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SASSOUNIAN'S OBSCURE RATIONALIZATION OF HATRED AND VIOLENCE

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The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the highest chamber of the Court, announced the final judgment on the ECtHR Perincek v. Switzerland case. The Grand Chamber held that Switzerland has violated Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the Convention) regarding freedom of expression, and has therefore unjustly restricted Doğu Perinceks freedom of expression.

This judgement is final and it constitutes an important case-law. To begin with, it establishes a strong basis for how in the future the European countries should interpret the right to freedom of expression and the balance between that right and its exceptions.

Armenian side has been busy with trying to distort the meaning and the spirit of this judgment. Meanwhile, the lawyers of Armenia Amal Clooney and Geoffrey Robertson championed the judgement,[1] together with the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Armenia who stated that Armenias requests from the Court were fully met.

Still, no one from the Armenian side could have grotesquely distorted the ECtHRs judgment as much as Harout Sassounian did when he wrote a piece titled To Ban Genocide Denial, Court Incites Armenians to Commit Violence.[2] According to Sassounian, Grand Chamber is actually inciting Armenians to resort to violence to satisfy the Courts requirement that genocide denial could only be criminalized if it is followed by some sort of violent reaction, a reaction which he defines later as bashing Perinceks head. This clearly does not reflect the seemingly joyous and victorious attitude the Armenians want us to believe. On the contrary, the hatred and call to violence by Sassounian is the only sincere reaction the Armenian radicals have expressed, showing their frustration, their embedded enmity towards Turkey and the Turks, and the threat that they might resort to violence for their own ends.

Radicals like Sassounian never needed any superficial excuses that they fabricate out of court judgments to resort to violence. Those who acquaint themselves with the history of the Turkish Armenian relations know that this is not an empty threat if it comes from Armenians like Sassounian. Armenian terrorism cost the lives of 31 Turkish diplomats not very long ago. Turkish people living abroad, as well as the citizens of other countries who did not agree with the Armenian allegations, have been under constant attack by the Armenian organizations. Renowned academics including Prof. Stanford Shaw (whose

house was bombed), Prof. Bernard Lewis (convicted for his academic research), Prof. Justin McCarthy, Maxime Gauin, and several others were either physically or psychologically harassed or -albeit politically- charged and convicted just because of expressing their scholarly views.[3]

ECtHR Grand Chambers Judgment on Perincek v. Switzerland case is a crushing defeat for radical Armenians. Basic rights and principles such as freedom of expression, fight against racial hatred, and discrimination have never been the main concern of the Armenian radicals. Instead, the controversy over the events of 1915 have been politicized, dogmatized, and become a part of political psychological discourse for building-up an identity against the Turks and Turkey. When this happens, no historical, philosophical, legal, or meaningful political debate becomes possible. Thus, this case is an evidence of the failure of reactionary position of the Armenians and Armenia to impose a particularly dogmatic discourse into parliaments of third countries, prevent and overwhelm any historical debate, statement, or self-expression contrary to the basic human right of freedom of expression. We sincerely hope that the Armenian side (including ferocious radicals like Sassounian) will from now on question that stance and realize their call to any kind of violence will only serve to further poison Turkish-Armenian relations.

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[1] Robertson, Clooney Issue Statement on ECHR Ruling, *Asbarez*, 15 October 2015, http://asbarez.com/140771/robertson-clooney-issue-statement-on-echr-ruling/

[2] Harout Sassounian, To Ban Genocide Denial, Court Incites Armenians to Commit Violence, *California Courier*, 20 October 2015, http://www.thecaliforniacourier.com/to-ban-genocide-denial-court-incites-armenians-to-commit-violence/

[3] Pulat Tacar , Armenian Juridical Attempts to Convict Those Who Reject the Armenian Genocide Claims and to Get Reparations From Turkey, *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue #50 (2015), pp. 395-470.

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