

## Interview with Hagop Dikranian, Hunchack Party Chairman in Cyprus

Azad-Hye had the chance to conduct a meeting in Nicosia with **Hagop Dikranian**, the Chairman of the newly formed branch in Cyprus. Below is his reply to a question regarding Melkonian School.



**Azad-Hye, Dubai, 18 January 2006:**

**Q - We would like to know about the difficulties that Melkonian Educational Institute (MEI) has faced until its recent closure. After months of the misfortunate decision how is the situation assessed now?**

**A** - Unfortunately, despite the pan-Armenian outcry, the AGBU's (Armenian General Benevolent Union) leadership proceeded in executing its treacherous decision resulting in the closure of this historical institute of education and science. This year, for the first time the school bell of the MEI did not ring. No students were accepted to the empty classrooms. As a consequence not only the Cypriot Armenians, but also Armenians from many other Communities in Diaspora were deprived from this vital source of light and knowledge. The Institute served young Armenian generations from abroad who were staying in the boarding school.

Our Community is facing more troubles now. The wave of assimilation is threatening in a direct way, especially now that the parents are obliged to send their children to foreign schools where no Armenian secondary education is provided. Even the Cypriot circles have expressed their concern and anxiety on the same issue. The Parliament of Cyprus described the step taken by AGBU as an "act of hostility". Moreover, the Government suggested financial assistance for the survival of MEI.

While the Central Administration of AGBU and its closer circles appeared in the controversial position of staging the closure of an Armenian school, the Melkonian Alumni Associations worldwide launched intense struggle to save their beloved school. The situation was complicated when the other guarantor of the MEI, the Patriarchate of the Armenians of Constantinople (Istanbul) took legal and judicial steps against the danger of closure. This process commenced in California and now is transferred into the Cypriot Court, where it waits for proper verdict. Meanwhile the school remains closed and the property unused. Two historical Armenian bodies (AGBU and Patriarchate of Armenians of Constantinople) are now facing each other, waiting for the judgment of the Court, anxious to see if the school will remain closed or reopen. This is a shameful and outrageous situation.

It is worth mentioning here that the Hunchak party, in Cyprus and abroad has expressed its clear position on this subject, opposing this damaging policy of AGBU. The 18<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Party, which was held recently in Cyprus, condemned the decision to close the doors of Melkonian in front of the students, considering it an assault against our people, history and heritage. We consider the silence and indifference of our both Catholicosates regarding this topic, a matter of condemnation, especially while celebrating the 1600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian Alphabet and the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide (both marked nation-wide just months ago).