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Homenetmen Glendale Ararat Chapter
Cultural Division

Get to Know...

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GRIGOR ZOHRAB

JUNE 26, 1861 — MAY 21, 1915

Grigor Zohrab was an influential Armenian writer, politician, lawyer and philanthropist, living in Istanbul, Turkey. He was arrested and killed by Turkish authorities during the Armenian Genocide. Zohrab was born into a wealthy family in Bestikas, Istanbul in 1861. His early education was completed at a local Catholic Armenian school. He received a civil engineering degree from Galatasaray Institute, but did not work in that field. Instead, he enrolled in a newly opened law school, the Imperial University of Jurisprudence, and received his law degree in 1882. He was a revered lawyer in the courts of the Ottoman Empire. He became a professor at the university, teaching law.

Grigor Zohrab defended successfully many Armenians charged with a variety of political and criminal offenses between 1895-96. As a result of his defense of a Bulgarian revolutionary in the course of which he accused a Turkish official of torture, he was disbarred and forced to live abroad. In 1908, following the revolution of the Young Turks, he became a member of parliament in the Ottoman Council, and also served his community as an Armenian councilor. Ever since he was a teenager, Zohrab showed great interest in national work and contributed heavily to his community. At the age of 30 he was chosen to be part of the national council of Constantinople and served on the council until his death.

From 1908 onwards, Zohrab was a member of parliament and known for his powerful speeches. He strongly defended Armenian interests and rights inside the council and at all levels of the government. In 1909 during the Adana massacre, he strongly criticized the Turkish authorities for their actions and demanded that those responsible be brought to justice.

During the mass arrests and execution that would signal the start of the Armenian Genocide in and around April 24, 1915, Zohrab was working hard to try to stop the violence. As a member of Parliament he was, trying to contact the Turkish authorities and to plea for the immediate stop of the hostilities. He even contacted his supposed friend Talat Pasha to protest, but all in vain. Zohrab told Talat that one day he would demand an explanation for these terrible actions. This would be the last time the two would meet. Some in his immediate circle strongly encouraged him to leave the country, but he refused. The following day, on May 21, 1915, Zohrab was arrested by the Turkish authorities, and executed without trial.

