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\*In loving memory (2014)

# Armenian Bar Association

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January 11, 2018

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Ms. Renata Luczak  
Comedy Central  
Vice President, Communications  
The Daily Show with Trevor Noah  
1575 N. Gower St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90028  
[renata.luczak@cc.com](mailto:renata.luczak@cc.com)

Re: *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*  
January 8, 2018 Episode; Season 23, Episode 40

Dear Ms. Luczak,

There is a problem. And it is a serious one.

One hundred years after the Genocide, and despite the welcome development of generations of enlightened people all around the world, the Daily Show and its Trevor Noah, on January 8, 2018, turned back the clock to a darker period in our history when he used the phrase “Filthy Armenian” on your network, broadcasting the term to millions of viewers across the globe.

In jest or not, to prove a point or not, as parody or not, our point is simple: the term “Filthy Armenian” should not be part of the English lexicon.

As you must know, the phrase has real historical connotations, just as the “N word” does. After 1.5 million Armenians were murdered and hundreds of thousands of women and children were wasting away without food or water, unprecedented humanitarian relief efforts in the United States provided aid and sustenance to the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. It was not uncommon in those days to hear, and even read in print, the term “Starving Armenians” as a description of the physical condition of those who had miraculously escaped the Turkish atrocities.

It was likewise not uncommon for the phrase “Filthy Armenian” to be used by Turkish soldiers and their henchmen as they butchered Armenian men, raped Armenian women and stole and enslaved Armenian children. The despicable term—*absolutely irrespective of how or why it is uttered*—conjures images of a deplorably dehumanizing moment in the history of the Armenian people. It should not be uttered, just as the word “Ni\*\*er” should not be uttered.

But the term is more than unsettlingly painful—it is today still patently dangerous. It remains, right now, a launching point for hatred against Armenians and Armenophobia,

most notably in Turkey and Azerbaijan. In Turkey, the term is used actively to dehumanize Armenians and other human beings, as if having Armenian blood renders such humans dirty, inferior and open to prey.<sup>1</sup> To be absolutely clear, Azerbaijani media just today cited to the specific January 8, 2018 episode commenting that, by using the phrase, “[Trevor Noah] exposed one more time the real face of Armenians.”<sup>2</sup>

We understand that the reproachful reference to Armenians was intended to coax a laugh from the audience by ridiculing President Trump's self-proclaimed genius and tolerance—we need no lesson in humor and parody; but there is good reason we are not laughing. The Armenian Rights Watch Committee of the Armenian Bar Association monitors the impact of language beyond the couches in our American living rooms, and we insist that those whose voices today are able to reach places like Ankara and Baku—like the voices of Trevor Noah, the Daily Show and Comedy Central—be mindful that their language can solicit more than the immediate giggle.

And that will undoubtedly be the case here. Real human beings will be impacted by the language Mr. Noah used on January 8, 2018. His use of that term—*again, absolutely irrespective of how or why it was uttered*—will continue to give succor to Turks and Azerbaijanis who actively bolster anti-Armenian hatred and violence. The phrase should not be part of the English lexicon—period.

The Daily Show and Trevor Noah would be wise to issue a retraction and an apology. It would be a good start, but it would not be nearly enough to unring the bell of the hate words that rang on January 8, 2018 and, of course, the reverberations of continued insecurity and dehumanization that Armenians in Turkey, Azerbaijan and elsewhere will endure because of it.

We request a meeting with the Daily Show producers, staff writers and Mr. Noah.

Sincerely,

**ARMENIAN RIGHT WATCH COMMITTEE—ARWC  
ARMENIAN BAR ASSOCIATION**

Saro K. Kerkonian  
*Chairman, Armenian Bar Association*

Garo Ghazarian  
*Co-Chairman of the Armenian Rights Watch Committee, 2-term past Chairman*

Karnig Kerkonian  
*Co-Chairman of the Armenian Rights Watch Committee, Board of Governor member*

Armen Hovannisian  
*Special Advisor to the Armenian Rights Watch Committee, 3-term past Chairman*

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<sup>1</sup> Marchand, Laure and others, *Turkey and the Armenian Ghost: On the Trail of Genocide* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2015) at 40, *see also* 56 and 186.

<sup>2</sup> *See* <https://amp.azvision.az/news.php?lang=en&id=78550> (posted January 11, 2018).