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EMBASSY ROW LECTURE SERIES -'THE ASSASSINATION OF MEHMET BAYDAR AND BAHADIR DEMİR, A MODERN TRAGEDY IN TURKISH-ARMENIAN RELATION' - LECTURE BY PROFESSOR CHRISTOPHER GUNN

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On January 27, 1973, the Turkish Consul General to Los Angeles, Mehmet Baydar, and Vice Counsel Bahadır Demir visited an Armenian American, Gourgen Yanikian in Santa Barbara. Mr. Yanikian had invited the Turkish diplomats for tea. After greeting Mr. Baydar and Mr. Demir, Mr. Yanikian left the table briefly. He returned with a loaded gun and shot Mr. Baydar and Mr. Demir dead. Mr. Demir did not die immediately, and was shot several times. Yanikian called the police, admitted to the murders, and was eventually tried and convicted of first degree murder, and sentenced to life imprisonment. In January 1984, Armenian American Governor of California, George Deukmejian, granted Yanikian early release.

The Yanikian assassinations inspired modern Armenian terrorism. Armenian extremists worldwide engaged in organized terrorism. The Marxist, Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) and the Armenian National supremacist Justice Commandos (JCAG) killed more than 70 people and caused hundreds of millions of dollars of property damage worldwide. These groups assassinated more than 40 Turkish Diplomats, including two more in the United States, Consul General to Los Angeles Kemal Arikian and Honorary Consul General to Boston Orhan Gunduz. On June 20, 1998, a bomb attack in Brussels, Belgium, was claimed by a group calling itself, The Gourgen Yanikian Military Unit. The US Department of State 1998 Terror Report stated this was a cover name used by ASALA. While Kemal Arikian's assassin, Hampig Sassounian, is serving a life sentence at San Quentin, the assassin of Orhan Gunduz is still at large.

The Speaker

Dr. Christopher Gunn is a specialist on transnational violent extremism and reconciliation. He received his B.A. in Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia, his M.A. in Political Science from the University of Rhode Island and his Ph.D. in History from Florida State University. Dr. Gunn spent the last decade researching in the region, including Budapest, Istanbul, Ankara and Antalya. His focus areas include Turkey, the island of Cyprus, Balkans, Caucasus, and Eastern Mediterranean. He teaches courses on the Ottoman Empire, modern Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean, and counter-terrorism. He is currently a faculty member in the History Department of Coastal Carolina University.

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