

A Huge Gathering at the Armenian Bar Association's 20th Annual Meeting in Glendale, California, May 8-9

GLENDALE - Several hundred legal heavyweights and dignitaries, along friends and family, celebrated the Armenian Bar Association's (ArmenBar) 20th Anniversary at a gala on May 9, 2009 at the Glendale, Hilton.

The banquet culminated a spectacular weekend complete with legal seminars, a pro bono community workshop, a star studded luncheon, and receptions.

"Simply put, this was a fabulous meeting," said Armen Hovhannisian, past Chairman of ArmenBar, and the meeting organizer. "After 20 years, we reaffirmed our wide relevance, special community role, and dynamic vibrancy. Our report card shows that we continue to make a positive difference for Armenians throughout the world," said Hovhannisian.

Governor George Deukmejian, one of an elite group of ArmenBar Honorary Members, was the keynote speaker at the gala dinner banquet. He wowed the crowd with the delivery of a true statesman and also with his comical anecdotes from the annals of Nasreddin. Hodja. Deukmejian, in a serious mood, spoke about the budget crisis, and ways to improve the situation, in California and in the United States, in general. Four hundred enthusiastic supporters were on-hand to witness the recognition and awarding of distinguished ArmenBar members.

Raffi K. Hovhannisian received the highly coveted Hrant Dink Freedom Award for his principled stand on Genocide recognition throughout the world. He is the founder of ArmenBar, the First Foreign Minister of the Republic of Armenia, and the first Armenian from the Diaspora to become a member of the Armenian Parliament.

Professor Ann Lousin, the only three term Chair of ArmenBar, and a professor at the John Marshall Law School in Chicago received a lifetime achievement award for her extensive service and mentoring to lawyers and law students.

Vicken Simonian, the longest-serving Board member of ArmenBar, received a public service award for years of pro bono service to the Armenian community and for his sustained volunteerism in the Los Angeles County court system as a judge pro tem, mediator, arbitrator and settlement officer.

Supreme Court Justice Ming Chin Luncheon Speaker

California Supreme Court Justice Ming Chin was the main luncheon speaker, and was introduced by fellow California Supreme Court Justice Marvin Baxter, a founding and Honorary Member of the Armenian Bar Association. After drawing parallels between his own family's immigrant past and the experiences of the Armenian community, Chin praised the outreach efforts of ArmenBar and encouraged the group to promote and help preserve impartiality in the judiciary.

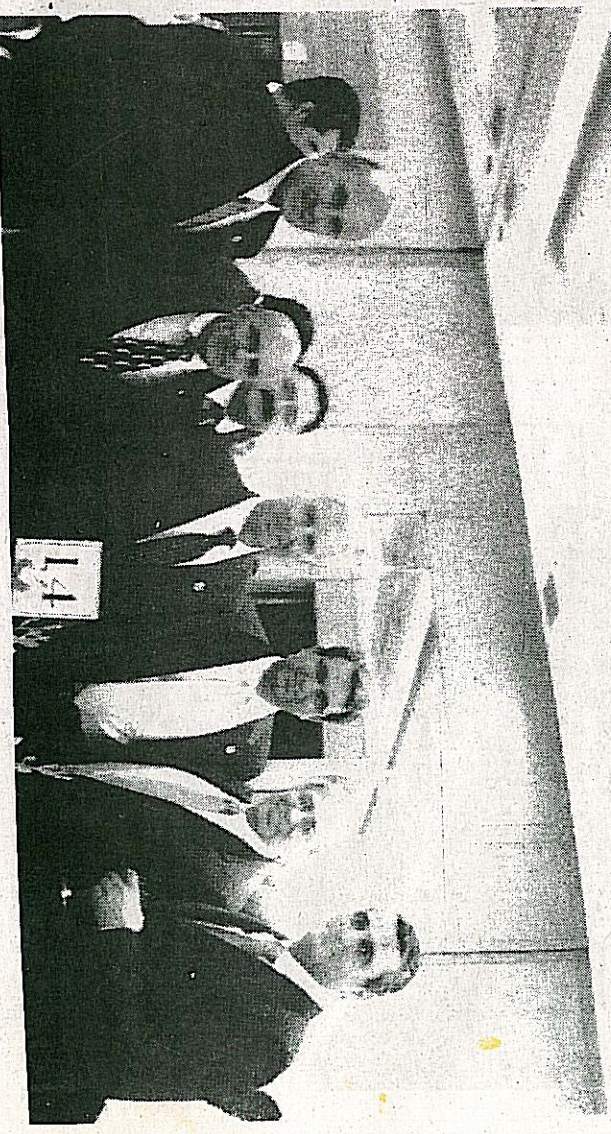
A panel on human and civil rights in Armenia, and the role of the courts in protecting such rights, was an important part of the legal seminars. Renowned Armenian civil rights attorney and Member of Parliament Zaruhi Postaniyan was the guest speaker. She was joined by Raffi K. Hovhannisian on the panel.

Nicholas Koumjian, a prosecutor in several international criminal tribunals and currently working at the Hague, was a special guest speaker in a panel focusing on the prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Koumjian is the chief prosecutor in the highly publicized, current trial of Charles Taylor, the former President of Liberia. The trial is taking place in The Hague, and Taylor is the first former African head of state to appear before an international tribunal for crimes against humanity.

Phillip Lynch, an Assistant U.S. Attorney who was appointed by the U.S. Department of Justice to be the Rule of Law Coordinator in Baghdad, Iraq in 2007, joined Koumjian on the panel. Lynch has had the unique experience of helping to establish Iraq's legal system following the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime, and shared some of those experiences. He discussed his first-hand involvement relating to the trial of Saddam Hussein, which resulted in a death sentence and execution.

The panel was moderated by John Lulejian from the U.S. Attorney's office. Lulejian is a member of the violent and organized crime prosecution section, and is also a Board Member of ArmenBar.

Garo Ghazarian, Dean of the People's College of Law, lead a panel discussion on "Crime and Justice in the Armenian Community." The panel included Steven Lubell a Commissioner in the City of Burbank, Thomas Lorenz and Tigran Topadzhikyan, both Sergeant with the Glendale Police



From left: Sheriff Lee Baca, Justice Armand Arabian, Tevan Aroustamian, Governor George Deukmejian, attorney Frank Zerounian, former State Senator Charles Poochigian, and Armenia's Consul General Grigor Hovhannisian.



From left: Superior Court Judge Larry Crispo, attorney Garo Mardrossian, and Superior Court Justice Stephen Czuleger.

