

AN ANTI-TÜRKiYE NARRATIVE

THE EVENTS OF
1915



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An Anti-Türkiye Narrative: The Events of 1915

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INTRODUCTION

The final years of the Ottoman Empire were marked by tragic events for all of the peoples who made up its population. During this time, the Ottoman geography saw the most severe civilian casualties and population movements. Millions of people were forced to flee their homes as a result of rebellions, conflicts, and wars in a range of regions spanning from the Balkans to the Caucasus. Half of the Turkish and Muslim population living outside our current borders suffered death, persecution or exile.

World War I, one of the bloodiest wars in human history, wreaked havoc on the region where Türkiye is located in the centre. While defending its lands, the Ottoman Empire also sought to maintain a peaceful and stable environment in Anatolia. However, the minority gangs, armed and provoked by occupying forces in order to dismantle the Ottoman Empire, resorted to attacks on the local people by exploiting the war.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians were massacred by Armenian gangs in a variety of locations, ranging from Van to Kars, Erzurum to central Anatolia.

The Ottoman Empire enacted the Relocation and Resettlement Law in order to prevent these massacres, which reached an unbearable level. Under this Law, it was agreed that the Armenian population would be temporarily relocated from areas where gang attacks were prevalent to other locations. Following the war, some of the Armenians who had been relocated from Anatolia to other Ottoman lands voluntarily returned to their former places of residence.

At the most agonising stage of World War 1, Armenians, like Turks, Kurds, Arabs and millions of other Ottoman citizens, endured suffering. During the relocation, there were also Armenians who perished as a result of epidemic diseases, public order difficulties, or clashes with security forces. For whatever reason, each of the casualties had souls, and they were far more than statistics; they were human beings.

Despite the numerous massacres perpetrated against Turks and Muslims, we have never dismissed the sufferings or created a hierarchy between them in discussions around the events of 1915. We have advocated that the facts about contentious issues should be sought in archival documents through the objective efforts of scientists and historians rather than in the halls of parliament. We have made over a million documents available to historians for this purpose. So as to tap into “fair memory”, we have brought many suggestions to our interlocutors, including the joint history commission. However, none of our sincere efforts have elicited a favourable response from Armenia or the Armenian diaspora. In fact, we have seen parliaments attempt to impose unilateral and baseless claims, such as “genocide”, on our state during this process.

Türkiye believes that truth can be revealed when historical facts are discussed using concrete evidence rather than speculations. We think that conducting unbiased, even-handed, and objective analyses of archival documents by experts in the field is the best way to accomplish this. Other approaches and methods appear to be aimed at advancing political and diplomatic interests rather than resolving the debate. Convergence of Turkish and Armenian historical narratives around a “fair memory” is still possible. Türkiye is willing to go to any length to unveil the truth.

The International Conference on the Events of 1915, which brought together distinguished academics and experts, is a significant step in this direction. This book, which covers the historical background, legal dimensions and current reflections of the events of 1915, will make a significant contribution to the fight against so-called “genocide” allegations. I would like to thank and congratulate everyone who helped organize the conference and put the book together for publication. I believe the book will serve as a guide, particularly for those seeking the truth.



PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN

FOREWORD

Presidency's Directorate of Communications conducts multi-dimensional projects on a truth-based communication platform in line with its mission of "empowering the Türkiye brand". Significant international events, which bring together actors from politics, media, academia on common platforms to discuss current concerns on national, regional, and global issues, constitute one component of these activities.

We place a premium on communicating Türkiye's policies, practices, and approaches to the international public and global interlocutors in a systematic, consistent, and effective manner, as well as on raising awareness about the issue. In this context, events such as "Turkey Today Panels," "15 Panels on July 15th," and "International Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean" are among major and notable events held as part of corporate mission and public responsibility. We believe that the International Conference on the Events of 1915, held on April 20, 2021, laid important groundwork for dealing with the events of World War I, which caused immense suffering to all

nations of the Ottoman Empire, in a scientific and fair manner based on international law and history. The Conference provided an opportunity to accurately, properly, and effectively describe the events of World War I to the global public, with eminent scientists and academicians addressing the issue from all perspectives.

As reiterated during the conference, the attempt to label and portray the events of 1915 as “genocide” without any historical or legal basis is nothing more than slander fuelled by political calculations. In this regard, both the European Court of Human Rights and the French Constitutional Court regarded it as a breach of freedom of expression to impose Armenian claims on the events of 1915 through political activities. It is evident that constant presentation of unsubstantiated allegations, which are incompatible with the provisions of the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and are determined to be contrary to international law, is intended to jeopardise world politics and public opinion.

We believe that the International Conference on the Events of 1915 accomplished a critical mission regarding its implications. The conference highlighted that neither history nor any policy could be built on falsehoods. In this regard, it fulfilled an essential responsibility by ensuring that our call for a fair memory policy based on truth is heard by the international community and shared with large audiences through the media.

This book that we have prepared in Turkish and English following the Conference will not only provide an important opportunity for the historical background, legal dimension, and current-day repercussions of the events of 1915 to be shared with the global public, but it will also contribute to averting approaches based on subjective narratives fictionalised by Armenians, as well as preventing the plundering of history. Our close

and fruitful collaboration with all stakeholders to unearth the truth will also lead to the International Conference on the Events of 1915 becoming a tradition with a corporate dimension. I would like to express my gratitude to all of my colleagues and participants who have contributed to the organisation of this Conference, which paved the way for the opportunity to address all aspects of the events of 1915 with an impartial and fair approach.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'F' followed by a horizontal line and a vertical line that curves downwards.

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR OF THE
PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE

FAHRETTİN ALTUN

AN ANTI-TÜRKİYE NARRATIVE

THE EVENTS OF
1915



Opening Remarks

SPEAKERS

Birol Çetin

Fahrettin Altun



The Events of 1915 and Archive Studies in Türkiye

Birol Çetin*

Dear Director, my Dear Colleagues and Dear Participants, first of all, I wish you a good morning, and I would like to start my speech by paying my respects. Certainly, retelling the events of 1915 and revealing the facts are invaluable, and I thank our Directorate of Communications for that. Indeed, facts today do not have much value. That's how we understand. Perceptions are always more at the forefront, unfortunately. No matter how right you are, you still have to express your righteousness aloud. As you know, many efforts have been made so far. For sure, we will constantly defend this cause about which we are right, and we will convey it more powerfully to future generations. We are not tired; we are right; and we need to continue our efforts, as understood. These theses were brought to the agenda more in the 1940s and 1950s. However, our academia, scientific community, foreign ministry, and diplomats gave very definite answers. Of course, this is what we constantly tell them: "Let historians discuss this; these issues should be discussed from a scholarly perspective." Yet, they, unfortunately, escaped from this front and took refuge in terrorism. As you know, many of our diplomats have been martyred, and, on this occasion, I wish that they rest in peace. I wish mercy from Allah. I say we will sustain their struggle. Indeed, it is a great con-

(*) President of the Turkish Historical Society

tradition: You say that you were wronged, and you resort to terrorism at the same time. This process continues today. Unfortunately, they are trying to mute our state's voice on these issues in the form of cooperation with other terrorist groups. To be clear, we will not give up. Of course, our state has made great strides in diplomacy in recent years. The fact that it is an excellent state with its crucial, strategic geographical location and accumulation of knowledge has an essential role in this success.

Türkiye now has reached an important point. Our foreign ministry's power has increased significantly, and our representation in many countries, starting with the African initiative... Apart from that, our organisations, such as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), Yunus Emre Institute, and Maarif Foundation, are now represented in 60-70 countries. So, what did they do this time when our voices are rising again in the international arena? They had to take shelter in politics, and they are trying to convince the parliaments in many countries that the Armenian theses are true. Of course, we are also fighting against these. We have conveyed the same message to these circles for years. Our President has also repeatedly said this: "Let historians handle this issue. Let us open our archives, let historians talk mutually. Let us not make this a subject of politics." For sure, it has a future dimension. You can discuss these today, but what will happen in the future? In other words, we know the current situation in Armenia. This does not provide any benefit to either their own nation or people. These calls have, unfortunately, always remained unanswered. Although they have not responded to our calls, we continue to make further efforts. Look, today I was going to tell you the number of publications we have made, but I have brought our books, the books we have in our library, to show them personally. On the right – our cameraman can show them – we have brought here the publications by the Turkish Historical Society so far; we have approximately 117 publications. On my other side, there are the publications of, in particular, the Presidency of State Archives, Military History and Strategic Studies Directorate of Turkish General Staff (ATASE), our universities, and so on...

We have brought all of them here. I also want to say this: These publications are very hard to produce since they are based on archive documents. Our former President, Mr. Halaçoğlu, Mr. Hikmet Özdemir, Mr. Yusuf Halaçoğlu, who is among us today, all made a significant contribution to these publications. I thank them all for their efforts. Of course, the universities have also worked on this issue, like Atatürk University and Ankara University... Again, the Atatürk Research Centre within our higher institution. They also have very serious work on the Armenian issue. Furthermore, we should not forget YÖK (Council of Higher Education).

Finally, I want to share with you the figures I got from YÖK. According to these figures, nearly 118 PhD dissertations have been written on the Armenian issue so far. Likewise, there are 443 master's theses. All of these are based on archives; as you know, it is the subject of history. People may have opinions, but if you are going to talk about history, every sentence must have a reference, it must have a footnote, it must be based on a source. That is why these are highly demanding works. Important messages have really been given so far. I thank again and again to all our academicians and researchers who have contributed...

Similarly, our General Staff has valuable work on this issue. I thank them again for their contribution. Of course, while we are constantly trying to pull this into the field of history, they are trying to escape it. They are trying to make it a political topic and dragging it into the political sphere. We know very well what they want to do in the political arena.

There is another point I would like to make: Now, we know very well who the real players in the background are, both regarding the Armenian issue and the Greek issue. Starting with the Greek issue, they have always attempted to fight us by taking shelter behind our people, like Armenians, Balkan peoples... and then in the Middle East. Until today, they have never been able to confront us directly. We actually invite them to do so. If these things are to be settled in the arena of politics, we have very valuable diplomats. We have very experienced politicians. We will fight in this area as well. However, we ask them to come before us without taking shelter behind anyone be-

cause it did hurt and continues to hurt the oppressed. You know, the Ottoman territory covered a vast area. Unfortunately, we had to withdraw from many regions. History recorded what happened in the places where we withdrew. It cost the lives of millions of people. There is still no peace on those lands. So, that gap has not yet been filled. Look at the Caucasus, look at the Balkans, look at the Middle East... Problems are constantly being created. Therefore, we say that historians should discuss this. We need to talk about the future, but we are constantly stuck in the past. There are no more details that have not been discussed or investigated. In other words, both our Historical Society and other institutions have used not only Turkish archives but also archives abroad. Therefore, to be honest, there are no documents left to investigate. I do not want to take more of your time. I want to close my words and leave the floor to the valuable participants. Above all, I would like to thank our Director of Communications, Fahrettin Altun, especially... I think it will be very fruitful. When you stand on the side of truth, even if the entire world comes together, the truth will triumph. I would like to express my gratitude and respects.

The Events of 1915: From a Fabricated Memory to a Fair Memory

Fahrettin Altun*

Thank you so much. Distinguished Participants, I greet you all with respect. Welcome to the International Conference on the Events of 1915, which the Directorate of Communications has organized. I hope that the ideas to be put forward here today will contribute to revealing the facts because history can be understood accurately with thanks to modest, brave individuals' confidence in truth. I would like to thank the distinguished panellists and everyone who has contributed and will contribute to this important meeting. Distinguished Participants, we can define the last century as an exceptional period that has witnessed critical turning points in history. The 20th century was defined by world wars, collapsing empires, changing borders, and the rise of democracy. The world has undergone a massive political transformation, like a change of a shell. While centuries of practices, borders, and governments have changed, great pain has been endured. The suffering experienced in almost every region has been carried from parents to their children, not only through history books but with tales, anecdotes, and memories. While some events turned into myths and lost touch with reality, some incidents could not get their share of the truth they deserved.

The 20th century witnessed a critical event in that sense, in that three

(*) Director of Communications of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye



The fundamental aim of the Republic of Türkiye is to serve the truth and justice in all areas. This fundamental perspective requires not only to oppose the injustices experienced today but also to approach events in history fairly.

Fahrettin Altun

great empires disbanded at the end of the First World War: the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Tsarist Russia all underwent complex transformations with impacts that have lasted until today. According to records, 65 million soldiers were mobilised in this first global war, and 38 million civilians and soldiers died. Given the period's low population, such a high loss inevitably caused considerable trauma to all countries that participated in the war. The Turkish nation, which showed heroism on numerous fronts, was seriously impacted by the war, which claimed the lives of millions of people.

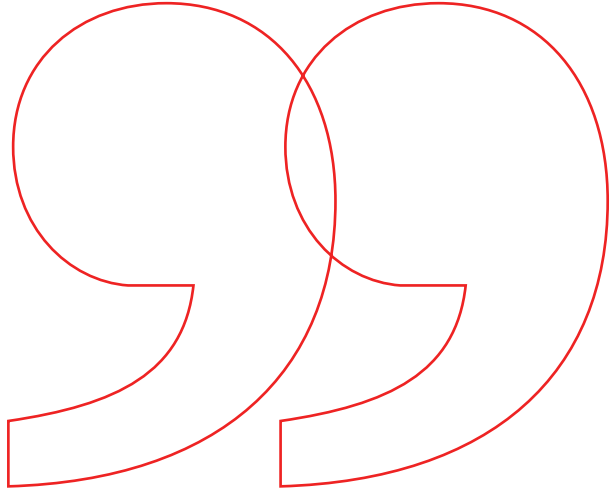
The Ottoman nation, as a whole, combated unprecedented challenges during the Empire's final years. We fought hard in Çanakkale, the Caucasus, Hejaz, Palestine, and Iraq. Unfortunately, incidents that occurred caused great suffering to the Anatolian people during the First World War, which dragged all sides of the war, including the Ottoman Empire, into indescribable chaos. In the same period, thousands of our soldiers froze to death and thus were martyred in Sarıkamış. On the Caucasian Front, our forces fighting against the Russian armies attacking the Ottoman lands were stabbed in the back by the Armenian gangs cooperating with the enemy. While various fragments of the Ottoman nation joined forces for the sake of the homeland, some structures that collaborated with then enemies emerged in some places. As a result of the conflicts in Eastern Anatolia, tens of thousands of Turks and Armenians lost their lives. Upon these events, some Ottoman citizens of Armenian origin in the eastern provinces, who were harbouring the gangs that were disrupting the actions of the army, attacking the civilians and cooperating with the enemy army, were subjected to the Relocation of 1915 to be sent to the Syrian lands within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. For the security of civilians and the defence of the homeland, Armenians living in certain regions were relocated under wartime conditions. Unfortunately, as such a security measure was being implemented, undesirable incidents happened under the conditions of an ongoing and violent war. Both Turks and Armenians suffered losses, and tragedies occurred. These experiences have also formed the basis of the debates that are occurring today. As the Republic of Türkiye, we deeply and wholeheartedly feel the pain of the incidents experienced in the implementation process of the Relocation Law adopted in 1915 by the Ottoman Empire.

We consider it as a prerequisite of our conscientious and moral stance to share the pain suffered by our Armenian citizens in the last century. As indicated by our President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, we believe that “being united as Türkiye” relies on being united in good times and bad times.

Today, however, we are facing a narrative that seeks to create animosity from history by distorting the common past of the Turkish and Armenian peoples who had cohabited peacefully for centuries. We oppose such narratives because we do not establish hierarchy and distinguish between the sufferings experienced in every corner of these lands. We are well aware that people of all backgrounds, religions, ethnic origins, and sects had coexisted peacefully in these lands for centuries. We know very well. And the whole world knows this very well.

Distinguished Guests, the controversy over what happened in 1915 has been going on for more than a century. This is because of the insistence and stubbornness to handle the 1915 events as a political and ideological issue. Some try to utilise the issue for imperialistic purposes by bringing it to the political agenda. It is evident that the ever-changing current political approaches cannot treat the 100-year-old historical issues properly. When politicised, such historical issues inevitably become a tool for fruitless, everyday debates. Therefore, the decisions taken by different parliaments on controversial historical matters do not make them democrats but patronising and tyrannical. The grief experienced in the past also becomes an element of interest for today’s politicians. And it is the greatest disrespect that can be committed against the victims and their suffering. The fundamental aim of the Republic of Türkiye is to serve the truth and justice in all areas. This fundamental perspective requires not only to oppose the injustices experienced today but also to approach events in history fairly.

That is why our struggle for truth is for pure truth, as we always emphasise. Our desire to reach the truth is not for political gain but for the truth itself. Our President’s call for a scientific approach and disclosure of the archives for the events of 1915 is also aimed at this. This



The decisions taken by different parliaments on controversial historical matters make them patronising and tyrannical. The grief experienced in the past also becomes an element of interest for today's politicians. And it is the greatest disrespect that can be committed against the victims and their suffering.

is a call for the truth. Therefore, our call for the truth is an indicator of our sincerity on this issue.

Distinguished Participants, the best way to show respect to the victims is to examine history through a fair memory perspective. The way to achieve this is to reveal what exactly happened in these lands over the last century in a transparent, honest, and scientific manner. The most comprehensive and sincere steps towards this goal have

been taken under the leadership of our President Erdoğan. Thus, the condolences for the Armenians who lost their lives have been conveyed at the highest level since 2005. I would also like to remind you of the words of President Erdoğan expressed in a letter sent to the Armenian Patriarch of Türkiye, Maşalyan, last year, “We are all aware of the circles working to create hostility out of the past by ignoring our unity that emerged from the bosom of Anatolia. While we desire and work for a future full of unity, prosperity, and tranquillity, it is our most important wish that the circles that aim for the opposite are not allowed.” These statements from our President are very important, striking statements.

Distinguished Participants, the so-called Armenian genocide slander is the premise of the phenomenon known as “post-truth” today. This is an allegation that has no connection with the facts and is only fuelled by political calculations. It is an emotional, irrational and illegitimate accusation. We are well aware of the fact that the concern of those attacking Türkiye through a convenient lie is not the Ottoman Armenians or historical victimisations. Hrant Dink, the brave son of these lands, explained this best as follows: “Who is our friend, who will cure the past? The French Senate’s decision? The American Senate’s decision? Are these our friends?.” These words from Hrant summarise how suffering has been turned into a convenient tool for imperialist impulses. He was aware of this. We are also aware of this.

Distinguished Guests, it makes no difference which parliament makes what decision or which foreign head of state issues what sentence in our opinion. What matters most to us is to have a rightful place in the hearts of the children of this land from past to present. That is why we will not tire of searching for the truth, even for a moment. Therefore, we believe this conference will play a significant role in precluding the looting of history, recapturing the historical background of 1915 and preventing the attempts to bring Türkiye to its knees through the so-called “Armenian genocide” slander. Our biggest wish is to make history be understood efficiently by scientifically analysing the events of 1915 and accurately reflecting it to national and international public opinion. As the Directorate of Communications and all institutions, we do and will continue to do our best within this scope.

I would like to thank the Presidency's Directorate of State Archives, the Turkish Historical Society, universities, and all other institutions that have contributed to important works in this process so far. I hope that the truth and conscience will heal our wounds and contribute to peace and stability all over the world, especially in our region. I greet you all with love and respect. I wish you the best of health.

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SESSION I

**The Events
of 1915 in the
Historical
Context and
the Armenian
Issue**

PANELISTS

Yusuf Sarımay

Seyit Sertçelik

Mesut Uyar

Oleg Kuznetsov

Maxime Gauin

Introduction

Yusuf Sarımay*

Esteemed Audience, first of all, I would like to thank our Presidency's Directorate of Communications for organising such an important and meaningful conference and greet you all respectfully. First and foremost, I would like to underline that I would like to draw a general picture and leave the floor to our distinguished speakers.

Instead of analysing historical events in a cause-effect relationship and treating them as a coherent whole, some Western and Armenian circles use historical events as an information warehouse from which Armenians pull out convenient arguments, and, so to say, history is often imprisoned in 1915. Thus, the reasons for the Armenian relocation, the events and uprisings of Armenian organisations in the process of relocation, and the policies of the great states of the period against the Armenians are attempted to be forgotten, and an approach claiming that the Ottoman Empire subjected the Armenians to relocation in 1915 for no reason has emerged. As a result of the activities of the Armenian diaspora following this approach, a one-sided memory was created on the Armenian side which was spread to many countries around the world, especially Western countries, through propaganda. With this one-sided memory-building approach that the Armenian diaspora has turned into an almost indisputable political belief, this desired genocide myth replaces the truth, as our esteemed

(*) Rector of TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Professor of History

director has just expressed. The approval of this by legislative bodies is aimed at cutting off the path of scientific research. What is being done here is not to establish history or for information purposes but for accountability, judgment, and conviction. They are attempting to entice us into the psychology of guilt through political pressure. However, we are ready to talk confidently and discuss every stage of this event, as in all events in history. Our government's proposal to establish a joint history commission in 2005 was very important, especially for the Armenian side. Opening archives and establishing joint commissions were important. It's still important because the Presidency of State Archives of Türkiye has opened all its archives transparently, and the documents revealed here seem to be confirmed by archives in many countries of the world. As a result, the pain suffered during the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire should be treated with a fair memory approach as a whole within the context of the fair memory approach. As mentioned earlier, in the context of these massacres in the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East, and Anatolia, it is important to recognise the Armenian problem in the context of the period's significant and decisive changes, such as the First World War, especially the whole picture. This is because the Armenian issue gained an international dimension with the Treaty of Berlin, and Armenians were encouraged by this international support to take action to create an autonomous and then an independent Armenia within the Ottoman Empire, in particular, in Eastern Anatolia. However, Armenians were not a majority in any part of the Ottoman Empire. As a result, they instigated uprisings in 1890 by founding organisations that preferred organised terrorism as a form of armed struggle. Since the 1890s, more than 40 uprisings and terrorist acts have taken place, especially in Erzurum, Merzifon, Sason, Kayseri, Yozgat, and Harput as well as in several other regions of the Empire, including the assassination of Sultan Abdulhamid II, and Anatolia was a complete mess until the 1900s. It should be noted that, despite these uprisings, an important segment of the Armenian community remained loyal to the state. The Armenian gangs exerted pressure and terror against them, and it should also be emphasised that over 3,000 senior ministers, pashas, members of parliament, and academics served in the Ottoman central administration during this era.

The events of Adana in 1909 shattered the tranquil atmosphere of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, and the severe defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan Wars encouraged the Armenian committees to establish a state and increase their activities with the support of European states. A significant breaking point in this matter, an important development, occurred on February 8, 1914, when the Ottoman Empire was forced to sign the Treaty of Yeniköy, which envisioned reform in the Eastern Anatolian provinces in favour of the Armenians, under pressure from European states. Two foreign inspectors were appointed with this treaty. With this treaty, it seems that an attempt was made to take the provinces that would be reformed from Ottoman sovereignty, and a reform zone was envisaged that included all of Eastern Anatolia, from today's Sivas and our existing 20 provinces. If this treaty had been implemented, that is, if it could have been implemented – it could not be implemented due to the First World War – Anatolia would have been divided. Indeed, as we will discuss during these sessions, one of the primary reasons for the relocation was to avoid Anatolia being permanently fragmented between Turks and Armenians. As a matter of fact, with the start of the First World War, Armenian nationalists saw the establishment of an independent Armenia as a great opportunity and fought against the Ottoman Empire with the Russian army and Armenian volunteer units commanded in particular by Andranik Ozanian, Erzurum Deputy Karekin Pastirmacıyan, we can increase these numbers. In other words, by the spring of 1915, the uprisings and acts of sabotage, and terrorism committed by the Armenian committees emerged as a serious threat to the Ottoman Empire's national security, which was fighting on many fronts. During the advance of the Russian army in Eastern Anatolia, uprisings and sabotage increased in Sivas and Erzincan in order to sever the Ottoman army's backline and 30,000 Muslim Turks were martyred by Armenian committees in the Kars, Ardahan, and Nakhichevan regions under Russian occupation.

Later, these massacres would increase to 525,000 casualties. This is clearly seen in the documents published by our Presidency of State Archives. Meanwhile, in a period when even Istanbul was endangered by the battles of Gallipoli, the Van riot broke out after those in Zeytun, Bitlis, Siirt, Muş, and Erzurum. On May 18, the city was occupied,



The Armenian relocation was unplanned, a temporary measure taken against the ongoing uprisings and cooperation with enemy armies.

Yusuf Sarıncı

thousands of Muslim Turks were killed, and the city was destroyed. We can clearly see this in the old city of Van behind the castle. In the meantime, the fact that the Ottoman government became aware of correspondence between the Allied Powers, who were planning to land in the Gulf of Iskenderun, and Armenians heightened unease. I want to come to the following point: Until May 1915, there was no general relocation, in other words, relocation and resettlement, the policy issued by the state in the Ottoman Empire. This is verified by the letter of the Commander-in-Chief to the Ministry of Interior dated May 2, 1915. Therefore, the Armenian relocation was unplanned, a temporary measure taken against the ongoing uprisings and cooperation with enemy armies. Since it was not planned in advance, no allowance was even included in the budget for 1915; as a matter of fact, the Armenians who rebelled around Zeytun and Maraş in early May were relocated to Konya. However, due to their collective presence and their attempts to cut off the army's supply routes from there, the relocation and resettlement of Armenians to southern regions away from war zones, such as Mosul, Zor, and Aleppo, began with the provisional law dated May 27, 1915. Despite the decision for relocation, 300,000 Armenians were exempted from relocation, their goods and belongings, especially those in Istanbul, were protected, and the value of property that was sold were deposited in a subdivision of the treasury, and we see from the documents that a significant amount of this was returned to those who returned in 1918.

International organisations were also allowed to distribute aid to Armenians in the relocation region, and during the relocation, the Ottoman Empire tried 1,673 people for mistreating Armenians, seizing their property, and causing their deaths in the Court Martial established in 1915-1916. There were 5,280 security personnel such as soldiers and police officers, 170 public officials such as district governors, district fiscal directors, governors of sub-districts, and 975 people from the public called gang members. During these trials, 67 executions, 524 prison sentences, and 68 penal servitude sentences were issued. Now, when we look at these trials in 1915-1916, is it possible that a central government, that is, the Ottoman administration, that is believed to have an aim of exterminating or massacring Armenians, behaved so sensitively about dismissing and punishing public

officials who committed crimes against Armenians or demonstrated negligence? This says that we must persistently ask this question and persistently continue to defend the truth.

Now, I give the floor to the distinguished speakers. First of all, I would like to give the word to the esteemed Professor Seyit Sertçelik. He is the Chief Advisor to the President and a Member of the Board of Security and Foreign Policies. But we know him well, especially for his profound work on the Armenian issue, as well as his academic identity. He did his doctorate in Russia. We know him for his long-lasting research, which have a command of Russian and Armenian documents, which he crowned with two valuable works and presented to our benefit and the world of science. Without further ado, I would like to give the floor to Professor Seyit Sertçelik. The floor is yours, sir.

Armenian Allegations and Facts

Seyit Sertçelik*

Esteemed Director and Distinguished Colleagues, I greet you all respectfully. Prof. Yusuf Sarımay gave a very comprehensive introduction. He presented us with a very detailed analysis of the events of 1915, which was really well constructed based on the Ottoman archive documents. I would like to express my gratitude to him. Now, Dear Colleagues, I would like to take you back in time a little bit, very briefly, so that we can understand what happened in 1915 since the events of 1915 are a result.

I think we, as the international community, make a bit of a mistake by evaluating the events of 1915 over the results because the Armenian issue goes far back. The first mass massacre committed by Armenians during the Ottoman era took place during the Russo-Iran War of 1828–1829. During the Russian army’s invasion of Eastern Anatolia, we see that over a thousand Muslim civilians were massacred in Doğubeyazıt by their Armenian neighbours. I believe that the “loyal nation” characterisation of Armenians, portrayed thus in Ottoman history, came to an end with this massacre of over a thousand Muslim civilians in 1828 because such a trait cannot be maintained after massacring thousands of civilians. Dear Colleagues, I discovered this information in a General Staff publication issued by the Russian General Staff in Warsaw, which was subordinate to Russia at the time; that is, the information that Armenians murdered thousands of Muslim

(*) Chief Advisor to the President of the Republic, Professor of History

civilians during the Russian army's invasion of Doğubeyazıt is written in the publications of the Russian General Staff. This, in my opinion, is critical. Now we have the Russo-Persian War of 1826-1827. As you all know, Iran easily won these battles thanks to the assistance of Armenians living in Iran to the Russian army. We can see that 40,000 Armenians living in Iran migrated to the territory of the current Republic of Armenia after this war.

Dear Friends, when we look at Armenian sources before 1828, we see that 85-90% of the region was completely Muslim-Turkish land. Before 1828, while the territory of the Khanate of Erevan, which is the capital of Armenia today, was dominated by an approximately 90% Muslim-Turkish population, the Russians consciously attempted to alter the region's demographic structure by deliberately moving 40,000 Armenians from Iran and beginning to establish a buffer zone in the region. Following its victory in the Iran war, Russia immediately declared war on the Ottoman Empire. During the Russo-Turkish War of 1828– 1829, the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia mobilized all of their resources to assist the Russian army in winning the war. The Russian army won this war thanks to the Armenians' material, moral, military, and economic support to the Russians. As I previously stated, 90,000 Armenians wanted to flee their lands in the Eastern Anatolian provinces and move to the Russian Caucasus in the aftermath of the war, believing that the Ottomans would avenge the massacre of over a thousand Muslim civilians by the Armenians in Doğubeyazıt. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire tried to deter citizens from leaving the country with its extremely tolerant state policies, but Armenians fled the country fearful of retaliation from Kurdish tribes, especially in the area where blood feuds were prevalent. In other words, Armenians, 40,000 of whom migrated to the Caucasus from Iran and 90,000 from the Ottoman Empire, gradually altered the region's demographic structure and established an Armenian buffer zone there. These conclusions, which we have drawn from historical documents, are noteworthy.

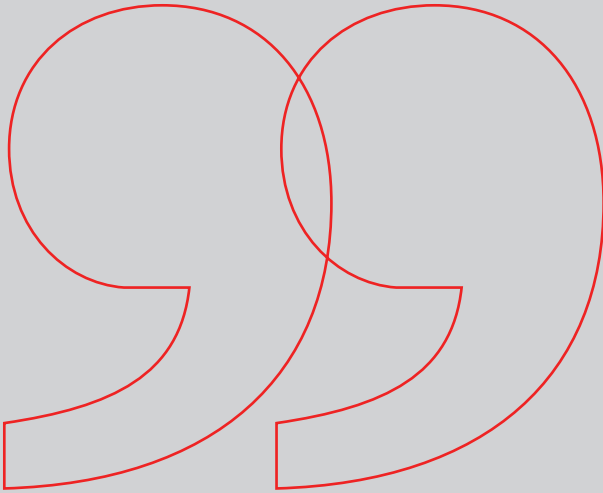
There is also this information, which I obtained from the Armenian Patriarchate, that I believe is important, and I would like to share it with you. We see that there were 479 crimes in total committed against

Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire between 1851 and 1871. Dear Colleagues, for 20 years, there were 479 incidents constituting petty offences against Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire, including murder, rape, injuries, and tax evasion. So, the following issue can be raised: Thousands, tens of thousands, or even hundreds of thousands of people can be killed in one incident. But this number in 20 years demonstrates that there was no such mass murder of Armenians during the Ottoman period; we know this definitively. As a result, this issue appears to be unwarranted. These 479 individual incidents constituting offences against Armenians over 20 years are the best proof of the fact that there was absolutely no systematic massacre against non-Muslims living in the Ottoman Empire, especially Armenians, and it lies in these documents obtained from the Armenian Patriarchate. I went through all the files on the Caucasus to see if there was any similar information in Russian archives from the same years; however, I could not find any information.

Later on, we see that between 1903 and 1912 there were 9,000 incidents constituting offences in the Russian Caucasus in a single year, according to a file submitted by the Governor-General of the Caucasus to the Czar of Russia.

Dear Friends, Azerbaijani Turks, Georgians, and Armenians lived in the Caucasus. Although the population of the Azerbaijani Turks in the South Caucasus was slightly higher, the population of Georgians and Armenians was equal. When we divide the number of incidents by the number of nationalities living there, we find that there were 3,000 incidents constituting offences against Armenians in about a year. Compared to 3,000 crimes in a year in the Russian Caucasus, a total of 479 incidents in the Ottoman Empire between 1851 and 1871 is one of the best signs that the Ottoman Empire definitely did not have an Armenian issue until the 1890s.

As if speaking in unison, Armenian historians propagated the myth that 300,000 Armenians were subjected to genocide and massacre in Türkiye during the period of the Armenian revolts that began in Anatolia in the 1890s.



According to the Russian and Armenian sources, we see that 300,000 Armenians continued living safely in the western provinces, especially Istanbul, during the war period.

Seyit Sertçelik

The assertion that 300,000 Armenians were killed between the 1890s rebellion period and the Adana Incident of 1909 is most certainly a lie. Indeed, Russian intelligence officers and diplomats serving in Eastern Anatolia, including Mayevsky, made extremely noteworthy statements. They say: “Armenians add a zero to the numbers in the context of their losses. They make false statements such as ‘10 people were killed’ when only one was killed, and ‘100 people were killed’ when only ten were killed.” Therefore, these statements from Mayevsky and other Russian intelligence officers and diplomats are highly crucial.

When we look at 1914, the First World War had begun, but the Ottoman Empire had not yet entered the war. However, we see that Armenians greeted the outbreak of the First World War with great zeal and excitement. There is no reasonable explanation for zeal and excitement for a war of such scale. However, Armenian intellectuals, especially the Dashnaks, who believed that the Ottoman Empire, which had been described as a sick man, was on the verge of going out of existence, had the idea that at the end of the war, they would at least establish an autonomous or independent Armenian state on Anatolian land. This idea inspired them to fight against the Ottoman Empire in the coming period in an almost all-out offensive.

Dear Friends, colonial states concerned with sharing the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, i.e., the sick man, needed internal auxiliary powers to deliver the final blow to the sick man in order to carry out their projects in Türkiye. Western colonial powers, especially Czarist Russia, saw the Ottoman Armenians as the collaborator force that would deliver the final blow to the Ottoman Empire from the inside. Moreover, Armenians deemed this role assigned to them suitable, at the very least, for the sake of establishing the autonomous or independent state they had long dreamed of. Indeed, Armenian intellectuals viewed the outbreak of the First World War as “a historical moment and an opportunity not to be missed.” The year 1914 was a historical moment and an opportunity for Armenians.

While the Ottoman Empire was battling the enemy on several fronts, Armenians armed by the Russians fought against the Ottoman army in the Caucasus Front, while they jeopardized the land behind the

front through widespread riots across the country. According to Russian and Armenian accounts, 40,000 armed Armenians in and around Zeytun rebelled and fought against the Ottoman Empire. On the Caucasian Front, we see that approximately 10,000 Armenians, the majority of whom were Ottoman nationals and were armed by the Russians, served in voluntary units against the Ottoman army. Apart from these units, some Armenian historians state that 150,000 Armenians served in the Russian army, while others claim that the number was closer to 300,000. As some Armenian writers and historians put it, we see that in 1914, during the First World War, Armenians were a party and minor ally on the side of the Allied Forces. This part is quite important, too. Armenians were a party and minor ally on the side of the Allied Forces during the war, and they did their best for the Allied Forces to win the war. Armenians who collaborated with the Czarist army not only helped the Russian army capture Van but also slaughtered tens of thousands of Muslims. The Ottoman Empire issued a notice to the Armenian Patriarch, its members of parliament, and notable citizens stating that they would take appropriate measures if they continued to massacre Muslims, but the warnings yielded no results. Thereupon, on April 24, 1915, before the decision for the relocation of Armenians, 235 Armenians – Ottoman Armenians – were arrested and sent to Çankırı and Ayaş prisons. After that, with the Relocation and Resettlement Law passed on May 27, 1915, Armenians were relocated, under the custody of state forces, from the lands they lived in to safer regions of the Empire, such as Syria and Mesopotamia. Most of them arrived in relocation regions safe and sound.

According to official population data of the Ottoman Empire in 1914, we see that the population of Armenians living in Türkiye was 1,300,000. Let's put that to the side. When we look at official Russian figures, I relay the information I have gleaned from Russian archives, particularly concerning the General Staff and other statistics: The Russians also indicate the number of Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire to be 1,300,000. This is extremely important because, starting in the 1830s, Czarist Russia planned to invade Anatolian lands, particularly Istanbul, through frantic projects. Russian intelligence officers and diplomats who photocopied Anatolia, as I would like to call it, noted various information, including underground and

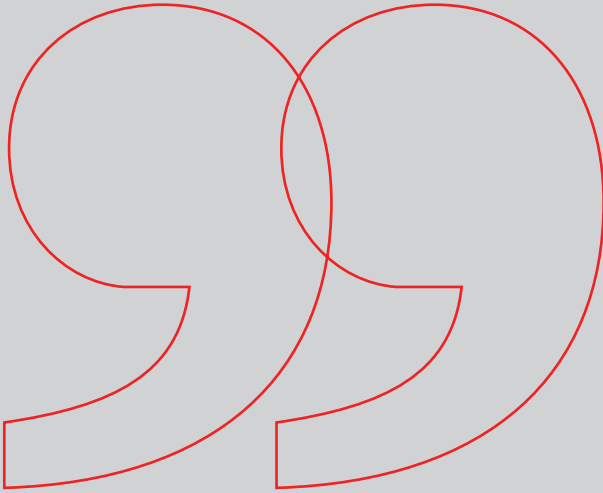
aboveground wealth, military unit locations, water supplies, and climate. The Russian General Staff specifically instructed intelligence officers and diplomats serving in Türkiye to report the exact number of non-Muslims and Armenians living in the country without exaggeration. The Russian army and the Russian General Staff, did not want to be surprised, believing that when they went to war with the Ottoman Empire and arrived in Türkiye, the Armenians would assist them. In this case, the figures had to be calculated with great precision. As a result, it is critical that the Russian sources claimed that 1,300,000 Armenians were living in the Ottoman Empire, and I can confidently state that the actual number of Armenians was 1,300,000. So, according to official Russian records, 360,000 Armenians safely migrated from Türkiye to Yerevan in the Caucasus region in 1915. We can see that 40,000 Armenians among these immigrants lost their lives in Yerevan due to infectious diseases, malnutrition, and cold climate conditions. In other words, they had left Türkiye, and 40,000 of them lost their lives in Russia. It is clear that this has nothing to do with massacre or genocide. Dear Friends, what happened to the 1,300,000 Armenians living in Türkiye? Again, when we look at the Russian and Armenian sources, we see that 300,000 Armenians continued living safely in Türkiye during the war period. Three hundred thousand Armenians survived unscathed in the western provinces, especially Istanbul. Again, according to official data from the Russian Immigration Administration, there were 360,000 Armenians who migrated to Russia from Türkiye. In total, 360,000 Armenians migrated from Türkiye to Russia. We now know that there were young Armenian people from Türkiye who went to Russia via the Balkans to join the Russian army before the war. They numbered in the thousands. We also know that there were Armenians earning a living as labourers in Russia and Europe before the war. Likewise, we know that there were those who went to Iran during the war. Since we do not have full access to Iranian archive documents, we cannot say the exact number; however, with 360,000 Armenians who left Türkiye, young Armenian people who were in Russia and Europe before the war, those who went to Russia from Türkiye before 1914 to fight in the war, and those who went to Iran, we can easily say that the number of Armenians who left Türkiye after 1914-1915 was 500,000. This is definite information, Dear Friends. Now, 500,000 left Türkiye. 300,000 Armenians

continue to live in Türkiye. We reached the number 800,000. I have just said that 300,000 people continue to live in Türkiye safely. We reached 1,100,000 people.

The conclusion I have drawn from Russian and Armenian sources in about eight years from hundreds of thousands of documents is that the total Armenian losses in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War were 150,000. There is a loss of around 150,000. However, as to how the Russian intelligence officers and diplomats in the 1890s had put it before, Armenians continued the habit and tradition of adding a zero to the numbers in the context of their losses during the First World War. So, by adding a zero to the number of 150,000, they have introduced to the world the lie that one and a half million Armenians died in Türkiye and made us deal with this lie ever since. Dear Friends , I can clearly say that the actual Armenian loss was 40,000 Armenians fighting on the fronts, excluding those who died from contagious diseases, climatic conditions, and cold. When we look at Armenian sources, which are confirmed by Russian sources, the number of Armenians in Russian uniforms who fought against the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus, most of whom were Ottoman Armenians, varies between 150,000 and 300,000. Some Armenian historians give the number 150,000, and some of them provide the number 300,000. So, it is between 150,000 and 300,000. In his memoirs, S. Vartanian, a significant Armenian historian, says that 200,000 Armenians fought against the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus, and most of them were shot in the battlefield and lost their lives while firing at the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, alongside the Russian army, the number of Armenians who fought Ottoman forces at the battlefield is in the hundreds of thousands... I can easily say that there were at least 100,000. In other words, I can say that most of the 150,000 Armenian casualties were Armenians who fought the Ottoman Empire at the battlefield. Similarly, there were nine Armenian volunteer units. All of them were Armenians of Ottoman origin, and they numbered around 10,000. They served as vanguards in the capture of Van by Russian armies. These were troops led probably by some of the most heinous rogues the world had ever seen. As Professor Sarıncı said, there were around 500,000 Muslim losses in the region. These Armenian murderers, who massacred hundreds of thousands of

people in Van and its environs, caused great suffering during the Ottoman Empire era.

Now, one of the most influential historians of the Soviet period, B. A. Borian, who is of Armenian origin, has made an important statement, which is interesting in my opinion, that summarises the events of the First World War very well. I would like to share it with you: In his words, “It was a historical and legal right for the Armenians to revolt. And likewise, it was a historical and legal right of the state to crush a popular uprising and suppress the rebels.” Dear Friends, Armenians, in their own words, waged a war of independence in the First World War in 1914. They went into this war knowing they would suffer significant losses, and they did. Again, with Arshag Chobanian’s words, one of the prominent Armenian historians and editors in 1916, “Exaggeration is inevitable in all similar crises. However, it is not true that Armenians were annihilated in Türkiye.” An Armenian editor published this in 1916. Dear Friends, there were very important Armenian magazines published in Russia during the First World War. Two magazines, the first of which is the “Armenian Bulletin” and the second is the “Armenians and the War”, total about 20,000 pages. I have read all of these 20,000 pages. At the beginning of the war, these magazines wrote that Armenians were massacred in Türkiye. First, the numbers 250,000, 300,000, 500,000, and then later even the number 800,000 were given towards the end of 1915. So, onwards from mid-1915, the magazines called “Armenians and the War” and “The Armenian Bulletin” wrote that Armenians were murdered, and the numbers of the losses constantly increased up to 800,000. When we come to the year 1916-1917, we see that the journal’s policy on the numbers had changed completely. I quote exactly from the editorials of the magazine, “Thank God, in Armenia – Armenians call the regions where they lived in Türkiye Armenia – there will always be Armenians, and there have always been. It turned out that the great Armenian loss in Türkiye, which we wrote about in 1915, was not true.” So, they had talked about the loss of around 800,000 Armenians in 1915. In 1916-1917, they said these numbers were not correct. We can easily read in the Armenian magazines of 1916-1917 that they had previously written this information for propaganda purposes in order to weaken the Ottoman Empire; they had inflated the numbers to 800,000 with



Claims of genocide and massacre directed against the Turkish nation, particularly as revealed by examining Russian archive documents and Armenian sources, are entirely incompatible with the facts.

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distantly reported hearsay and exaggerated numbers, and in 1916-1917 that these were definitely not true, there was no vast Armenian loss in Türkiye, they were extremely happy, and that it was possible to establish an Armenian state in Türkiye. Now, the claim that one and a half million Armenians were massacred originates from this hearsay and distantly reported numbers that were deliberately inflated and exaggerated for propaganda purposes in the aforementioned Armenian magazines, Russian magazines in Russia, and newspapers and magazines in Europe, France, Germany, and England. Today, Armenian historians present the numbers from those magazines, stating that there was a massacre of 800,000 and one million Armenians as if it were true, and we have to deal with these claims. Considering the extraordinary conditions of the period, it becomes evident that the decision for relocation was inevitable. This issue is a state act, legitimate in terms of national and international law. Similar examples of this practice are frequently encountered throughout history and today. Given the period's conditions of war and public order, such state acts cannot be associated in any way with the meaning attributed to the concept of genocide in international law.

When historical events are studied comparatively, they become meaningful; thus, more accurate results are obtained. Unfortunately, I have to make a self-criticism here. As historians of Türkiye, Turkish historians, we cannot really say that we study history comparatively, unfortunately. In the context of the comparative understanding of history, I believe that it is imperative to know whether the relocation-like events that the Ottoman Empire implemented in the case of Armenians for justifiable reasons during the First World War also took place in other countries during this war.

Dear Friends, in the First World War, Czarist Russia deported hundreds of thousands of Russian citizens of German and Jewish origin living in the western regions of the country with no justified reason; only with the suspicion that Germans and Jews living in these lands may cooperate with the German army, they drove hundreds of thousands, even almost a million Germans and Jews from the Ukrainian and Belarusian lands where they lived, tens of thousands of kilometres to the inner parts of Russia, through relocation. That

is to say, for its German and Jewish citizens, Czarist Russia implemented a relocation, similar to the relocation implemented by the Ottoman Empire. Millions of people were removed from their lands and sent to the inner parts of the country, tens of thousands of kilometres away. When we consider Russia's frigid climate conditions, it becomes clear that tens of thousands of people lost their lives during the journey and in the regions they migrated to. However, we have not heard any argument that Czarist Russia committed a massacre or genocide against Jewish and German citizens during the First World War. On the other hand, Armenian historians and those who support them, unfortunately, dare to define the relocation decision taken on very justifiable grounds by the Ottoman Empire against Armenians who collaborated with the Russian army and betrayed the Ottoman Empire as a decision for massacre or genocide. Now, when the implementation of relocation by Czarist Russia against its German and Jewish citizens is taken into consideration, it becomes clear, once again, the injustice of those who want to see the relocation decision, taken based on justifiable reasons by the Ottoman Empire regarding the Armenians, as a decision for massacre or genocide.

Dear Friends, there is something even worse, something even more important. As we all know, Dashnak Armenia was established in the Caucasus in 1918. When Dashnak Armenia was established, the Dashnak government exiled thousands of Bolsheviks, in other words, communist Armenians, who they saw as a threat to their rule, to Soviet Azerbaijan, and the Azerbaijani Turks embraced these Armenians. They did whatever they could to help them survive.

We see that many Bolshevik Armenians imprisoned by the Dashnaks were killed during this period. Considering the Dashnaks' practices against their kinsmen, it is clear that there is no basis for accusing the Ottoman State of massacre or genocide. We see that in 1914-1915 the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which was an ally of the Ottoman Empire, committed Europe's first massacre or genocide in the 20th century against its own citizens who lived in the country who spoke Russian and were referred to as Rusyns. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was our ally. However, considering the act of Austria-Hungary, with the approval of Germany, against these Russian (Russian speaking

community), 100,000 of whom were executed by firing squad or hanging solely on the suspicion that they may cooperate with the Russian army, and 150,000 died in concentration camps from hunger, infectious diseases, and cold, it is clear that some states have to look no further for the first genocidal criminals of the 20th century. In a circular issued by the last emperor of Austria, Charles I, the phrase, “Not all Russians arrested were guilty, but they were arrested so that they would not be guilty,” is extremely important.

Unfortunately, during the First World War, Armenians faced certain suffering. However, there is a different dimension to the event that we, as Turkish historians, do not dwell on much: forced emigration. Millions of people escaping from the Russian army and Armenian rebel bands and volunteer units had to flee from Eastern Anatolia and Sivas to the inner regions. The Armenian rebel bands and gangs murdered these people during this escape. That is to say, during the war, Armenians, Kurds, and Turks all suffered greatly and were forced to flee their homes. When the events of 1915 are examined based on historical documents, as I have mentioned above, it is seen that the Ottoman government of the period actually made a relocation decision because of the war conditions. Moreover, according to the population analysis and studies carried out since that day, Armenians in Anatolia were not subjected to ethnic cleansing or genocide, and this fact is confirmed by the large Armenian population which has been living in Armenia and other countries from the past to the present. The deaths which occurred during the relocation were due to the natural consequences of the migration, war, and climatic conditions. Some individual attacks and murders that occurred during this period were punished immediately by the authorities of the period, and Armenians were not the only nation to be forced to emigrate in history, but in fact, empires throughout world history, especially in war and other extraordinary situations, implemented many relocation- like exile incidents. Therefore, I conclude by stating that the claims of genocide and massacre directed against the Turkish nation, particularly as revealed by examining Russian archive documents and Armenian sources, are entirely incompatible with the facts. Thank you for taking the time to listen to me and thank you for your patience.

Yusuf Sarıay: I would like to thank Seyit Sertçelik for this highly detailed analytical presentation on Armenian claims and facts, which were mainly based on Russian and Armenian sources. In particular, we have to ask the question, “How did Revan become Yerevan?,” historically. In addition, he pointed out the role of the Armenian Volunteers in Russia’s victory in the war in the Caucasus, which Karekin Pastermadjian emphasizes in his memoirs. I thank you again.

Military History and the Events of 1915

Mesut Uyar*

Thank you very much, Mr. Moderator. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Presidency's Directorate of Communications for inviting me. First of all, I want to say that I am a military historian. I examine the events of 1915 from the standpoint of military history, and I use them in my own works and studies to the extent that they can be used in my work. So, my area of expertise is not Armenians, relocation, or genocide studies. As a military historian, what I consider to be an important issue is our approach to this subject. Here, the President of the Turkish Historical Society showed the works published by both the Historical Society and other government institutions regarding the events of 1915. He talked about quite a number of books. However, if you look at the books written by prominent military historians currently working in the field, you will not find these books in the index of any of them. Here, do we say, "Sir! These people are all biased. They do not use our publications knowingly and willingly"? Or should we examine why they do not use them?

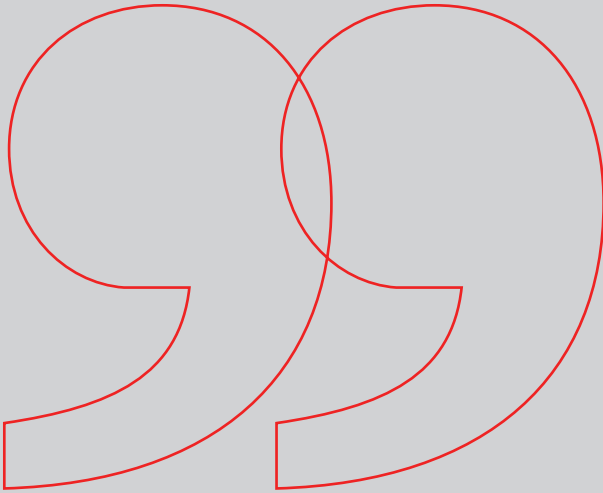
First of all, the events of 1915 took place during a war. They took place during World War I, that is, the First World War. If we look at it, the actual justification of the relocation decision is related to military reasons, and it is linked to the war effort. Therefore, this issue is also an

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issue of military history. However, this subject has not been examined in detail in terms of military history. We see that the works about the events of 1915 in Turkish and in foreign languages have not been used by military historians, as I have just said. In other words, not only the works related to the events of 1915 published in Türkiye, but also the works produced by Armenians or other academics, academics working on genocide studies, are not used by military historians because military history looks a bit like economic history. It attaches importance to numerical warnings. So, when you say something, you have to describe it numerically. You should base it on exact numbers, if possible, or on a numerical database in general if that is not possible. For example, when mobilisation was declared on August 3, 1914, Armenians were drafted into the army like those who were obligated. In February 1914 on the Caucasian Front and in March 1915 on other fronts, Armenian soldiers were taken from combat units and transferred to combat service, support units, and labour battalions. As you know, one of the main claims of the Armenian community is that the soldiers who were taken behind the front lines of these goods and services, support, and labour battalions were subsequently massacred in a planned and systematic manner. There is also the claim that a policy similar to the practices in Nazi Germany during World War II was pursued. In other words, it is claimed that the practices we watch in Hollywood movies also took place in Türkiye during the war. Military historians are now unable to use these arguments either for or against. Because we still do not have basic numerical data. How many reserve officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers were recruited during the mobilisation period? How many incumbents continued to be enlisted throughout the war? How many of them were Armenians? How many Armenian officers and soldiers were transferred to the combat service, support, and labour battalions in February and March 1915? How many labour battalions were there? What was the ratio of Armenians to the personnel in the labour battalions? What other ethnic groups were in the labour battalions, and what were their numbers and proportions? How many Armenians were killed, injured, fell ill, or became prisoners of war due to combat or non-combat reasons? How many were demobilised during or at the end of the war? Now we do not have any of these numbers. Let alone the Armenians; we cannot express in numbers how much of the

population was recruited in the Ottoman army during the war, which efforts were made in which years, and what happened to these soldiers. We have only some rough data. Based on this, we are trying to reach certain numbers at best, and this is actually not valuable work in terms of military history. So, we do not have a database that can be used. Now, these are not unnecessary details. We need to know these to evaluate the issue in terms of military history. As long as these are not provided, the written works produced do not have much value in terms of military history. In other words, they only include some common things, and I have seen that military historians try not to include the Armenian events of 1915 in their works unless they have to. When they have to include this in their works, they summarise the dominant Armenian genocide allegations. I mean, they look at an introductory reference-style book, as I will show here, and in this reference book, there is one chapter on Armenian issues, and in other chapters, Armenians are mentioned for other reasons. They take such a book and repeat some of the general information there in their works. When we do not provide basic military data, anecdotes, memories, newspaper reports, and rumours fill the gap. For instance, medical corporal Ali Rıza Eti, who served on the Caucasian Front, kept a diary, which Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları published in 2009, and in it, he recounts many incidents and also mentions that Turkish soldiers killed some Armenian soldiers behind or at the front. Now... Unless you provide basic data and information, such anecdotes and memoirs begin to become the primary sources and are generalised. So, a couple of instances recounted by medical corporal Ali Rıza Eti are amplified and included in various works.

Now, a perspective on military history will not only be beneficial regarding the numerical issues but, as Prof. Seyit has indicated previously, it will enable us to place the events of 1915 in a general context as well. So, where do the events of 1915 fall within World War I? What is its role in the entirety of World War I? What part do the events of 1915 play in world history? Military history will make a crucial contribution in helping us to determine them because the incident in question here today, which began what we refer to as the events of 1915, is relocation. What is relocation? Since when has it been used in the modern period? What are the common issues encountered in the



The actual justification of the relocation decision is related to military reasons. However, this subject has not been examined in detail in terms of military history.

Mesut Uyar

relocation process? Prof. Seyit has given an example in Russia in World War I. There are other examples in other countries as well. Were there any other relocations that had been implemented? What do we encounter when we compare the implemented relocations with those implemented in Türkiye in the Ottoman Empire? First of all, we need to know the general characteristics of the relocation issue and the problems that it poses. However, in analysing the events of 1915, both Turkish and foreign historians focus only on Ottomans and Armenians. In other words, they place the magnifying glass, the projector, on top of them and detach them from the whole. However, one of the most prominent examples of relocation in the modern period was implemented by England in South Africa during the Boer War.

So, we need to determine the unique characteristics of the Ottoman-Armenian example after indicating all of the common issues because the Ottoman-Turkish example bears a range of common problems, yes, but it has unique characteristics as well. Unfortunately, common issues and the specific issues related to the events of 1915 have not been distinguished so far. They are analysed altogether as if all of them are related to the Ottoman-Armenian issue. However, most of them are inherent issues. Thus far, I have only found a few articles and a book review written by American professor Edward Erickson, an excellent military historian. What I mean is that he pays attention to this issue, so he tries to place the events of 1915 in the general context.

Now you will ask why Turks, Turkish military historians, do not work on this subject? There is an accusation made regarding this; “Our academics do nothing! They are not working; they are not making an effort. They are not publishing research.” But I will tell you this: there are historians studying war in Türkiye, and recently the number of them has increased. However, the number of military historians in Türkiye is low because, apart from a few newly opened master’s programs of the National Defence University, military history does not have a strong presence in universities in Türkiye. It is not an academically acknowledged field. The courses do not exist. Of course, in the meantime, I would like to add that some of our professors introduced several lectures through their efforts. I do not want to deny their efforts. However, military history is not a unique department in the

universities in Türkiye. It is not a field of associate professorship recognised by the Council of Higher Education. Likewise, war studies is also not a field recognised by the Council of Higher Education. Thus, we are not training military historians. Because we are not training military historians, we are not able to publish research on many subjects, including the Armenian issue, research which significant world military historians can utilise, and, unfortunately, this matter remains a field of personal interest.

I want to end my speech by answering the question of what we should do in my own way. First, what we need to do initially is to establish a place in universities for military history and war studies. Education needs to be provided, and the Council of Higher Education should define it as a field of associate professorship. Military historians should be able to find employment and a platform in universities. Second, military historians should publish citeable studies that world historians can utilise. A foreign historian needs to look up and examine four or five books when they want to look into a subject related to World War I or the Ottoman Empire, and sometimes they even need to learn Turkish and examine Turkish books and research. Since this is not possible, most historians do not include or superficially, inaccurately include the Ottoman Empire in their works, even though this is necessary. So, in order for us to publish these kinds of studies, military historians need to study this field. We will first train military historians, and then our military historians will be able to publish academic studies that everyone can utilise. Third, since the 1960s, the top-down approach to history, in other words, reducing the main story to individuals, has lost its popularity. People are curious about what individuals experienced, especially when it comes to war and war history, and today, it has become more and more popular. Thanks especially to the 100th anniversary of World War I, many people want to learn what happened to their grandfathers, and as a military historian, I regularly come across requests from many people from various places: Arabs, Persians, Armenians, Greeks, Turks, etc. So, they say, "Sir, my grandfather served in this/that unit. I cannot find any information about him. Can you help me?". This is a great request, a desire. If only we could write stories that would warm their hearts and fulfil this desire... For instance, Prof. Seyit has just given some examples.

By naming these examples... In other words, if we could tell the story of an Armenian soldier from his enrolment in the military in 1914 to his discharge, if we could provide this information to people, we would do a significant part of our work. What if we do not do this? If we do not do this, we will have – as we have today – difficulty in persuading even Turkish scholars and readers, let alone Armenian and Western scholars and readers. If you look closely, some of the most critical publications and theses supporting Armenian claims in the last 15 years were written by Turkish academics. In other words, the subject has now gone beyond communicating our claims, theses, and writings to Armenians or Westerners. Now the issue is to convince our own citizens, schools, and academics. I would like to thank you again for the invitation. I want to end my speech without straining the patience of Mr. Moderator. Thank you.

Yusuf Sarıay: Mesut, thank you very much for your sensitive approach. In particular, you have presented us with a different window, a different perspective, on how we should view the 1915 events and the Armenian events from the perspective of military history. This point of view was critical in order for us to place this in the context of world history. It is understood that the Turkish academic community will have to shift their focus to that area in the future. This is extremely important. I thank you again.

The World in 1915 and its Aftermath

Oleg Kuznetsov*

Yusuf Sarıay: Now, I would like to give the floor to Professor Oleg Kuznetsov. Dr. Kuznetsov taught at various universities, especially in Russian educational institutions. He currently works as a professor at the Azerbaijan University of Languages in Baku. His work is on the Russian army, military history, and especially on Armenian terrorism. I give the floor to him by quoting one of his phrases: “Terror is the practice of the Armenian nationalist ideology.”

Oleg Kuznetsov: Gentlemen, thank you for giving me this opportunity. You have allowed me to participate in such a comprehensive, important meeting – thank you. Likewise, I would like to thank the official institutions of the Republic of Türkiye. I can express my own opinion, my view here, and my point of view differs from that of many Russian Federation official historians, and it becomes important to express my opinion here. This is also a difficult mission here. It is imperative to rationally strike a balance between history and populism or among political conjunctures. I would like to express my opinion about what happened in 1915 not only in the Ottoman (Empire) but also in the whole world, as far as I know.

The First World War was an event bearing universal effects, and, therefore, it affected human beings, and if we look at it in this sense,

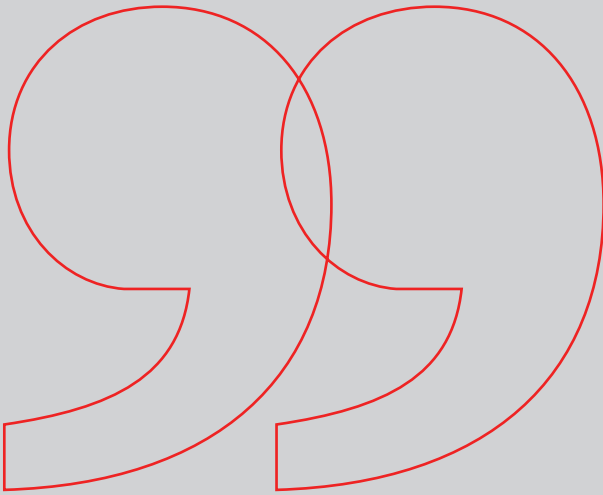
(*) Faculty Member of Azerbaijan University of Languages, Professor of History

it also had a universal and uniform feature. These were similar events in different countries. First of all, I want to talk about military crimes in different countries. This emerged in the First Balkan War in 1912, and, eventually, the international commission was formed. It was founded by the Carnegie Institute in America. Representatives of European countries joined this, and they started to address military crimes, the military crimes committed in the Balkans. Pavel Milyukov from the Russian Empire was also a member. He was also an opposition leader and from the Democrat party group; still, he was among the authors of the report. This report was published in Geneva in 1915; let me see, I will show it on the screen. This report was published in Geneva in 1915. However, this did not attract much attention because of the events of the First World War. When I saw this, I saw something clearly. If we consider the first genocide in a legal context, if we evaluate it according to the Nuremberg decisions, the first victims of genocide were the Turks in the Balkans because they were expelled from Macedonia. They were expelled from Greece during the war, and there are many documents from that period to prove it. Such crimes prove that the events that happened in 1915 are not specific to that period. The previous events occurred as specific events. Collective losses have occurred previously. The events of 1915 were, in fact, ordinary for the period. As my Dear Colleagues stated earlier, many countries all over the world carried out exiles on the basis of the nation. They drove people of different nationalities from their lands. They did this due to military security concerns to ensure their territories' security; indeed, there was exile also within the Russian Empire in 1915. Germans, Jews, many people from the Western provinces were sent to the Ural Region, and, likewise, the Muslim population was exiled from the Caucasus, and the French were exiled from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

One of the interesting points here is the event in South Africa. There were soldiers in the colonies under the German armies. There were 900 white German soldiers in Namibia. The rest of the army was made up of indigenous soldiers fighting against South Africa's dominion. They fought against Britain at that time, and the English, that is, the British, were ruthless in South Africa. The events that took place in Prussia, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman [Empire] pale in

comparison to this event. Such brutal events happened, but this does not come to the fore. Nobody talks about them because the practice at that time was an everyday event, and everybody took measures in the meantime to ensure their own security. Similarly, the second issue that emerged from the events of 1915 was that all warring countries essentially used their own men on the opposing land. This event was very common on the Caucasian Front. Of course, I do not know how the Turkish party would evaluate these events, but in 1914, the Ottoman army and the Russian army took action. Local elements also supported the Russian army. Here, the religious element was used very actively during the First World War. All of the contending parties used this religious element. In 1916, riots broke out in the Russian Empire in the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic in Chechnya, and the Orenburg Cossack troops were employed to suppress it. They received awards and medals for their heroism or their brutality, that is, for doing their job effectively in this uprising. In this context, we can say that the Armenians in the Russian Imperial troops were used against the Ottoman Empire on the Caucasian Front during the First World War. Likewise, there were troops established with the people of the Russian Empire in the Ottoman army; for example, there were Azerbaijanis. In other words, people from Muslim regions joined the ranks of the Ottoman army. We see this in the South Caucasus. So, such events were normal for that time. National troops were not only composed of Armenians in Russia. For example, there was the Polish unit; there was the Czech Kosovo unit. For example, there was Admiral Kolchak in the civil war environment. Thus, this was a common practice in the world at that time. On the one hand, it was done to undermine the opponent's power and use its own resources economically to strengthen its own power, and such events were understandable and acceptable under the First World War conditions. Therefore, no one saw this as something extraordinary. This is why the events here, on Ottoman lands, were not something different from what happened in other countries.

I want to emphasize; unfortunately, the human brain, the human imagination, is incapable of viewing what happened in the past century or two centuries ago in terms of historical events or in a realistic manner because we begin to apply our inherited understanding to events



The Armenian issue was originally determined as a tool, a tool of ideological repression, and it was used as an ideological tool of war for the consolidation of the Armenian diaspora and the fight against the Republic of Türkiye.

Oleg Kuznetsov

that occurred over a century ago. As you know, antibiotics and medicines are used today. These began to appear after 1943. Before penicillin was invented, the losses because of medical problems in a war environment were always three to four times the casualties in war. Casualties due to medical problems were three to four times more than the casualties at the front. In other words, today's wars have no casualties due to medical reasons, and if there is a conflict, a soldier dies at the front. However, then it was a very different situation. People lost their lives due to even weather conditions. In other words, people were dying because of the conditions rather than the war, the conflict itself. The events of 1915 were essentially a product of state policies. The policies implemented by all states brought about the events. That is, a certain number of people died naturally under those conditions, and there was no medicine at the time. As previously stated, people inevitably lost their lives since penicillin was not yet discovered and epidemics occurred. In other words, biological and natural factors influenced the death and loss rates of individuals. Let's assume that the soldiers made their way to their medical corps. However, civilians lacked their medical units, and the army provided this service to itself. In other words, people had to rely on their resources to survive. Unfortunately, in the modern world, these issues are not brought to light or considered. Understanding this fact has a significant impact on our understanding of the events of that era. For instance, we are well aware that two of the three Ottoman corps sent to Caucasia in 1914 perished from exposure to the cold. When the spring of 1915 came, the frozen corpses began to thaw. Of course, the corpses provided an ideal spreading ground for a cholera outbreak, and the death of people from different ethnic groups in Eastern Anatolia in 1915 was inextricably linked to this outbreak. In other words, they died as a result of health complications. So, to say that this is a 'state policy' is ridiculous because it was not only Armenians who died here but people of other nationalities as well. Of course, the Armenian side pursues its own political goals in an ideological sense and says that only their own people suffered. They never consider what happened to other good neighbours, and we can ask a question here. Which ideology is the so-called Armenian genocide mentioned here based on? We know this very well. Nobody knew what genocide was after the First World War. If there isn't even a term or a word for it, we can point out when the idea emerged. The bibliography of Candan Badem was

previously published in Türkiye. A bibliography of 4,500 books on the Turkish issue was compiled here. I have this bibliography in my library. I checked them as well as the titles of the books. When were the Armenian genocide allegations first raised? Not even after the Second World War. This happened much later. The Armenian genocide allegations started to be mentioned in the mid-60s. It was invented at that time, and two factors were behind it. One of them was that Türkiye entered NATO. It emerged because of this. The second factor was the deployment of American rockets against the Soviets on Turkish territory, and when this occurred in the early 1960s, two significant events occurred in Soviet Armenia. In 1962, the Armenian Communist Party decided to construct a mausoleum. They used this to pursue their claims against the Turkish state, and after that, the Institute of History was renamed the Armenian Science Institute. What does this mean? From this point forward, a new ideology based on the goal of fighting Türkiye began to emerge. What was this based on? First of all, NATO's southern front had to be blocked. The so-called Armenian issue was specifically invoked in this formulation. It emerged as a product of the Cold War period, developed by the Soviet Union in the 1960s in response to NATO's geopolitical pressures. The Armenian issue is primarily a product of the Cold War era and the struggle of geopolitical blocs. Therefore, the so-called Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire is a matter of interstate conflict, and it does not have the slightest connection with history and historical facts, and I can sincerely say that there are two histories here. One from the Ottoman Empire period and written in Russian and Armenian and the other in English. I would like to provide an example to make a comparison. How is the Lebanese uprising portrayed in Russian and related works, such as Russian publications? This uprising is said to have killed 40,000 Armenians. According to British publications, 12,000 Armenians died in the Armenian uprising along with people from other nations. In the mid-nineteenth century, Britain assisted the Assyrian population. They wanted to get the Assyrians on their side. Assyrians also fought against the Ottoman Empire together with the Armenians. Armenians supported the Russians, and Assyrians supported the British. So, it is the same incident that is mentioned. Supposedly the same losses. Exaggerated losses are mentioned in Soviet Russian history. In Britain's history, two enemies, two enemies of the Ottomans, are mentioned. In Russian

works, only Armenians are mentioned. In this sense, the hypocrisy is evident. Yes, we see the ideological part of it. We have seen the ideological dimension of the so-called Armenian genocide issue. Of course, we can state categorically that the context of this issue was originally determined as a tool, a tool of ideological repression, and it was used as an ideological tool of war for the consolidation of the Armenian diaspora and the fight against the Republic of Türkiye. The Warsaw Pact dissolved. A state, a republic of Armenians emerged in the former Soviet lands. The idea of establishing an Armenian ethnic state in Türkiye's lands lost its actuality at this point. Armenia is in the grip of a major economic and political crisis. This is something that we are all aware of. Indeed, Armenians were unable to establish an ethnic state, a mono-ethnic state capable of functioning normally. What Armenia has is ideological cohesion. So, a mono-ethnic state exists here. Ethnic minorities account for less than 2% of the population in that country. There are Yazidis and a few Jews. There are no Muslims left in Armenia. They claim that Armenia has six Muslims. According to them, one of them is the mufti. In brief, they prove their efforts to transform the country into a mono-ethnic state. As such, this is a manifestation of the ideology. It is the result of the idea developed in the 1960s, and these claims arose as part of the ideological project. As a result, a mono-ethnic state was established. This was supported. It was initially assumed that Armenia would be established in this Turkish geography. But then came the events of 1918, and Armenia became what it is today. Dashnak Armenians arose as a result of the Batum Treaty. What happened after that is the reincarnation of events. The Russian Empire collapsed, and then the Soviet Union collapsed. I would like to say only one thing about the context of this issue: Russia has always lost because it supported the Armenians. For instance, Dashnaks played a role in the collapse of Russia. They fought against the Ottomans, but the Dashnaks provoked the Karabakh war in 91, thereby undermining the unity of the Soviet Union. They accelerated the union's collapse. In this context, Russia and Türkiye share common adversaries, necessitating extensive cooperation. The scientific community of Türkiye and Russia should be in great cooperation. We need to examine this problem from multiple perspectives and bring the facts to our people.

Yusuf Sarıncay: Thank you very much, Sir.

The Allegation of “Continuous Genocide” from Abdulhamid II to Atatürk

Maxime Gauin*

I will limit myself to the requisite time. Briefly, as an introduction, I would like to emphasize that one of the strengths of the Armenian nationalist literature of the 1960s, when the genocide allegation emerged in the international public sphere, was to allege the continuity of the Ottoman and Turkish policies from Abdulhamid II to the Turkish national movement led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Also, they alleged a Christian genocide, that the Turks were barbarians, and they killed all the Christians. and so on. It often has an implicit or an explicit anti-Semitic dimension because at the end of the 19th century, it was alleged that “Jewish bankers” were behind Abdulhamid II, and later it was alleged that the Committee of Union and Progress that was born in the Ottoman Empire was controlled by Jewish Freemasons. This is the kind of nonsense you can read in Armenian literature until today, actually. This extreme thesis of Christian genocide continuity, etc. is experiencing a revival since 2010, roughly, in the last 10 or 12 years. Many arguments have been debunked regarding the Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek cases by many historians, such as Edward Erickson or (inaudible), but one argument that did not receive the attention it deserves, namely the supposed disappearance of Anatolian Armenians. So, very often, when you have debunked many arguments, the ultimate response is

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“Yes, but there are no Armenians in Anatolia anymore, so this was genocide.” I will answer this argument specifically focusing on three periods, three aspects. First, the relocation by the Russian Army in 1915-16 and the Russian withdrawal. Then the French occupation of the Çukurova of Adana region and the French withdrawal. And my third and last part will be about the Greco-Turkish war and the Greek scorched earth policy, the policy of destruction that provoked the immigration of Greeks and Armenians from western Anatolia.

So first of all, the Russian offensives, the attacks of 1915 and 1916, made a large part of eastern Anatolia a war zone. As a result, as has already been said, actually, about 300,000 Ottoman Armenians were relocated by Russian forces, including the Armenian volunteer units. And according to an official statement of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, the oldest Armenian Nationalist Party, this same party took part in this relocation. According to the official data of the Armenian Republic, roughly half of these people died due to lack of food and because of diseases during or right after the relocation of 1915-16. This means a mortality rate of 50%, yet the mortality rate of the Ottoman Armenians relocated by the Ottoman army is, as far as can be known, between 40 and 50%. So, the mortality rate was the same or perhaps even higher in the Russian relocation. This is something to be known and to emphasize, I think. Yet, even when the region was secured after the invasion conquest, the Czar’s authorities were reluctant to repatriate a lot of these surviving Armenians because they preferred to set Cossacks in these conquest activities, but also and perhaps even more because systematic killings of Muslims by the army and units of the Russian army made the Armenians unpopular in the Russian administration. Michael Reynolds has really striking, really clear Russian documents in this regard.

Moreover, the Russian Revolution of 1917 caused a collapse of the Russian troops on the eastern Anatolian front and, as a result, an Ottoman reconquest in 1917 and even more in 1918. Yet, the remaining Armenians in the Russian forces took profit from the mass departure of both Russian officers and soldiers to commit a third wave of killings against the Muslims, the remaining Muslim populations, and unprecedented wave of destruction of Muslim property. According one more

time to the official statistics of the Armenian Republic, forwarded to the French military attaché in the Caucasus, Pierre Chardigny, 50,000 Armenians fled eastern Anatolia in 1917-1918, which means that the number of refugees increased, in what is today Armenia, increased to 200,000. And one more thing, according to these official statistics, this number was reduced to 150,000 by epidemics in Yerevan in 1918-1919. So, we see that Armenian nationalism was particularly destructive for its own population in eastern Anatolia at several stages of the First War. But this is far from being the end of this.

So, my second part is about the French occupation of Adana and the withdrawal from this region. First of all, I want to specify that contrary to a persistent myth, France never promised an Armenian state in or around Adana and never said what exactly the boundaries of Armenia in the Caucasus would be. On the contrary, the French government refused to accept the establishment of an Armenian state in Adana and refused to see what exactly the boundaries would be. Regardless, it is true that at the beginning of the occupation, by the end of 1918 and in the very first months of 1919, the occupation of Adana, I mean, attempts were made to use Armenians as a tool to justify a permanent domination of France in the Cilicia region, particularly as far as the exploitation of cotton was concerned, because one of the main problems of the French imperialists was the lack of production of cotton in their colonies. So, there were Armenians who were not relocated from Adana to Syria, tens of thousands according to the French official statistics, and there were even more Armenians who were repatriated from Syria to Adana, Mersin, Tarsus, etc. I will say Adana to be short, but of course it means the surrounding parts of Türkiye. So about 60,000 people were relocated, repatriated by the French forces in 1919. Moreover, the Armenian nationalists of Adana invited the Armenians of Konya and Kayseri, who had not been relocated in 1915-16, to come to Adana, Tarsus, Mersin, etc., with the aim to change the demographic balance because, as the French said, "We cannot create an Armenia here because you are a minority." The idea was "we will change the majority, and we will force the French to accept an Armenia here."

Meanwhile, the criminal behaviour of the Armenian Legion, the unit



Three attempts to declare an Armenian or a Christian Republic in Adana were blocked by the French forces in 1920.

Maxime Gauin

supposed to be under the French command, and the fierce resistance of the Turkish population to the domination made these plans impossible as early as September 1919. So, the French policies begins to change and to see Armenian nationalists as dangerous and Armenians as unreliable clients. The Armenian Legion was purged as early as February 1919, and then purely and simply suppressed in summer 1920. Similarly, the kind of pogrom against the Muslims of Adana in July 1920 was repressed by the French authorities by summary executions and three attempts to proclaim an Armenian or a Christian Republic in Adana, were blocked by the French forces in August and September 1920. Yet, these struggles and crimes created a distrust, to say the very least, between the communities. Meanwhile, I would like to give you the details. Meanwhile, the French policies changed, and it was decided to evacuate, to leave the occupied region. And that is why the Ankara Agreement was signed on October 20, 1921 with the withdrawal of the French occupation troops. After this agreement, the Armenian National Council of Cilicia, the umbrella organization of the three Armenian nationalist parties and churches, decided openly on the mass immigration of the Armenians, with the firm support of Greece and of the British Armenian Committee - the role of the British government is unclear. So, I will not enter into this issue.

Yet, the Ankara Agreement provided amnesty and other guarantees, but all that was called irrelevant, negligible by the Armenian nationalists, which was not the case. And the stronger agreement is also the stillborn agreement of March 1921, and even the Sévres Treaty, which was so emulating for Türkiye, were previously considered by the same Armenian and British nationalists to be totally insufficient. The problem is not the content of the Ankara Agreement. The problem was with the very fact that the French would leave; the Armenian nationalists did not want their co-invasionists to continue to live in an independent Türkiye. That was their main concern. And the Greek nationalists, of course, did not want anything of this kind. Even more strikingly, the emigration rate of the Armenians from Mersin, Tarsus, and Adana at the end of 1921 was 99%, but the emigration rate of the Assyrians was 55 percent. Yet, the Assyrian religious leadership was very against the Turks, and some Assyrians took part in the killings of Turks in 1920. So, this is arithmetic evidence that Turkophobia of

the leadership and participation of some people in crimes against the Turks; the fears of reprisals are far from being enough to explain this immigration. To finish with this part, both French and Turkish authorities decided to create, at the end of 1921, joint commissions to take care of the Christians' abandoned properties, with a very clear aim to tell those who were leaving after two or three months, "Do you miss your shop, do you miss your house? If 'Yes.', just go back to Adana, go back to Mersin. Your shop, your house is waiting for you." But what happened to the Armenians who accepted to be members of this joint commission? They were threatened to death. By who? By Turks? No, by Armenian nationalists themselves. This is one more time the proof that the Armenian nationalists did not want co-existence and did their best, if I may say, their best, to prevent such co-existence. And the result was the unnecessary immigration of about 60,000 persons only at the end of 1921. If there are almost no Armenians in Adana today, this is largely because of the Armenian nationalists themselves and their policies after 1918.

My third and last part will be about the Greek-Turkish war of 1919-1922. In the western Anatolian provinces, particularly the provinces of Izmir and Kütahya, were largely spared during the forced relocation of 1915 and 1916. Most of the Armenians, 99% of the Armenians of Kütahya and Izmir, were not relocated at all. However, as early as May 1919, a minority of Armenians in Izmir took part in assassinations and plunders committed by Greek civilians and Greek soldiers during and after the Greek landing of May 1915. And this is proved even by Greek sources, because the Western countries were so infuriated by the crimes against the Turks of Izmir that they forced the Greek command to punish the perpetrators. Yet, among the perpetrators punished for crimes committed on the 15th of May 1919, there were 13 Armenians. Moreover, volunteer units, Armenian volunteer units were created by 1920, and they were often used very cynically by the Greek command to put all the blame on them. Of course, these units committed crimes, but the majority of the perpetrators were Greeks, not Armenians in the western part of Anatolia in 1920 and 1921, but they were cynically used. In spite of this cynical use, the number of Armenian volunteers increased in 1922, under the leadership of General (inaudible), who was a former military attaché in an Armenian

embassy. But my main point is not here. My main point is coming. As it is well known, the Greek forces, including the Armenian volunteer unit, burned the Turkish cities of western Anatolia after the debacle of August 1922. In two weeks, merely in two weeks, the cities of Eskişehir, Manisa, Aydın, etc., were destroyed, mostly by fire, as well as countless villages of the same region and also of the province of Bursa. Many Turks were killed, raped, and so on, including children. But what is much less known is that the Greek forces, including one more time the Armenian volunteer units, forced the Christian population, both Greeks and Armenians, to leave western Anatolia, with the same aim to leave to the Turks a desert. Indeed, the Greeks and Armenians were overrepresented among the traders and artisans, and the proof that these Christians were forced to leave by the Greek army and not by the Turkish army comes from their own testimonies because the unanimous testimonies of the Greek and Armenian refugees cared for by the US Navy was, “it was the Greek army that forced us to leave.”

Similarly, the report of the head of the French Catholic Mission in Eskişehir is quite clear: “The destruction of the city and the immigration of the Christians was due to the Greek army and nobody else.” At least 85,000 Armenians arrived in Greece from western Anatolia because of this scorched earth policy. In Eastern Thrace the destruction was less systematic, but the forced immigration of the Christians by the Greek army was as systematic as in eastern Anatolia and these people who have always lived in Bulgaria.

So, I have reached my conclusion. The emigration and death of literally hundreds of thousands of Armenians had nothing to do with the CUP or the Kemalist policies. It is not the whole truth, but this is a part of the truth not sufficiently known. And, moreover, in spite of the mutual massacres, İsmet İnönü, the main delegate of Türkiye at the Lausanne Conference, proposed several times a return of the Armenian refugees, which was refused by the Armenian nationalists. And in spite of all that, Armenian communities survived in cities such as Adana or Tokat or Diyarbakır until the 1970s or even until the beginning of the 1980s. So, that is why the argument that there are no Armenians today is a completely invalid argument. I have finished.

AN ANTI-TÜRKİYE NARRATIVE

THE EVENTS OF
1915



SESSION I

Question &
Answer

Yusuf Sarımay*

Firstly, the following question is raised: “Were there any anti-Armenian laws, hate speech against Armenians, or venomous language used by the Young Turk regime against them, similar to Hitler’s language against Jews in the Ottoman State?” First and foremost, let me state that there was no hate speech towards Armenians or other elements throughout the Ottoman State because the Ottoman State professed to have communities of very different religions and nationalities coexisting in peace, and it largely succeeded in doing so in various regions such as the Balkans. As for the Young Turks... The Young Turks are a group that declared constitutionalism against Abdul Hamid’s regime while also collaborating with Armenians; they moved in tandem. Furthermore, they entered the elections through joint lists during the first elections as well. There is no such discourse. I would like to highlight a point here: As you might recall, in the Balkan Wars, hundreds of thousands of people were massacred. Over 600,000 Muslim Turks were able to save their lives and seek refuge in the remaining lands. According to archival records, 200,000 of them were

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in central Istanbul. As a result of hunger, misery, and epidemics, these people who fled to Istanbul lived in inns, bathhouses, on pavements, and in mosque courtyards. Despite that great disaster, during a period when nationalist discourses were allegedly on the rise, no group, no Turks, attacked them in Pera, Beyoğlu – an area inhabited by Greeks, Armenians, and Bulgarians. They did not say anything about retaliation against them. This is a highly important point. This is how it is. This is important in terms of understanding the humanitarian aspect of nationalism in the Ottoman Empire because, for Turks in Istanbul, their enemies were the Serbians in Macedonia and the Bulgarians in Bulgaria. They are the ones who massacred their kinsmen and brothers. In other words, they regard the ones in Istanbul as their own. Therefore, there was no hate speech against Armenians or against the many other non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire.

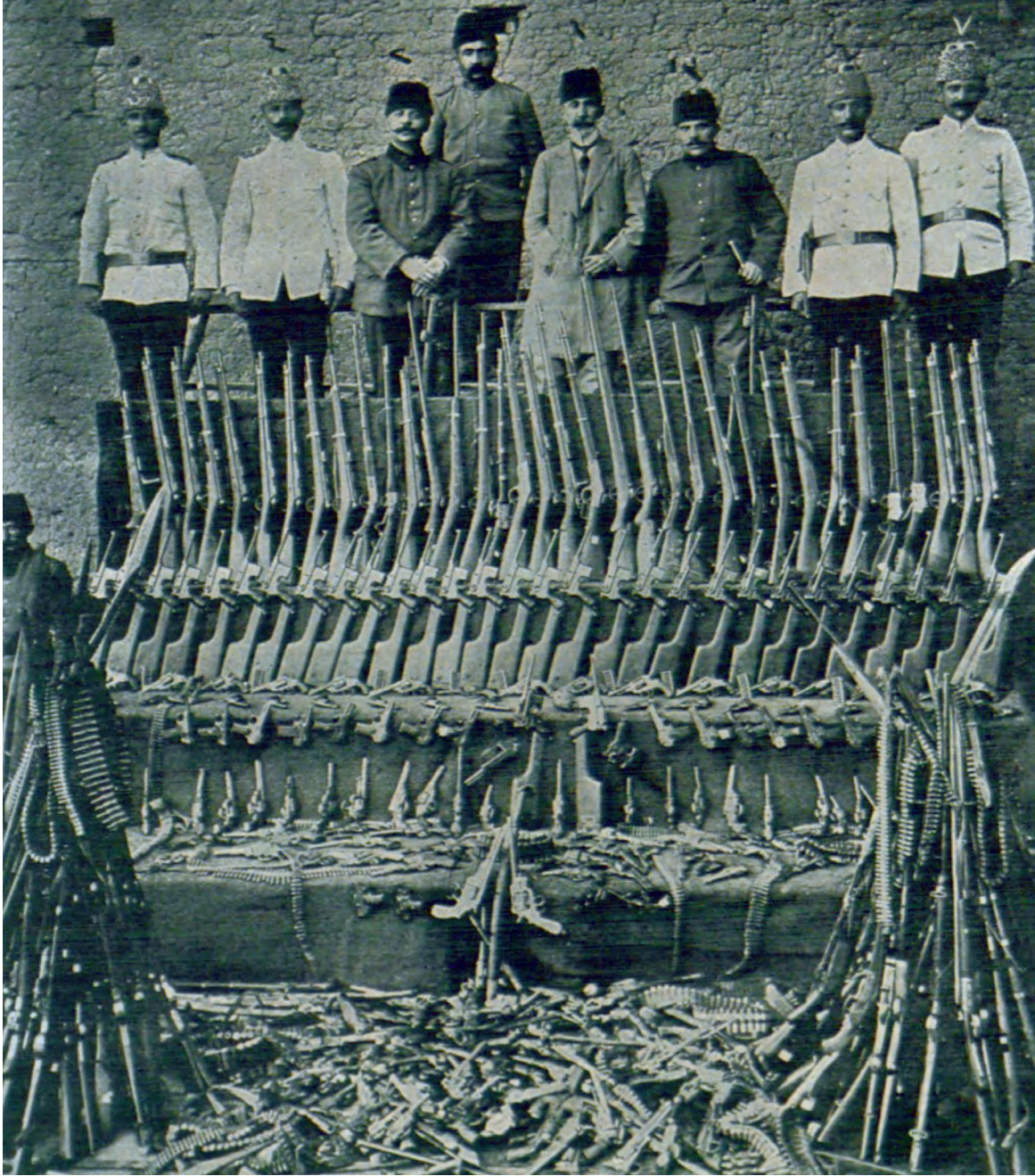
There is another interesting question asked by Mr. Acar, Consul General in Chicago: “When and where did the allegations of the death of 1.5 million Armenian first surface? Furthermore, when was 1915-23 mentioned for the first time instead of 1915-16 to define the alleged genocide period?” I would like to reply as follows: As is well known, Armenians were widely dispersed throughout the world. Following the collapse of Dashnak Armenia in the Soviet Union and France’s withdrawal from Çukurova, as you may be aware, Armenians migrated to various countries in America and Europe and elsewhere. In fact, the dispersion of Armenians throughout the Christian world caused a substantial identity crisis. As a result, on the 50th anniversary of the relocation, in 1965, large-scale commemoration programs were held all over the world in order, on the one hand, to prevent this, and, on the other hand, to construct this animosity on an identity founded on anti-Turkish sentiments. If you pay attention, you will notice that these commemoration events created a very serious genocide myth. It created a new historical fiction far beyond actual history, and an Armenian identity based on anti-Turkish sentiments began to be built. In this regard, the second and third generations in the diaspora have more anti-Turkish sentiments. In other words, anti-Turkish sentiments are stronger in these generations than in the generation that personally witnessed the First World War and relocation. ASA-LA, the Armenian terrorist organisation, has emerged from these

generations. Within this framework, the allegation of the deaths of 1.5 million Armenians has been coming to the fore since 1965. Previously, far lower numbers were mentioned in various parts of the West and in the Soviet Union... As for the second one, from 1915 to 1923, the habit of blaming both the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Türkiye together emerged at the same time. In response to another question, I'd like to say the following: Ms. Münevver asked this question: The Armenian population in the Ottoman State was around 1.3 million people, 1,290,000. There are no figures that exceed 1,350,000, but the Armenian parties claim that the number is much higher. Another question is about April 24. I'd like to conclude this session by responding to this. As you know, April 24 was the date when prominent Armenians, more specifically, the committee members, were arrested pursuant to a circular issued by the Ottoman Ministry of Interior. According to archival records, the Ottoman police kept a complete record of all those carrying out activities in Istanbul. There were a total of 601. This is not a coincidence. 356 of them were Dashnaks, 173 were Hunchaks, and 72 were Ramgas. Two hundred thirty-five people were detained in Istanbul on the night of April 24-25. In the past, figures along the lines of 2,300 were given. It was later discovered that there had been a massive sorting error with the documents because there were lists of their names and addresses. There are 235 people in total. The total number of committee members in Anatolia's various regions, such as Kayseri, Aydın, Elâzığ, and Diyarbakır, is 321. I'd like to note that especially. One hundred fifty-five of those detained in Istanbul were sentenced to a mandatory residence in Çankırı. For example, 35 of them were released 15 days later. However, the Ayaş Military Prison held a group of 71 people, the majority of whom were Dashnaks. These were members of the Dashnak Party. They were imprisoned in the Ayaş prison until the end of the First World War. That is, the case is not simply that there was a massacre, and they were all exterminated, as some claim. The Ottoman State made certain that whoever was imprisoned at its hands remained alive. According to the documents, for example, "A person died in prison due to health issues". The Ottomans even recorded that. The group of 71 was released at the end of the First World War when Anatolia was occupied following the Armistice of Montrose. They were imprisoned here for four years.

Our dear questioner enquires, “Why do the Armenians highlight April 24?” It is because the leadership team of Armenians in charge of all the coordination was arrested on April 24. This team also conducted relations with the external world such as Europe and Russia. They initiated allegations of genocide as of April 24 because they just could not accept the arrest of that leadership group. Let me note, however, that April 24 is important from a different viewpoint, in terms of our history. You see, on the morning of April 25, the land battles of the Battle of Gallipoli began. It is important from this standpoint in terms of our history as well.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Presidency’s Directorate of Communications for putting on such a productive symposium, and without testing the patience of participants, I extend my greetings and appreciation to all of you.





Arms taken from the Armenians of Amassia.

Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, The Armenian Aspirations and Revolutionary Movements Album no:1/State Printing House, 1916

AN ANTI-TÜRKİYE NARRATIVE

THE EVENTS OF
1915



SESSION II

**The Events
of 1915 in
the Light of
International
Law**

PANELISTS

Sevgi Gül Akyılmaz

David Saltzman

Hazel Çağan Elbir

Deniz Akçay

Introduction

Sevgi Gül Akyılmaz*

Thank you. I respectfully welcome the participants. We have three distinguished speakers in the second panel, titled “The Events of 1915 in Light of International Law.” Since we have agreed with the organizing committee to include the ownership issues and lawsuits filed for this purpose to complement the subject and provide a holistic approach, I would like to give a presentation following three distinguished speakers. Therefore, I believe it will be convenient to organize the flow of our panel as follows: I would like to ask the distinguished speakers to finish in 15 minutes because there will be four speakers. Then, we will answer questions, if there are any, and close this session. Now, I would like to leave the floor to Mr. David Saltzman, Esquire, the first speaker on the list. He will be speaking about the continuing state, successor state, and legal and ethical responsibilities. It is your turn, David Saltzman; please speak now.

(*) Faculty Member of Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Faculty of Law, Professor of Law History

An Empire Has Died. Who Pays for the Funeral?

David Saltzman*

Thank you very much, Professor Akyilmaz. Let's see here. I'm going to share my screen, so I have a presentation to share with everyone. First of all, I would like to thank and congratulate the sponsors and organizers of this event, and I would like to express my admiration for my co-panellists and other presenters. I have learned quite a lot thus far. When I saw the final program for this conference, I confess that my name looked out of place. After all, I'm neither a historian nor a professor of law. I'm a different sort who deals with World War One. I'm a legal practitioner, a professional advocate. In my practice, I have taken on a number of cases at whose core is the question of whether one can espouse a particular viewpoint in a genuine historical controversy and not suffer for it, whether financially, academically, or professionally. And many times, that viewpoint is an unpopular one. My clients have included university students, university professors, a sitting member of the United States Congress, and non-profit advocacy organizations. And I have had the honour to represent the Republic of Türkiye in litigation concerning World War One era events, so history matters deeply to my clients and me. So, an empire has died. Who pays for the funeral?

In the case of the Ottoman Empire and especially the events of 1915, we are talking about whether the Republic of Türkiye, the state that sits upon the remnant core of the Imperial Dominions, is presently

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responsible for the alleged internationally wrongful acts of the Ottoman Empire.

Sometimes it could seem as if one's moral compass demands elevating compassion for those who suffered losses during the war above the search for clarity in the historical record and the assignment of legal responsibility. But I would assert that these stand on equal moral footing. Indeed, sincere compassion cannot exist independently of historical accuracy and the application of the rule of law. With that in mind, we begin the legal analysis with the concept of state succession, which can simply be defined as the change or transfer of sovereignty over a certain territory. However, the simple definition is inadequate. A change of sovereignty over how much territory is sufficient for there to be state succession? What rights and obligations, if any, are automatically transferred from the predecessor state to the successor state? Does the successor state succeed to all treaties of the predecessor? How about to its debts? Some terminology has developed to help us make sense of this, in particular the distinction between a successor state and a continuing state. This is important because the transfer of certain rights and obligations to a successor state has not been the traditional norm, whereas state practice has been developing to make the passage of rights and obligations onto continuing states. The doctrine has its roots in two principles: First is the widespread belief that a state should be held accountable only for its own wrongful acts. Second is the notion that liability does not pass on to one's heirs. These rationales have been criticised as being outdated, and a modern theory has emerged that favours succession to international responsibility, but only for continuing states. And it is, of course, more complicated than that, as continuity and succession can coexist. A predecessor may have multiple successor states, only one of which is recognised as or asserts itself as the continuing state. And one can see how messy this can be, especially in the case of the former Ottoman Empire. If one were to overlay a modern map on a map of the Ottoman Empire at its greatest extent, one would now find all or parts of, by my count, forty-two countries, Türkiye included. Those who favour imputing all Ottoman responsibilities to the Republic of Türkiye, the continuing state. For some scholars, the concept of the continuing state simply implies that the identity of the new state is

legally indistinguishable from that of the predecessor state. One merely looks at the new state as being the same as the old state but with a different group governing it and maybe some modestly adjusted borders. An alternate theory of continuity includes a wider variety of so-called objective and subjective factors in assessing the identity of states. Let's look at past examples to see what factors have played an important role in the continuity determination as well as what rights and obligations have been deemed transferable to continuing states.

I have to say in advance that I don't find either approach very useful, whether the new state theory or the many factors theory. The circumstances of imperial collapse, dissolution, and new state formation are too diverse to allow easy classification and, therefore, the adoption of strict rules. In my opinion, each empire is *sui generis*, that is, one of a kind, and so is an imperial collapse. To use an animal classification as an example, one can neatly sort out a rule to describe a house cat, a tiger, a lynx, a leopard, and a lion. But can you sort out a rule to describe a platypus, an elephant, a rat, and a porpoise? They're all mammals, but finding a rule is a far messier affair. With that in mind, let's look at a few imperial collapses and how they have been treated by law, and perhaps more importantly, how the successor states have treated themselves. Though as many as six types of state succession have been identified in the academic literature, I'm going to focus on two types that are most relevant to the Republic of Türkiye's relationship with the Ottoman Empire: state dissolution and state secession. Dissolution of states describes situations where a state goes extinct and several new states are created in the original territory of the predecessor state. Examples are the dissolution of the Soviet Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. The various examples, both old and new, suggest that in cases of dissolution, there is no general rule of a succession of responsibility arising from the wrongs of the predecessor state.

There are examples but no rules. Whenever successor states have succeeded to international responsibility after the dissolution of the predecessor, they have done so through voluntary agreement and not under any legal obligation. Secession occurs when one or more new states emerges from a predecessor state but the predecessor state



Based on its own national interests and as an expression of its sovereignty, Türkiye may choose to voluntarily deal with such allegations by the Turkish people and government at a time of its own choosing, as it chooses.

David Saltzman

continues to exist. Thus, when there is secession, there is both a continuing state and a successor state, or perhaps many of them. This would be the traditional analysis for the case of the Ottoman Empire and Türkiye. Examples have ascribed the responsibility arising from internationally wrongful acts of the predecessor state to the continuing state since it and not the successor state has the identity of the predecessor state. Looking at the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Austria considered the breakup of the short-lived Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of World War I to be a case of dissolution with Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia emerging as new states. The victorious allied powers of World War I, on the other hand, agreed that this was a case of secession with only Austria and Hungary as continuing states but the other states being successors. In the 1919 Peace Treaty of Saint-Germain was signed between the allied powers and Austria, and Austria said OK and generally accepted responsibility for losses and damages “as a consequence of war.” So even though Austria accepted this responsibility in 1919, by 1926, seven years later, the Austrian Constitutional Court decided that except as otherwise provided by a treaty of the country, Austria would no longer be held responsible for the empire’s liabilities.

Let’s look at the USSR. When the czarist regime fell, the Soviet Union claimed that it was not the continuing state of Czarist Russia. Later, the USSR changed its position and accepted continuity with Czarist Russia, at least with respect to treaties. Moving forward still, the present Russian Federation is most often viewed as a continuation of the USSR, but other scholars believe that it is a newer successor state. Russia itself has taken a piecemeal approach. In 1992 it entered into a cultural agreement with Germany, in which it reaffirmed an earlier agreement between the Soviet Union and West Germany, itself a state that no longer exists. And in 1997, Russia entered into a settlement with France, whereby it agreed to pay the value of pre-revolutionary Russian bonds that were nationalized by the USSR after the revolution of 1917. As these two examples demonstrate, even as the continuing state of the USSR, Russia entered into these two agreements voluntarily, there was no legal standard by which Russia was obliged to take on these responsibilities, nor any international body that directed Russia to act in a certain way.

Moving on to Germany, after the German Reich was defeated in World War II, two countries emerged: the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, West Germany and East Germany. Unlike Austria, West Germany took the position that it was the continuing state of the German Reich, whereas East Germany viewed that there were two German states as new entities. The international community was divided. France defended the idea that the German Reich ceased to exist in 1945, while the United Kingdom treated West Germany as a continuing state. In 1990, the Treaty on the Establishment of German Unity was signed between the two Germanys, according to which a new state was not created, if you use West Germany's language. Despite what the language suggests, East Germany was integrated into West Germany. Thus, you have some sort of continuity between the West German state before and after unification. This all gets very messy. So, the Turkish case – is it a continuing state or a successor state? As I have noted, the collapse of each empire and the birth or rebirth of new states is unique to its facts. So, we must look at history for clues about who should pay for the Ottoman Empire's funeral. Let's start with the fact that the Ottoman Empire's decline was gradual, not precipitous. It lurched through various attempts at reform and rejuvenation through the 18th and 19th century. By World War I, it was deeply in debt and reeling from losses in the Balkan Wars. During the war, Ottoman troops fought on seven fronts from Iraq to Macedonia. But of course, the ultimate result in 1918 was defeat.

The Sultan's government, under great duress, agreed to the treaty itself, but it was never implemented, and the rise of the nationalist forces under Mustafa Kemal rendered a new state of affairs. As the war-weary allies departed the theatre and demobilized, the Turkish National Assembly governed between April 1920 and the end of the Turkish War of Independence. This was alongside, of course, a remnant sultan's government in occupied Istanbul. This government concluded treaties such as the Treaty of Moscow and the Treaty of Kars of 1921 and also concluded the Treaty of Ankara in the same year, in which France gave de facto recognition to the nationalist government. The Turkish War of Independence did not conclude until 1923, five years after the end of the First World War, with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne, which carried with it wider recognition

of the nationalist government and paved the way for the Declaration of the Republic. So, the Ottoman Empire's decline was long, and the birth of the Turkish Republic was also a lengthy affair. Indeed, both the Nationalist and Sultan's government were present at the London conference in 1921. So, it is worth emphasizing that transformation from Empire to Republic is hardly a linear process. When discussing Türkiye's status as a continuing state or successor state, an important factor to consider is territory. The Republic of Türkiye succeeded to a relatively small portion of the territory of the Empire.

It is important to note, however, that many would consider Türkiye a continuing state despite the substantial loss of territory because it retained the core of the empire, or as some have put it, the historic homeland of the Turk, Anatolia. This, however, is a shaky foundation upon which to establish a legal obligation. After all, the Turkish Republic did not retain many of the wealthiest parts of the empire: the Balkans, oil-rich northern Iraq, or many other parts of present-day Iraq, numerous islands and islands in the Aegean, and the territorial sea surrounding them. At its height, the Empire stretched from Austria in the West to the Caspian Sea and eastern Ukraine in the north to Ethiopia in the south. When the Turkish Republic was formed in 1923, it had within its borders only Anatolia, Istanbul, the Turkish Straits, and a small Thracian hinterland. If what is deemed essential could very well be the wealthiest part of the Empire, the Republic of Türkiye was not reduced to the essential parts of the old Empire. So, let us begin to answer our question. Who pays for the Ottoman Empire's funeral? In one sense, Türkiye already paid by accepting the loss of these valuable territories. In addition, even though ethnic Turks made up the largest group in the territory of the new Turkish Republic, the Ottoman territories that were lost to other successor states also comprised a significant number of ethnic Turks. A good indicator of this is the population exchanges that took place between the Greeks and Turks and others following the foundation of the Republic, where nearly two million people were involved.

So, again, who pays? Well, Türkiye paid again by having to absorb and resettle a huge influx of new citizens. If one looks at a slightly longer period from 1790 to 1923, 1.9 million Christians and 5 million Muslims

were forcibly displaced as the Ottoman Empire crumbled, according to this insightful map by Professor Justin McCarthy.

We have a variety of objective and subjective factors to determine who should pay and who should lose, in other words, whether Türkiye is a continuing state or a successor state. But I would conclude that Türkiye has no legal obligations and that it has met all of the obligations that it acceded to when it was formed both in the Lausanne Treaty and by factors as to what territories it lost. We can move on then to say, has Türkiye itself been judged by others to be a continuing state or a successor state? Right after the war in 1925, for example, some arbitration said, yes, Türkiye is a continuing state, not a successor state, and therefore it owes these obligations. But in truth, Türkiye has moved over time to say it is not convenient for me to be a continuing state; I am more of a successor state. So, what we end up with is there is really no fixed body of law that requires a state to meet the internationally alleged wrongs and to compensate for them following the end of a war. In other words, it is voluntary. People have tried to create a body of law, and I think all of those attempts to create it has failed. So, Türkiye, based on its own national interests and as an expression of its own sovereignty, can choose to voluntarily address such allegations in the manner of its choosing at the time of its choosing. And really, based on these questions for the Turkish people and government to ask who are we, who do others think we are, and how do we end the war so that it does not recur? And indeed, that is the key here: Empires collapse during war. When wars end, you want them to end with finality, and you want those who negotiate those agreements to go into the negotiating room believing that they can end the war forever and not have it reignite when people decide they do not like the terms of settlement. And therefore, it is essential that you have every party there feeling voluntary and sovereign. And that is really the key. We do not need these other factors. Thank you.

Sassounian Case in the Context of International Relations

Hazel Çağın Elbir*

Dear Guests, I would like to thank the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications for inviting me among these distinguished names. It is an honour for me to take part in such a significant conference. Today, I would like to touch upon the latest developments regarding the international relations. When we consider the title of the second panel, “The Events of 1915 in Light of International Law”, I am going to talk about its results in international relations.

I am not a law graduate. But, in my opinion, the latest developments are significant for every individual. I am sure that Mr. Saltzman has more to say about the Sassounian Case, but I would like to share my views considering international relations. These are my points for my presentation: Armenian terrorism, the assassination of Kemal Arıkan in Los Angeles and the results of this assassination, and the parole of Armenian terrorist Sassounian.

Armenian terrorism has always been a significant issue for Türkiye. Turks have been subjected to Armenian terrorism three times in history. The latest phase of these attacks is still in our minds. I am deeply upset about reminding you of the unfortunate attacks. More than 30 Turkish diplomats have been martyred.

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On January 28, 1982, Consul General of the Republic of Türkiye in Los Angeles, Kemal Arıkan, was assassinated by the crossfire of two terrorists in the morning hours while he was in his vehicle stopping at a traffic light close to his residence. The “Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide” claimed responsibility for the assassination. It is useful to remember the city of Los Angeles and the state of California at that time. One must recall that the terrorist organization that claimed responsibility for the attack was connected to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and was continuing the Dashnak traditions of terrorism. ASALA and Justice Commandos are the terrorist organizations that have committed the most acts of terror against Turkish diplomats and their families. So, what was the source of their audacity? The radical nationalist Armenians being so prevalent and effective, especially in California, goes back to 1979, when a politician of Armenian origin named George Deukmejian became the Attorney General of California. Deukmejian was a powerful political figure who presided over the state’s prosecutors and police officers. Deukmejian, who was part of the Republican Party, made efforts to become the California governor and joined the elections as a candidate of the Dashnak Party in California. In a period when radical nationalist Armenians were prevalent in the state, a bomb attack was organized against the residence of our Consul General in Los Angeles, Kemal Arıkan, in 1980. Similar attacks were conducted against Turkish associations and agencies afterwards. On November 1981, a bomb attack was also carried out against the Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Washington, Şükrü Elekdağ during his visit to the Consul General in Los Angeles. The Consulate building of the Republic of Türkiye was significantly damaged as a result of the attack.

It is known that Kemal Arıkan emphasized the necessity for taking precautions when asked what it was like to serve in a state where there was a significant Armenian population. Regarding such conditions, the importance of the United Nations Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations should come to mind. And, you can see the Convention, the 29th Article of the Convention that came into force in 1964, states, “The person of a diplomatic agent shall be inviolable. He shall not be liable to any form of arrest or detention. The receiving State shall treat him with due respect and shall take all appropriate steps to prevent any attack on his person, freedom, or dignity.” The

failure in the implementation of this clear stipulation cost the lives of Consul General Kemal Arıkan and the other members of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

It is also significant to remind that the parole of Sassounian depended on the approval of the California governor. It will be helpful to present a brief history of the demands for Sassounian's release.

Release hearings had been brought to the agenda seven times since 2006. Demands for release were rejected in the hearings in 2006, 2010, 2013, and 2015. A release order was issued in 2017; however, it was turned down by the governor, Jerry Brown. The demand for release was brought to the agenda once again in 2018 but rejected. A release order was issued in 2019 as well, but it was rejected by California Governor Gavin Newsom on May 25, 2020. Recently, on the 24th of February 2021, the Supreme Court of California overturned Governor Newsom's rejection decision. In this context, it is beneficial to draw attention to the explanations by the US attorneys. Mr. David Saltzman and Mr. Günay Evinç shared their views in detail on why the terrorist Sassounian must not be released.

On March 10, 2021, a very upsetting news report was published. The Office of the California Governor, Gavin Newsom, informed the Armenian National Committee of America-Western Region that the Governor decided to approve of the decision for Hampig [Harry] Sassounian's parole.

Regarding the subject, the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated, "We are disappointed by the expected grant of parole in the State of California of convicted murderer Harry Sassounian. Attacking a diplomat is not only a grave crime against an individual; it is an attack on diplomacy itself." However, it is not sufficient for a powerful politician in the United States administration to only express that he is disappointed and must implement more effective ways against the decision that gives a green light to terrorism and disregards the law. I believe that the release of the terrorist Sassounian, despite knowing that he does not feel remorse and that he has stated that he would do it [again] if he could, warrants a greater reaction than disappointment. Such a release constitutes a risky situation not only for Türkiye, but for the United States as well.



Armenian terrorism has always been a significant issue for Türkiye. More than 30 Turkish diplomats have been martyred.

Hazel Çağın Elbir

It will be useful to remember who Sassounian is, whose release has pleased ANCA-WR. The remorseless terrorist Hampig Sassounian, the terrorist of the martyred Consul General Kemal Arıkan, is being portrayed as a hero by the radical nationalist Armenians in California. In fact, during this long process, a fund directed by the Dashnak Party was established for high sums to be collected as donations for Sassounian. Turkish- American National Steering Committee (TASC) Co-Chair Attorney Günay Evinç has emphasized the US judiciary has become politicized and added that the Governor presenting any reason for the continuation of the conviction would have been sufficient for rejecting parole. In such a case, no one would be able to object to the Governor's statements. The Governor's statements are essential, even if it is controversial. In this case, there is no controversial statement, and Governor Newsom presented the San Quentin State Prison's report on mental health as a justification document to the court. According to the report, the release of the murderer Sassounian will pose a threat to public security. However, it appears that the judge has disregarded such an important piece of evidence.

In his statement, US Attorney Günay Evinç highlighted that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who expressed that he deeply regrets the Sassounian decision, stated that there is another way to prevent Sassounian's release. Günay Evinç indicated that there is a possibility for Sassounian to be arrested once again right after the implementation of the release decision. Evinç structures this possibility by drawing attention to Clause 1116 of Article 18 of the US Criminal Code. According to this article, it is a crime to murder a diplomat, and the punishment of the crime is a life sentence. This article is being disregarded. Evinç has expressed that Kemal Arıkan's family as well as the Turkish Republic have struggled since 2013 to acquire information on the release hearings. In fact, he has explained that the seventh hearing in 2019 was learned about only two weeks prior to the hearing. It is clear that this stance was displayed in order to pave the way for the prisoner's release.

One of Blinken's statements notes that terrorists who murder US diplomats have received life sentences. He not only expressed that these countries must not release these convicted terrorists but voiced that they would otherwise be sanctioned in case of a release. France and

Greece are two countries in which this situation applies. There are convicts who have murdered US diplomats in both countries.

The United States, which threatens countries where convicts who have murdered US diplomats are being held, is disregarding its own law and displaying eagerness to release an international terrorist despite the presence of valid evidence regarding this subject. This signifies that the war on terror discourse amounts to idle words. The United States' jurists and high-ranking politicians need to remember that they must be heedful of their own domestic practices while they give messages of democracy, law, and justice to the world. To make such a decision with regards to ending the conviction when all the evidence and justification are in favour of the Arıkan family and the Republic of Türkiye would mean to marginalize Türkiye and to overlook the unlawfulness of the relevant Armenian actors and, thus, disregard justice.

Especially in this period when tensions between the United States and Russia are on the rise, it is not possible to understand why the United States is still defending Armenia, which is a Collective Security Treaty Organization member, against a NATO ally. The US support for organizations which openly engaged in terrorist organization activities in the south of Türkiye, in addition to the Sassounian decision, leads to conviction in public opinion that there is hostile sentiment against Türkiye in United States politics. Considering these developments, if the United States President's statement, which has become customary to be given on April 24, is to be one-sided and pro-Armenian as they have been until today, dark and difficult days will be unfortunately awaiting Turkish and United States relations.

Armenian Allegations in the Light of International Court Resolutions

Deniz Akçay*

Thank you. First of all, I would like to thank and offer my regards to the Presidency's Directorate of Communications for holding this important meeting. Now, I believe that the issue, i.e., the genocide allegations, should be re-evaluated in terms of the articles I have previously written about the issue and the research I have carried out as well as the valuable contributions made today. There are also new findings and new decisions beyond the contributions, beyond what was done today. A large number of significant decisions was made by the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Furthermore, I think it would be beneficial to collectively evaluate the decisions made by the ECHR and the International Court of Justice concerning other issues. This is a matter I would like to discuss as well. First and foremost, as part of an article I previously wrote, the allegations that emerged during the Sévres meeting were also brought forward, but they were never thoroughly investigated and were not taken seriously. In the Treaty of Sévres, which never entered into effect, some claims were raised, but they could not be distinguishably justified, so the claims were mostly discussed. Some claims were raised in a scattered manner, not in much detail. Firstly, the term "Crimea" was occasionally mentioned in the preparation phase of the Treaty of Sévres, the most important issue that I have identified, at least, in discussions is that, let's not forget that the

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Ottoman Empire was not invited as a state, and it was unable to develop and present its arguments. There are two issues I dwell on. First, they emphasised several times that the Armenian “volunteers” were ready for battle, saying that they were fighting in the French foreign legion, that they were ready for an armed struggle, and it should also be emphasised that they certainly do not provide a detailed picture of genocide.

Another issue I want to touch upon regarding the issue is that the discussions on the Treaty of Sévres are incorporated into 700-page minutes. Even considering the content of the minutes, the subject which is mainly focused on is definitely not the allegations that could be related to genocide, but more importance is attached to the issue of to whom Erzurum will be given. It is seen that there is a discussion between UK Prime Minister Lloyd George and Lord Curzon on pages 511, 12, 13, and 14 in the 700-page minutes. The French clearly want Erzurum to be given to Armenia. Curzon suggests that failing to give Erzurum to Armenians would be a very bitter event. On the contrary, Lloyd George says that it would not be appropriate to give it to the Armenians and that it will be unfair. These claims are on pages 511, 12, 13, and 14. Another important issue is that even in the text of the Treaty of Sevres, there is no article that clearly evokes genocide. The general term “mass killings”, which appears in the Treaty of Saint-Germain and the Treaty of Versailles, has not been used. I find it useful that these issues are examined and assessed in detail. However, we are no longer in that position today. In particular, the decision made and announced by the International Court of Justice on the application of Serbia and Montenegro in 2008 has an extremely different approach, and I find it useful that it be examined in detail. Firstly, the events which occurred in Srebrenica and led to the slaughter of thousands of Muslims have been known since 1991. These events were also reflected in the United Nations; a number of decisions were made against Serbia in the United Nations. However, the International Court of Justice has not evaluated them sufficiently, and it could only take a decision on genocide in terms of Srebrenica. Nevertheless, there have been detailed reports about the pressure put on Muslims in every corner and each region of Serbia since 1991. However, it has not evaluated them. Moreover, it is important that the Serbian state

does not take them into account. In addition, the International Court of Justice has not sufficiently evaluated that Serbia has not complied with the preventive measures it has taken. These pressures could have been ended well before. Although thousands of Muslims were killed in Bosnia by Serbs, the International Court of Justice did not decide on any compensation. In other words, this Srebrenica, or I could even go a bit far to say that if another International Criminal Court had not ruled that a person involved in the Srebrenica massacre has personally committed the massacre, maybe the International Court of Justice might have concluded that there was no genocide in terms of Srebrenica either. These are important issues, but of course, they were not evaluated sufficiently. So it was barely discussed in the doctrine as well. In particular, further importance was attached to compensation, but what was more important than the compensation is that the justifications for the finding were weak and not convincing enough. In order to be convincing, a balance sheet of all the pressure applied should be prepared. It is also very severe negligence that this has not been done. No importance was attached to the compensation issue, maybe because it has not been done. Considering other practices again, the application made to the International Court of Justice was unfortunately rejected on the grounds that the state had no judicial responsibility, and also in other decisions taken by the International Court of Justice, following the decisions taken by Italian courts regarding oppression and killings, for example, by Germany. A similar decision by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg concerning whether Germany has legal responsibility or not; with a quick decision in the first stage, it was rejected on the grounds that it had an exemption. When these decisions are taken into account, it is no longer possible to assert genocide allegations easily; rather, the decisions are finalised with the goal of closing and concluding the issues as soon as possible. Research is not conducted properly. Currently, other decisions are, of course, likely to be important. For example, there are two more decisions. It is not related to genocide, but, for instance, in the Siroko decision regarding Azerbaijan's application against Armenia, it is emphasised on page 70 of the European Court of Human Rights decision that 700,000 Azerbaijanis have been relocated. But I have not encountered any criticism about this subject. Another decision that remained in our minds is the decision

of Perinçek, which is very important. There, it is only limited to the grounds that the court did not have the jurisdiction to hold a genocide case. He has pleaded that many states have recognised the “Armenian genocide”. But the Strasbourg Court has not accepted that. It has underlined that those decisions were political in nature and rejected them.

Thank you.

Sevgi Gül Akyılmaz*

Now, maybe it's an off-schedule presentation now – we added it later – but I'd like to talk about a slightly different topic. I will talk about abandoned properties and their repercussions on today's legal issues. Of course, it is a very detailed subject, a comprehensive topic. As a result, I will try to touch upon the topic briefly by mentioning main headings not to exceed the time limit and to make room for at least a few questions. Therefore, there may be some information gaps. I apologise for that in advance. The concept of "abandoned property" is a term used in our legal system to refer to properties left by Armenians who were transferred and resettled or missing, namely, lost or fugitive. When we say property here, of course, we mainly refer to immovable property, but the concept also includes personal property, that is, movable property. Recently, we have also come across some studies in the international community aimed at including the goods left by the Greeks within this scope. Now when we say abandoned property, we have some important headings so that we can understand the problem. One of them is a corpus of law that we call the Abandoned Property Legislation. The second is basic information on the Ottoman Land Code. The third consists of information about Ottoman foundation law, which has gained significant importance recently; there are a number of lawsuits before us, and these cases are primarily initiated before the courts of first instance. If the desired results cannot be obtained there, the process of Constitutional Court begins, and from there, we encounter a chain extending up to the European Court of Human Rights, and we see that the property claims have been coming to the fore since 2012. In an international meeting organised by the Armenian Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia in Yerevan, a separate topic was devoted to property, and we see that a strategy

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A strategy is followed by the Armenian Catholicos of Cilicia that it is necessary to focus on cases related to religious institutions and foundations, as claims of violations of the freedom of religion and conscience can be added to the claims of property violations.

Sevgi Gül Akyılmaz

has been followed to focus on religious institutions and foundations, as attaching particular importance to the issue would bring more attention to the violation of freedom of religion and conscience claims that are likely to be added to the property claims – we have been observing that recently. Yes, there are applications regarding individual property claims, the most notable of which is the case of Agavni Mari Hazaryan and Others, which was concluded by the Constitutional Court in 2016. This case is currently before the European Court of Human Rights. But, as I said, the focus has recently been on cases related to religious institutions and foundations. In this context, we see that there are three important cases before us. In the upcoming years, it will be necessary to make efforts and studies regarding this in the legal field.

One of these cases is the case of the Armenian Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia. The other one is the case of the Sanasarian Han Foundation. The third one is the case of the Maryakop Armenian Church. Let's take a brief look at these. I would like to mention the first one; the opening date of the case is interesting, as well. This case was opened in 2015. What has been claimed with reference to the centennial of the events of 1915? Let me actually say this about the case: first of all, an application was made to the Kozan Land Registry Directorate. As no response was received from there, an application was made directly to the Constitutional Court without any due process, and the return or compensation of the church, monastery, and its annexes belonging to the Armenian Catholicosate of the Great House in Kozan was demanded, and within the framework of this case, it was claimed that the freedom of religion and conscience, in particular, property rights, were violated, the principle of equality of the Constitution was infringed upon, and the right to a fair trial was violated. When the Constitutional Court rejected the case in 2016 as domestic remedies were not exhausted, Catholicos Aram I applied to the European Court of Human Rights on December 6, 2016. The court did not accept the application, as domestic remedies had not been exhausted as required. However, here I would like to underline that, of course, no examination has been made in terms of property violations. In other words, if this case were to go to the European Court of Human Rights again in the future, the property violation would be examined after the domestic remedies had been exhausted. Thereupon, the Catholicosate filed a lawsuit against the Ministry of Finance and Kozan Municipality in the Second Civil Court of First Instance in

Kozan in 2019 to exhaust domestic legal remedies. We are following the evolution of this case; unless the desired result is achieved, there may be a process extending again to the Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights.

The second case is that of the Sanasarian Han Foundation, which started in 2011. In this case, filed by the Armenian Patriarchate, Sanasarian Han's registration was requested in the name of the Sanasarian Foundation. This is an interesting case. I want to dwell on this in a moment. The judicial process continued. It was submitted to the Court of Cassation, and firstly, a decision was made within the framework of the expert report that the foundation was a community foundation. Later the decision that was is a community foundation was revised by the First Civil Chamber of the Court of Cassation in the process of revision, and it was deemed as a "fused foundation". It was then taken to the Constitutional Court. The case is currently before the Constitutional Court.

The third case, as previously mentioned, concerns the Maryakop Armenian Church located in Jerusalem. This case is noteworthy in this regard because it is the first case brought by a foreign foundation from another country. They requested the registry of some immovable property in Istanbul in their name. The judicial process began in administrative courts, specifically, the Ankara 15th Administrative Court, and continued in the Constitutional Court, where it was alleged that the right to access the courts and property rights had been violated. By ruling that the right to access the courts had been breached, the court remanded the case to the court of first instance, the 15th Administrative Court, for retrial with its 2019 decision. In other words, the Constitutional Court has not yet examined whether property rights were violated in this case, either. These are ongoing lawsuits.

Now, as we consider these lawsuits within this framework, I would like to draw your attention to the following points: First and foremost, there was the abandoned property legislation, the first phase of which was introduced by the Council of Ministers on May 30, 1915, and the general structure was created. Later, in 1915, a bylaw, a provisional code, and a regulation for absolute implementation of this code were issued in that order. The process proceeded, and numerous legislative regulations were introduced, culminating in the completion of the abandoned property legislation in 1928 with two acts.

The second point I would like to underline is the information on the Ottoman Land Code. I'd like to emphasise that the Ottoman law was referred to in certain proceedings up until the Civil Code that came into force on October 4, 1926, and particularly when courts were to render decisions related to foundations founded prior to 1926, they often conducted these proceedings according to the Ottoman foundations law.

I would like to point out, from the standpoint of the Ottoman Land Code, that lands subject to private ownership were exceedingly rare within the Ottoman state's general land politics. In essence, there are miri (public) lands, the possession of which belongs to the state while the right of use and disposal are granted to individuals, which we refer to as "miri land," and, as seen in the case of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, the majority of lands turned over to churches and monasteries are owned by the state. These religious institutions hold the right to use the land. That is, according to Ottoman law, they are tenants on the land. Ebussuud Efendi was an important Shaykh al-Islam and legal expert. There was always this argument in his fatwas and similar fatwas: "It is not possible for churches and monasteries to have properties or foundations." In other words, a foundation cannot be established for the benefit of religious institutions like a monastery or synagogue, and they cannot own property. Another important point I would like to underline in particular has been brought to the agenda lately and will continue to be so. This is particularly important when the judiciary is making a decision or when academics are conducting research. There is a misconception here: treating all non-Muslim foundations in Türkiye as if they were community foundations. In reality, this is an extremely flawed approach in terms of Ottoman law. Non-Muslims, like Muslims, were able to create foundations in the Ottoman state, which we classify as charitable foundations or commercial foundations, just as in the case of the Sanasarian Han Foundation. This is because Mkrtich Sanasarian had founded a charitable foundation there. We come across foundations that are solely focused on philanthropy. Creating foundations on behalf of churches and other religious institutions was forbidden under Ottoman law. But foundations may be established in support of the poor clergy, which was the case of the Sanasarian Foundation, which was established in support of the poor Armenian children. Thus, not all non-Muslim foundations are community foundations. Community foundations are a form of foundation that emerged within the



Ottoman law and abandoned property legislation must be taken into consideration in property lawsuits.

Sevgi Gül Akyılmaz

framework of the third paragraph of Article 42 of the Lausanne Treaty and the 1935 Law on Foundations, unique to the Republic era. Since religious institutions like churches, monasteries, and synagogues lacked legal personality in the Ottoman state, they were unable to acquire immovables. As the donations made in favour of them or the lands left by will are not registered in their names, there are records that we call “known as notion” or “known as alias”. The records known as alias are those made on trustworthy and real persons, while the records known as notion are those made on saints and saintesses. In 1912, the groundwork for community foundations was laid, a legal arrangement was introduced for the first time (Provisional Law on the Legal Persons’ Right of Disposition of Immovable Property), and it was declared that the immovable property would be allowed to be registered in the name of religious institutions. That was the origin, and later in the Republic era, based on the related articles of the Lausanne Treaty and the 1935 Law on Foundations that these religious institutions should issue a declaration in the form of a list of the immovable property they owned. The document is known as the “1936 Declaration”, and the community foundations emerged as a result of this. What is the significance of being a community foundation? Community foundations may establish the right of disposition on the immovable properties. They can demand the return of their immovable properties and are managed by their trustees, whereas the non-Muslim fused foundations transferred to today are under the administration of the General Directorate of Foundations.

Lastly, I’d like to say this and wrap things up. In the lawsuits that would reach the European Court of Human Rights, in order to examine a case regarding the violation of the property right, the court will consider two criteria because it will deem itself authorised on an event that took place 100 years ago. One of them is that there is an ongoing violation. The second point is that, along with the ongoing violation, has there really been a violation of property rights? Is a fair presumption formed? We see that these two issues are specifically underlined in petitions submitted both to the Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights. In the proceedings, it has been stated that a fair presumption has evolved within the scope of both the Lausanne Treaty and the abandoned property law, and that there has been an ongoing violation. Therefore, I would like to expressly emphasise that Ottoman law and abandoned property legislation must be taken into consideration in property lawsuits.

AN ANTI-TÜRKİYE NARRATIVE

THE EVENTS OF
1915



SESSION II

**Question &
Answer**

David Saltzman*

Sevgi Gül Akyılmaz: Are there certain criteria about the continuing state in the international law?

David Saltzman: Thank you very much for the question. Generally speaking, there are criteria, but they are mostly academic. If we talk about what criteria exist within the international law, my thesis is that there are academic indicators and theories. But ultimately, the law is state sovereignty. Once you are recognised as a state, you have the sovereignty to decide which obligations you accept and which you do not irrespective of whether you consider yourself the continuing state or the successor state. When I say this thesis, I realize that I am going against the wider legal academic opinion, but I have read most of the legal academic work on this subject and my belief is that it is insufficient to draw any rules.

Sevgi Gül Akyılmaz: Has the international community accepted Türkiye as a new state? What is the general opinion on this?

David Saltzman: That is a great question. My other point in this thesis is that other nations treat Türkiye as they see fit transactionally at the moment as it is convenient for them. Indeed, it is equally important how Türkiye sees itself. So, if Türkiye sees itself as a continuing state, as it has from time to time, then you can assert rights under that status. However, if another state, a third state, wants to impose that name on Türkiye they can only do so from an academic sense. Again, I believe that my thesis, it is not radical, but I believe that the international law really does gravitate toward strong sovereignty. That is what happens when we resolve wars; that is what happens when we ratified the Lausanne Treaty and declared the

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Deniz Akçay*

I have a lengthy article published in the AVİM (Centre for Eurasian Studies) journal on succession and the succession of the Ottoman Empire. I can tell you that the Republic of Türkiye was acknowledged as a new state in the end. Albeit, the Swiss banker assigned for the payment of Ottoman debts claimed that it was a continuing state and acted with the intent of making us pay all the debts of the Ottoman Empire. However, I have reviewed the negotiations in Lausanne thoroughly, and in the end, Japan, the US, and many other states took the floor and recognised Türkiye as a new state.

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29 October 1915, A photograph displaying some of the firearms belonging to Armenians confiscated during their relocation in the district of Karacabey in the province of Bursa.



Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives,
"BOA.FTG, 1674"

29 October 1915, A photograph displaying some of the firearms belonging to Armenians confiscated during their relocation in the district of İnegöl in the province of Bursa.



Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives,
"BOA.FTG, 1655"

AN ANTI-TÜRKİYE NARRATIVE

THE EVENTS OF
1915



SESSION III

**Current
reflections
of the Events
of 1915 and
the Perspective
for the Future**

PANELISTS

Alev Kılıç

Ömer Turan

Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş

Ergün Kırlikovalı

Christian Johannes Henrich

Patrick Walsh

Introduction

Alev Kılıç*

Thank you very much. At the outset of my remarks today, I'd like to express my sincere thanks to the Presidency's Directorate of Communications for facilitating this significant, appropriate, and timely conference, as well as my gratitude and congratulations to all participants for their valuable contributions.

Our third session is now underway. We discussed the events of 1915 and the historical and legal aspects of Armenian claims during the first two sessions. They were extremely valuable contributions, presentations, and papers on this subject. Essentially, these legal and historical dimensions are the aspects where we have the most leverage to counter Armenian claims, putting us in a position to dismiss these claims. What we are going to talk about today in this session is more of a political angle on the issue. Due to political views directed at Türkiye, this subject and this political angle can become a stage for an arbitrary approach entirely fit for political purposes without any logical basis. As you are aware, Armenia achieved its second independence in 1991 after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Even here, there is a peculiar situation about Armenia's approach. While Georgia and Azerbaijan, which won independence for the second time around the same time, say that they got their independence for the second time, Armenia adds a third time. Why? Because it considers the republic during the Soviet era an independent republic as well. This is a brief digression, but it is worth noting because it is an interesting difference of approach. In the period of transition from bipolarity to multipolarity, Türkiye consistently and steadily advocated for regional cooperation.

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It was only in 1999 that it advocated for the six countries under the OSCE umbrella to cooperate under the banner of the “Stability Pact for the Caucasus.” Following or during the Georgian War in 2008, it reintroduced it to the agenda as the “Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Pact,” which would also include all six countries. Last, after the Karabakh War, as we well know, in 2021, it brought the same considerations to establish a 6-country platform to the agenda. Furthermore, Armenia found a vindictive, vengeful, and expansionist policy toward Türkiye to be more suited to its interests due to the pressure, coercion, and indoctrination from the Armenian diaspora, the Apostolic Church, and some Western partisans to a great extent.

The point to which this strategy had brought Armenia led to an unavoidable defeat in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. The Pashinyan administration, which came to power with the “Velvet Revolution” discourse in 2018 and aimed to discharge the old mentality, saw the wrongdoings of the past and understands a policy based on realistic regional cooperation and good neighbourliness, but stumbled back and forth between old approaches and the old trajectory due to influence created by the same pressures and old regime supporters, and we can see that it is ongoing today. While commitments were made to open economic and transportation pathways and heading towards regional cooperation with the November 8 ceasefire agreement, and the deals on implementing said ceasefire agreements with the new implementation agreements of January 11, there is still a pursuit of support from the West for achieving their old objectives, primarily from France, the United States, and the European Union. Today, I am certain that the esteemed speakers, some of whom I personally know, will shed light on these topics. In particular, I’ll begin with our first speaker, Prof. Ömer Turan. Between 2013 and 2020, he was the head of Middle East Technical University’s (METU) history department. At that time, we had the opportunity to work closely with him at the Centre for Eurasian Studies, of which the majority of our audience is unaware. When it comes to history departments, METU is one of our exceptional universities. Prof. Ömer Turan, who has added the Armenian issue into the curriculum, has been particularly interested in the subject. And now, I’d like to congratulate him on the occasion that he has become the rector of METU in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Nicosia. Mr Turan’s biography is so substantial that I will not be able to go into depth about it due to time constraints, so I will now leave the floor to Prof. Ömer Turan.

Missionary Activities about the Armenian Question

Ömer Turan*

Moderator, and Dear Participants, thank you for your kindness towards me. The lesson continues thanks to you. It has started with our expert Lütem, and it continues with you as the good successor, just as it was in ASAM. Thank you for your contributions. I would like to thank the Presidency's Directorate of Communications for holding a meeting at this level at such a time. As the title of my paper, I said, "The missionary Dimension of the Armenian Issue." In that context, I want to start my presentation.

Missionary activities, Christian missionary activities are known as proselytism, but it is not just that. Evangelism activities are just like part of the iceberg of missionary activities above the water. Underneath, there is an economic aspect, a cultural aspect, and a political aspect. There is even a military aspect. To put it simply, the countries that send missionaries open up a living space for themselves where they go. Considering the issue within the framework of Anatolia and the Middle East, we see the issue take a more sensitive turn because it is called the "Bible Lands", that is, "the land of the Bible" in the Christian literature. These lands, where Christianity was born, where the first churches were established, and where the apostles walked, are now under the rule of Muslims. The Crusades were not able to take

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this away from the Muslims, but missionaries, as they say, will bring these lands back to Christianity through an unarmed Crusade. Within this framework, Catholic missionaries came with the capitulations. British Protestant missionaries came to the region at the end of the 18th century, American missionaries at the beginning of the 19th century, and German missionaries in the second half of the 19th century. They came to Anatolia, to the Ottoman lands. They conducted activities. In 1820, the first two missionaries, the first two American missionaries, came to the Ottoman lands. In the years 1830 and 1831, Smith and Dwight, two specially commissioned missionaries, travelled from Izmir to Balıkesir, Istanbul, Tokat, Sivas, Erzurum, Tabriz, Shusha, Yerevan, Van, Trabzon – where the Armenians lived – for a year and a half. Although they travelled together, they wrote reports separately for a year and a half.

They wrote a comprehensive report without showing each other and finally combining the notes they collected there, and penned a large-scale report about who the Armenians were, where they lived, and under what conditions they lived, the condition of the churches, the condition of their schools, their relations with the Ottoman administration, their social, political, and cultural situations, etc., everything... In line with that report, using the information in that report, American missionaries started to work among Armenians. The first station was established in Istanbul. The second station was established in 1835 in Trabzon and a later station was established in Erzurum. The mission was initially named West Asia, later the Mediterranean, and then Türkiye. They considered Anatolia, almost the whole of Anatolia to be Armenia. They even divided Anatolia into Northern Armenia and Southern Armenia and named it this way. After 1860, they conducted activities in Anatolia, with three large stations called East Türkiye, Central Türkiye, and Middle Türkiye. In 1913, before the First World War, 174 missionaries (only ABCFM missionaries, I only take it as a basis) were working in Anatolia. The number of people they were able to make Protestants, the number of Armenians, is only a few tens of thousands. This is the result of almost a century of work. But what did we say? Christians' activities aimed at turning people into Protestants or at conversion are just the tip of the iceberg of their missionary activity. Christianisation, conversion to Protestantism, or

other religious conversion activities were only the tip of the iceberg in terms of missionary activities. There was more to it under this tip, and missionaries were engaged in activities in the fields of press, education, and health in addition to their religious activities. The Armenians were the primary focus of their activities in Anatolia. Its activities in the Balkans were also about Bulgarians. They issued 725 publications before 1881. Almost half of these, namely, 358, are about Armenians. They had published six million, over six million, pages in Armenian and Turkish in the Armenian alphabet as of 1913, before the First World War alone, only in that year. With publications like that, they addressed the Armenian youth, people, and intellectuals.

The second area is education. In education, again, they had educated more than 25,000 students in a total of 426 schools as of the beginning of the First World War.

These schools started from primary school. There were secondary and high schools such as Tarsus and Merzifon at the level of Robert College, as well as high schools and theology schools at the level of Harput College. They raised the children in these schools at various levels with nationalist sentiments. They impressed the liberal ideas of the West upon those children. They reminded them of their Christian identity and Armenian identity. Children who had undergone such an education would become the leaders of the Armenian cultural awakening and later their social-political societies and institutions. They took part there like this.

The third area is health. Education, press, and publications are for a certain segment, but health is for everyone. Before the First World War, more than 40,000 people had been treated in nearly 20 hospitals and dispensaries as of 1913 alone. Some of them came several times, and Armenians, namely, missionaries, always knew very well how to create a relationship style in which they were strong, and their interlocutors were weak by noticing the gaps, and the missionaries sympathised with the Armenian separatist movement. We mentioned at the start of the speech that they portrayed themselves as an “un-armed crusade.” They sympathised with the Armenian nationalist movement. They safeguarded them against Ottoman rule. Since, as



Christian missionary activities are just like the part of the iceberg of missionary activities above the water. Underneath, there is an economic aspect, a cultural aspect, and a political aspect. There is even a military aspect.

Ömer Turan

a result of the capitulations, foreigners enjoyed immunity in a sense and, more importantly, they communicated movements and events in Anatolia to the West in a way that differed from reality and from the viewpoint of Armenians. Due to acts that were in their favour, in fact, they even contradicted with some American diplomats. Perel was one of them. In the years 1894-1895, he was serving as the American ambassador to Istanbul. He had a row with missionaries, saying, "Your exaggerated attitude and actions are jeopardising, damaging Turkish-American and Ottoman- American relations". But these were influential people who tried to remove Perel from his office via the President and put Perel through hell. Though few in number, there were other American diplomats who opposed the missionaries' actions in the same vein, Admiral Bristol being one of them; I'll speak about him as well.

As the First World War loomed on the horizon, missionaries realised that the time they had been waiting for had come and the Ottoman Empire was about to collapse. They claimed in their publications that non-Muslims should not be left under Ottoman security and administration, even going so far as to publish articles arguing that not even Muslims should be left under the Ottoman rule, in order to provide a pretext for the occupation of Ottoman lands and Anatolia. By means of "Near East Relief," a relief organisation they established following the Armenian relocation, they began raising funds in the American and Western public by spreading news against the Ottomans, creating propaganda on how Armenians were being oppressed and by collaborating with Wellington House, which carried out Britain's propaganda against the Ottomans in the First World War. They played an active role in spreading Wellington House's propaganda material against the Ottomans in the USA. As you might be aware, following the First World War, they continued to engage in such activities during the War of Independence, the National Struggle. For example, on October 30, 1920, Turks recaptured Kars, and, in the meantime, around 30 Armenians lost their lives. A member of the Near East Relief reported this incident to the US as if 80,000 Armenians had been killed. Admiral Bristol was the US High Commissioner in Istanbul at the time, and he knew that nothing of the sort had occurred. He indicated in his memories and diaries that this was an exaggerated, improvised

move, far from reality. He also had serious discussions about it with Armenians, missionaries, and Near East representatives. They apologized and said they would never do it again, but they continued with their activities. In Lausanne, there were three missionaries amongst the American committee. Secretary-General of the American Board Barton, American Board's delegate in Istanbul, Pete, Robert College's President Gates, and another missionary called Montgomery were sent to Lausanne, again by the church and organisations from Sürmene town, to carry out activities in favour of Armenians and create propaganda. These missionaries performed their activities in the most sincere manner possible in order to obtain a decision issued in favour of Armenians and to impress both the American and other Allied delegations.

These individuals had a secondary goal in mind, which was to enable missionary organisations to survive in the new Turkish state. After ensuring that they, like the delegates from the Allied countries, had forgotten about the Armenian issue, they let it go and returned to the US. This is the most important aspect of missionary activities in relation to our subject today, in relation to the topic of our session. It is that what I have said here qualifies as a source for the events of the First World War in 1915, along with their history and aftermath because the delegates of the Allied Powers were not in Anatolia, in Ottomans lands as they were already at war. Germans were already our allies. Both American and German missionaries were carrying out activities in these lands. They were moving with such a mentality, and together they built an environment against the Turks, both by fabricating news (as I demonstrated in my Kars example) and by attempting to protect Armenians as much as possible, and this is still going on today. In other words, missionaries are primarily responsible for the environment generated in the Western public against Turks, Türkiye, and the Ottomans on this subject. They were involved in propaganda efforts. They are the ones who made certain that the material, I quote, used in the creation of the "Blue Book" was given: the reports of German missionary Lipsius and the reports of American Board missionaries. It is vital that these are acknowledged, and of course, these details are known. In the West, the image of the missionaries, their missionaries, is different. They are portrayed as unique, even

non-political, religious, charitable, and benevolent individuals. They are regarded as impartial people. Taking this into account, bringing it to their attention, it is important to pay attention to this while taking this view of the missionaries, their expressions, and certain parts of their sources. I believe that these documents should be reviewed in light of these. Thank you.

Alev Kılıç: And I extend my thanks to Prof. Ömer Turan. It was a delivery I have watched with great interest, and Mr Turan addressed something that has not been discussed much, if at all, in the past, namely the underbelly of the iceberg, which is seldom discussed and overlooked, namely the religious aspect. It is highly important. Thank you very much.

Time for a Solution for the Armenian Question

Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş*

Alev Kılıç: Our next speaker is Professor Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş. Dear Professor Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş is also a very familiar scholar. To begin, I would like to remind our distinguished listeners once again that Mrs. Bozkuş has recently been appointed a full professor. I would like to congratulate her once again. It is recent enough to celebrate. She is currently employed at Ankara University, and Mrs. Bozkuş has worked concurrently in the fields of history, international relations, language, and literature. She has studied issues such as the Caucasus, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Armenian issue, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Up to today, she has carried out numerous national and international projects and authored many articles on terrorism, Türkiye-Armenia relations, diaspora, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and parliamentary resolutions. By the way, what is interesting is that she also worked in the US, conducted research and worked on the Armenian issue, diaspora, and parliamentary resolutions at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). In other words, she was literally in the hornet's nest. Therefore, she has invaluable experience and impressions. Dr. Bozkuş, now I leave the floor to you for your speech titled, "It is Time for the Armenian Issue to be Solved."

Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş: Thank you very much Mr. Ambassador. Distinguished Participants, I'd like to begin by greeting you all respectfully.

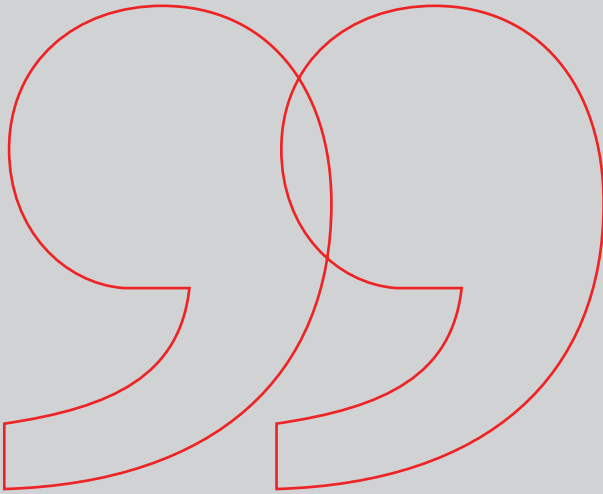
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Now, I call my speech “It is Time for the Armenian Issue to be Solved.” Why is it time for the Armenian issue to be solved? Because this problem has existed for centuries, and we are incapable of finding a solution. First of all, it would be far better to begin with how Turkish-Armenian relations started. As commonly known, Turkish-Armenian relations began during the Seljuk era, specifically during the reign of Çağrı Bey. However, when we look at the ties between the two communities, we see that we cannot go beyond 1915 in the international literature for both parties. As we all know, Armenians served in critical positions as bankers, administrators in state institutions, as craftsmen, and as merchants in the Ottoman Empire. Their significant and privileged positions continued in the 19th century, when they were employed in bureaucratic and diplomatic institutions where Greeks were more dominant among non-Muslim subjects. Armenians made significant contributions to the state administration in the Ottoman Empire, and you know, 29 pashas, 22 ministers, 33 deputies, 7 diplomats, and 11 consul generals were among them. We also know that during the Balkan Wars between 1912 and 1913, Gabriel Noradunkyan, an Armenian, was the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs. Again, we know that the Minister of the Treasury was an Armenian, and the Minister of Finance was Agop Kazazyan. It was mentioned in the morning session, and there was even a question about the attitude of the Committee of Union and Progress towards the Armenians. Between 1914 and 1918, there were 14 Armenian deputies in the Ottoman Parliament, each directly nominated by the Committee of Union and Progress. We know that Oskan Mardikyan, one of the Armenian-origin members of the Committee of Union and Progress, was appointed as the Minister of Post and Telegraph by the Committee of Union and Progress in 1913. Armenians also held prominent positions in the Ottoman bureaucracy because the Ottoman Empire had no racist discourse against Armenians. Several questions on this subject were raised during the morning session.

There were a few questions such as “Was such animosity prevalent in the Ottoman Empire?” No, it was not. Artin Dadyan Pasha served as the Deputy Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. They served as deputies and diplomats in the Ottoman bureaucracy. When we look at the Privy Council (Encümen-i Daniş), one of the most important

institutions, we see Armenian names here again. Among them, there were several significant works by Sahak Abro in the imperial mint, in the imperial gunpowder factory, and in architecture. We know that the Amira class made substantial contributions, particularly in this area. The state offered Armenians control of the Empire's most vital and strategic institutions, including the economy and security. This is very important. Armenians and Turks were actually very culturally influenced by one another during the Ottoman Empire. Armenians would speak Turkish in many places, including their homes. We see that Turkish newspapers and books were published in the Armenian alphabet in the 19th century. We know that many Western works that left their mark on the period were translated into Turkish by Armenian intellectuals. During this period, there were Armenians and non-Muslims sent abroad for education just to translate those works. We again know that the architects of some mosques were Armenians. Once again, it should be noted that the Balyan family made significant contributions to this cause. Another essential point, as you can see on the screen, is the 1863 Turkish newspaper that used the Armenian alphabet, *Varaka-i Havadis*. When we examine this newspaper, when we examine its issues, we see no indication of the Armenian community's dissatisfaction, any troubles or problems with the Ottoman Empire. Look, I am talking about the 1860s. We know that Ohannes Pasha, who was in the close circle of Abdülhamid II, was appointed to the Ministry of the Treasury (*Hazine-i Hassa Nazırlığı*), which was in charge of the administration of his personal assets. At this point, we see that Armenians played a significant role in the 19th century, particularly at the Privy Council (*Encümen-i Daniş*), the Translation Office, *Hazine-i Hassa*, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We also see that they worked as clerks, translators, and ambassadors for prominent diplomats and bureaucrats of the period such as Mustafa Reşit Pasha, Rıza Pasha, Ali Pasha, and Fuat Pasha during their duties abroad.

So what happened that this situation suddenly deteriorated? Numerous factors contributed to the deterioration of this situation. Our dear professors have already highlighted multiple dimensions since the morning. However, if we summarise in general, the nationalism movement that started in the 19th century and continued in 20th century



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contributed significantly to the deterioration of this situation. When the Greeks, followed by the Serbs, Wallachians, Moldavians, and Bulgarians, achieved independence from the Empire, it set a precedent for Armenians. However, in general, Armenians remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire until the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878. In the process leading up to these 1915 events, there actually were fundamental turning points. Yes, the nationalism movement was a part of this turning point but going back a little further -it was also mentioned in the morning session, mainly Professor Yusuf talked about the Treaty of Berlin- we may assume that this process started with the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca of 1774. Again, at the Congress of Vienna, the Eastern question gradually gained prominence for the first time. At this point, we can say that this process began to deteriorate with the Eastern question, the Edict of Gülhane, and the Edict of Reform of 1856. Yes, of course, the Ottoman-Russian War was a breaking point between the two communities. With the influence of Western states and great powers, the activities of the missionaries that Professor Ömer has just mentioned were very effective in the separation of Armenians into different communities and different groups. As a result of all these developments, the Ottoman Empire had to enact the Relocation and Resettlement Law during the First World War. When we consider the process by which this law was enacted, we see an extremely positive picture. However, as this picture started to deteriorate, and the Ottoman Empire joined the First World War alongside Germany and Austria-Hungary, this situation was seen as an opportunity by Armenian nationalists, and in 1914, the Committee of Union and Progress officials met with the Armenians in Erzurum and tried to get their support.

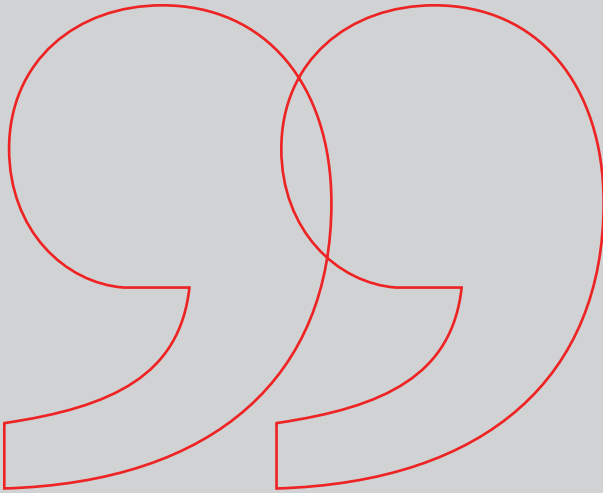
The Dashnaks declared that they would support their state as loyal citizens if the Ottoman Empire entered the war, but the Dashnaks did not keep this promise later on. At the Dashnak Congress held secretly in June 1914 before this meeting, they decided to use the impending war – as we have just said, many groups were created with the nationalist movement – thinking it was their turn to separate and gain independence from the Ottoman Empire. What happened? During this period leading up to the war, they started to guide the Russian armies, formed gangs, attacked the Turkish troops, and attacked the

villages. Numerous acts of terrorism and insurrection began. However, there is a critical point here. It should not be forgotten that Armenians brought from other regions, rather than Anatolian or Ottoman Armenians, had a serious impact on terrorist incidents, as Professor Seyit spoke about Iran in the morning session. What happened that the Armenians were subjected to relocation and resettlement? However, [for] this relocation and resettlement, today the word “deportation” is used in foreign sources, especially when we look at the foreign literature. “Deportation”, as we all know, means expulsion, but this is not the case for the Ottoman Armenians because they were transferred to a region within the Ottoman territory. Naturally, unfortunate events occurred during this relocation, and people died, but there were many reasons for this. In other words, Turks and different ethnic groups also lost their lives. The weather conditions were extremely inclement, disruption of roads, transportation, food shortages, and epidemics... And look, we are holding this meeting on-line today due to the pandemic.

I mean, consider the effects of the epidemic a century ago. Numerous difficulties were encountered, including problems recruiting gendarmerie forces due to the war, as well as attacks by Kurdish and Arab tribes. However, we must now set all of these aside. We all need to understand once and for all that, despite this pain and tragedy, Turkish-Armenian relations did not begin in 1915. That is why we should not attempt to finish it in 1915. This issue must now be liberated from the shadow cast by 1915 because we cannot proceed in this manner. In other words, we cannot accomplish anything for another century if we continue to harbour grudges and hatred. We should not continue to educate future generations in this manner, particularly for the Armenian side. It was mentioned in the morning session that we defended these lands together in Çanakkale during the First World War and in many different places. We can maintain this unity today; why not? Because there was a climate of indulgence in the Ottoman Empire. We can continue it today. But of course, some steps need to be taken in order to achieve this. Of course, the Armenians, too. I analysed history textbooks in Armenian. We conducted a study for five years. We examined how they talk about Turks in the history textbooks in the Balkan and Black Sea countries. Here, we see that

Armenians have already accepted that the problem started with the Eastern question. Therefore, in the Ottoman Empire, you cannot speak of hatred towards Armenians, just as towards any ethnic or religious group. You cannot see such a thing. As we have just mentioned, they occupied the highest positions. The most obvious proof of this is found in history textbooks. However, when we look at the Armenian history textbooks, Armenians are now aware that this problem is used as a political tool by the Western states and the great powers. When we examine the Armenian history textbooks, we see that the French are also blamed for letting them down. Again, when we look at the Armenian history textbooks, we can say that the Russians are actually seen as saviours by the Armenians, and at the same time, they are blamed for being among the states that failed them. For instance, history textbooks include the following:

By helping the Turks in the War of Independence, Russia also failed the Armenians. We drew attention to this in a study we conducted on the occasion of the centenary of the Treaty of Moscow in the past weeks. In other words, there are claims that the Armenians still do not accept the Treaty of Moscow. We see accusations about this. In other words, we see an accusation levelled against Russia at the time for making this treaty, producing a solution with the Turks, and assisting the Turks. We see that a strong and victimising image of Türkiye and Russia are formed in Armenian history textbooks as well as an image of Armenia as the victimised country. Therefore, there is not a single enemy for Armenians. Armenian historians themselves state this in history textbooks. Anyone who can be defined as a conqueror is an enemy of the Armenians. Who are they, if we look at this issue from past to present? Persians, Romans, Arabs, Byzantines, Mongols, and Turks. It varies periodically. However, when we consider the image of the primary enemy in Armenian history, we see that the Turks are in the foreground. So, what are we going to do to solve this issue? Türkiye has issued condolence messages on April 24 every year since 2005, expressing their solidarity with Armenians in their grief over their losses. For this reason, simply by considering the steps Türkiye has taken thus far in extending a hand of peace, perhaps a different path can be tried this year, putting all accusations aside. Maybe it is time for this issue to be solved. Perhaps the other party will realise



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that the relations between the two communities are so deep-rooted that they cannot be limited to the events of 1915, and not only Armenians but also Muslims had losses during the First World War. The Armenian side should also recognise that there is no point in comparing the death tolls and making statements like, “Did 2 million people die or 1.5 million or 600,000?”

There is an Armenian author named Hovhannes Tumanyan, highly important. Armenian author Hovhannes Tumanyan says, “Let’s discuss for the sake of bright ideas to bring peace, brotherhood, light, and justice to the nations.” This year, I think maybe it is time to talk about these historical facts at the table because this seems to be the only solution for both sides, that is, for the two ancient peoples of the region. Tumanyan emphasises that the brotherhood of nations and the happiness of people depend on living together in peace, and by taking a step together in the name of normalisation, we can establish peace together in the region as two ancient peoples and two ancient societies. When we examine regional and global powers’ historical aspirations in this region, we see that they do not want peace, tranquility, stability, or normalisation here. Normalisation will actually result in significant changes in the region’s economic, political, cultural, and other spheres because, as we all know, the Eastern question is at the heart of this issue. Therefore, Armenia and the Armenian community should do their part from now on. First of all, they should realise that the diaspora and Western states use the events of 1915 for political purposes. As Hrant Dink stated, the addressees of the issue, we Turks and Armenians, can solve this problem by sitting at the table. For this reason, it is time to turn a new page on the Armenian issue because I think it is time to take the necessary steps for a prosperous future. Since the process started with TARC in 2001 until now, Türkiye has made a proposal for the Turkish Gold Platform. You know, the Zurich protocols were signed and then could not be implemented. Football diplomacy, a joint commission of historians. [Türkiye] has taken steps many times but could not find a response.

However, this change is now necessary. You know, every year, a new state recognises April 24. My doctoral dissertation is on parliamentary resolutions. When I began my doctoral research, sixteen countries

recognised these assertions. As of today, the number has increased to 40-50 and is continuing to grow. Here. It has been recognised by 49 of 49-50 states in the US, and what will Biden say this year? We have been seeing the news of the Armenian side in the Armenian press about this for days. In other words, these parliamentary resolutions are detrimental to Türkiye, but I believe they are more detrimental to Armenia because this is now used as a political tool. The states that do not recognise it ask: “Why has Israel not recognised it? Will they recognise it? On what condition will they recognise it?” or we say:

“America has not recognised it.” They just say: “Meds yeghern.” In the Armenian language, I also studied Armenian, when you look at it in Armenian, Meds yeghern is already a synonym for the word genocide, which we call “ճեղապանութիւն” in Armenian. As a result, when he says “Meds Yeghern” rather than “ճեղապանութիւն” we in Türkiye exclaim, “Yes, he didn’t say ‘genocide’ this year!” This is also wrong. I mean, everyone knows that the parliamentary resolutions on these issues are used for very political purposes. The Armenian side, in particular, must now establish its position on this issue. These resolutions have adverse effects on the relations of the two states in many political, economic, and cultural areas. International organisations make critical decisions as well. These decisions, I believe, are among the most significant impediments to the normalisation of relations between the two states. Again, the parliamentary resolutions, yes, our professors have shared their valuable information with us in the previous session. These resolutions are legally invalid, but they have political consequences; that is, they have a negative effect on the relations between the two states. That is why Armenia should also make up its mind about these resolutions because not only Türkiye and Armenia but also Western states should bear responsibility for the events of 1915. We have already talked about the Eastern question.

Just as they had an impact on coming to this point, they can bring the solution closer by leaving the parties of this issue to their own devices and by not using this issue as a political tool. The events of 1915 should no longer be used as a trump card against Türkiye. In other words, the parties should be encouraged to solve the problem peacefully. Again, the Armenian diaspora’s hegemony over Armenia

must be ended. Armenian leadership is independent of both the West and Russia. As you know, there will be elections in June. I believe they should take this situation into account during this election. To sum up, today, in the most remote corners of the world, just as Mr. Ambassador has mentioned, I earned my doctorate from UCLA. The first thing I noticed when I went there was that, as my professor stated, it is a place where the most radical and problematic members of the diaspora are. There are also monuments, statues, columns, decisions, and many things there, and the number of these is increasing day by day. Believe it, yes, they also harm Türkiye, but they harm Armenians more than Türkiye because people are focused on this and cannot get out of it. I think the tragedy and pain experienced by all Muslim and Armenian peoples during the First World War should be taken out of political interests, and 1915 should no longer be a tool used by Western states for their political purposes. It needs to be examined perspicaciously. It needs to be resolved fairly. At this point, the issue of joint historians proposed by Türkiye is very important. This proposal is still valid. After the developments in Karabakh, there may be a serious development and normalisation in Turkish-Armenian relations in the coming days, and the six-party platform proposal put forward by Türkiye after the Karabakh war is also very important, that if Armenia wants to take part in this platform, it must take some steps. Thank you for listening patiently.

Alev Kılıç: Thank you, dear Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş. You have painted a somewhat gloomy picture of the situation, but the message you have conveyed is bright. We agree with Tumanyan. We need to discuss bright ideas. You have made a similar reference to Dink, to whom the Presidency's Director of Communications, Mr Altun, referred in his opening speech this morning. We truly need to turn a new page and address our own issues. The resolutions taken in the Western parliaments are void. Moreover, most of them are completely non-binding provisions that are not approved by the governments and the executive bodies. However, even this, I think, harms the democracy of those countries as much as it harms Türkiye and Armenians. The abuse and exploitation of democracy and the interpretation of history by politicians and legislatures are probably not among the practices and procedures foreseen in democracy. Thank you very much, Bozkuş.

The Armenian Diaspora, the Presumptive Future Approach of the U.S. President and the U.S. Congress to the Turkish-Armenian Conflict, and Its Potential Fallout

Ergün Kırlikovalı*

OK, the name of my presentation is “The Armenian Diaspora: The Probable Approach of the US President and the US Congress to the Turkish-Armenian Conflict and its Potential Fallout.” The Turkish-Armenian conflict: I’m a researcher and writer specialising in the late 19th and early 20th century Ottoman history with specific reference to the Turkish-Armenian conflict. Having lived in California, which is home to a large Armenian community, for most of my adult life, I also witnessed first-hand how some historical events are misrepresented by both religious and lay leaders of the Armenian diaspora.

Some in the Armenian diaspora cultivate hatred for all things Turkish. They teach their young such feelings to keep them in unity and in the Armenian community and to prevent their young from being assimilated into the dominant American culture. Because of my lifelong readings on the subject and living in the same urban settings with the Armenian diaspora for more than forty-three years, I feel uniquely qualified to comment on the Turkish-Armenian relations. There is this Los Angeles Times article from 1990, which I think explains the

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situation well. It is a blur from there. “Edna Petrosyan is only six years old, but she knows all about Armenia’s enemies already... Now, recite the poem I taught you, Tello Petrosyan instructs her daughter. Edna steps out of her mother’s embrace, raises her head, puts her hands in her pockets, and with a face grave beyond her years, begins:

‘It’s better that I be a dog or a cat, than a Turkish Barbarian...’

The poem promises that ‘when the Armenian wind blows, it will not leave a single Turk standing in Armenian land.’

This is the Los Angeles Times, February 9, 1990. This is from a six-year-old kid. This is in the 21st century, end of the 21st century; this is now; this is the reality we’re facing here. Kids are taught this kind of hatred.

With President Joe Biden’s pending April 24th address to the nation, the hopes and expectations of the Armenian diaspora are that the President will finally utter the “G” word. If he does, that would be the first time since President Reagan uttered it back in 1981. Will he or won’t he? If Biden uses the “G” word, what will its reverberations be?

How will the Armenian diaspora react? Will Armenian bullying and intimidation and harassment, already experienced plenty by Turkic-Americans, turn to terrorism? What will the Armenian lobby do next? How will US-Türkiye relations be affected by this political move by the President?

I will try to cover these points in my 20-minute PowerPoint presentation. The month of April is awash with Armenian propaganda, misrepresenting history. At the heart of the malicious Armenian effort is the desire to defame Turks and have the long discredited political claim of Armenian genocide recognised.

They conveniently ignore the armed Armenian rebellions, terrorism, treason, territorial demands, and the suffering of the Muslims, mostly Turks, at the hands of Armenian revolutionaries.

And to the remainder of the story, they inject heavy doses of hearsay, forgeries and embellishments presented to the unsuspecting public as “genocide”.

The Armenian lobby, unfortunately, finds fertile ground for their distortions in the ethno-religious bias against Muslims in general and Turks in particular. Here is an original print from the 16th century at the Hungarian National Museum depicting a Turkish warrior butchering an infant.

The Armenian lobby causes millions of dollars of hard-earned US tax payers’ money to be squandered every year under the cover of humanitarian aid to Armenia. Armenia, a land-locked, poverty-stricken, violence-plagued, and corrupt country, is a client state of Russia, where Russians pretty much own everything from energy to telecommunications. Just look at this chart. The total U.S. aid to Armenia in the last 20 years is \$1.4 billion. The Armenian population is 2.9 million. If you do the math, you see that each Armenian person got \$478 of US aid. Now, if you just gave \$478 to every American, the US would have to spend 158 billion. Now that that teaches a lot right there.

Armenia had illegally occupied 20% of Azerbaijan and expelled at gunpoint a million Azerbaijanis from their homes. After 20 years of illegal occupation and fruitless peace talks at the OSCE-Minsk Group, Azerbaijan finally liberated its homeland from foreign occupiers after a 44-day epic war last fall.

Armenia sold US arms to Iran. The Guardian article titled “US Fury at Armenia over Arms Transfers to Iran”, dated November 28, 2010, revealed that Armenia enabled Iran’s purchase of rockets and machine guns in 2003. Four years later, in 2007, some of these weapons were recovered in Iraq from two Shia militants, militant attacks in which a US soldier was killed and six others were injured.

Perhaps the biggest blow to the Armenian lobby came from the European Court of Human Rights’ verdict on October 15, 2015 that will resonate for decades to come. Part of the ECHR’s (European Court of Human Rights) Grand Chamber ruling was that the “Armenian



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genocide” is an opinion, it can be rejected, and such rejection would be an exercise in free speech. Thus, it was determined by the highest court in Europe that rejecting the alleged Armenian genocide was not hate speech, as the Armenian lobby wants people to believe; it was mere free speech.

The ECHR (European Court of Human Rights) has further ruled that the alleged Armenian genocide could not be compared to the court-proven Holocaust. The latter had gone through the due process at a competent tribunal, and the intent was proven. Remember the Nuremberg verdict of October 1, 1946?

On the history front, a formidable array of prominent historians, scholars, researchers, and experts in the history of the Ottoman Empire disputed the Armenian allegations of genocide. Here is what 69 of them said in a public statement that was published in the New York Times and Washington Post on May 19, 1985: “As for the charge of ‘genocide’, no signatory of this statement wishes to minimise the scope of Armenian suffering. We are likewise cognizant that it cannot be viewed as separate from the suffering experienced by the Muslim inhabitants of the region. The weight of evidence so far uncovered points in the direction of serious inter-communal warfare perpetrated by Muslim and Christian irregular forces complicated by disease, famine, suffering and massacres in Anatolia and adjoining areas during the First World War...”

To date, the relevant archives in Türkiye are open, and more than 100 countries have already sent their scholars there, except Armenia. Armenian archives are still closed. Limited access is given only to those who subscribe to the official Armenian narrative. So what are the Armenians afraid of?

Against this backdrop, let’s now turn our attention to the calls to US President Joe Biden to recognise the long-discredited political claim as Armenian genocide on April 24, 2021. Biden has been in politics for 48 years, serving 6 terms as a US Senator and two terms as Vice President. During all these years, Biden made it clear that he was a philhellene and armenophil. He voted for genocide recognition in the

past and pledged in 2020 to do so again if elected president. Therefore, if Biden's voting record is any guide, Biden will probably utter the "G" word.

Some argue that being a president is different than being a candidate. When a candidate becomes president, he is quickly reminded to put American interests before ethnic interests. Türkiye is a valued NATO member with the second largest army. Türkiye has been a bulwark of the Western Defence alliance during the Cold War and a reliable ally for the US for more than 70 years. Turks fought bravely, shoulder-to-shoulder with Americans in Korea against communist aggression and were awarded the US Congressional Medal of Honour for their valour. Turks also fought alongside US soldiers against terrorism in Afghanistan, against ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, against sectarianism in Somalia, and against other evils elsewhere.

Türkiye is a strategic partner for the US in the troubled Middle East. Türkiye sits on arguably the single most important geography in the world. Surrounded by three seas and strategic waterways, Türkiye is a most celebrated piece of earth. A country where two continents meet, East and West hug, religions flourish, civilisations overlap, the earliest human settlements and innovations for millenniums take root, ancient silk routes crisscross, energy corridors find a hub, and more.

Recognising the flawed Armenian narrative as genocide would be offensive to Türkiye. A disappointed and incensed Türkiye may be compelled to reconsider the US's reliability as an ally and may slowly disengage from the US's insults, threats, sanctions, embargoes, and schemes, almost all of which are initiated by the racist Armenian and Greek lobbies.

It is true that there are other issues between the US and Türkiye. The S-400 missile system Türkiye bought from Russia in 2018, because the US would not sell Patriots for political reasons or by demanding unfavourable terms. Türkiye says these missiles will not be a part of the NATO system; so concerns of Russian access to NATO technology are overstated. Türkiye needs this missile defence system against Syria and Iran, as NATO provides no missile protection in the eastern

half of Türkiye. Türkiye suggested formation of a blue-ribbon technical investigation committee to evaluate competing claims, which seems reasonable and fair.

Then, of course, there is the issue of that Fetullah Gülen, the primary-school educated cleric calling Pennsylvania home for more than 20 years. Gülen wanted in Türkiye for plotting the 2016 coup where more than 300 innocent civilians lost their lives. There is an extradition agreement between the US and Türkiye, so such a request normally should not be a problem. But the US says it is not convinced that Gülen is behind the coup. Türkiye had sent many reams of documents connecting Gülen to the coup, but the US remains unconvinced. The real reason may be that if the US turns Gülen over to Türkiye, then the US's indirect role in that coup may be exposed to the whole world during the trials. Others reject this claim as a mere conspiracy theory. Be that as it may, if Biden uses the "G" word on April 24, he will be adding insult to injury. Whether that tips the scale in the US-Türkiye relations remains to be seen. At best, we can see a deep freeze descending upon the US-Türkiye relations. At worst, we may see a huge black hole appearing in Biden's world map where Türkiye and its surroundings are. I can see major newspapers then publishing editorials, asking "Who lost Turkey?" The US president did. The US Congress did. The U.S. media did. The Armenian and Greek lobbies did. We all did. Appeasing the nagging and dishonest Armenian lobby by taking their flawed narrative at face value should not have been more important than keeping the friendship and trust of a powerful, resourceful, and influential ally like Türkiye for 70-plus years.

The US is built upon lands owned by Native Americans. Has any president recognised the Trail of Tears of 1840 and many other cases as acts of genocide? Then, there was slavery in America for centuries, victimising generations of African Americans. Has any president recognised the many centuries of bondage, torture, rapes, massacres, and persecutions as genocide? The Chinese, the Japanese, the Vietnamese, and other Asians were all discriminated against and persecuted at one time or another. Hispanics, Jews, and Catholics were discriminated against and persecuted. Has any president recognised the many centuries of America's inhumanity toward these many groups?



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Some eight million people were massacred in Congo between 1886 and 1908. Millions of Ukrainian people and others perished in Holodomor and the Stalin Purges of 1930s. There are countless cases in history, Hereros, Namas, Cambodians, Ethiopians, natives of Brazil, Australia, Canada, Paraguay, Guatemala, on and on and on. A list too long to list here where human's inhumanity to human may better fit the description of genocide. Has any president recognised any of these?

Why then pick with tweezers only the Armenian suffering out of a complex web of suffering that includes Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Circassians, Jews, and others? Why such selective morality and hypocrisy? Why divide and polarise Americans on the basis of ethnicity and/or religion with a one-sided view of history? Is the White House the proper institution to adjudicate genocide disputes? Or the U.S. Congress? Or media, academia, clergy? Of course not. There's one and only one institution that can do that: The International Court of Justice. The United Nations established the ICJ as a specialized court just for this purpose. That's why we call it a competent tribunal. Only cases tried after the night of the 1951 convention and where the intent to destroy is proven by the ICJ can be considered genocide. Examples are Holocaust, Rwanda, and Srebrenica. The First Amendment prohibits government action motivated in whole or in part by viewpoint hostility.

Evidence shows that a notable motivation for presidential recognition is hostility towards viewpoints that dispute the Armenian genocide claim. Such viewpoint discrimination constitutes a violation of the First Amendment. Then there's this: The presidential declaration is further unconstitutional because it will serve to demonise Turkish-Americans as genocide deniers, which in turn will likely incite violence against Turkish-Americans. A purpose to harm a politically vulnerable group violates the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. The threat of increased Armenian intimidation, violence, and terrorism victimizing Turkish-Americans and Azerbaijani-Americans is very, very real. Genocide was not recognised as a crime until the Genocide Convention of 1948, which entered into force on January 12, 1951. The universal prohibition on ex post facto laws would bar any genocide prosecution retroactively, as Article

24 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Justice clearly states.

I wrote to the President to urge him to put American interests before Armenian ones and refrain from using the “G” word on April 24th. I asked him not to divide and polarise Americans but unite and heal them instead. Turkic-Americans want dialogue and peace.

The Turkish culture and history are little known and mostly misunderstood in America, mainly due to the incessant misrepresentations by anti-Turkish lobbies. Even the wildest claims are readily believed and disseminated just because they defame Turks and vilify Muslims. Turkish-Americans do not react effectively or timely to news, articles, events, or legislation that might impact their lives significantly.

Their voices are hardly heard, arguably because of the small size of their communities; the culture of shying away from being the ambassadors of their culture; the lack of effective grassroots networks for political action; scarce resources made available for perception cultivation; little or no access to big media (print, audio or visual); fear of backlash, intimidation, harassment, and violence by Armenian extremists; general ignorance on matters related to their heritage; lack of interest and enthusiasm or concern; self-centeredness, indolence, and/or procrastination, and other reasons.

That said, though, I must add that Turkish-Americans are much better organised nowadays. They have their own newspapers and radio and TV programs. They get involved in the political process more. Last year, for example, we had 10 Turkish Americans running for office, and four of them won the election. More and more volunteers are stepping forward.

If President Biden uses the “G” word, we will probably see an increase in Armenian propaganda misrepresenting Türkiye and Azerbaijan as “aggressors”. They will try to tarnish these nations’ images and set the stage for future Armenian demands for reparations and territory. In the process, they will whitewash the dreadful human rights record of the corrupt and violent Armenia, which until recently, had illegally

occupied up to 20 percent of Azerbaijan, expelling at gunpoint a million Azerbaijanis from their homes. But Armenian propaganda will not be the only thing increasing. Armenian hate speech, intimidation, harassment, terrorism, and hate crimes are also expected to rise.

On November 4, 2020 in Beverly Hills, for example, a Turkish restaurant, Cafe Istanbul that you see here, was attacked by a group of Armenian extremists. The Beverly Hills Police Department called it a hate crime. One young Armenian is in custody and charged with that hate crime. The Los Angeles Unified School District adopted two resolutions in 2020 denigrating Türkiye, Turkish people, and Turkish-Americans, as well as, by association, Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani people, and Azerbaijani-Americans. These resolutions declared April 24th a school holiday commemorating the alleged Armenian genocide. Turkish-Americans in L.A. are extremely concerned about the safety of their children, as such a day will intensify Armenian hate speech, bullying, and terrorism.

The Armenian-American lobby has aggressively promoted a distorted view of history while agitating for federal and state proclamations or resolutions defining the tragic WWI events in the Ottoman Empire as genocide. California Senate Bill SB 1915, introduced by Armenian Senators Poochigian and Speier that you see here and passed in the year 2000, would enable the alleged Armenians in California who have claims arising out of insurance policies in effect in Europe or Asia between 1875 and 1923 to bring legal action to recover on that claim. This self-serving law was struck down by the 2009 verdict of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit for usurping the federal government's foreign affairs powers, and thus, being unconstitutional. A 2012 verdict by the same court threw out yet another lawsuit, also related to the alleged genocide.

The U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed in its 10, I'm sorry, 11-0 en banc ruling, unanimous ruling, another lawsuit on February 23, 2012, brought by Vazken Movsesian, a priest at St. Peter Armenian Church in Glendale, on behalf of a group of Southern Californian Armenians in 2002. The court ruled that only the federal government has jurisdiction over foreign entities, pre-empting the state law. Now,



**Why then pick with tweezers
only the Armenian suffering out
of a complex web of suffering
that includes Turks, Kurds, Arabs,
Circassians, Jews, and others?**

Ergün Kırlikovalı

this may be in jeopardy if Biden utters the G word at the U.S. Congress or is recognised last October 29, 2020. So, this defence is taken away from our hands.

Three California state legislative bills, ACR 26, AB 1019, and AR 20, 21 have been introduced since February. I stress since February, within the last 60 days. Three resolutions, all are related to the allegations of Armenian genocide and on the Armenian territorial claims against Türkiye and Azerbaijan. Repeat, in the last 60 days, three resolutions in the California state legislature.

ACR 26, introduced by Armenian Assembly member Nazarian on February 08, 2021, will praise, command California businesses that have chosen to suspend business dealings with the Republic of Türkiye. AB 1019, introduced by Assembly Member Holden on February 18, 2021, will prohibit public employee retirement systems from investing in Türkiye until Türkiye recognises the alleged Armenian genocide. Now, these retirement funds, they are huge. We're talking probably a trillion dollars or something. So, this is very important for Turkish trade. So please, let's all wake up. AR21, introduced on February 8, 2021 and sponsored by Armenian Assemblyman Nazarian is about the alleged Armenian genocide.

The Armenian attempts to drag California legislature, public education, economy, and criminal justice institutions into the anti-Turkish witch-hunt constitute an abuse of representative democracy.

If President Biden utters the "G" word, the Armenian Diaspora will turn up its hate speech and harassment of Turkic Americans; increase its propaganda and lawsuits against Türkiye, cause more anti-Turkish resolutions to be introduced in city, state, and federal legislatures; and try to hurt the Turkish economy by meddling with U.S.-Türkiye relations. Armenians will certainly try, try and try, but, as always, they will not gain much because they lack the two most important supports: history scholarship and international law.

Now, with my finishing remarks I would like to wake up, my friends, brothers, sisters, everyone, please. The fight is only starting. And we

should be more educated, more motivated to wage our fight and win this thing because it is not getting easier or smaller or less important; it is getting more important. And when Türkiye needs more trade, more foreign currency, Armenians will do their best to hurt Türkiye through these resolutions. I am doing my part, but I want everybody to do their part also. Thank you for listening to me.

Alev Kılıç: Thank you, Ergün Bey. Thank you, Mr. Kırlıkovalı for this very interesting presentation. We salute you for your courage and commend your unrelenting efforts.

Ergün Kırlıkovalı: Thank you.

The Armenian Question as Political Instrument

Christian Johannes Henrich*

Alev Kılıç: I have the pleasure to present our next speaker, Christian Johannes Henry, an academician with a background in political science, international relations, and economics. He is well known in Türkiye for his thesis or book on Turkish foreign policy from 2002 to 2012, called “Turkey between Regional Hegemonic Claims and Zero-Problem Politics from a Perspective of Turkish-Armenian Relations”. He fits in perfectly to this panel, as we are discussing reflections of the past on contemporary developments. Dr. Henry, the floor is, or the screen is yours, please.

Christian Johannes Henry: Thanks a lot, Distinguished Ambassador. I'm very happy to get the opportunity to talk to my distinguished colleagues and all interested people, all over the screens. I hope one day we will meet in the floors again, not in the screens. In Germany, maybe also in all other countries, we are completely fed up with the virus. So, hopefully, next year is an opportunity or a possibility to meet up in Ankara face-to-face. And as you said, I am very interested in this topic since 2005. I started my research on the Armenian question and never gave up so far, even if it contains lots of obstacles in Germany following this topic. For example, my PhD supervisor told me I shouldn't continue with this topic if I want any academic career

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in Germany. But for now, I'm still in the field after 16 years. The only thing that changed in that time in 2016, I stopped my membership in the government party, CDU, Christian Democratic Union, in Germany after they adopted the genocide term while ignoring all of my offers to inform the Bundestag group about the events. And so, then, after 21 years in that party, I quit this party. It was quite famous in the media, but it's already five years ago. So, today I focus more or less on the on the way the Armenian question is used as a political instrument because of my personal feeling that this question all over the Western world is used against Turkish claims of being a member of the European Union or of any other thing that is used against Turkish people and Türkiye as a country.

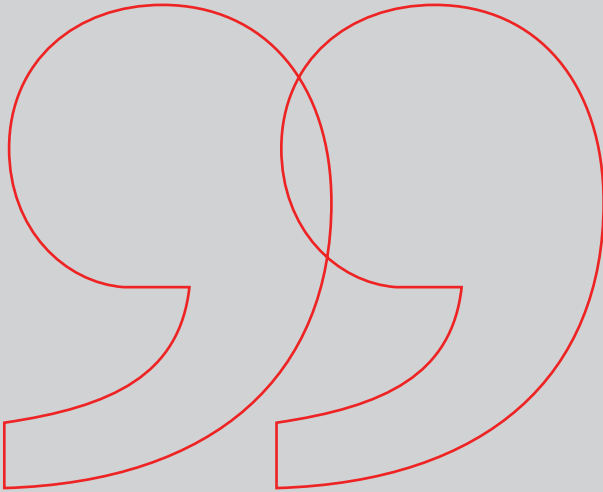
One of the claims of what you read a lot in newspapers is the whole world accepts "Armenian Genocide" as genocide or the genocide claims of Armenian people. Why are you in opposition to that? This is one of the most [common] questions asked to me, or sometimes not even a question. Questions would be nice. And you can answer and discuss mostly a small threat or something like, why are you doing that? I was thinking about what is the whole world? It's a good question, since the problem of the Western world is that we have always, in all kinds of world politics, we have a Eurocentric way of watching others. So, what is the world? The world is one hundred and ninety-seven sovereign states. The whole world is also 7.3 billion people. But if you check, so my research is not as actual [current] as from my distinguished colleague Yıldız Bozkuş, because there are some states more now accepting it. But I did research to the dates about 2016 which states adopted it at the time. So, these 23 states are just nearly 12% of all countries. So, that is already one little hint that the Western world seems that they are the basis of the whole world's life: 12 countries claim to be the whole world. So, I'm not very good at math, but I understand that 12 is not the majority of one hundred. So, the Armenian genocide-claims-accepting countries represent 617 million people, citizens, that is 8.4% of the world's population. That figure shows that the Western world has a big arrogance to think that they are representing the world. They do not. It is just a minority accepting the genocide claims, and even with a few countries more accepting it in the time between 2016 and 2021, it is not a change to a majority.

So, what is better in that case is what the other colleagues already mentioned, the Armenian propaganda is much more professional than from Azerbaijan or Türkiye. Let's just give one example from my personal academic career. In these 16 years, my research centre, also at the time University Zygon, we wrote one application after another to Turkish foundations, German foundations, and Azerbaijani foundations. And one time we got a research project funded. My colleagues who are on the Armenian side get every year some projects to finance the research. So that is one of the biggest problems in that field. The German politics and academic fields and foundations, of course, not interested in the objective view on that field, but the Turkish and Azerbaijan side who are interested are not willing to pay anything for it.

So that is one of the bad results I faced after all of these 16 years researching the topic. So, it's a standalone. Even a couple of years ago, I talked in the embassy in Berlin, the Turkish Embassy in Berlin, that at least we need the network, that I know just one call and I need a list with all colleagues all over the world who are in that field. Even that data is not available. And these are some advices already now, because I know they are very influential people in the audience. Just that is not a thing with a lot of costs. Just make an Excel file, write every politician, scientist, historian, whatever on that list with the email data, and then we have it easier to share resources or other things.

So then to the next. Who accepts the Armenian genocide claim? It's also interesting in the academic field to understand what the claims are or who these people are who claim something, what their personal interest are, where they're coming from. So, in that way, I check these countries such as Argentina, Armenia, Austria... So, we don't need to go through every country, you know, most probably the flags. But if we check them a bit more in detail, I thought all these countries in a matrix, and there are four categories to ask for, like the first one, which of these genocide-claims-accepting countries have a majority Christian population.

So, every one of these countries accepting the Armenian genocide claim has a Christian majority except Lebanon. But Lebanon, we know they have a minority of about 20, 25% Armenians. And so



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that is a special case. But except Lebanon, all other countries have a Christian majority. So even in history or also in political science, religion shouldn't be one of the issues, "I decide something here," it is something like this. Because we will see later how the countries are deciding the genocide claim, the genocide bills. I have made some research about the decision-making process that will be later in the presentation. On the second scale, on the second part of the table, we see the question: who has a significant Armenian population? And if you check this, they are also a majority. I will show you in a better way that you can see it in figures. So just in the numbers; if you check the Christian majority population, you see the red one is, yes, they have Christian majority, except for this one country, Lebanon. The significant Armenian population is still a lot. We have some more with no Armenian population. But the biggest ones are Argentina, Switzerland, France, and the United States. We already talked about the California side. So, they have a very big Armenian population. And the propaganda is running there. Then it is quite funny; I took who has warlike past with Türkiye. So, which of these countries have been at war with Türkiye during history? Because my wife is a Slovak, and she told me that they have Slovak poems also read and sung to their children about the cruelty of the Ottoman barbarians, even though nowadays historians proved that in Slovakia no slaughter or massacre or anything occurred by the Ottoman Empire, but the poems or the songs are still there. So, for example, I would go back to this one. So, the shared history with war is Armenia, of course, Austria twice. The Empire was in front of the capital, Vienna, then Cyprus, France, and Greece, Italy, Lebanon, and so on, then Poland, Russia, Slovakia. Of course, they have also a personal interest in playing something like revenge, maybe, obviously. Or it can also be that just there are some hidden feelings of the people, like you, cannot say it, directly. It is because of this. Like in Austria, you have a big minority in Austria who is against the Turkish EU membership, even much more than in Germany. And the people in this field research it. And they said it is also because of this history with the Ottoman Empire, being twice in the siege in front of Vienna.

So even if the people didn't name it, this is the reason why there is something like the common shared history with some bad intents

and bad memories about this Ottoman Empire time. So, and the other one is a significant number of Turkish migrant workers, like what we called in Germany Gastarbeiter, the working migration starting in the 60s. And that is also interesting because it is a very special kind of people. When you have these migrant workers, they came without any deeper education. They were just invited for five years, prolonged to ten years. They should just work and not integrate into the society. But then time changed, as we all know, and guest workers became normal, legal immigrants with families making their home in Germany. But these people, of course, are different, then, from the normal average Turkish society in Türkiye. With all due respect to you, I do not want to say anything bad about these people, but it is different if I talk with Turkish scholars or if I talk to former Turkish guest workers, the manners, the behaviours, and all these problems. They also are reasons for these countries where these guest workers are in big groups that there is some recent remorse about this.

And then it is also what my colleague Kırlikovalı said already before: I conducted research, who of these countries who accept the term “genocide.” What kind of history they have, according to general science and their own history. And do they accept their own crimes or don’t they? For example, Argentina and Chile, just two years ago, were sued by the native Chileans and Argentinians, called Mapuche before the international court about this torture and massacres, rapes and genocide between 1860 and 1934. And they both do not accept it. The colleague already named the German history. Of course, you can say, did Germany accept the Holocaust? Yes, we did. But we don’t accept the genocide in Namibia, the former German Southwest Africa on Herero and Nama. So, you can check the list down there. France’s topic is much known and very emotional for Turkish people. The Algerian war is nothing else if you take the same categories as they do for the Armenian claim. Then, there is, of course, genocide against the Algerian people and also the Rif War in Morocco, where Germany delivered the gas and France used the gas against the people in the Rif War. All these parts of their history or dark parts of their history are not considered genocide. Of course, not in Cyprus, Bloody Christmas, when lots of Turkish people were murdered on the island of Cyprus, was never considered genocide.

I mean, I heard that my distinguished colleague Turan is from Cyprus University. So that is a slap in the face of the people of Cyprus, of the Turkish Cyprus part, because this is the new history. About the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, we also know that even after the Khojaly massacres, the BBC team made photo documentation and video documentation of the massacres on people, the civilians in the region committed by the Armenian and Soviet Union forces. Also, this is not recognised as genocide. So, put this all in a row, and we can see that in all ways of politics towards Türkiye, the Western world is dealing with double standards. It is not just in the European Union accession process also in that case. There are genocide claims against Türkiye, even if the historians in the first panel talked about it already. These claims are not even provable. We talk about the genocide. Genocide is a penal code topic. So, if the Armenian lobby would be so clear about these claims, why are they not going to a court? Because they don't have any clear evidence. They need to open their own archives, and they will see what the Dashnaks and Hunchaks do against their own people first and then against the Ottoman civilians. So, that is also one of the parts we are mostly forgetting.

The first murders of the Ottoman Armenian people were committed by Russian-Armenian groups who wanted to destroy the 800 or 1000 years of peace living in the Ottoman Empire. I do not want to touch the historical events too much. But let's focus now on the parliamentary decision-making process, that is a very interesting thing. For example, the Argentinean Senate was discussing this issue, and they just accepted it. So, there was not a long discussion. It was something about the protocols of about 10 minutes, 15 minutes of discussion. And the only reason was that other big countries, like European Parliament and the United Nations, also accepted. That was the reason why Argentina's Parliament accepted this genocide claim. Uruguay was even more interesting. They accepted the genocide bill just because Argentina did so. So, there was not even a discussion. It was just directly a raise of the hands, and it is done. For me, as a political scientist, it is not acceptable. How can I decide in a foreign parliament about another country's history? That is already something that I would not accept. History does not belong to parliaments, especially not to foreign parliaments. But on the other hand, if I want to do so,

why am I not having open-minded discussion first. I mean, that is a very hard claim, the term genocide.

So, I need to show respect to both sides and then let historians on both sides talk in the parliament or let them make their points. But just saying the European Union did so; we do also. And Argentina did so, we do also. For me, it is completely an undemocratic act. Slovakia, the home country of my wife, they had a long discussion about the Turkish EU accession negotiation process, and while this discussion was running, just one colleague raised a hand and said, "I was recently reading the novel from Franz Werfel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. So, there was genocide. I would like, if we also call it genocide". And then there was another colleague: "OK, it's fine. We have no problem with it". And then it was decided that Slovakia accepted this "genocide". So, it's also very interesting. Based on the novel, they decided about the history of Türkiye. So, how can I make a decision about another country? Even Franz Werfel said later, in the last month of his life, he was also forced to write it in that way in the book. So, even there was, from the Armenian minorities, a pressure on him to write the book as he did. So, a novel seems to be a good resource for the Slovak parliament to decide. But the thousands of documents which are available in the Ottoman archives where I had the honour to research, they are not proof; that is interesting. And even the Armenian archives were at least closed at that time when I wanted to access them until 2015. Nowadays, just a couple of weeks ago, someone told me that they are now opened in the same conditions as Türkiye, like just academics, no politicians, no journalists. It needs to be proved. It is just what I heard a couple of weeks ago. I want to ask again about this, if it's true or not, because also there is big, lying propaganda around.

So, then we have the EU Parliament Copenhagen criteria. It is another proof of the double standards and for the undemocratic behaviour of the Western world. For example, you all know since you are all interested in the Turkish European Union accession negotiation process. The Copenhagen criteria are made for new member states to the European Union, and they are set for everybody who wants to be a member. But the EU parliament made a decision that Türkiye should accept first the genocide claims before we can negotiate with them

the full membership of the European Union. So why do we have now a lex for Türkiye? It is completely undemocratic and without any legal acceptance to make extra criteria just for Türkiye. So, it's another point where the Western world shows their double standards and undemocratic and illegal behaviour toward Türkiye.

So, if we come down to this final point that these double standards are all over Türkiye, like you see it in the EU negotiation process, you'll see it in the Armenian genocide claim, even in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, we have the double standards, even lying in the media. So, since October, the start of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, I'm writing a lot of emails every week to our newspapers because they're writing completely false news. For example, the last week I wrote to the biggest German newspaper portal, it's called NTV, like in Türkiye, NTV, but it's a different company. We said no, they did not. Armenia is not even a part of the war, there is only one region as you know, and I do not need to tell you. Only one region is considered Azerbaijan, and this part was freed after more than 20 years of illegal occupation. This happened. On the other case, Armenia has not involved the Republic; they sent weapons and missiles over the border and tried to reach Baku and Ganja and killed many people. This is not covered. So, but of course, as you guessed, I didn't get any answer from any of these newspaper portals. Probably I'm on the red list. So, maybe once when I'm in Türkiye, I can't come home and waiting for that.

What I said in the beginning already, we have this problem in the academic field that we are not very well connected. I have one friend in Sweden, one friend in the Netherlands, but at least this guy from the Netherlands already dropped the field and is in a normal job as a lawyer, because it was so hard to get any research projects on this topic. The money from European sources is not for that way. They're going into the other direction. As I said, Azerbaijan, both countries have their reasons. Azerbaijan says the oil price is so low that we have not even enough money for our budget. So, we can't spend it for other things. And in Türkiye, it was the same discussion. First, they said the lira is so bad and others said we do not have even the budget for that. So, the excuses are good, but it would be better to have funds. As the colleague said, the war just started or the fight just started. But every



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war or fight will be lost if you do not have the money to buy weapons and ammunition. Weapons and ammunitions are supporting scientists and academics and the academic research. So, that is the most important thing. And the third point of my conclusion is the network. So, even if you don't want to talk about money for any reasons, then at least make this Excel file to just connect all us together. If I have a symposium, an English-speaking symposium, I know I can invite Patrick Walsh, I can invite this and that so that we know the email addresses and in which languages they can deal in the conference. Just this would already be good, so that we know, in the group or in a WhatsApp group what projects are running now. Maybe there are some questions opened with others already answered. Then we can save time and that way that we can use each other and cite each other in the projects.

So, from that part, I have two other examples as my last statement, two examples how this academic field works in Europe. For example, I was invited to the University of Bonn to a conference like this, what we are doing now. Not as a speaker, I just went there as an audience member. And the main speaker was the Swiss historian Hans-Lucas Kieser. I'm sure that some of you will know him very well. So, he spoke for about one hour. Very nice. And everything that he said was right. There was nothing wrong. The only thing is he was not showing the other side of the coin. So, in this one hour, he was not talking about one dead Muslim murdered by Armenians or Russians. So, then in the end, I asked, 'Professor, what is with the murdered Muslims or Turks from the Armenian groups like the Dashnak and Hunchak'. And then he said, "That was not part of my project. I focused on the Armenian genocide and not on the other side." Most of the audience people here are academicians. How can you conduct a research project and just focus on one side? It is not academic at all, but he is a professor. So, it was hard for me to understand that these people can be a professor and everyone says, nice work, you wrote a very good book and blah, blah, blah, and it's not a good book. It's just half of the work. If I study the Holocaust side and I say "I was just focusing on the crimes the Jews committed against the Germans, and I don't focus on the German side," then I would say, "Of course the Jews were killed because they were just aggressive. They stole some bread in the

Warsaw ghetto, and they destroyed some windows”. But I have to focus on what the Nazis did if I’m talking about the “genocide”. So, why don’t I have to talk about the Armenian revolutionary groups when I talk about the so called Armenian genocide that belongs together? Mr. Kılıç as an ambassador probably lost also people because of the ASALA group, all these ambassadors and diplomats who were killed by them with their families and these happenings.

All these murders happened because the Western world motivates the Armenian terrorists that they somehow have the right claim. But that’s not the right claim. It’s the wrong claim. And they are just poisoned in their brains by their parents and teachers and other things. So, the problem is not the Armenian people today. I always want the Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Turks to come together because the people are those who suffer at the end because of some stubborn politicians. But the international community needs a fair and open-minded approach towards Türkiye in all kinds of things.

My last point is that it is the same when we criticise the Turkish government for anything, what they are doing. I do not care who is governing Türkiye. I’m a German. If the AK Party is running the office or if CHP is running the office, I should watch objectively what is good and what is wrong, like I do in the German government if it is the Social Democrats or Christian Conservatives. But what I realize now, everything that is done in Türkiye is just portrayed in the media by the bad sides. So, they always say, like to the Turks in Germany who vote for Erdoğan, if they want, they should go back to the dictatorship in Türkiye and live there. But it is not the question. The question is why are they voting or electing him? So, no one in Germany can tell you why Turks are voting mostly for Erdoğan that, for example, the child death rate at birth is reduced by 50% or the Turkish life expectancy rose by 10% in Erdoğan’s administration. All these points are not covered, or the health insurance system, unemployment aid, all of these are not covered. So, they that just show if a journalist is imprisoned, that is, of course, bad if journalists are imprisoned for no reason. But is there a reason? We don’t know it. How can I say in Germany if someone is imprisoned for a right or wrong reason? I don’t see the lawsuit, but they always talk about this and that is what I don’t

like. Let's be open-minded. If there is something what is bad in the government, of course, we can criticise this as well as we can criticise it in Germany. But we just look with bad eyes at Türkiye. And that is my final word. I'm very sad about it, and I'm optimistic as is my nature that in future we will come back to our long-time German-Turkish friendship. That is my wish for the future. Thank you a lot.

Alev Kılıç: Dr. Christian Johannes Henrich, thank you for this very interesting and sobering presentation. We are running out of time, I know, but I did not want to interrupt this and the previous very interesting presentations, and I also would like to commend you for your civil courage. And also, just a footnote, I would say, I happened to know during my days in Switzerland Dr. Hans Lukas Kieser, and unfortunately, he is not the exception for the example you have given.

1915 in the Light of Recent Events in Karabakh: What Do Events in Karabakh and the Southern Caucasus Tell Us About 1915?

Patrick Walsh*

Alev Kılıç: Now, we come to the final speaker of our session. And, he is also a very familiar face watching these conferences: Patrick Walsh, a historian, a political analyst, and a teacher. He is a very prolific and proficient writer/author. He has written books on the First World War, Germany, Ottoman Türkiye, Russia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. And his latest book, “The Second War in Karabakh” is waiting to be published. So, Dr. Walsh, the screen is yours.

Patrick Walsh: Thank you very much and good afternoon everybody and thank you to the Directorate for a very interesting and rewarding conference today. So, this afternoon, I would like to talk about 1915 in the light of recent events in Karabakh and the South Caucasus, and, you know, ask the question, “What do events in Karabakh and the South Caucasus tell us about 1915?”. So, it is a bit of an opposite thing from what historians usually do, actually. OK, so I want to ask, what is the implication or the importance of the South Caucasus for the Turkish defence of 1915 as well? First of all, then, if we look at the Armenian narrative, what is it? Essentially, it says this: the

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Armenians are helpless, innocent victims; the Ottoman response in 1915 was unjustified; the Armenians deserved a national state; and a different outcome in 1915 was both possible and preferable. And these are the ideas underlying the Armenian narrative of 1915, even though they are not always explicitly expressed or stated. So, the Armenian experience in the South Caucasus is very relevant to judging whether the Ottomans were right in 1915 for a number of reasons. Well, firstly, we can see what the Armenians have done with state power themselves. We can see whether Armenian nationalism is a positive force in the region. And thirdly, we can see how Armenians treat minorities they rule over. So, we can get a good idea of what would have happened without the relocations in 1915. So, let's look at the Armenian state-building experience first of all.

Looking first at the First Republic and after this time, right. So, in 1918-1920, we had the Yerevan Republic. I mean, even Armenians see this as a disaster. There are many apologetic works being produced like Richard Hovannisian's defending the record of the Dashnak government. But the facts speak for themselves. Papazian, for instance, notes that there were three lost wars in succession against all its neighbours, and the first Armenian prime minister, Hovhannes, I always find his name difficult to say, Katchaznouni told the party convention in 1923 about how the necessary constructive state-building work had been completely ignored in favour of dubious state expansion work. The result: widespread famine, disease, hundreds of thousands of deaths among the Armenian population, not to mention other people. A British report at the time, which was sent to Oliver Wardrop, the High Commissioner in the Southern Caucasus at the time, it could be a description of today. The politics of the Yerevan Republic are dominated by the notorious Armenian secret society known as the Dasnaksutyun. Its present policy in the Caucasus is centred on (1) the acquisition of territory for the Yerevan Republic, (2) the extension and equipment of the Armenian Armed Forces, and (3) the propagation of the doctrine of the Dashnaks. It seems impossible that a sound democratic government will be attained in the Yerevan Republic until the activities of this society have been ended.

The society, by its methods of terrorism, prevent the better and

broader-minded elements of Armenian society from taking up official positions. Will we ever see the better elements of Armenian society taking up official positions even a century afterwards? The Bolsheviks, the effect of the Bolsheviks. Let's give them some credit. They saved Armenia in 1920-21 from self-destruction and probably from the destruction of everyone else in the region. The Soviets revived Armenia through curtailing its nationalism, particularly during the Stalin period. Let's give Josef Stalin some credit. Because a lot of people come out with credit when you compare them to the Armenians. The Bolsheviks come out with credit. Joseph Stalin comes out with credit. Afterwards, as things were relaxed by Khrushchev and then by Gorbachev, Armenian nationalism was again unleashed, and the process of self-destruction and destruction of others was recommenced.

So, let's have a look at the Second Republic and its record. First, we have territorial expansion, which was again given precedence over state building. The Armenian Republic grew in size as a result of its victory in the 1990s. But again, size was actually prioritised over substance. So, we have economic disaster. We have, you know, rampant inflation, GDP halved since the Soviet days, demographic disaster occurring with high migration, people voting with their feet to leave Armenia. One million out of four million left after it left the Soviet Union. Compare that to Azerbaijan, where seven million, six and a half million at the time they left the Soviet Union, and 10 million today. You can see the contrast. Mostly, they left for employment in Russia, lots of part-time work. Social disaster, high unemployment, poverty... And, the 2020 war teaches the lesson that a functional state is needed to win wars. In 1991-1994, Azerbaijan lacked this. In 2020, it had it, and Armenia did not. Armenia did not understand this. Both its capacity and will to fight in Karabakh was depleted by the failure of state. Only Levon Ter-Petrosyan understood this, but even he could not curtail Armenian nationalism to make a functional settlement to arrest the process that ultimately defeated them in the war. Okay, so, Armenia was incapable of developing Karabakh.

There is Aghdam, which I think I would call Armenia's Victory Park, because there has been so much sniping against Azerbaijan's Victory Park in Baku. But this is Armenia's Victory Park. The ruins are a



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testament to its failure. And what else has happened? There has been a surrender of independence to Russia. And the question really is whether territorial expansion is of more importance than a functional state to the Armenians. I mean, that is the predicament that Nikol Pashinyan was placed on. And he promised so much, he failed to deliver, and he got himself into a more destructive war. He was the great hope. And now he is claiming that he's going to put the Armenian army under the auspices of the Russian army. So, this is where he has led, back to square one, actually, one step forward, two steps back. So, in the end, the functional state is an imperative for all aspects of development. So, let's look at Armenian nationalism. It has produced the most ethnically and religiously homogeneous state in the region. It is still obsessed with territorial expansionism despite all the disasters it has brought. It has a strong, myopic sense of self-importance, the Armenians. They are disabled by their own misinformation and disinformation. There is a big talk about this in California at the minute, about how misinformation and disinformation is destroying Armenia, and who is producing it? The Armenian diaspora. So, they have become victims of the sword they have been wielding for a century. Territory before people, a big problem. And essentially that Armenian nationalism is incapable of compromise and accommodation without actually being militarily subdued by exterior forces, either by the Turks, by the Bolsheviks or by the Azerbaijanis. Peace is never made unless they get subdued in the first place. You know, there is a picture of Armenia, the vast state of Armenia, and what it would like to hold, there is no consideration of whether it has enough people to hold such a state. It is just, you know, an objective, and it is pursued relentlessly.

So, Armenian treatment of ethnic minorities, well, the Yerevan Republic became overwhelmingly Armenian. Erivan itself had been a khanate until the 1820s-1830s. It had around a 50/50 Christian/Muslim population in 1900. In 1919, around a quarter of its population was still non-Armenian. Zangezur was largely depopulated of non-Armenians during 1918-1921 by people who subsequently fought for the Nazis. Professor Malcolm Yapp of the London School of Economics made a very good comment about, he made a review of Richard Hovannisian's admirable third volume of "The Republic of Armenia," and

he stated this pretty well. He said “ethnic cleansing” was a term not then used, but its practice was everywhere. The Armenians of the Republic wanted to dominate Karabakh and to clear the Muslims out of the Arras Valley and resettle the region with Armenians; the majority of Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh saw the dangers and advocated a much more moderate line of compromise. As in so many similar episodes, the position of the moderates was undermined by the hot-heads organized in partisan bands, and, in the end, it was the moderates who suffered most in the abortive rising of March 1920. The militants blame the British for the disaster.

It is also clear that Armenian adventures in Karabakh and along the Arras contributed to the breakdown of government in Azerbaijan, the establishment of Soviet power in that Republic in April 1920, and eventually the subversion of Armenia itself. So, you know, that is the sum achievement of the Armenian First Republic. Coming so near the conclusion. What is the story of this? Well, militarised Armenians against vulnerable Muslim communities. You know, we see them in 1915 in Van and Eastern Anatolia; 1918-1920 in Erzurum, Kars, Ardahan; 1918-20 in Baku, Quba, Karabakh, Zangezur and Erivan; and 1988-94 in Yerevan and Karabakh. So, the common factor is that when the power of state is absent to protect ordinary citizens, Armenian militants fill the vacuum. So, the conclusion then. In conclusion, a number of things are apparent. Firstly, the experience in the Southern Caucasus has tended to confirm the correctness of the decision of the Ottomans to resist the establishment of an Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia. Secondly, how the Armenians have behaved since adds weight to the position that nothing else could have been done in 1915 that would have produced a better result, despite the tragedy that occurred. Thirdly, the Armenian state actually established has proven too much for the Armenians to manage effectively, even in its existing size. However, Armenian nationalism has proven incapable of learning these lessons. The consequences have been continued cycles of warfare and disaster for the Armenians and instability in the Southern Caucasus.

So, I think these facts need to be emphasised in information relayed to the West. They represent powerful obstacles to an acceptance of

this simple, simplistic Armenian narrative and the campaign for so-called genocide recognition. Parliaments may still pass motions, but states which have to deal with reality perhaps will be more swayed by factual information like this. To finish off, last slide, in terms of future prospects, there are two possible scenarios: a positive one in which Armenia makes a functional peace in the region that leads to good relations with its neighbours. The second Republic becomes part of a developing regional economy, freed from the obstacles of the occupation of Azerbaijani territory, and it develops economically. Armenia proceeds towards reaching accommodation with Türkiye over historical issues as part of a general reconciliation process. A more negative scenario would involve Armenia determining to rebuild for another war over Karabakh, with a hope that a future weakening of the Azerbaijan state might present another revanchist opportunity. In such a scenario, Armenia would subjugate itself and become almost a complete dependency of Russia, with the hope that Moscow would assist another push against Karabakh. This would obviously maintain the existing hostility towards Türkiye and Turks and continue the so-called genocide recognition campaign. So, future prospects are essentially hope against history. Thank you very much.

Alev Kılıç: Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Patrick Walsh. It has indeed been an excellent concluding presentation giving us the balance between hope and history. That was good.

Seyit Sertçelik*

Distinguished Ambassador, Ms Yıldız made a remark regarding comparing numbers. Let us not compare numbers. It is not so important whether the death toll was 2 million, 1.5 million or 600,000. At this point, I do not know if Ms. Yıldız would like to correct her remarks in order not to mislead the public in Türkiye, or I would like to comment on this. It was understood as if the death toll was 2 million, 1.5 million or 600,000. It was understood as if 600,000 Armenians who had lived in the Ottoman Empire died. This is absolutely not true. In my first presentation, I stated that the number of Armenians who had died during the First World War was around 150,000 and that the Russian intelligence officers and diplomats had the habit of adding another zero to the figures, and this is why the figures reached 1.5 million. Even with the most exaggerated estimates, you cannot find anywhere or in any work of Armenian historians that around 2 million Armenians had died. Therefore, I believe we need to be a bit careful while constructing our sentences. And also, she said that 50 countries recognised the genocide. This is not true either. So far, 30 countries have recognised it. 49 state legislatures in the United States of America recognised it. So, it will be wrong if we say 50 countries recognised it when it is actually 30. I found it necessary to correct this. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity, Mr. Ambassador.

Alev Kılıç: Thank you, Mr. Sertçelik for these reminders.

(*) Chief Advisor to the President of the Republic, Professor of History

AN ANTI-TÜRKİYE NARRATIVE

THE EVENTS OF
1915



SESSION III

Question &
Answer

Ömer Turan*

Alev Kılıç: Münevver Aktaş has a question, Mr. Turan. Did the missionaries get the permission of the Ottoman administration for their missionary activity in Anatolia? Did the Ottoman administration know thoroughly about these missionary activities? This is the question, sir.

Ömer Turan: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. Of course, we are talking about a century's worth of time. They began in 1820, and various attitudes emerged at different times until 1920. For example, the Ottoman administration had considered this a problem among Christians since in the first half of the 19th century: Protestant missionaries tended to Orthodox communities and non-Muslim communities as well as Jews. In other words, it tolerated it to the point that it disturbed the state, the public, or society. Following that, a feud and rivalry erupted between Orthodox communities, patriarchs, and missionaries; for example, those who died after becoming Protestants were not allowed to be buried in their graveyards. As a result of this, the grand vizier had to interfere by going up to their graveyard. In 1850, an independent Protestant nation was created under these conditions. The scope of missionary activities increasingly became apparent in the second half of the 19th century. In order to put schools into order, it is important to briefly recognise the Ordinance of General Education dated 1868 within this context. It is important to understand and regard Abdulhamid's activities in Anatolia aimed at opening schools and modern schools as attempts to open schools that could compete with missionary schools in the last quarter of the 19th century. The missionaries' attitudes during the Armenian events agitated the Ottoman administration, but this was the weakest time of the Ottoman rule.

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It could not deal with it well. Regarding the number of schools, despite its refusal to allow the establishment of a new school, the new school was established as if it were another branch of a school. They managed to find their way somehow. The missionaries were assisted by the British Embassy as well as the U.S. Embassy and consulates. They could not deal with that well; they knew it, and they were following. While they attempted to regulate schools and educational programs, they were only able to do so to a limited extent. Due to the events at the American College of Mersovan, this location was closed during the time of national struggle following the First World War. Both missionary institutions and schools were supposed to be closed when the Turkish delegation travelled to Lausanne. However, with the aim of winning the USA, missionary institutions were allowed to continue, or more specifically, American charitable institutions – that is the term – were allowed to continue, as long as they were subject to domestic law. During this time, a child at the American College in Bursa said, “I accepted Christianity,” which sparked widespread outrage in 1927. The school was shut down, as you know. Missionaries introduced the concept of “Unnamed Christianity” at that time. We will do as we have done before, except this time without using the word “Christian.” These Western educational institutions that provided modern education were also required by the state. Institutions that adopted domestic law were permitted to operate as long as they were supervised; those that did not were forced to close or closed. In a nutshell, sir, this is the situation.

Alev Kılıç: Thank you very much, Mr. Turan.

Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş*

Alev Kılıç: The next question is for Professor Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş, from another speaker from the previous panel, Mr. Saltzman. The question is, “What would you recommend as a first step toward reconciliation between Türkiye and Armenia? Who should take it?”

Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş: First of all, I would like to make a quick correction. As mentioned by Prof. Sertçelik, I believe there is a misunderstanding here because the figures I referred to were not from the Turkish side. On the contrary, they are the figures the Armenian side continuously claims. In some resources, there are allegations that three million Armenians had died, or some claim that two million Armenians had died. Therefore, the comment of “comparing the death toll” refers to the allegations of the Armenian regime. Secondly, what I meant by the countries that recognised the genocide was that 49 out of 50 states in the US recognised it. And finally, if we go back to the participant’s question, I think Türkiye has extended its hand to Armenia several times regarding the resolution. Now the Armenian side should also take responsibility. At this point, it can be a start toward a solution if the Armenian side accepts the proposal to form a joint commission of historians. Thank you, Mr Ambassador.

(*) Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Faculty Member, Professor of History

Ergün Kırlikovalı*

Alev Kılıç: Our next question is for Mr. Ergün Kırlikovalı. We have a couple of questions, but I am asking the first one. What is your take on the timing of so-called Armenian genocide resolutions? Is there a link between adopting such a resolution by the United States Congress on October 29, 2020, and Türkiye's foreign policy moves?

Ergün Kırlikovalı: Absolutely. The US receives support from experts when it comes to politics. If they want to hurt a country or a group, they look for and find its Achilles heel. Even if they do not look for it, the consultants tell them. If you are going to do this, you should do it on October 29 to hurt the Turks and see how they will react vigorously. That is the way they do it. Therefore, no one should deceive themselves. All these events had been designed and planned. They have a well-planned background. They put their finger on the issue like this and stir the pot. What the Armenians do is that there are Armenians among the aids of the politicians in U.S. states like California or Massachusetts. They are the ones who write letters and texts. They are the ones who reply to our letters vituperatively. In the past, what they did was to wait for April, and everything would happen in April. It is now all year round. They adopt a resolution even in the middle of July. They are kind of in the euphoria of victory, and there is no timing for this matter anymore. It is throughout the whole year. We should expect anything at any time. I do not know how else I can put this. The doors are open now, and we must expect anything at any time.

Alev Kılıç: Thank you, Mr. Kırlikovalı.

(*) Former President of Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA)

Christian Johannes Henrich*

Alev Kılıç: How do you assess the work carried out by Türkiye against the so-called Armenian genocide allegations?

Christian Johannes Henrich: How many days do I have? The point in this case is that Türkiye could make much more effort to get results about this. What I mentioned before is that I always feel thankfulness from Turkish people, academics, and universities about research, but if you ask them about funding, money, it is “the end” that is already finished. Everyone says, “nice work, do it, we’ll help you, we’ll support you”. If you need something, zero. It is not possible. Our task would be much better if little Armenia and the diaspora pay much more money in that field than big Türkiye with its allies. That is the first problem; it does not matter which government – it does not make difference. Nowadays, the government or the old one under Atatürk ignored the topic. We did not commit genocide, and we will not talk about it, but the rest of the world talked about it. I think it is the biggest problem that no one is paying attention to, so our tasks would be better if they would do. This is the big wish; otherwise, the war is lost before it is started.

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Doctor of Political Sciences and International Relations

Patrick Walsh*

Alev Kılıç: The last question for Patrick Walsh. Do you think the Karabakh War can be a turning point in the relations in the region?

Patrick Walsh: Well, hopefully, I think I said this, the positive scenario is that it could be, maybe. I hope Armenia has learned its lesson. You know, that is probably false optimism, but maybe it is only through Armenia being, becoming part of the economic infrastructure of the South Caucasus and the wider region, that it will actually see benefits. It will actually be able to feed its own people. Its own people will be able to stay in their own homes and have jobs. And maybe this will produce a different population that sees that the quest for territorial expansionism is a mistaken path. And instead, they can actually look after their own population and look after their people. Perhaps that is a dream, but I cannot see any other way out of it, to be honest. Unless they see reality and they understand that, looking after their own people and forgetting about expanding their territory, unless they do that, and they see the selfish, almost selfish benefits in such a project, and it does take root. And, you know, hopefully a lot of it has to do with Russia's role in this and, obviously, Türkiye's as well. But hopefully, Russia actually is honest and, you know, does actually facilitate the peace process and the infrastructure development. And there is a good working relationship between Türkiye and Russia that is preserved. I mean, if that is the case, then maybe Armenia can be almost guided in the right direction. And, you know, in everybody's interest, in the stability of all the neighbours in the South Caucasus, that is the most hopeful thing. But, you know, it is probably hope against history, as I said before.

Alev Kılıç: Thank you. Thank you, Walsh. We are all crossing our fingers for the positive scenario.

(*) Independent Researcher, History and Politics

Some of the arms and explosives taken from the Armenians during perquisitions made at the chief place of Mamooret-ul Aziz and its neighbourhood.



Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, The Armenian Aspirations and Revolutionary Movements Album no:1/State Printing House, 1916

Armenian Brigands arrested at Tchengilar, vilayet of Broussa, with a cannon, firearms and military uniforms therein captured.



Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, The Armenian Aspirations and Revolutionary Movements Album no:1/State Printing House, 1916

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