

Balyan Family Mausoleum opens in Istanbul

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ISTANBUL

Published
September 28,
2016



Having designed many architectural artworks ordered by Ottoman Empire between the 18th and 19th century, the Balyan Family, a dynasty of famous Ottoman imperial architects, is getting its own mausoleum years after the deaths of its most prominent members. Built in the Balyan Family Graveyard in Üsküdar Surp Haç Armenian Cemetery, the Balyan Family Mausoleum was constructed by the Hraç and Hagop Kirmızıyan brothers.

The Balyan Family Mausoleum will be opened in a ceremony on Oct. 1, 2016 with Culture Minister Nabi Avcı, Turkey's Armenian Patriarch General Counsel Aram Atesyan and Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IBB) Mayor Kadir Topbaş in attendance. Garabet Baylan was the creator of the most important artworks generating Istanbul's unique skyline and the architect of Dolmabahçe Palace. Along with the said mausoleum, Garabet Baylan's tombstone, which got lost during expropriation, will come together with Amira Balyan, Sarkis Balyan and other prominent family members in the family graveyard.

One of the two entrepreneurs and supporters of the project, which was taken on by the Kirmızıyan brothers and devoted to their parents, Hraç Kirmızıyan says, "It is a belated act and a debt against the Balyan family." Recalling that a majority of artworks symbolizing Istanbul were created by the Balyan Family, Kirmızıyan says by building a magnificent mausoleum befitting their creations, they want to make the Balyan family's memories permanent.

Designed with inspiration from the altar section of the Armenian Church in Beşiktaş, the mausoleum project was constructed with three-meter-long one-piece marble pillars and a tomb and arch placed on top of them. The block marbles in the background feature the names of the prominent family members as well as an Ottoman tughra. Completed and carried out in two years, the project covers the clean-up and restoration of all of the sarcophagi belonging to the Balyan family, and the creation of a mausoleum befitting the creations of a dynasty that crowned Istanbul's skyline with their artworks. ■