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Dr. Arda Ekmekji Launches 'Towards Golgotha'



Dr. Arda Arsenian Ekmekji during her presentation at the Glendale Public Library last week

GLENDAL—The Glendale Central Library buzzed with excitement on the evening of July 25, 2012 as the crowd poured into its second floor auditorium to hear Dr. Arda Arsenian Ekmekji, Dean of Arts and Sciences at Haigazian University. She had traveled more than 7000 miles to launch the U.S. release of *Towards Golgotha*, memoirs of her grandfather Hagop Arsenian, a pharmacist and survivor of the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

Elizabeth Grigorian, director of Armenian Outreach at the library, invited Ardashes Kassakhian, Glendale's City Clerk, to the podium to introduce Dr. Ekmekji. Kassakhian is the great grandson of Hagop Arsenian and nephew of Dean Ekmekji who had painstakingly translated the memoirs from Armenian to English. She revealed that she wasn't aware her grandfather's handwritten memoirs even existed until her uncle, visiting from Ottawa in 1996, carried them with him to the Middle East.

Hagop Arsenian documented his early life in the suburbs of Constantinople and the eventual deportation of his family to Aleppo, Syria, then described his life in Palestine from 1919 until 1940. Dr. Ekmekji, during her research at the comprehensive Derian Armenological Library of Haigazian University, read numerous accounts of other survivors and, in comparing their identical descriptions, discovered that the authors had been detained in the same encampments, but never met.

The audience hushed when an audio tape was played of her father, Noubar, reading a portion of her grandfather's writings in Armenian in which he chronicled the atrocities he had witnessed using the terms "massacres" and "slaughter house." The word genocide had not yet been coined, not until the mid '40s by Raphael Lemkin.

Dr. Ekmekji, a full professor at Haigazian, holds a Master of Arts in Ancient History and Archaeology from the American University of Beirut and a Doctorate in Archeology from the University of Paris. Her translation is the first book to be published by Haigazian University Press. As it came off the presses, Dr. Paul Haidostian, President of the University remarked that "all memoirs of genocide survivors or stories of the Armenian genocide are considered as a resurrection, in the Armenian collective conscience." It is available at Amazon.com and the Armenian Missionary Association, amaa@amaa.org.

Audience members who were present and recognized during the evening were Elise Kalfayan, President of the Friends of the Glendale Library, Arno Yeretjian, representing Glendale's Abril Bookstore, Dr. Richard Hovannisian, Prof. Emeritus at UCLA, Rev. Father Ghevont Kirazian, Pastor of the Crescenta Valley Armenian Apostolic Church, and Frank Quintero, the Mayor of Glendale. Also in attendance were members of the Haigazian University Board of Trustees, the Haigazian Women's Auxiliary of Los Angeles, and the Haigazian Alumni Association.

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