

LAWSUIT AGAINST TURKEY PROCEEDS IN UNITED STATES FEDERAL COURT  
LOS ANGELES, CA

*We are excited to contribute, as we can, to empower this important case.*

A lawsuit filed against the Republic of Turkey moves forward in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California following a federal court order on July 11, 2019.

The lawsuit, Ghazarian et al. v. Republic of Turkey, alleges violations of international law as well as statutory and common law claims against Turkey due to conduct committed by Turkey's agents in the United States. The case stems from an attempt by an elderly California man to exercise cultural and religious rights at sacred pilgrimage sites in Turkey as an Armenian Christian.

The federal court previously expressed doubt that it had jurisdiction in the matter under the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act and ordered plaintiffs to show cause as to why the case should not be dismissed.

Kerkonian Dajani LLC, which represents plaintiffs Barkev and Garo B. Ghazarian in the case, filed a response brief addressing the jurisdictional and sovereign immunity issues raised by the court.

Specifically referencing plaintiffs' response, the U.S. federal court did not dismiss the lawsuit and instead held, in its July 11 order, that it would "defer a determination about its jurisdiction until after Turkey has been served and had an opportunity to provide its views on the issue."

The complaint specifically alleges that Turkey's agents harassed, demeaned and degraded Barkev Ghazarian, an elderly man from Glendale, California, because he sought to exercise religious and cultural rights in Turkey as a native Armenian Christian in 2017.

It further alleges that Turkey's agents interfered with the inheritance of Garo B. Ghazarian, Barkev's son, by thwarting his father's efforts to pass to him direct knowledge of such native traditions as practiced by generations of Ghazarians at certain sacred sites situated within the present borders of Turkey. Plaintiffs allege that, in doing so, Turkey ensured that Barkev's direct knowledge of his family's ancestral traditions and pilgrimage sites would not pass to future generations of Ghazarians.

According to the complaint, the acts committed by Turkey's agents were undertaken pursuant to a specific policy of Turkey targeting native Armenian Christians.