



**International Institute for Genocide
and Human Rights Studies**
(A Division of the Zoryan Institute)

PRESS RELEASE

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How Will the Canadian Museum for Human Rights Represent Genocide?

Toronto, Canada—The International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (A Division of the Zoryan Institute) (“IIGHRS-Zoryan”) was invited to a public gathering in Winnipeg by the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (“CMHR”) in April 2003, after an initial meeting with Gail Asper in Toronto. As a Canadian institution, we lent our name publicly in support of the CMHR at an early stage.

Our early enthusiasm diminished over time, owing to the politics surrounding the museum. Owing to such politics, we still have no idea how the Armenian Genocide and other cases will be represented in the CMHR. The IIGHRS-Zoryan made a detailed presentation to CMHR officials in December 2009, as part of its public consultation, on how to represent genocide in general, and the Armenian Genocide in particular. When we found that the public consultations were not being taken into consideration by museum officials, and there was an outcry from various communities about what they felt was unfair treatment, we subsequently issued two public statements on this issue in February and August 2011, and wrote directly to Stuart Murray, the museum’s President and Chief Executive Officer. None of the points have been dealt with by the CMHR, nor has our letter been responded to.

The arguments can be read in detail on the IIGHRS-Zoryan website, at

<http://www.genocidestudies.org/Announcements/How%20Genocide%20Should%20be%20Represented%20in%20the%20CMHR%20v20.pdf>

and

<http://www.genocidestudies.org/Announcements/Genocide%20Multiculturalism%20and%20the%20CMHR.pdf>

The essence of the arguments is as follows.

The lack of responsiveness of the CMHR and the absence of information about how cases of the gross violation of human rights will be represented raise questions as to which cases will be included, how much space will be allotted to each case, what their content will be, if they will have a permanent or only temporary exhibit, and how these decisions are made. Moreover, there is a close relationship between the gross violation of human rights and genocide that is being neglected in the museum’s planning. Unless we study such cases comparatively, the lessons that

can be learned are of limited value, particularly with a view to the prevention of such cases.

In trying to fend off criticism from various community groups over its handling of these issues, the CMHR posted a statement on its website, originally appearing as a letter in the *Globe & Mail* on March 23, 2011, that the museum is not about genocide and never was. The August 2011 IIGHRS-Zoryan editorial rebutted this with explicit statements to the contrary from the museum's own publicity. The editorial also argued the benefits of studying the known cases of genocide on a comparative basis. Finally, the editorial pointed out that as a federal institution, the CMHR was legally required to adhere to the official Canadian policy of multiculturalism, which is to integrate all citizens into Canadian society and treat them fairly and equally.

We recently learned from Armenian community representatives that the museum will include the five genocides officially recognized by Canada's Parliament, including the Armenian Genocide, but we still do not know how they will be represented or how the CMHR will deal with the fundamental questions raised in our two public statements. It seems that the CHMR is playing community politics by contacting different groups at different times, while ignoring the challenging questions raised by an institute whose mission is the study of these very issues. We raise these issues today to make the Armenian community aware of what has transpired over the past eight years. The IIGHRS-Zoryan calls upon the Armenian community of Canada to speak with one voice and to demand answers to these questions, for which we have been awaiting an answer for a long time.