

****PRESS RELEASE****

On Armenian Genocide Centennial, Thousands Join Armenian President, Members of Congress and Pontiffs of the Armenian Church for Ecumenical Service at Washington's National Cathedral

Multi-Faith Service Delivers Message of Awareness, Gratitude and Unity

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 7, 2015 – To commemorate the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, today, thousands joined Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, members of Congress, Pontiffs of the Armenian Church and multi-faith leaders for an ecumenical service at the National Cathedral in the nation's capital.

2015 marks the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the Armenian Genocide, in which an estimated 1.5 million Armenians perished at the hands of Ottoman Turks from 1915-1923. With a message of awareness, gratitude and unity, the ecumenical service served as the signature event for three days of services, exhibitions, concerts and an award ceremony led by the National Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide Centennial (NCAGC).

Esteemed guests and representatives of various faiths gathered for “The Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide: A Prayer for Justice and Peace” to remember those lost in the Genocide and to demonstrate gratitude for the regeneration of life for which the survivors and their saviors worked so hard.

The Most Rev. Dr. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, welcomed attendees to the service and the Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, delivered the homily. The interfaith ceremony was led by His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, and His Holiness Aram I Catholicos of the Holy See of Cilicia.

Also in attendance were the descendants of saviors who contributed to the survival of thousands of Armenians a century ago. During the service, they were acknowledged and praised for their human compassion and selfless bravery.

“Worshippers of all faiths long for a world of tolerance and devoid of hate and violence,” said Noubar Afeyan, Chair of the NCAGC Steering Committee, who is himself the descendant of a Genocide survivor.

Reflecting on the day's service, the Armenian President offered his perspective:

“It was truly an honor to address the congregation at the National Cathedral,” said President Sargsyan. “Today's ecumenical prayer demonstrated a powerful call to unite this community in the spirit of gratitude, justice and peace.”

“It is important to recognize that we must work together to forge a more peaceful future. Genocide can happen anywhere, at any time; there is no generation, religion or ethnic group that is immune—history has shown this. What happened in 1915 to the Armenian people whether we call it tragedy for

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geopolitical reasons or massacres, it is genocide by its very intent and means, and genocide is a crime against humanity" emphasized His Holiness Aram I during the ceremony.

"We seek to inspire a change of spirit in people—an awakening of the heart that will influence future generations. The events in Washington are a testament to our strength, 100 years after the Genocide, as we join together to promote peace, honor those lost, and protect those at risk around the world no matter their race, religion or ethnicity," said His Holiness Karekin II.

Today's service is part of a series of commemorative events planned by the NCAGC to mark the 100th anniversary of the Genocide. Upcoming events include a concert at the Strathmore featuring performances by renowned Armenian musicians May 8 at 8 p.m., a Divine Liturgy at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception May 9 at 10 a.m., a banquet dinner and awards ceremony at the Marriot Marquis May 9 at 5:30 p.m., and various other exhibitions and cultural events.

For more information about the NCAGC and these events, please visit:

<http://armeniangenocidecentennial.org/>

Photography, videos and press release for media use: <http://edelman.isebox.net/agc100dc>

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the National Cathedral

Washington National Cathedral is a house of prayer for all people called to serve as a spiritual home for the nation. It seeks to be a catalyst for spiritual harmony in our nation, reconciliation among faiths, and compassion in our world. Learn more at www.cathedral.org.

About the National Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide Centennial

The National Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide Centennial (NCAGC) began with the united efforts of the Diocese and Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Churches of America, East and West coasts. The NCAGC provides a unique opportunity to bring Armenians together from across the country and Canada to join in remembering and honoring those lost in the Genocide 100 years ago. Showing a unity of spirit and purpose, the events also serve to raise awareness of the Genocide and thank the institutions and individuals who have helped Armenians to survive and thrive.

For media enquiries please contact:

Email for media requests: Debora Comenalli, Edelman at Debora.comenalli@edelman.com or +1 (202) 270 8873.

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