



A Living *HOPE*

NAYIRI KARJIAN, GENERAL MINISTER, LIVING WATER ASSOCIATION, OHIO NORTHEAST, UCC | OCTOBER 30, 2020

COVID 19 numbers continue to be on the rise. Each number a person, a loved one, a parent, a child, a sibling, a relative, a child of God. Loved ones mourn the loss of their beloveds. Health care providers labor to soothe and heal. Scientists research hastily for vaccines. Lost jobs threaten the livelihood of families and households. Still many refuse to wear masks, a simple act that can slow the spread of the virus. Others refuse to acknowledge the reality of COVID 19 pretending it does not exist. Still others scheme to murder leaders and governors... I want to despair. I want to weep.

PARTISAN POLITICS and everything elections continue to divide and polarize. So called debates turn into insults and scorns. Name calling and animosity disrespect and contempt abide. Confusion and bewilderment continue to reign. We cannot seem to find a conducive way forward. COVID and partisan politics continue to consume us. And consumption is like quicksand out of which it is difficult to emerge. I want to despair. I just want to weep.

RACE RELATIONS, racial inequality, anti-immigrant sentiments continue to divide and separate us. According to Southern Poverty Law Center 940 hate groups are currently active in our country. Extremist groups of different forms, nationalists, zealots, separatists continue to flourish. Bullying, hate and abuse abound even on social media. Overt expressions of racism and prejudice come in multitude. I want despair. I want to weep.

ARMENIA is at war with Azerbaijan. To Armenians, living in Armenia and in diaspora around the world, this war mirrors the Genocide of 1915, when the Ottoman Turkish government began the systematic deportation, attempted conversion and ultimate killing of a million and a half Christian Armenians. Armenia did survive the genocide, first as an independent republic and then as Soviet Armenia. A few years later Joseph Stalin awarded

the Armenian territory of Nagorno Karabakh to Soviet Azerbaijan. It remained semi-autonomous within its bound, and Armenians remained a majority there, although bloodshed was rampant.

As the Soviet Union was falling, the people of Artsakh, the Armenian name for Nagorno Karabagh, voted, just like Armenia and Azerbaijan, to regain sovereignty. Azerbaijan did not want to give up the area, hence the war. In 1994 a cease-fire was brokered but the war wasn't really over. Azerbaijan's senior ally Turkey closed its border with Armenia and continued to deny the Armenian Genocide.

On the surface, the war today seems to be between Armenian Christian Artsakh and Muslim Turkic Azerbaijan. Yet, fighting also are Syrian mercenaries, foreign terrorist fighters paid by those in power, Israeli drones, Turkish helicopters, and Russian bombs. Funding and arms come from Turkey. The unfinished war continues as civilians and infrastructure are targeted and Cathedrals destroyed, reminding us of the Genocide and the destruction of Armenian churches, schools and cultural centers of a century ago. Is this Genocide all over again? Is it about the oil pipe lines of Azerbaijan? I want to despair. I want to weep.

Then I remember the words in Peter's first letter, "God has given us a new birth into a **LIVING HOPE** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." I wonder, is there such a thing as dead hope? Then I remember the word of an Armenian song, "Our worries are many but our HOPE is great." I realize that a dead hope, or losing hope would be the greatest tragedy. For, Christ is Risen and hope always triumphs even if as a glimmer, and sings in the heart even if as lament.

I have benefited from R. K. Honvannissian's, Turkey Leads New Atrocities Against Armenians, Oct 21, www.nypost.com