

Marching toward recognition

Students and young adults travel to Fresno to join a 215-mile walk that raises awareness of the Armenian Genocide.

By Jackson Bell
News-Press and Leader

When Shaghik Aghakhani first asked her parents if she could join a symbolic march that spotlights the Armenian Genocide's anniversary, they didn't want her walking several miles a day through the Central Valley.

But for the Burbank 17-year-old, being a part of the event was just too important to back down. So one day she sat her parents down and explained just

how much it meant for her to be part of the 19-day, 215-mile trek from Fresno to Sacramento.

Though still worried about her safety, her parents reluctantly agreed to let her go, Shaghik said.

"I had to do this because I didn't know in what other way I could help the Armenian community," she said. "I have to relieve the pains of not getting recognition by walking.

"I hope our government takes the side of human rights and acknowledges what happened, because I don't want something like the Armenian Genocide to ever happen again."

Shaghik was among more than 40 area teens and young adults of Armenian descent who boarded rental vans Friday afternoon in Glendale and drove north of Fresno to join others already

participating in the "March for Humanity."

The march's aim is to raise awareness of the Armenian Genocide on the eve of its 90th anniversary and push the United States and Turkish governments to recognize the mass slayings, said Vicken Sosikian, director of the event.

More than 1.5 million Armenians were killed in what many consider the first genocide of the 20th century.

"The fact is that from 1915 to 1921, our forefathers were sent into forced marches," said Sosikian, 25, of Glendale. "And by us marching, we want to show our solidarity for them."

A core group of 14 people began marching on April 2 and plan to reach the state Capitol on Thursday. Scores of

See MARCHING, Page A4



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Forty area teens and young adults of Armenian descent boarded rental vans Friday afternoon in Glendale and drove north of Fresno to join participants in the "March for Humanity" to commemorate the Armenian Genocide.