

– OPEN LETTER to ALL ARMENIANS –

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The Closure of Melkonian is a Pan-Armenian issue!!

HELP US TO SAVE THE MELKONIAN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE FROM BEING CLOSED OR SOLD

Dear Armenians,

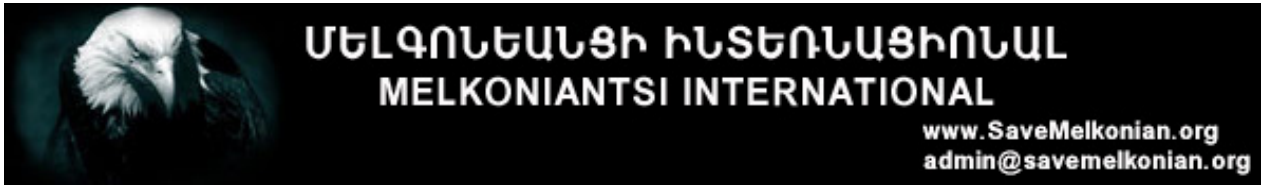
On March 16, 2004 the Central Board (CB) of AGBU announced its decision to close the Melkonian Educational Institute (MEI) by June 2005. We, the **Melkoniantsi International** (MI – the confederation of Melkonian Alumni Associations worldwide) are appealing to the entire Armenian Diaspora and every Armenian person to help us to prevent the realization of the AGBU plans.

Melkonian is no doubt the most important and famous Armenian school in the world. It has been referred to as the '*jewel in the crown of the AGBU*'. The Melkonian Educational Institute has neither failed nor has ceased to fulfil its mission: it has produced **the cream of the nation** and still continues to create strong, successful and wilful individuals, with truly fascinating personalities. Moreover, the graduates of MEI are, as a rule, quite *politicised, proud and passionate about their history, culture, civilisation and identity* – something that becomes less of a feature among contemporary Armenian Diasporic adolescents. Only a Boarding school can achieve this. MEI has produced the leaders of Armenian communities, intellectuals, teachers, academics, doctors, artists, public servants, professionals and an endless list of champions of Armenian Diaspora.

Closing that school down would be yet another major blow in the history of Armenian Diaspora's social disintegration and cultural degradation. Succinctly put, the idea of closing MEI or discontinuing it as a boarding school is tantamount to aiding and abetting the 'White genocide' of assimilation.

The AGBU has repeatedly failed to produce any reasonable justification for their commitment to close the school. More: to this day the AGBU CB has refused to discuss any of the issues with interested parties, preferring to do it's work behind closed doors. All of their answers have been ambiguous, elusive and evasive. There is no transparency and accountability; its dealings with the broader Armenian community at large have been arrogant and high handed. And AGBU has on many occasion, in our opinion, lied about its intentions, they have remained irresponsible to all the petitions and still turn a blind eye and treat MEI as their own private property.

The MEI was founded to educate Armenians from the Diaspora and to educate them within an Armenian environment. Melkonian school has provides teenagers from over 40 countries with an opportunity to live and grow up together in an entirely Armenian environment, and thus to explore and strengthen that which is common to them, irrespective of where they come from, their Armenianness. This can only be achieved in a long established **boarding** school environment one with its established traditions and culture going back over 78 years – that is, the MEI as it stands!



In 1925 Garabed Melkonian assigned all of his wealth (factories, lands in Egypt, stocks, etc) to AGBU Lausanne so as to form the “*Melkonian Fund*”. That wealth was valued at 425,092.5 Egyptian Pounds and the entry in AGBU records states that \$4,647,020 was received in 1925. In today’s money that wealth nears **\$1,500,000,000**. It was stated clearly by Garabed Melkonian that “***Only the interest and income from this capital will be devoted to and used in the service of the above-described goals***[the Melkonian mission goal being ‘*to ensure the education of poor young Armenians*’ see Clause VII of the Deed]”. However, what remains of the Melkonian Fund today is only worth \$5,500,000. In 78 years the AGBU has not published any reports as to what happened to all that wealth and as to how exactly it has been spending the interests generated from that Fund. Furthermore, it has repeatedly refused to publish the accounts of the MEI itself.

Thus, it is clear that the AGBU was tasked to act **only** as a **fund manager** for the “Melkonian Fund” and to carry on Melkonian brothers’ legacy. The Deed also clearly states that AGBU has no right to sell MEI lands or to close the school down. Nevertheless, a large chunk of Melkonian lands was indeed sold in 1980s and the proceeds went toward construction of “Melkonian Commercial Centre” – an enterprise that was promised to make MEI self-sufficient, though the proceeds from it go to AGBU directly to this very day. Furthermore, the Deed is set in such a way that MEI cannot be closed down even if AGBU goes bankrupt – it also has very specific instructions to the banks regarding the procedures should the AGBU find itself unable to carry the mission of the MEI onwards. Nevertheless, the AGBU CB takes the liberty of deciding to close the MEI in June 2005.

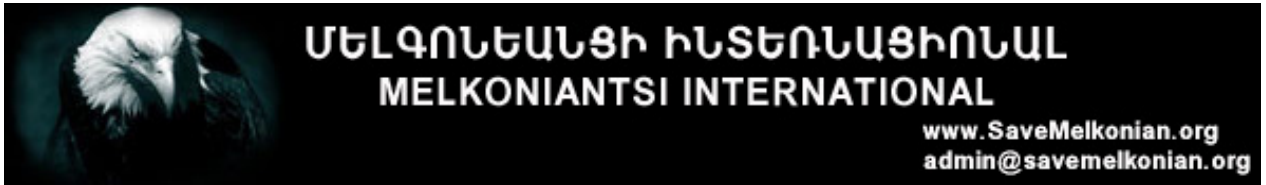
That is what they (the AGBU CB) have “decided” and if nobody stops them they will put that decision into practice by June 2005.

All details regarding the issue of Melkonian closure and sale are available at **[www.SaveMelkonian.org](http://www.SaveMelkonian.org)**

## **We Call upon the Whole of Armenian Community for Help!!!**

Given all of the above,

- a) The MEI still fulfils its mission and is still the most important and unique school in the Armenian Diaspora. And the standards of the school are on the rise,
- b) The MEI can be and is a financially totally **self-sufficient** institution not requiring any financial input from general AGBU funds, c) The proposed closure of the school goes against the Will of Garabed Melkonian (1925),
- d) The Cypriot people and government wish to see the MEI staying in Cyprus and have already committed to doubling their already substantial annual grant to the school,
- e) Cyprus being a member of the European Union from May 1<sup>st</sup> 2004, will give the MEI a much enhanced advantages over any proposed alternatives.



Therefore, We, the **MELKONIANTSI INTERNATIONAL (MI)** – the confederation of Melkonian Alumni Associations worldwide, call upon the entire Armenian Nation and every Armenian Person to intervene to the best of their capacities (both financially and practically) to help us in our struggles against the Cultural Genocide that the AGBU CB is about to perpetrate.

We call upon every Armenian organization in the Diaspora, to oppose in whatever way they can, the realization of the AGBU's decision

We call upon every Armenian newspaper, newsletter, Armenian website, every Radio-station and TV-channel to publicize and spread the information about the catastrophe that AGBU intends to undertake.

We call upon every influential Armenian businessman and politician to help our cause by intervening with the AGBU CB and/or by supporting our cause financially and practically.

We call upon every Armenian to support us in every way possible; by informing the Armenian communities in which they live of the facts surrounding this issue, of helping to raise awareness of the issues; and wherever possible, by fundraising on behalf of Melkoniantsi International or their local Melkonian Alumni chapters. No contribution, be it financial or moral, will be too small.

We have initiated a fundraising campaign to collect funds under the name of the **\*Melkoniantsi International Fund\***. All donations will be dedicated to the efforts to keep the school open as it is. Every cent counts and we urge every Armenian who wants to stop this new **White genocide** against our people, to donate. You can Donate Online, by bank transfer or set up monthly/weekly payments. Details of the account and how to donate can easily be found on our website [www.SaveMelkonian.org](http://www.SaveMelkonian.org).

Whether your contribution is **€5, £20, \$10,000** or a letter/phone-call to a potential donor/organization; Whether your contribution is a TV show or a Radio broadcast, or a newspaper article or our banner on your website; Whether your contribution is a poster or leaflets placed in Armenian centers raising the issue; whether it is a fundraising activity for MI fund or a letter to AGBU CB, your contribution to our campaign will be much appreciated and will bring us a step closer to saving the all-Armenian school.

Please make a copy of this letter and forward it to others. We can and we will Save Melkonian. Please do not neglect this call: **Awake and Rise!**

Sincerely,

**MELKONIANTSI INTERNATIONAL (MI)**

Coordinating Committee

(Save Melkonian campaign)

[www.SaveMelkonian.org](http://www.SaveMelkonian.org)

e-mail: [admin@SaveMelkonian.org](mailto:admin@SaveMelkonian.org)

This is now a Pan-Armenian issue!!!  
**WE WILL NOT GET TIRED**