

15 September 2026

Dear friends, distinguished guests, a warm welcome to you all!

Հարգելի հիւրեր, սիրելի բարեկամներ, բարի եկաք:

Havalu hogirno em hami xêr hatin.

Today is the 72nd birthday of my *Chutag*, whom I always hold in my heart with such deep longing and love. He was 52 when he was killed. This coming January will mark the 20th anniversary of his assassination.

20 years without him... 20 years of striving to keep his legacy alive...

Tonight, once again, we have gathered to celebrate his life and his struggle, as well as those who pursue similar struggles, through the International Hrant Dink Award we present in his name.

Distinguished guests, dear friends,

As I was trying to write these words, a folk song kept coming to my lips. A song that sprang from hearts yearning for a homeland where my people had lived for 4,000 years—hearts aching with the pain of displacement, exile and massacre, and of being subjected to cultural genocide as well. A folk song that has kept that pain and longing alive, passing them down from generation to generation, becoming almost like a hymn:

‘Without a mother or father,
without a sister or brother, without a husband;
even the moon and the sun are strangers to me.’

Regrettably, this year too, our world has continued on its course, engulfed in war. ‘Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.’ The suffering, the cries of anguish, the plight of migrants and the testimonies of what they have endured are mounting day by day. And yet, there is no sign of relenting. Human beings have become enemies to one another and to the environment.

In today’s wars, as states fight one another, civilians and identities are directly targeted, while a language of hatred and hostility towards those who are not regarded as one of their own continues to spread. To justify their wars and ambitions in the eyes of their own societies, states do not hesitate to define the enemy not as another state, but in terms of race and religion, portraying entire societies and civilisations as enemies. This is why countering this hateful discourse of othering and demonisation is just as important as opposing war itself. Indeed, it is critically important.

We who stand for living together belong to no single nation, race or religion.

We are of every race, every religion and every nation.

We who stand for living together are everywhere on this planet; we are citizens of every state.

We who stand for living together are not the exception.

We who stand for living together are united in opposing the divisive policies of the states we are citizens of.

That is why we who stand for living together oppose both a state order that fuels war mongering and the discourse that turns ancient peoples against one another in order to perpetuate that order.

We are living through a time when constitutions and international law are losing their force. Every 15 September, I cannot let the day pass without speaking the name of my dearest Çiğdem Mater in your presence. I look forward to the day when she will once again join us in this hall. We continue to hold on with hope to our vision of a society where she and all political prisoners are free, where freedom of expression can be exercised to the fullest, and where, united in democracy, we stand for living together against the warmongering we see across the world. I salute everyone who is contributing their efforts and hard work to what is being pursued under the name of the peace process. When it comes to peace, all else becomes secondary. I truly hope that the outcome will far exceed all expectations.

Dear friends,

No matter how hopeless, exhausting or disheartening it may sometimes feel, we will continue to say: peace, peace, peace. We want peace.

Every effort, every endeavour made in the pursuit of peace and justice is precious. It is also a dignified undertaking for those who commit themselves to it. True peace, of course, requires courage—the courage to face the truth and to confront what lies deep beneath the surface.

‘Justice is the foundation of the state’ is a word of God. Justice strengthens the foundations; it mends and heals grieving, wounded and broken hearts; it restores strength to battered bodies and renews them; it revives hopes that have faded and gives us reason to hope again.

Light breaks through, and darkness recedes.

The word of the Lord says: ‘The Lord detests lying lips, but delights in those who are truthful. In the way of righteousness there is life; along that path is immortality.’*

Woe, woe, woe to the day when the Lord's patience runs out. And so, I would like to make a humble appeal to all leaders, those in positions of authority, and those whose voices carry weight: Cast resentment and hatred out of your lives, along with language that others and turns people into enemies. Then fear, too, will recede. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom; there is healing. There is love. Where there is love, there is no fear. Love casts out fear.

With the hope that together we will see the days when love triumphs over fear, when light triumphs over darkness, and when neither the moon nor the sun is a stranger to us...With my warmest love and respect to you all.