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Armenian Bar Association Presents Hrant Dink Freedom Award to Dr. Edita Gzoyan for Courageous Defense of Historical Truth and Academic Independence

MALIBU, Calif. — October 14, 2026 — The Armenian Bar Association presented its prestigious Hrant Dink Freedom Award to Dr. Edita Gzoyan on October 10, 2026, during the Association's Midyear Meeting in Malibu, California. The Association's highest honor recognizes Dr. Gzoyan's extraordinary courage and conviction in defending fundamental human rights, preserving the historical truth of the Armenian Genocide and other injustices against Armenians, and upholding academic integrity and intellectual independence even in the face of political pressure.

Named in honor of Hrant Dink, the Armenian journalist and human rights advocate assassinated in 2007, the award recognizes individuals whose work embodies the courage to speak truth to power, defend human dignity, and advance justice. Dink understood that confronting historical denial and preserving the truth were moral responsibilities essential to justice and reconciliation. Dr. Gzoyan's scholarship and public service reflect that same commitment.

Dr. Gzoyan is a historian and legal scholar whose work has focused on the Armenian Genocide, the experiences of survivors and refugees, international law, humanitarian responses to mass violence, and the preservation of the historical record. She has authored important scholarly works, published extensively, taught and mentored others, and served for many years at the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (AGMI) in Yerevan. Advancing from researcher to Deputy Scientific Director, she became the Institute's Director in 2024, working to strengthen its international scholarly standing and advance rigorous, evidence-based research into the Armenian Genocide.

Dr. Gzoyan's selection for the Hrant Dink Freedom Award reflects her steadfast commitment to preserving the historical record of the Armenian Genocide and documenting subsequent anti-Armenian violence, including the pogroms against Armenians in Sumgait, Kirovabad, and Baku, Azerbaijan, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as well as the 44-Day War in Artsakh in 2020. Her work has helped ensure that the firsthand experiences of Armenian survivors, refugees, and victims of persecution are preserved for scholarly research and future generations.

That commitment was demonstrated during the February 2026 visit of U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance and Second Lady Usha Vance to the Tsitsernakaberd Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex in Yerevan. During the visit, Dr. Gzoyan presented books on the Armenian Genocide and Azeri aggression against Armenians in Transcaucasia, consistent with the institution's tradition of providing scholarly works to visiting dignitaries. She also addressed the history of

Artsakh and drew attention to memorials commemorating Armenian victims of the Sumgait, Kirovabad, and Baku pogroms. Her determination to ensure that these historical realities were not overlooked exemplifies the intellectual independence and moral courage that the Hrant Dink Freedom Award is intended to honor.

Following the visit, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan asked Dr. Gzoyan to resign as Director of AGMI. Her departure prompted concern among scholars, human rights organizations, and members of the Armenian community, raising broader questions about academic freedom and the independence of institutions entrusted with preserving and interpreting historical evidence.

In honoring Dr. Gzoyan, the Armenian Bar Association recognizes the importance of protecting scholarship from political interference and ensuring that the documented historical record can be expressed freely without fear of political coercion or punishment. The award acknowledges not only her distinguished academic achievements but also her determination to preserve and express historical truth when doing so carries significant professional consequences.

Introducing Dr. Gzoyan at the Midyear Meeting Luncheon, Judge Zaven V. Sinanian (Ret.) emphasized the moral responsibility embodied in the award and the connection between her work and Hrant Dink's legacy.

"The Hrant Dink Freedom Award carries profound responsibility," Judge Sinanian stated. "It bears the name of a man who understood that journalism was not merely the reporting of events but a moral commitment to truth, human dignity, reconciliation, and justice."

Judge Sinanian observed that Dr. Gzoyan's scholarship reflects the understanding that preserving historical memory is both an intellectual pursuit and a moral obligation. He emphasized that academic freedom matters most when tested, historical integrity is paramount when the truth is inconvenient, and courage matters most when something is at stake.

"Dr. Gzoyan has reminded us that a scholar's responsibility is not simply to preserve the history that is comfortable to hear," Judge Sinanian said. "It is to pursue the evidence, protect the record, and give voice to those whose experiences might otherwise be forgotten."

The award inscription recognizes Dr. Gzoyan's extraordinary courage and conviction in defending fundamental human rights and universal dignity; her commitment to historical accuracy, academic integrity, transformative truth, and lasting justice; and her determination to preserve and protect the authentic record of the Armenian Genocide and its aftermath. It also honors her devotion to education, documentation, and scholarship, as well as her efforts to safeguard the independence of public and national institutions.

The Hrant Dink Freedom Award has a distinguished history of recognizing exceptional individuals who have advanced historical truth, freedom of expression, and justice. Past recipients and honorees have included Genocide scholars Vahakn Dadrian and Taner Akçam in 2007; former U.S. Ambassador to Armenia John Marshall Evans in 2008; Armenian Bar Association founder, the Republic of Armenia's first Foreign Minister, and former parliamentarian Raffi K. Hovannisian in 2009; investigative journalist Edik Baghdasaryan, Editor-in-Chief of Hetq.am, in 2012; and distinguished historian Professor Richard Hovannisian in 2015.