

ARMENIAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

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Speech by the Chair of the Armenian Community Council UK

Presented at the ANC All-Party Parliamentary Group Inaugural Gala Dinner and Fundraiser for Mr Tim Laughton

28 Jan 2025

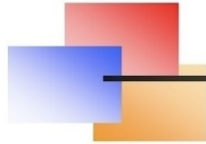
The Institute of Directors, London

Your Grace Bishop Manukyan, my Lords, Rt. Hon. Members of Parliament, Mr. Tim Laughton, ladies and gentlemen. I feel very privileged to be standing here on this wonderful occasion as Chair of the Armenian Community Council of the United Kingdom to thank Mr. Laughton for his passionate advocacy in representing the concerns of the British Armenian Community, the interests of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh (known as Artsakh to Armenians) while serving as a Member of Parliament at one of the most important epicentres of democracy in the world. Indeed, the All-Party Parliamentary Group, supported by ANC UK does immense work in keeping Armenian issues under the spotlight of our government.

Armenians have constantly witnessed many of the important transitions of history, having suffered over millennia at the bleeding edge of the politics of world empires and interests. We have understood the true value and cost of our Christian faith and have had to constantly define our sense of identity in the face of great adversity.

Why was Mr. Laughton's Bill on the Recognition of the Armenian Genocide so symbolically important for Armenians and indeed for the United Kingdom? Because it matters. It matters when dark chapters of history come back to life in the guise of modern politics. It matters because, if we do not acknowledge historical atrocities, they will be repeated again and again. It matters because UK Foreign Policy very much fights against its formal recognition. Just yesterday for the Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration, the Armenian Holocaust was again inexcusably and purposefully omitted from the Prime Minister's speech. Armenians say if the world had listened to the cries of our people during the Genocide of 1915, perhaps the Holocaust and subsequent genocides may not have happened. Do we really mean "never again?"

Am I being rhetorical? I'm afraid to say I'm not. Only 16 months ago, the 150,000 Armenians of Artsakh once more suffered the horrors of ethnic cleansing, having been forced to abandon everything they had ever known, fleeing for their very lives over a matter of 3 or 4 days. For comparison, that is almost four times the population of Gibraltar. Today, for the first time in 3,000 years, Artsakh is devoid of all its indigenous Armenians. The world has still not listened to the cries of those people. Even more recently, with the dissolution of Syria, the vibrant Armenian Community of Aleppo (where my father was born and where my great grandfather had sought refuge after an even older atrocity, the Hamidian Massacres of 1894 to 96), once again has Turkish flags all over. The community has been whittled down from 200,000 to a mere 10,000, remnants of the last Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia from the time of the Crusades nearly 1,000 years ago.



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Since the war of 2020, the emboldened dictator Aliyev of Azerbaijan has constantly threatened Armenia proper with more genocidal annexation of the south of the country, endlessly promoting the most heinous Armenophobia. He has been systematically erasing all evidence of an Armenian presence in Nagorno-Karabakh to hide his crimes and to rewrite history. He would not have had this level of malevolent confidence were it not for the support of Presidents Erdogan and Putin, and the constant supply of modern weapons and drones from Israel. It seems many world leaders now, and even the newly elected President from across the Pond, are talking about an annexation of some territory here and renaming a bit of a sea there. This pattern keeps on repeating, affecting each and every generation.

With all this in mind, it is worth reminding ourselves that there is still much work to be done. The sincere support of all the honourable Peers and Members of Parliament present is more crucial than ever before in an uncertain world. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Last but not least, I thank the ANC UK and Annette Moskofian for their unrelenting hard work.

Dr Garen Arevian
Chair, on behalf of the Armenian Community Council UK
London
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