

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Zoryan Institute Facilitates Agreement between Canadian Museum for Human Rights and Armenian Genocide Museum Institute**

Toronto—Mr. Stuart Murray, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) of Winnipeg, and Dr. Hayk Demoyan, Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute (AGMI) of the National Academy of Sciences in Yerevan, signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the museums in Winnipeg on November 7, 2013. The agreement was officially witnessed by Mr. K.M. Greg Sarkissian, President of the International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (A Division of the Zoryan Institute) (IIGHRS-Zoryan).

View the event at: <http://youtu.be/7TtOlou7g2I>

Read the CMHR's official release at: <http://museumforhumanrights.ca/about-museum/news/canadian-museum-human-rights-and-armenian-genocide-museum-institute-sign#.UoVR5fmThYE>



Left: Stuart Murray; Middle: Hayk Demoyan; Right: K.M. Greg Sarkissian

The objective of the MOU is to exchange knowledge and expertise, educational materials, and exhibitions with respect to human rights, share research and advice, cooperate to advance the academic study of human rights and reconciliation, the Armenian Genocide and its effects, and processes seeking justice and reconciliation, and work together to educate people on issues of human rights, in both national and global contexts.

As part of his remarks about the background to the day's ceremony, Mr. Stuart Murray commented on the role of the IIGHRS-Zoryan:

One of our museum staff members, Dr. Clint Curle who is with us today, travelled to Armenia earlier this past year ... with the president of the Zoryan Institute, who is here with us today ... to meet with Dr. Demoyan to get a firsthand look at the work being done at the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute.

After this connection, for which we do thank the Zoryan Institute so much for the opportunity to bring us together, our two organizations began the process of forming a partnership to advance our shared goals and advancing human rights education and reconciliation and justice. And that is why we're here signing this agreement today. We are pleased to partner with the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute in order to raise awareness of the Armenian genocide in Canada and indeed around the globe. We will do that by drawing out the human rights lessons that are relevant today as they were in 1915.

In reflecting on the importance of the MOU, Mr. Murray described the significance of the Armenian Genocide in history and how it led to concept of crimes against humanity in international law:

It is always special when museums of conscience of human rights can come together. We have a big job to do and there is clearly much work yet to be done, but together we can accomplish it. The Armenian Genocide, which began in 1915, was a violation on an almost unimaginable scale. Millions of people were murdered—millions more sexually assaulted, robbed, left homeless, or orphaned. Canada and Manitoba received some of these orphans, and we will be privileged to hear from the family of one such individual this morning. The Armenian Genocide is an important human rights story. The concept of crimes against humanity was developed in response to this horrible series of violations against the Armenian people. The crime of genocide was also developed in reference to the attacks against Armenians. The first international reaction to this genocide resulted in a joint statement from France, Russia, and Great Britain in May of 1915, when those atrocities directed against Armenian people were identified as, and I quote, "new crimes against humanity and civilization," end quote.

Dr. Demoyan, who put forth his vision for the establishment of new worldwide network of museums that deal with genocide and human right violations and their consequences, made the following remarks as part of his statement:

We highly value this document to be signed with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and see it as an important part of the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute's activities regarding academic exchange and cooperation. Within the last two years AGMI signed several other cooperation agreements with a number of museums and organizations worldwide to spread knowledge about the Armenian Genocide and other genocides committed in various regions and periods. This is a new beginning at the threshold of the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, the lessons of which still remain unlearned and untaught.

Dr. Demoyan expressed his gratitude to the IIGHRS-Zoryan, stating, “It is a great pleasure to be here participating in this very important signing ceremony, which became possible with invaluable support and assistance of the International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (A Division of the Zoryan institute).”

In praising the potential of the CMHR, he went on to say, “...I have no doubt that the crucial mission the Canadian Museum for Human Rights extends beyond Canada’s borders and also will provide a good platform for human rights education and prevention globally.”

Referring to the widespread problem of genocide denial, Demoyan remarked,

The Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, and other cases of horrible crimes of genocide and human rights violations still face denial with high level support. In order to leave no chance for those denial efforts to succeed, we have to set common agenda and work hand in hand to fight it everywhere.

Mr. K.M. Greg Sarkissian, as President of the IIGHRS-Zoryan, has been involved in promoting the comparative study of genocide and the gross violation of human rights, through such as activities as the Genocide and Human Rights University Program, run annually in partnership with the University of Toronto, and publication of the journal, *Genocide Studies International*. Representing the Board of Directors of the Zoryan Institute, made the following remarks as part of his speech:

We at the International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies look forward to the CMHR taking a comprehensive and comparative approach to all cases of genocide. It would complement perfectly the objectives of Canada’s official policy of multiculturalism. It especially would make those communities who feel their histories have been neglected or denied feel more welcome. One cannot overestimate the psychological trauma of those who are part of a nation that has experienced genocide. The comparative approach will help those Canadians share the understanding of their traumatic experiences with their fellow Canadians and the world at large. The comparative approach will enhance the public’s understanding of the complexities of this phenomenon, promote respect for others, and encourage reflection and dialogue, which are fundamental objectives of the CMHR. Only through the comparative study of such cases can we find general truths about the nature and mechanics of this phenomenon as a general problem of humanity, which can help us find solutions to how genocide can be prevented.

Mr. Sarkissian recalled how he was inspired to involve the Institute with and support the CMHR.

It was a dream, when we first met with Ms. Gail Asper back in April, 2003 and she described so passionately her father’s vision to have a museum for human rights. We exchanged our personal stories, as Canadians of Jewish and Armenian extraction, two groups who had experienced a profound tragedy perpetrated against them simply because they were perceived differently from the majority. We felt an instant bond, not only because of the traumatic nature of our pasts, but also because her father’s dream and vision resounded perfectly with the work of our Institute since 1982. Today, with this signing ceremony, Mr. Asper’s vision now expands beyond the borders of Canada by establishing such partnerships... This is no longer a dream. It is here, it is happening, and just last week it was declared that the official opening will be in September 2014. We look forward to serving as a liaison between the two museums and facilitating their ongoing cooperation.

Mr. Armen Yeganian, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia, after expressing the deep gratitude of the Armenian Government and the Armenian people to Stuart Murray and all those who are working hard to establish the museum, went on to state the following:

I would like to stress that this is not only an Armenian issue, or an Armenian-Turkish issue; this is, unfortunately, an international issue. Fairly enough, the Canadian Government decided to have officially recognized five genocides in this museum... This is another proof of Canada's real leadership on human rights issues.



From left to right: K.M. Greg Sarkissian, Ambassador Armen Yeganian, Stuart Murray, Hayk Demoyan, Clint Curle.

Mr. George Shirinian, Executive Director of the IGHRS-Zoryan, stated how gratifying it was to see the visit of Dr. Clint Curle, Head of Stakeholder Relations for the CMHR, to Armenia earlier this year develop into such a cooperative relationship with Dr. Demoyan and the AGMI. Shirinian also expressed his gratitude that so many members of the Armenian community responded to the Institute's invitation and come to show their support for this initiative, with which the Institute has been so intimately involved. The IGHRS-Zoryan will maintain an ongoing role as liaison and facilitator between the two museums.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights is the first museum in the world solely dedicated to the evolution, celebration and future of human rights. It is the first national museum in Canada to be built outside the National Capital Region. The Museum will use immersive multi-media technology and other innovative

approaches to create an inspiring encounter with human rights unlike anything visitors have experienced before.

The Armenian Genocide Museum & Institute of the National Academy of Sciences is a non-profit organization based in Yerevan, Republic of Armenia. The mission of the Museum-Institute is the academic and scientific study, analysis of the problems as well as exhibition of the textual and visual documentation related to the first Genocide of the 20th century.

The International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (A Division of the Zoryan Institute) runs an annual course in comparative genocide studies in partnership with the University of Toronto and is co-publisher of *Genocide Studies International* in partnership with the University of Toronto Press. The Zoryan Institute is the first non-profit, international center devoted to the research and documentation of contemporary issues with a focus on Genocide, Diaspora and Homeland. For more information please contact the Institute by email [zoryan@zoryaninstitute.org](mailto:zoryan@zoryaninstitute.org) or telephone 416-250-9807.



The Armenian Ambassador, the Armenian Primate, members of Armenian organizations, and the Armenian community were in attendance.

Click on the links below to read speeches given at the event:

[Speech by Stuart Murray, CEO of CMHR](#)

[Speech by Dr. Hayk Demoyan, Director of AGMI](#)

[Speech by K.M. Greg Sarkissian, President of the Zoryan Institute and IIGHRS](#)

