organization, it is our opinion that the very first step for Armenia to be able to pull itself out of its continuing downward spiral of “grave” economic conditions (as the newly appointed Prime Minister described it), along with its social and political challenges, is to have transparent and fair elections. Taking inspiration from the recent call by Arsinée Khanjian for the Armenians in the Diaspora to become directly engaged in Armenia, and give their time to serve as election observers for each and every ballot box, the Zoryan Institute urges the Diaspora to provide volunteers to observe the entire process, from polling to the actual counting of ballots. By the Diaspora’s participation in monitoring the entire voting process, citizens of Armenia can begin to have confidence that their vote actually counts and thus in the outcome of their elections. Then, citizens can begin to take more seriously their duties towards fair election, and their elected representatives can begin to take more seriously their own responsibilities and obligations of transparency and accountability to the electorate.