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President, 435 Members of Congress Get Genocide Documentary
“River Ran Red” with Letter from Jewish World Watch
Film is Screened to Large Audiences Nationwide

(April 24, 2009) – Jewish World Watch founder Rabbi Harold Schulweis urged members of Congress to support House Resolution 252 on the Armenian Genocide in a letter accompanied by a DVD copy of *The River Ran Red*, the epic documentary film on the Genocide by Dr. J. Michael Hagopian.

The film has become an important tool in recounting the events of 1915, when the Ottoman Turks carried out the planned extermination of 1.5 million Armenians in what is the first Genocide of the 20th century. More than 300 people attended the East Coast Premiere of *The River Ran Red* in Watertown, MA, on March 22, and screenings during the past week at Genocide commemorative activities at the University of Southern California and the University of California, Los Angeles, drew hundreds of students.

Culminating more than 40 years of interviews with 400 eyewitnesses to the Armenian Genocide of 1915, *The River Ran Red* is the final film in Hagopian’s *The Witnesses* trilogy produced by the Armenian Film Foundation. The 60-minute documentary film depicts the epic search for survivors of the Armenian Genocide along the Euphrates, which snakes from the Armenian Plateau in Turkey to Syria. Hagopian weaves a compelling story of terrifying intensity and resounding warmth. The search concludes with the discovery and testimony of the last three survivors, among several thousand, who had been stuffed into a burning cave in the forbidden desert of Deir Zor.

The Jewish World Watch has been a strong supporter of the Armenian Film Foundation’s efforts to bring the events of the Armenian Genocide to the fore. In his letter to the members of Congress, Rabbi Schulweis wrote, “We are men and women of conscience, and together we ask our government to recognize what we know as true: that 1.5 million Armenians were systematically slaughtered in a government-sponsored campaign of genocide against them. ... I urge you to watch this film, and put your vote to work recognizing the Armenian Genocide by endorsing H.Res. 252.” DVD copies of *The River Ran Red* along with the same letter also were sent to President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

The River Ran Red has had several screenings in the past several weeks. The National Association of Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) organized a showing in Watertown, at the Mosesian Theater at the Watertown Arsenal Center for the Arts. Dr. Hagopian and Armenian Film Foundation board member Gerald Papazian attended the Boston-area event from Los Angeles. Afterwards, there was a panel discussion with Dr. Hagopian, Prof. Taner Akçam, who holds the chair in Armenian Genocide studies at Clark University, and Dr. Bedross Der Matossian from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In another screening on the East Coast, the film was shown at New Jersey’s Englewood Public Library on April 23.

In Southern California, Armenian students joined in the call for passage of H.Res. 252. The screening at USC on Monday, April 20, was sponsored by the USC Armenian Student Association and the USC Institute of Armenian Studies. The showing at UCLA on Sunday, April 26, was sponsored by the Armenian Studies Program and the UCLA Armenian Graduate Student Association. Immediately following the screening there was a lively question and answer session with director J. Michael Hagopian.

“Armenian students at these two great universities will be critical for generations to come,” stated Dr. Hagopian. “They should be well versed in all aspects of the Genocide and accept the responsibility history places upon them as future leaders of our people.” He added, “At both institutions I was amazed at the intellectual attributes of the students and their fervent devotion for Armenian causes. The future will be in good hands with these students.”

DVD copies of *The River Ran Red* may be purchased by calling the Armenian Film Foundation at 805-495-0717 or visiting www.armenianfilm.org.

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