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## **Armenian-Turkish Unity at Slain Editor's Funeral**

By Sebnem Arsu and Susanne Fowler

ISTANBUL — More than 50,000 mourners, including senior Turkish and Armenian officials in a rare display of unity, poured into the heart of Istanbul on Tuesday to bid farewell to [Hrant Dink](#), the Turkish-Armenian journalist who was gunned down outside his offices last week, a death that many Turks hoped would be a catalyst for change.

The Armenian patriarch in Istanbul, Archbishop Mesrob Mutafyan, spoke out during Mr. Dink's funeral against curbs on freedom of expression and encouraged the thaw in relations between [Armenia](#) and Turkey that has become evident since the slaying.

“It is unacceptable to judge and imprison someone because of his thoughts, let alone to kill him,” the archbishop said during the hourlong service at the Holy Mother of God Armenian Patriarchal Church. “It is mystical that his funeral turned into an occasion where Armenian and Turkish officials gathered together.”

Diplomatic relations between Turkey and Armenia were frozen and their border closed in 1993 after years of grievances, chiefly over the mass deaths of Armenians at Turkish hands in 1915, during World War I. Many scholars and most Western governments accept that more than a million Armenians died in what they describe as a genocide, but Turkey says that there were deaths on both sides and that they were an unfortunate result of the war. But on Tuesday, in what was widely regarded as an important symbolic step, Turkish and Armenian officials appeared at Mr. Dink's funeral services.

Top Turkish officials — Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin; Interior Minister Abdulkadir Aksu; the Istanbul governor, Muammer Guler; and the head of the security forces, Celalettin Cerrah — were seated in the front row. Two generals were also present.

The Armenian deputy foreign minister, Arman Kirakossian, was seated behind the Turkish governmental officials, with Karen Mirzoyan, the permanent Armenian representative to the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

Religious leaders included the archbishop of the Armenian Church of America, Khajag Barsamian. Impressed by the strength of the public reaction to Mr. Dink's death, Archbishop Barsamian said in an interview that “his soul will be in peace when he sees that his assassination created some positive steps between two countries.”

Saban Disli, foreign relations officer of Turkey's governing Justice and Development Party, agreed that public revulsion with the killing could improve relations.

“With the help of a supportive public opinion, the best approach to resolve conflicts between the two countries is to assess issues altogether, rather than considering them one

by one in a deadlock,” Mr. Disli said. “The only obstacle that can hinder our good will to open the borders and re-establish dialogue with Armenia would be the destructive lobbying of the Armenian diaspora against Turkey.”

Earlier, with hundreds of police officers in riot gear and with traffic barred on the main thoroughfares, normally chaotic sections of Istanbul were subdued as ethereal Armenian music played from loudspeakers along Republic Avenue; Turks of various ethnicities stood shoulder to shoulder, many in tears.

Many mourners waved circular placards reading “We are all Hrant Dink” in Turkish on one side and in Armenian on the other.

Still other signs read “Murderer 301,” a reference to the law under which scores of writers and intellectuals, including Mr. Dink and the [Nobel Prize](#) winner [Orhan Pamuk](#), have been prosecuted in lawsuits filed by nationalists.

Mr. Pamuk was provided personal security by the police on Tuesday, the CNN Turk Web site reported. Mr. Pamuk was escorted by policemen in plainclothes as he left for a book fair in Egypt.

Mr. Pamuk has refused offers of personal security from authorities in the past, the Web site said.

Article 301, which criminalizes the act of insulting “Turkishness,” remains a roadblock to Turkish entry into the [European Union](#), which is urging Turkey to amend it.

Prime Minister [Recep Tayyip Erdogan](#) has shown some willingness to have the law reworded, asking nongovernmental civic organizations late last year to come up with a draft to submit to Parliament. No single version has been agreed upon, but the killing of Mr. Dink seems certain to spur the debate.

During the march, an elderly woman of Armenian descent, crying on the street, said it was “important to remember that Turkey became a republic with our blood, too.” She asked not to be identified, saying she feared someone might shoot her, too.

The police said that Ogun Samast, 17, had confessed to shooting Mr. Dink and that he said he had been given the weapon by Yasin Hayal, a nationalist convicted in the bombing of a McDonald’s restaurant in 2004.

Mr. Hayal has been detained in connection with the Dink case. Both men are from Trabzon, on the Black Sea in far eastern Turkey, a city known as a nationalist stronghold.

One of the mourners, Nazli Ilicak, a journalist, said that while Muslim Turks felt a strong sense of shame at the killing of Mr. Dink, the government “will find it hard to turn this dynamism into a real step for peace with Armenia before the elections this year, especially in the shadow of increasing nationalism.”

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