

## Armenians Pursue 'Peace Road 2016' on Mount Aragats in Wind and Hail

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September 21, 2016



Yerevan, Armenia -- For the 2016 Peace Road, UPF-Armenia decided to conquer Mount Aragats, the highest mountain in Armenia.

The extinct volcano, whose crater has become a glacial circus of about 400 meters (about 1,312 feet) depth, has four peaks, of which the Peace Road team chose the Southern Peak at a height of 3,879 meters (over 12,726 feet).

There is a legend that St. Gregory the Illuminator (c. 257– c. 331), who is credited with bringing Christianity to Armenia, climbed to the top of Mount Aragats to pray, and at night his path was lit by an unquenchable lamp hanging in the sky. The legend says that even now, this lamp shines at night, but only the chosen can see the light.

Mount Aragats is a wonderful natural showplace. Its central hill covers an area of over 820 square kilometers (more than 316 square miles). It also is known for its beautiful Lake Kari, located at an altitude of 3,250 meters (more than 10,662 feet) above sea level. The lake's circumference is about 1,150 meters (almost 3,773 feet), and it was from this place that the Peace Road team of 23 persons started climbing.



Besides the organizers of the action and the members of the organization Protection of Family, a few young people who found out about the project through social networks expressed their desire to join.

On a perfect morning in the light of the bright sun, the team started climbing. The Peace Road team chose to climb Mount Aragats on September 21, which coincidentally is the U.N. International Day of Peace. The mood of the participants was enthusiastic.

After two hours' walk, the group reached the foot of the mountain with the remains of the glacier, where they decided to take a break. Although a sharp, cold wind was blowing, the glacier gave them good protection.

The second part of the journey was a real challenge. The light, white cloudlets, which earlier were so pretty, suddenly turned into heavy storm clouds.

The last part of the climb to the top was the most difficult. The path abruptly became steep, and stones and earth poured down under the climbers' feet. Strong gusts of an icy wind and hail complicated their already difficult situation. But returning was no longer possible. Nature left them no choice but to overcome and win.



By helping each other, the team managed to conquer the southern peak of Aragats. Though exhausted by climbing to the peak, they were filled with the new energy of victors. They could admire the indescribably beautiful view of the crater and other mountain peaks.

But the weather was against them: The air temperature was below freezing, and icy gusts of wind with hail chased them. They descended by a more secure slope, which was declivous (sloping downward) but was much longer. A huge black cloud covered the entire mountain range, and the team had to hurry, because it was very dangerous to descend in the fog. Despite all their efforts to hurry, however, the storm cloud caught up with them and tormented them with rain and hail all the way down. However, the participants did not surrender; they joked and encouraged each other.

The more that challenges were thrown on the team by nature, the closer they became, trying to help each other in every way. Frozen, soaked to the skin, they were still happy with the completion of the climb.