



Houston-Baku Sister City Association



connecting coastal cities across the ocean
through cooperation in business, culture and education

Press Release
June 2009

2009 February - May
activities

HBSCA holds a presentation by Ahmet Erentok

On February 7, 2009 HBSCA held a presentation by Ahmet Erentok, a Chairman of Azerbaijan-Turkey Historical Research Foundation and Azerbaijan Turkey America Foundation at Turquoise Center. Mr. Erentok touched upon the goals of the Foundations and discussed historical perspectives of collaboration between Azerbaijan and Turkey in different areas.

The presentation followed by a luncheon was attended by HBSCA Board members, members of Houston-Istanbul Sister City Association, Mr. Ali Findik, Acting Consul General of Republic of Turkey, Mr. Adsinar Cajar Bocek, Consul General of Panama in Houston, U.S.-Azeri Network (Adil Baguirov, Washington, DC), American-Azerbaijani Council (Javid Huseynov, California), Azerbaijani students, City of Houston officials and representatives of Azerbaijani and Turkish communities.

Khojaly Massacre Commemoration

On February 24, 2009 Houston community of Azerbaijanis took part in the "Justice for Khojaly" event. Presentations on Azerbaijan history and Khojaly massacre were made by Azerbaijani-American Council members Togrul Mammedbayov and Yusif Babanly.

A special guest for the event, Member of Azerbaijani Parliament, Havva Mammadova, shared her first hand experiences of contacts with Khojaly survivors.

Metamorphosis by Saida Fagala

HBSCA proudly announced *Metamorphosis* exhibition by its Art Director, Saida Fagala. Opening reception was on Saturday, March 7, 2009, 5 - 8 pm at Gallery3, 2101 Winter St, Houston, TX 77007. Exhibition was on view March 7 - 21, 2009.

Another Saida's exhibition was featured at the *Rouge Art* gallery in Houston, and attracted more than 250 guests during the April 16-17 opening.



Novruz Bayram celebration

On Saturday, March 21, 2009 HBSCA brought the Houston community together for a celebration of the annual *Novruz Bayram* festival at the elegant Demers Banquet Hall, 8225 Cantrell St, Houston, TX 77074. The event was attended by over 170 guests, many of whom moved to Houston from Azerbaijan, but also other Houstonians with a link to our Association and to the city of Baku. Special thanks go to the Ministry of Diaspora in Baku to help make this event possible. The evening offered a full program, including a delicious Azerbaijani dinner, prepared with the help of some of HBSCA volunteers, a live music performance, lots of dancing and a few speeches here and there including some by official representatives from the City Hall and the Houston International Festival (*iFest*) organization.

While singer *Javid* accompanied by his keyboard player *Adil Mirzayev*, specially flown in from Baku for the occasion, provided the music entertainment and treated the guests with a stellar music performance of traditional and modern Azerbaijani songs, the dance floor never seemed empty that night.

Kamilla Javanshir featured on KUHf Novruz program

On March 20, 2009 a radio program about Novruz tradition and featuring Javid, a singer performed at HBSCA organized Novruz celebration and Kamilla Javanshir, HBSCA member and President of Azerbaijani Women Club of Houston, was broadcasted on Houston KUHf (Houston branch of National Public Radio) station.

Walnut Bend Elementary School represented Baku at the iFest-2009

Houston International Festival (*iFest-2009*), which was held during two consecutive weekends April 18-19 and 25-26, was officially opened by the Mayor of the City, Bill White. The Governor of the State of Texas, Rick Perry and his wife, Mrs. Anita Perry also honored the festival with their presence at the opening. As in previous years, Houston-Baku Sister City Association represented the City of Baku at a variety of events. On Thursday, April 16, the President of HBSCA, Mrs. Irada Akhoundova and her husband Dr. Edouard Mamedov attended a gala dinner hosted by the Mayor of Houston and on Friday, April 17, the children of the Walnut Bend school represented Baku at the opening parade under the leadership of HBSCA director Mrs. Kamilla Javanshir.

During the festival, Azerbaijan and Baku were also represented at the Houston Sister Cities information booth.

HBSCA presence and support at the *iFest* is especially important, because Azerbaijan is under consideration for being named as a featured country for *iFest-2011*.



Azerbaijani Films Premiere in the USA

On April 25, 2009, two contemporary Azerbaijani films were honored with a *Golden Remi* award at the International Independent Film Festival (*Worldfest-2009*) in Houston, Texas.

The short film *House* by director Asif Rustamov was honored by the jury with a Golden Remi Award in the category Short Subject Film & Video and the feature film *The 40th Door*, which was screened at the AMC theatre on Sunday, April 19 and Tuesday, April 21 in the presence of Film Director Elchin Musaoglu Guliyev, received a Golden Remi award in the category Foreign Theatrical Feature Film and Video. *The 40th Door* tells a story of a 14 year old boy, Rustam, who moves to the city to find a job after his father is killed by the Russian mafia. After a group of racketeers attacks him and demands a portion of his earnings, Rustam starts to dream of another life as a musician. He eventually finds an unusual friend who is alone in the darkness, much like himself. The premiere of the movie night was attended by members of the Azerbaijani and Turkish community as well as by many other Houstonians and during the question and answer session after the show, many members of the audience took the unique opportunity to get their questions about the production and the story answered by Elchin Musaoglu himself.

This year, it was for the first time in the history of the Festival and in general for the US, that Azerbaijani movies had been selected for participation in the festival. Azerbaijan's contribution was made possible by the close cooperation between HBSCA and the Azerbaijani Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Minister, Abulfaz Garayev).

HBSCA Presents Azerbaijani Artist Rasim Babayev

During the weekend of May 22-24, 2009, the Houston-Baku Sister City Association welcomed the Houston public for an opening and closing reception on the occasion of the exhibit of the paintings of Azerbaijani artist, the late Rasim Babayev at *Gallery3* in the Winterstreet Studio in Houston.

Some 20 paintings were shown to the public including the famous "Blue Camel" paper tile painting which drew a lot of admiration from the exhibition visitors and comments were received how the paintings tend to remind one of the art of both Picasso and Chagall.

During the reception a short speech was given by Shirin Babayeva, granddaughter of the late Rasim Babayev, who shared some insights about her grandfather's life and his works with the audience. The two sons of the artist, Elnur Babayev from Washington and Chingiz Babayev from Baku were also present during the exhibition.

More images of his works can be found at AzGallery of Azerbaijan International. The initiative for the exhibition was a joint effort between Elnur Babayev, HBSCA president Irada Akhoundova and HBSCA Art Director Saida Fagala.

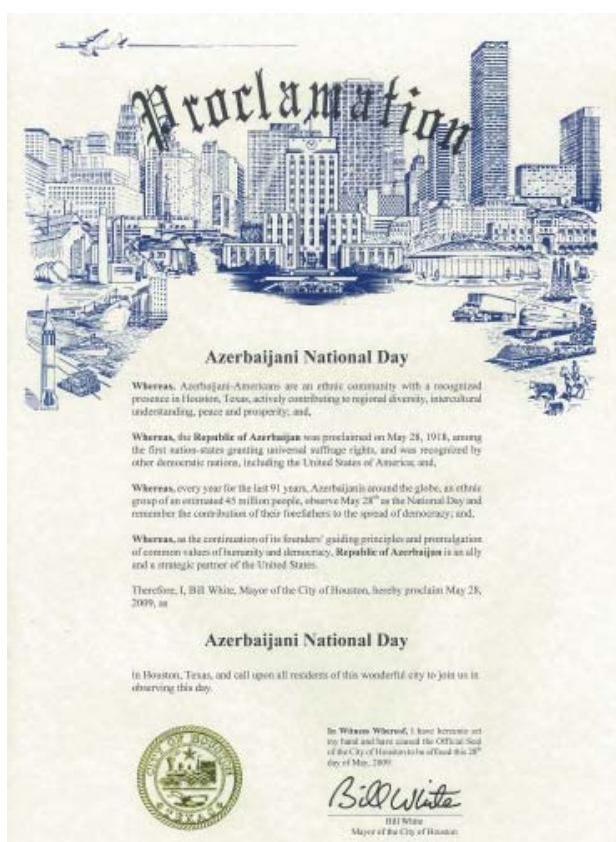


Houston celebrates Azerbaijan Independence Day

Houston, Texas, May 28, 2009 - that Thursday night the Houston-Baku Sister City Association brought together the Houston community for a reception at the historical Houston City Hall to celebrate the Anniversary of Azerbaijan's Independence Day.

The celebration recognizes the 91st anniversary of the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR), the first secular and democratic republic in the Muslim and Turkic world. Azerbaijan People's Republic was declared on May 28, 1918 in Tbilisi by the Azerbaijan National Council headed by Mammad Amin Rasulzadeh. Over the 23 months of its existence prior to Bolshevik occupation of Azerbaijan in April 1920, ADR succeeded in restoring the territorial integrity of the country, in securing the international recognition of Azerbaijan, and in establishing democratic institutions, including the Parliament and the multiparty representative government. Among other key achievements of the first republic were the 1919 universal suffrage law, granting women the right to vote (notably, ahead of the United States and some European nations), the establishment of Baku State University, and the adoption of the modern national symbols of Azerbaijan, including its tricolor flag, anthem and the coat of arms.

The event was attended by approximately 100 delegates of Houston-based consulates and City officials, representatives of Houston's business, cultural, educational, non-profit communities and by many Azerbaijani's living in Houston.



Houston-Baku Sister City Association

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The Houston-Baku Sister City Association (HBSCA) was officially formed during the Cold War by a group of energetic Houstonians who nurtured the organization through many years.

Interest in this organization increased in recent years. On December 14, 2005, a group of eighteen individuals decided to revive HBSCA and make it an exciting cultural and business force in the Houston metropolitan area. The group outlined a list of projects that will be implemented with the close cooperation and help from the City of Houston.

This organization will embrace numerous individuals and informal social formations with the common goal of promoting Baku heritage and traditions and Azeri culture through extensive community outreach, broad assistance to people in need and intercultural exchange.

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