

23 November 2006

The Council of Edinburgh City Reaffirms Its Recognition of the Armenian Genocide

Following several meetings and intense political lobbying by Dr Hagop Bessos (Scottish CRAG Committee) and Dr Harry Hagopian (CRAG Consultant) with the Edinburgh councillors (including Leader of the Council and Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group) over the last week, a Motion attempting to reverse last year's recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Edinburgh City Council was defeated today.

The council of Edinburgh City reaffirmed its recognition of the Armenian Genocide by voting down with 56 votes against 2 a Motion proposed by Cllr Philip Attridge that called for the formation of 'a Multinational Commission to carry out an independent and impartial investigation into the *alleged* Armenian genocide'.

An amended Motion proposed by the Conservatives, supporting any discussion of genocide only through the Foreign Office in London and not at Council level in Edinburgh, was also soundly defeated today.

Instead, the following amended counter Motion by Cllr Dawe, Leader of the Liberal Democrats' Group, won by 29 votes against 17 - a majority of 12 votes. The Motion that was voted in stated:

That this Council:

- 1. regrets the attempt to reopen the debate and change the decision of Council of 17 November 2005 to recognise the Armenian genocide; and**
- 2. reaffirms the terms of the motion agreed on that day.**

In contrast with the large Turkish deputation at the Council, CRAG stressed that an issue which had been debated and voted for little over a year ago should not come up for debate yet again. Consequently, it was decided that only the SCC chairman, Dr Hagop Bessos, would speak out today (with support from representatives of the Armenian community in Edinburgh). Dr Bessos rebutted the Attridge Motion and underlined the historical reality and contemporary significance of the Armenian Genocide.

The debate on the floor of the Council, followed by a free vote, ensured that the Motion recognising the Armenian Genocide not only prevailed again but was also re-confirmed with the subsequent Motion today.

Commenting on the outcome of the deliberations and voting today, Dr Bessos expressed the hope that the citizens of Edinburgh would not be subjected in the future to further questions upon their integrity and judgment. He stressed that such a Motion vindicated the experiences not only of his own family but also those of over one million Armenians who died during the Armenian Genocide 1915 and in subsequent years.

Also commenting on the outcome, Dr Harry Hagopian applauded the untiring efforts of the Scottish CRAG Committee led by Dr Hagop Bessos, adding that neither he nor Dr Bessos deemed the Motion anti-Turkish but simply pro-truth and in favour of reconciliation - perhaps an example for the Foreign Office in London.

For further information, log on www.crag.org.uk and www.accc.org.uk

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Campaign for Recognition of the Armenian Genocide (CRAG)