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IN MEMORIAM: TASC REMEMBERS THE VICTIMS OF ARMENIAN TERRORISM

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In Memoriam: TASC Remembers the Victims of Armenian Terrorism

Mehmet BAYDAR Turkish Consul General and

Bahadır DEMIR Turkish Vice Consul

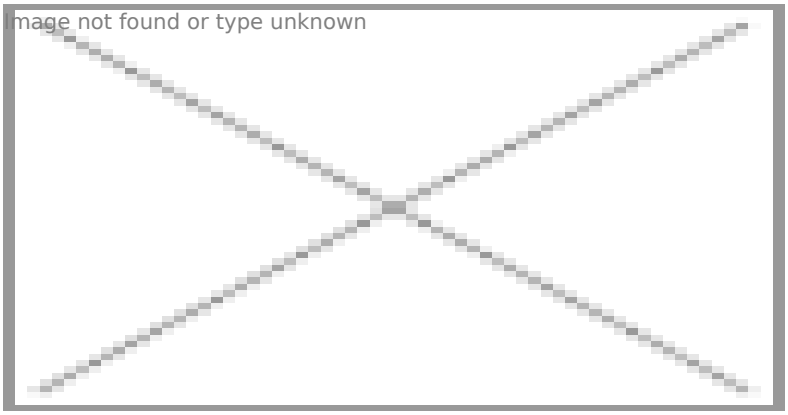
Assassinated January 27, 1973

Santa Barbara, California

Kemal ARIKAN Turkish Consul General

Assassinated January 28, 1982

Los Angeles, California



On January 27, 1973, Armenian American extremist, Gourgen Yanikian, assassinated the Los Angeles Turkish Consul General Mehmet Baydar and Vice Consul Bahadir Demir, after inviting the Turkish diplomats to his hotel suite to present the Turkish Government with gifts.

Soon after killing the diplomats, Yanikian surrendered to police, was tried in the Superior Court of the State of California for the County of Santa Barbara, was convicted of first-degree murder, and sentenced to life imprisonment. Ten years later, California Governor George Deukmejian, who was of Armenian descent, ordered the release of Yanikian, who died of natural causes soon thereafter. The Armenian Reporter, commemorated Yanikian, declaring that he had "opened [a] new era of political struggle" and "changed the course of Armenian history."

We believe he inspired terrorism by ASALA and JCAG to force the revision of Armenian history by silencing scholars, academicians, teachers, and political leaders, the vast majority who disagreed with the Armenian allegation of genocide.

The Yanikian murders were the start of modern-day Armenian terrorism by Armenian terrorist organizations, Marxist ASALA and neo-fascist JCAG. To date, ASALA and JCAG, have carried out over 160 terror attacks, mostly bombings in public areas, and hate crimes against people of Turkish heritage. ASALA and JCAG have claimed responsibility for the deaths of more than 77 people, including more than 40 Turkish diplomats, law enforcement officers, and Americans; wounding of over 700 people, mostly non-Turks; and billions of dollars of property damage worldwide. In the 1980s, Turkish and Israeli intelligence cooperated to uproot Armenian terrorists in Lebanon's Syrian-occupied Bekaa Valley. We commend inter-intelligence cooperation.

On January 28, 1982, Armenian gunmen assassinated the Turkish Consul General to Los Angeles, Kemal Arikan.

He is survived by his wife, Nuran Arikan, and two children.

According to the FBI, a month before the assassination, Consul General Arikan was warned that the risk of Armenian terrorism was severe. Mr. Arikan summoned his security detail and expressed that he did not want anyone to take an unacceptable risk guarding his life. The day before his assassination, Mr. Arikan was visited by an Armenian community leader (whose identity is redacted) who assured Mr. Arikan that the Armenian American community appreciated his efforts at dialogue and reconciliation.

The next morning, as Mr. Arikan drove himself to the office, two Armenian Lebanese immigrants, Hampig Sassounian and Koko Saliba, likely aided by others, cornered his vehicle at a busy intersection on Wilshire Blvd. and shot him more than 14 times in the head and body, killing him gradually. Simultaneously, the "Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide (JCAG) claimed credit. In one parole hearing, Sassounian admitted with a smile that when escaping with Saliba from the crime they "high-fived" each other, scene. Saliba escaped to Lebanon where he was killed. Sassounian was arrested and tried, and although he pleaded innocent, was convicted of first-degree murder, and sentenced to life in prison. In 2002, Sassounian admitted to the assassination in return for the possibility of parole.

Seven parole hearings ensued, almost every 18 months, without the direct victims, Arikan family. Turkey attended in their place. The first six all resulted in denial of parole, either by the California Board of Parole Hearings (BHP) or Governor, as the Turkish Consul General and Turkeys lawyers assisted the prosecutors in preparation and during the hearings.

In the beginning, Turkey was granted victim status, but gradually the BPH decided Turkey was not a direct victim. The Consul General was turned away at the prison gates, while Turkeys lawyers who had once sat next to the prosecutor at the San Quentin Prison parole hearings, during which they could assist the prosecutor with details about the crime and Armenian terrorism, were downgraded to observers and moved to the second row next to the prison guards who were supervising Sassounian. Turkey's lawyers were only able to advise prosecutors at breaks during the 10-hour hearings.

Unfortunately, the US Department of State and United States Attorney General were not able to obtain Turkey victim status, despite direct written appeals to the BPH and California Governor. However, always did they support Turkey by submitting letters from the Secretary of State and the Attorney Journal opposing Sassounians parole. These were accompanied by letters from the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Justice, Turkish Ambassador, and Turkish Bar Association President. The arsenal of good law and policy was always on Turkeys side in the justice against JCAG and ASALA terrorism.

However, on the seventh parole hearing, procedures were twisted. First, in the summer of 2019, unbeknownst to the prosecutor, a parole commissioner granted Sassounian advance parole, and advanced Sassounians next parole hearing 18 months, from June 27, 2020 to December 27, 2019. Secondly, the prosecutor was not informed until the first week of December 2019. One week after that, the prosecutor asked Turkey whether it had heard from the BPH regarding the new parole hearing date, which Turkey had not. With the remaining seven days, Turkey was not able to apply for observer status to appear at the parole hearing and submit a victims impact statement; the State Department and Attorney General were not able to submit letters to support Turkey and oppose parole; Turkish American groups had no opportunity to send their letters and victim impact statements to BPH, even though the convenience of StopTerroristParole.org. With the field left empty, BPH easily granted parole to Sassounian.

After the BPHs kangaroo hearing, in early 2020, the Turkish Consul General and Turkeys lawyers met with the California Governors Office, and the US State Department and Attorney General were able to intervene as well. In May 2020, the Governor reversed the BPHs decision and denied Sassounians parole.

However, in a short time, a California Superior Court reversed Governor Gavin Newsoms decision, holding that Newsom had abused his discretion, whereas it was the court that had overstepped the bounds of law and usurped the governors powers. On top of that, Los Angeles newly elected District Attorney, George Gascon, with the objective of releasing prisoners from Californias overcrowded prisons, strongly advised all state prosecutors to stand down and not appear at parole hearings. The prosecutor in Sassounian protested and appeared. This was all against the background of the US Supreme Courts ruling that California prisoners were overcrowded resulting in cruel and unusual punishment, and the California Supreme Court had ruled that parole was a right. Subsequently, young nonviolent and older inmates, even violent older ones, were given parole priority.

Indeed, under similar circumstances, even Sirhan Sirhan, the assassin of Robert Kennedy, was recently granted parole, despite the intervention of the Kennedy family and their lawyers. However, Governor Newsom reversed the BPHs decision and the Superior Court did not challenge that decision this time.

The path to being released was clearing for Sassounian, now almost 60 years old, as he glided unchallenged through the parole process. The final stone was laid down when Newsom, supported by the Armenian National Committee of America and struggling in a gubernatorial recall vote, did not appeal the decision of the Los Angeles Superior Court, despite Turkeys and Turkeys lawyers' appeals. The law was completely on his side, but he did not appeal. The Biden Administration, unlike prior administration for two decades, did not intervene. When Sassounian was released, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken issued a statement of apology to "Mrs. Arikan family and our friends at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Sassounian was released from San Quentin Prison and taken into ICE custody for deportation to Armenia, which had given him citizenship and offered him employment in the Armenian military. Sassounians custody went dark for several months, and absolutely no information was available regarding his location and terms of release not even on the publicly available inmate databases. No information was shared with the victim's family or even, Turkey. A few months later, Sassounian appeared in Armenia, and the Armenian press reported that he was now giving lectures to Armenian youth who revered him as a hero.

Sassounian never apologized to the Turkish Republic for this act of terror and continues to conceal the identity of JCAG operatives who participated in the assassination of Kemal Arikan.

Our sympathies are with the Arikan family and all victims of terrorism and their families.

Watch the NBC evening news report on the assassination, January 28, 1982. Heidi Schulman Reporting: https://www.izlesene.com/video/los-angeles-baskonsolosu-kemal-arikan-suikasti-28-ocak-1982/10416404

On December 27, 2019, two commissioners of the California Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) granted Sassounian parole. A major irregularity was that the hearing was held without notice to the victims, including the Republic of Turkey, representatives of which have attended and opposed Sassounians release in all prior hearings.

Kaynak/Source: