

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Cyprus Armenian community mobilized to save Melkonian school**

***They call on the government to intervene***

***“It is a part of the cultural and historical heritage of us all”***

The Armenian community of Cyprus has been mobilized in a final effort to help save the Melkonian school after two Supreme Court decisions – issued coincidentally at the same time -- overturned a heritage preservation order and an injunction on the use of the land, paving the way for the destruction of the historical school and the commercial development of the founders' estate.

The determination with which the New York-based organization that was entrusted with the administration of the estate sought to overturn the protective measures on the historical buildings and the forest on the main Limassol Avenue, proves that it never wanted anything else but to sell the land and develop it, said community members.

“This is holy ground. It is the cultural and historical heritage of all of us – Armenians as well as Greeks of Cyprus and cannot allow anyone to destroy it,” they added.

In a series of protest letters signed by the Armenian Representative in Parliament, Mr. Vartkes Mahdessian and Archbishop Varoujan of the Cyprus Prelacy, and supported by political and other organizations that represent the vast majority of the community, the Armenians of Cyprus are demanding that the government find ways to save the estate so that the school can reopen some day soon.

They also demand for some explanations from the Attorney General asking him to investigate the reasons why the public defense failed in the case of the preservation order.

“It is with sorrow and regret that the Armenian community of Cyprus was informed of the Supreme Court decision dated December 11, 2006, in the appeals case 943/05, that overturned the preservation order on the historical buildings and the forest of the Melkonian School,” said the protest letters that were sent to the political party leaders as well as the President of the Supreme Court Council, expressing their frustration to the latter.

“According to reports in the daily press, the reason given for the reversal of the preservation order did not take into consideration the historical, cultural and national importance of the place, both to the Armenian community of

Cyprus as well as to the whole of the people of Cyprus, as it is regarded as an important cultural heritage site for all Cyprus.

“We demand that the Attorney General consider this as a matter of national interest and comprehensively contribute to the efforts to reassign a protection order on the historic buildings and the forest, in order to save one of the greatest national treasures of Cyprus and the whole of the Armenian Diaspora.”

The Armenian community has also asked that all the political parties position themselves clearly and practically on whether they are in support of saving the historical site and reopening the Melkonian school.

The protest letters conclude by reminding the political parties that “the House of Representatives had condemned (on March 26, 2004) the decision to close the Melkonian school as a “hostile act”. But the organization that is entrusted with the administration of this national treasure continues to mock the House and its members and is proceeding with the implementation of its plans, that is the leveling and the commercial development of the property and the forest.”

“We don’t want them to give us pledges any more. Let them transform their promises to actions,” the community members added.

As regards the reversal of an injunction on the use of the Melkonian Estate, as was requested in the Cyprus courts by the Armenian Patriarch of Bolis, members of the community say it is not impossible for the case to be heard at the European Court of Justice, a development that would also have negative political implications for Cyprus.