

COMMUNIQUE

Appeal – Open Letter to the Armenian General Benevolent Union Central Board

January 19, 2014

Berj Setrakian, Esq., President
Honorable Members
A.G.B.U. Central Board
New York

Dear Mr. Setrakian:

With this Appeal – Open Letter we appeal to you to reopen The Melkonian Educational Institute, especially for Armenian students from Syria.

As you are aware, a terrible civil war has been taking place in Syria for the last 3 years. Factions from all sides are shooting and bombing each other without distinction. Armenians living in Aleppo, Damascus, Kamishly, Kessab, and other regions of Syria are falling victims to this terrible situation. Surly, you are privy to more detailed accounts of the devastation and slayings that Armenians in Syria, namely Armenian youth, are suffering. Armenian schools remain partially open, but are in constant danger of attacks. Thousands of Syrian-Armenians have been forced to leave their homes and seek residence in Armenia and Artsakh, Jordan, Lebanon, or elsewhere.

Today, the Armenian youth who attend schools in Syria live in constant fear and anxiety of getting killed. They are also exposed to the other psychological and emotional traumas of living through war. There is no safety, and living conditions are unbearable. In parts of Aleppo, food and water are scarce. It is crucial, that we act now to lend a helping hand and move these youth to safety.

In light of the horrific and volatile state of Syrian affairs, we urge The Honorable Central Board to retract its decision to close the Melkonian Institute, particularly since this motion would free Armenian students from their daily struggles in Syria. We believe that financial considerations run secondary to the need to execute this philanthropic initiative. For the past eight years after

the closure of the Melkonian Institute, the accumulated funds to the Benefactors' huge Bequest have significantly multiplied due to income generated by commercial structures built on Melkonian property. Also, because these students are technically refugees, various international organizations, the United Nations, American Red Cross, and others would be willing to assist. We are sure that your legal and public relations advisors could find the financial means necessary to reopen the Melkonian Institute.

The reestablishment of the Melkonian Institute would provide a safe haven in which approximately 1000 students would receive a high-quality education *right away*. In addition, it will build upon Melkonian's mission as a major center for educating Armenian youth and preventing the loss of the western Armenian dialect. This should be at the forefront of A.G.B.U's objectives. No other Armenian organization, not even the Armenian Church, can accomplish this mission.

Considering the severity and seriousness of the above-mentioned set of circumstances, we formally propose that you withdraw your decision to close The Melkonian Educational Institute, and reopen it without delay. While A.G.B.U's ongoing efforts to help Syrian Armenians are widely appreciated, we believe the venture to reopen The Melkonian Institute will offer invaluable benefits to this community of Armenians and inevitably build upon the merits of the A.G.B.U's organization.

We also propose that the humanitarian aid being provided by A.G.B.U. to Armenia be primarily allocated to the cause of Armenian refugees from Syria, who are settling in Armenia and Artsakh.

We trust that your consideration of this plight will be fueled by benevolence and logicity.

Thanking you in advance,

A group of Melkonian Graduates

Note: All those Armenians who are in agreement to reopen the Melkonian Educational Institute mainly for the Syrian-Armenian students, please complete and sign the provided e-mail form and send it to the assigned e-mail address.

Visit www.melkonianforever.org Main Page and send your support by [Email](#) or via [Feedback](#)

Thank You