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**AS/Cult/AA (1998) 8**  
8 April 1998

**Confidential**  
English only  
P:/CULT98/AA/AACAA8.98

## **COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND EDUCATION**

### **Sub-Committee on the Cultural Heritage**

#### **Cultural Heritage of Cyprus**

Letter from Mr Khosrov Haroutyunyan, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia to Mrs Leni Fischer, President of the Parliamentary Assembly (31 March 1998)

Reply by Mrs Fischer (6 May 1998)



**ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ՀԱՆՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԱԶԳԱՅԻՆ ԺՈՂՈՎԻ ՆԱԽԱԳԱՀ**  
**PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**

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*31 March 1998, Yerevan*

**Madam President,**

I am writing to you with regard to a matter, which raises serious concerns for the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, Armenians all around the world, and I am sure, for everyone caring for creation of the atmosphere of peace and security in Cyprus.

It has come to our attention that the authorities of the so-called "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" intend to convert the Armenian Monastery of Sourp Margar into a 50-bed hotel at the cost of one million dollars. The monastery and the surroundings will be leased to the "Department of Museums and Antiquities" for forty-nine years, while a contract will be concluded with Mr. Devis Sommezlev, an engineer and businessman, by which the latter will carry out the reconstruction works at the site.

The confirmation of this information has been found in an article published by the Turkish Cypriot newspaper Ortan, which referred to an interview given by the Director of the above mentioned Department to the Turkish Cypriot News Agency.

The monastery is a tenth century monument of architecture, situated near the village of Khartza in the Kyrenia range, the occupied part of the island. It is one of the unique samples of ancient Armenian culture in this region, and it stands out as an illustrious example of cultural heritage left endanger the integrity and purpose of this historical monument.

**H.E. LENI FISCHER**  
**PRESIDENT, PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**  
**COUNCIL OF EUROPE**  
**Strasbourg**

Armenia has no official contacts with the Turkish Cypriot authorities, who control the territory. I would therefore, request your assistance in using all leverage available to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and its bodies to persuade the above-mentioned authorities to abandon their plans with regard to the Monastery.

I will be ready to provide any further information on this matter and I look forward to bringing my personal involvement in finding a fair and acceptable solution to this problem.

In anticipation of your understanding and cooperation, I remain,

Yours Sincerely,

Khosrov HAROUTYUNYAN

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'K. Haroutyunyan', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

*Council of Europe  
Parliamentary Assembly*

*The President*

Strasbourg, 6 May 1998

Dear President,

Thank you for your letter drawing attention to the possible conversion of the historic Armenian Monastery of Sourp Margar in Cyprus into a hotel.

I appreciate and share your concern for the preservation of the Armenian heritage, which is I believe very much an integral part of our common European cultural heritage. The international community has indeed a responsibility to react when this heritage is under threat.

Your representative Mrs Gayane Saroukhanian has already spoken on the matter in our Assembly's Sub-Committee on the Cultural Heritage. I am therefore sending your letter to the General Rapporteur on the Cultural Heritage, Mr Paul Staes, who has been asked to investigate.

I very much hope that a fair and acceptable solution will be found.

Yours sincerely,



Leni Fischer

H.E. Khosrov HAROUTYUNYAN  
President of the National Assembly of Armenia

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cc. M. Paul Staes

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