

Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, as altruistic saviors of Genocide survivors.

There is virtually no survivor account or memoir that does not speak of scenes of “slave markets” where Armenian boys and girls and young women were sold, or the heart-rending supplications of mothers begging Kurdish women to take their children so that at least the children could survive. In these moments of absolute despair and agony, the physical survival of the child was of utmost importance, regardless of the circumstances threatening the child’s racial and religious identity. Siranush was one of these children, Setrak Baghdoyan remembers. Her mother’s plea had been so sincere and emotional that a Kurdish woman took Siranush in her arms and promised to care for her like her own daughter.<sup>47</sup> How many babies and little children grew up like Siranush in Turkish or mostly Kurdish families, with no recollection of their ancestry? And in the rare cases when the mothers of such children survived, how could they go on living with the pain of having relinquished their children, their flesh and blood, to a Muslim stranger?

The horrors of the massacres continued to live on, their memory unabated, and tormented the souls of the survivors. Vahram Garabent was only ten years old when the massacres began. His father, grandfather, and four uncles were taken away, and were never heard of again. Vahram’s mother, grandmother, and his younger brother converted to Islam and remained in Merzifon. That was an option given to the Merzifon Armenians. The rest of Vahram’s extended family

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<sup>47</sup> Baghdoyan, *Erb drakhte dartsav dzhokhk* (2007), p. 240.