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THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S DOUBLE STANDARDS IN ITS USE OF THE 'GENOCIDE' CONCEPT: PERSPECTIVES ON THE 1915 EVENTS AND THE GAZA CRISIS

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On 11 September 2025, the European Parliament (EP) rejected an amendment proposed by the Left Group that sought to designate Israels actions in Gaza as genocide and urged the EU to cease all forms of assistance enabling such atrocities[1], with 171 votes in favor, 378 against, and 34 abstentions[2]. The amendment, part of a non-binding resolution on Gaza, was opposed by the center-right European Peoples Party, the liberal Renew Europe group, and most of the far-right factions. Despite this rejection, a resolution that was adopted called for an immediate ceasefire, an end to Israels humanitarian aid blockade, and the release of hostages held by Hamas. While the International Association of Genocide Scholars and certain EU officials have labeled the situation in Gaza as genocide, the EPs refusal to officially adopt this term raises serious concerns about political interests superseding international legal norms and fuels debates over double standards.

The EPs approach to the term genocide stands at the intersection of international law and politics and sparks significant debates. Defined under the 1948 Genocide Convention, genocide refers to acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. This legal concept carries binding consequences only when affirmed by international courts. However, the EPs contradicting approaches to the 1915 Events and the ongoing Gaza crisis highlight the politicization of law and accusations of double standards. This analysis aims to demonstrate that the EPs designation of the 1915 events as genocide while refraining from applying the same term to Gaza is shaped by political interests in contravention of international legal norms, constituting a significant inconsistency from the perspective of Republic of Türkiyes interests.

The Events of the First World War and the European Parliaments Genocide Designation

In 1987[3] and 2015, the EP adopted resolutions labeling the relocation and claimed massacres of Armenians in 1915 during the Ottoman Empire period as genocide. These resolutions, however, lack the backing of any competent international court ruling, such as from the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The crime of genocide requires clear evidence of intent, yet the claimed intent behind the 1915 events remains a matter of contention among historians and legal scholars. Türkiye maintains that these events occurred under the chaotic conditions of the First World War with no systematic intent to annihilate and with mutual suffering on all sides. Nevertheless, the EPs non-binding resolutions appear to have been influenced by factors such as the Armenian diasporas lobbying efforts, the human rights discourse in Europe, and political tools aimed at exerting pressure on Türkiye, rather than a robust legal foundation.

The EPs approach is problematic as it employs one of international laws gravest accusations □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ sufficient evidence or judicial ruling. This stance aims to tarnish the international reputation of the Ottoman Empire and, by extension, its successor state, the Republic of Türkiye, while exemplifying the use of historical issues as political instruments. Türkiye has repeatedly stated that these resolutions lack impartiality and negatively impact EU-Türkiye relations. The EPs transformation of a legal concept into a political narrative undermines international legal norms and erodes trust between states.

The Gaza Crisis and the European Parliaments Reluctance

The ongoing conflict in Gaza since 7 October 2023 presents another critical case testing the international communitys approach to the concept of genocide. With over 60,000 Palestinians killed, humanitarian aid systematically obstructed, and widespread famine and starvation, the crisis has been supported by the International Court of Justices (ICJ) 2024 preliminary finding of a plausible case of genocide. Additionally, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other officials on charges of war crimes and deliberate starvation policies. Organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Association of Genocide Scholars have stated that Israels actions in Gaza meet the legal definition of genocide. Yet, in September 2024, the EP rejected an amendment labeling the situation as genocide (378 against 171).

The EPs reluctance to officially adopt the term genocide for Gaza represents a clear double standard. Israels close economic, political, and strategic ties with the EU, coupled with the historical guilt of certain leading EU member states, are primary drivers of this cautious stance. Since Israel is a significant EU trade partner and regional ally, labeling this countrys actions in Gaza as genocide would risk straining EU-Israel relations. Furthermore, Israels counter-terrorism narrative and Hamass 7 October 2023 attacks render the issue of intent contentious for some EP members, pointing to a political rather than legal assessment.

Double Standards and the Separation of Law and Politics

The inconsistency between the EPs approaches to the 1915 events and the Gaza crisis is a stark illustration of the entanglement of international law and politics. The 1915 events, as a historical matter, pose minimal political risk for the EP, as the Ottoman Empire no longer exists and Türkiye is not an EU member but a candidate country. Thus, the EP could adopt the genocide label without a judicial ruling, assuming a political stance. In contrast, Gaza is an ongoing crisis and Israels strong lobbying within the EU and geopolitical interests compel the EP toward a more cautious approach. This contravenes the principle of applying law universally and impartially.

From the Republic of Türkiyes perspective, the EPs resolutions on the 1915 events are seen as an instrument to distort historical realities and weaken Türkiyes international standing. Conversely, the EPs reluctance to label Gazas situation as genocide casts doubt on the sincerity and credibility of the EUs human rights and international law rhetoric. The common thread in both cases is that the EPs decisions are driven by political motivations rather than legal rigor, undermining the principles of credibility and consistency in international relations.

The Republic of Türkiye, as a state committed to international legal norms, maintains that grave accusations such as genocide must be substantiated by competent international courts and robust evidence. The EPs designation of the 1915 events as genocide is viewed as an unjust accusation against Türkiyes historical and national identity, leading to a loss of trust in EU-Türkiye relations. Similarly, the EPs reticence regarding Gaza conflicts with Türkiyes advocacy for the rights of the Palestinian people and regional stability. Türkiye demands that the situation in Gaza should be addressed justly within the framework of international law, with accountability for those responsible.

The European Parliaments designation of the 1915 events as genocide, while refraining from applying the same term to the Gaza crisis, exemplifies the politicization of international law and overt double standards. The resolutions on the 1915 events, lacking a legal basis, unjustly accuse the Ottoman Empire and its successor state, Türkiye, while the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is overlooked due to geopolitical interests. This inconsistency not only undermines the EPs credibility but also erodes international legal norms. In essence, the sole consistency in the EPs decisions on the 1915 events and the Gaza crisis lies in the primacy of political interests over legal principles.

**Picture:*
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/aa/Euroopan_parliaementin_istuntosali_%28Brysselissä%29.jpg

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