

# FACTS AND COMMENTS\*

(OLAYLAR VE YORUMLAR)

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**Abstract:** *This article discusses the main events in 2014 concerning Turkey's relations with Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora, especially the declarations by both countries with special emphasis on Prime Minister Erdoğan's message of condolences and also the commemoration events of 24 April in some countries, as well as Armenian demands from Turkey and some other developments during that year.*

**Keywords:** *Turkey, Armenia, Germany, Czech Republic, Egypt, Syria, Australia, Greece, Sweden, Bolivia, Armenian genocide allegations, Armenia and Diaspora Demands from Turkey, R.T. Erdoğan, A. Davutoğlu, S. Sarkisian, E. Nalbantian*

**Öz:** *Bu yazı 2014 yılı içinde Türkiye'nin Ermenistan ve Ermeni Diasporası ile ilişkilerini, iki ülke devlet adamlarının beyanlarını, Başkan Erdoğan'ın taziye mesajını, 24 Nisan'ın bazı ülkelerde anılmasını, Türkiye'den Ermeni taleplerini ve 2014 yılı içinde diğer bazı gelişmeleri ele almaktadır.*

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** *Türkiye, Ermenistan, Almanya, Çek Cumhuriyeti, Mısır, Suriye, Avustralya, Yunanistan, İsveç, Bolivya, Ermeni soykırım iddiaları, Ermenistan ve Ermeni Diasporasının Türkiye'den talepleri, R.T. Erdoğan, A. Davutoğlu, S. Sarkisyan, E. Nalbantyan*

\* Since the previous issue of our journal (issue 29) was dedicated to the Special Issue on ECHR, *Perinçek v. Switzerland* Case, the article "Facts and Comments" where we analyze Turkey's relations with Armenia and the Diaspora was not included in that issue. For this reason, in this 30th issue we analyze the above-mentioned relations for 2014.

## I- RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND ARMENIA

### 1. The Impasse in Relations

The failure to put the protocols into effect, Armenia's refusal to withdraw from the Azerbaijani territories it occupies including Karabakh, its allegations of genocide against Turkey and also its many demands from Turkey on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the relocation led relations between Turkey and Armenia to an impasse.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu made several attempts to change this situation. In this context, he visited Yerevan on 12 December 2013<sup>1</sup> on the occasion of Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization but couldn't meet President Sarkisian, although he met with Foreign Minister Nalbantian, no result was achieved. On the other hand Nalbantian, trying to belittle this visit, stated that the normalization policy of bilateral relations didn't change, that Davutoğlu repeated the same points he said four years ago during his visit, and that he said to Davutoğlu "do you want us to lose another four years?"<sup>2</sup> Armenian Foreign Minister, with these words, revealed that they previously didn't accept to approach the Karabakh issue and normalization process of bilateral relations together and they do not intent to accept it now as well.

On the other hand, Davutoğlu reiterated Turkey's stance on Armenia in every opportunity. In the Trilateral Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia held in Ganja, he said "unless the occupied territories are freed and the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is resolved in this context, a full normalization between Turkey and Armenia is not possible. The issue of opening borders is within this context". He also stated that in case the Karabakh conflict is resolved, not only the Turkish-Armenian border but also the Azerbaijan-Armenia border will open<sup>3</sup>.

We would like to briefly elaborate on the reasons of Armenia's insistence to disregard Turkey's opinions and suggestions.

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1 *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 28.p.24,25

2 "La Politique turque vis-à-vis de l'Arménie Inchangé" (Turkey's Policy Towards Armenia Unchanged), *armenews*23, January 2014.

3 "Türkiye-Azerbaycan-Gürcistan Dışişleri Bakanları Üçlü Toplantısı" (Trilateral Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia), *haberler.com*, 19 February 2014.

First let's indicate that since the very beginning the Armenians don't want Turkey to be involved in the Karabakh negotiation process in any form. Even though Turkey's proposal to resolve its issues with Armenia together with Azerbaijan-Armenia issues is to the point and realistic, Armenia's refusal to accept this formula is because a final or partial solution in Karabakh requires Armenia to make concessions such as withdrawing from certain regions and this is not approved by internal policy considerations. On the other hand, since major countries co-chairing the Minsk Group don't put pressure on Armenia to make concessions, Armenia doesn't feel the need to make concessions. Furthermore, Armenia doesn't have any major military failures that require them to change their stance. In this case Armenia easily carries out its policy to maintain the status quo and to that end even endures closed borders with Turkey.

In this context, it is seen that the view that the closed border with Turkey is damaging the Armenian economy isn't so true. It should be kept in mind that under Kocharyan there was an increase in national income which occasionally reached double figures when the Turkish border was closed. Following Armenia's membership to the Customs Union, it is likely that its need for the Turkish border to open will decrease, at least in the earlier stages.

On the other hand, it is seen that major countries' desire for normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations without considering Azerbaijan's issues with Armenia will have negative results on Azerbaijan. In this case, Azerbaijan will have to strive against Armenia alone, its efforts will not succeed as major countries will directly or indirectly support Armenia and probably Azerbaijan's Karabakh policy might erode and maybe Azerbaijan, in return for several regions, might give up Karabakh. On the other hand, in order to prevent this, it is a possibility that Azerbaijan might resort to military resources to take back territories occupied by Armenia including Karabakh. Considering Azerbaijan's continuous armament, this shouldn't be underestimated.

Taking into account this possibility, stalling-delaying policies adopted by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs on Karabakh can be risky. It is possible that Turkey's

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policy to approach and find solutions to the issues between Turkey and Azerbaijan with Armenia as a whole will not have any results in the near future due to Armenia's objection and lack of open support by major powers.

## 2. Statements by Armenian Statesmen

It is seen that Armenian statesmen, especially Serzh Sarkisian, put special effort to criticize Turkey and Armenia at almost every opportunity. These criticism aims to influence the public opinion of Armenia and the Diaspora. Azerbaijani statesmen also do not hold back from their harsh criticisms against Armenia. However, Turkish statesmen seldom mention their problems with Armenia and the Diaspora. This is due to serious problems in Turkey's neighbors, especially in Syria, Iraq, Israel and Cyprus, and due to the fact that current problems with Armenia and the Diaspora are on the back burner.

President Serzh Sarkisian, in his speech at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe about issues concerning Armenia on 2 October 2013<sup>4</sup>, said: "Turkey, which contrary to all international rules and norms is keeping closed the shortest route connecting Armenia with the outer world for so many years have forced us to make extraordinary efforts to develop and build a modern state. Genocide is not only a heinous crime against humanity but also a striking manifestation of fascism and intolerance, as well as a grave encroachment upon the right to life..... The best way to prevent atrocious crimes against the mankind is to discuss those terrible pages of history and to assess the past in the light of universal values."

Sarkisian's answers to questions at the end of his speech<sup>5</sup> led him to further touch upon relations with Turkey.

In response to Azerbaijani assembly member Seyidov's question: "You have territorial claims to Turkey, at the same time you have territorial claims to Georgia... Do you think that this kind of policy has future?" Sarkisian said: "We have never made any territorial claims to Turkey. If there is just one such claim, one such statement you can point out, I'll ask for your forgiveness."

4 "Statement Of Serzh Sarkisian The President Of The Republic Of Armenia In The Parliamentary Assembly Of The Council Of Europe" 02.10.2013, Access Date: 03.02.2015  
<http://www.president.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2013/10/02/President-Serzh-Sarkisian-participated-at-the-session-of-the-PACE-speech/>

5 "President Serzh Sarkisian At The Plenary Session Of The PACE Responded To The Questions Raised By The Members Of The Parliament", 02.10.2013, Access Date: 03.02.2015,  
<http://www.president.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2013/10/02/President-Serzh-Sarkisian-answered-the-questions-of-PACE-members/>

In response to another question about relations with Turkey, he said: “efforts we made pertinent to the start of relations with Turkey didn’t yield positive results because the Turks are not ready to start relations with Armenia. After lengthy negotiations we signed documents on the establishment of diplomatic relations, but the Turkish leadership refused to ratify the documents.” He also said: “We believe that each country should be very responsible about documents it signs. Unfortunately, in this case we don’t see any presence of such responsibility. The Turkish authorities are trying to make some proposals through different channels but I think these proposals are being made mostly to calm down the international community, if they really want to do something they can ratify these Protocols and we will be able to start relations and discuss any issue of interest.”

In response to a question about regional partnership, he said that they proposed Turkey to start up relations with the idea of cooperation, but it was hard to conceive any form of cooperation when the parties (he refers to Turkey and Azerbaijan) lack that wish and are boasting about to isolate their neighbor(Armenia).

Emphasis should be laid on these words by the Armenian President.

Serzh Sarkisian complains about the closed borders with Turkey. However he did not mention that Turkey closed its borders due to Armenian forces’ occupation of Azerbaijani territories and its continuing occupation also outside of Karabakh.

Sarkisian also complains that the Protocols were not approved by Turkey and doesn’t mention that Turkey delays the approval in order to find a solution for the Karabakh conflict. Another point that he didn’t mention is that Armenia also didn’t approve the Protocols and removed these documents from the agenda of the Armenian Parliament.

His words that Armenia never made territorial claims to Turkey and that there are no statements suggesting these claims reflects only half of the truth. It is true that Armenian officials, including presidents, didn’t make an official territorial claim. In fact, an official territorial claim to Turkey would be an act that will not be supported by any country. Turkey can also perceive this as an act of war. Therefore, an official territorial claim, considering the imbalance of power between the sides, is unrealistic and dangerous.

Despite Armenia not making any official demands, President Sarkisian personally made statements implying such demands. For instance, in a meeting

on 23 July 2011, in response to a student's question if Western Armenia, including Mount Ararat, will ever be united with Armenia, he said: "Everything depends on the young generations. Every generation has some goals to achieve." It is possible to infer from these remarks that it is currently not possible for Armenia to take Eastern Anatolia but this could be achieved if the young generations would take it as their goal. Turkish Foreign Ministry released a statement 3 days later strongly condemning Sarkisian's response. The statement said that these remarks were unfortunate and to give advice to the young people and future generations that could provoke hostilities and an ideology of hate between two nations was an irresponsible act<sup>6</sup>. Former President Robert Kocharyan also made similar statements before. In a speech he delivered in 2005, after stating the he didn't make any territorial claims to Turkey, he stated that the recognition of the genocide was among their policies, and future presidents and politicians will deal with the legal outcomes of the recognition of the genocide<sup>7</sup>. As is known, according to Armenians, the legal outcomes of the genocide claims are reparations, property return, and land.

Recently, in 5 July 2013, in his opening speech at the Pan-Armenian Forum of Lawyers, President Sarkisian said: "International recognition of the Armenian genocide, its condemnation and elimination of the consequences will always be an imperative", thus, made reference to reparations, property return, and land<sup>8</sup>.

Territorial claims were clearly included to the report on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the genocide presented by Prosecutor General of Armenia in the Forum. Stating that Armenia has territorial disputes with both Turkey and Azerbaijan, Prosecutor General said that , in order to solve these issues, it was necessary to prepare a comprehensive claims package with solid legal grounds and introduce it before relevant authorities to be submitted to the International Court of Justice<sup>9</sup>. The Forum decided to set up a special committee to collect legal documents on major issues regarding the Armenian genocide. The Turkish Foreign Ministry protested this development stating that the declaration made by the Prosecutor General is deplored by Turkey and contradicts the obligations Armenia has undertaken towards the international organizations of which it is a member, and added that "nobody can dare to demand territory from Turkey<sup>10</sup>."

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6 *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 39, p.14-15

7 *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 16-17, p. 27

8 *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 28, p. 10

9 *ibid*, p.13. For the summary of this report, please see pages 10-16 of the same issue.

10 *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 28, p. 10

As it is seen, there are efforts to add artificial issues such as territorial claims to the loaded agenda of Turkey-Armenia relations. If these turn into official claims, there's no doubt that a major crisis will arise between the two countries. However, it is highly possible that these efforts are rather demagogic gestures for propaganda purposes for the year 2015 and to keep the public opinion busy. This will be better understood in the upcoming period.

A new addition to these semi-official Armenian territorial claims was made by Armenian Minister of Education and Science Armen Ashotyan. In 17 January 2014 he proposed to rename Armenia to "Eastern Republic of Armenia" and justified it by saying that present-day Armenia comprises only one-tenth of the nation's historic territory and therefore calling it Eastern Republic of Armenia would be more suitable<sup>11</sup>.

While there was no reaction from other members of the government to this weird proposal, Giro Manoyan of the Dashnak Party said that this proposal was inopportune and asked the ruling Republican Party to cancel the 2009 Protocols and/or re-determine the border between the two countries in accordance with the border drawn by President Wilson for the Treaty of Sèvres<sup>12</sup>.

The belief that an important part of Turkish territories in Eastern Anatolia belonged to Armenia is prevalent in Armenia and the Diaspora. When taking into consideration that the last Armenian state in the region was abolished nearly a thousand years ago in 1045 by the Byzantine Empire and that from that date onwards these territories were ruled first by the Seljuks and then the Ottomans, and the Armenians were a minority compared to other communities, it is seen that the assumption that Eastern Anatolia was Armenian territories is far from reality and is an approach that started to be grow stronger especially during Sarkisian's presidency.

President Sarkisian maintained his criticisms against Turkey in 2014 as well. In an interview he gave during his visit to Czechoslovakia<sup>13</sup>, repeating the Armenian views, Sarkisian said that they are ready to revive the process of normalizing relations if the Turkish side demonstrate the political will and end steps of the ineffective path of pre-conditions and added that Armenia's stance of normalizing relations without pre-conditions is supported by the US and other Western countries. In the same interview Sarkisian also criticized

11 *Nouvelles d'Arménie*, Issue 205, March 2014, p.8

12 "Manoyan, Ashotian's Proposal to Rename Armenia Inopportune" *Aysor.am*, 27 January 2014.

13 "Sarkissian Souhaite Que la Turquie Normalise Ses Relations Avec l'Arménie" (Sarkisian wishes for Turkey to normalize its relations with Armenia), *Armenews*, 5 February 2014.



NATO for not pressuring Turkey to end its blockade of Armenia imposed in 1993.

In his speech in the European People's Party in 6 March 2014, he mentioned the illegal blockade that Turkey imposed on Armenia and said that when humankind was getting ready to mark the World War I and the horror it unleashed, Turkey continued its policy of denial, attempted to bury the memory of more than one million victims of the Armenian Genocide disregarded demands of a nation that was deprived of its homeland, refused to repent for what had been done and thus pursued a xenophobic policy that at its roots is aimed at harming Armenia and Armenians<sup>14</sup>.

The capture of Kessab near the Turkish border by resistance forces in Syria became an excuse for Sarkisian to criticize Turkey. In a speech he made about the events in Kessab<sup>15</sup>, the Armenian President asserted that Kessab witnessed deportations in the last century, Turkish Armed Forces invaded Kessab in 1909 and set it on fire, and a French ship transported Kessab population to Latakia (Since both Kessab and Latakia was a part of the Ottoman Empire, his remarks is not understandable; moreover transportation of Armenians by a French ship occurred in 1995, in the events of Musa Dagh). Sarkisian also claimed that the Kessab population was exiled to Der Zor and to Jordan. He stated that the last event was the third deportation of the Kessab population and was against ethnic minority rights. As is known, before Syrian resistance forces entered the city, a large part of the Kessab population abandoned the city and went to Latakia, then came to Turkey. Therefore it is not possible to speak of a deportation in Kessab.

In both Armenian and Diaspora press, many articles claiming that Turkey ordered Syrian resistance forces to capture Kessab due to many Armenians living there, vilifying Turkey and featuring relocation and genocide claims were released. Such articles decreased after Turkey's acceptance of Armenian refugees from Kessab.

Although the Armenian press blamed Turkey for the destruction of Armenian churches in Deir ez-Zor in September, Armenian officials preferred to keep silent.

In his speech in the Armenian Ministry of Defense on 18 April 2014<sup>16</sup>,

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14 "President Serzh Sarkisian Took Part In The Plenary Session Of The Epp In, Dublin", 06.03.2014, Access Date: 03.02.2015. <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2014/03/06/President-Serzh-Sarkisian-speech-Dublin-EPP/>

15 "President Serzh Sarkisian Made A Press Statement Concerning The Events In Kesab", 24.03.2014, Access Date: 03.02.2015. <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2014/03/24/President-Serzh-Sarkisian-statement-Kesab-Syria-in-Hague/>



President Sarkisian also touched upon relations with Turkey. Sarkisian said that the Turkish-Armenian (normalization) process ended in a stalemate and now was frozen, and the reason of the absence of relations between two countries was not Armenia. Stating that they were criticized on the ground that the protocols had at least two negative implications, Sarkisian said that the first criticism was that the recognition process of the genocide would be suspended in the long run and second one was that the protocols hindered the settlement of the Karabakh conflict.

Sarkisian asked, if the Protocols suspended the recognition process of the genocide, why the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, despite all efforts by Turkey, adopted the first resolution over last 24 years and why Turkey didn't ratify the Protocols if they were in favor of Turkey. Sarkisian asserted that if these documents had been in favor of Turkey, Turkey would have ratified these documents without taking into account neither Azerbaijan's position nor any other's interests. He also added that if the protocols had been in favor of Turkey, they would not have caused tensions in Turkey's internal political life.

In response to those claiming that the Protocols would hinder the settlement of the Karabakh conflict, he asked why harassing military acts of harassment increased if the opposite side (Azerbaijan) was in an advantageous position in the negotiations.

It seems that these statements were made by the Armenian President as a response to the criticisms against him in Armenia and the Diaspora.

In his speech in Armenia on the occasion of 24 April, Armenian President criticized Turkey, even harsher compared to the previous year. The summary of this speech and our opinions are in the "Activities Planned to Commemorate 24 April" section of this article.

On 24 April, Sarkisian joined the European Union high-level meeting held on the occasion of the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Eastern Partnership and made a speech<sup>17</sup>. Although normally he was supposed to talk about Armenia's relations with the EU, while mentioning these relations, he devoted most his speech to Armenia's issues with Turkey.

16 "President Serzh Sarkisian Held Consultation With Leadership Of Ministry Of Defense", 18.04.2014, Access Date: 03.02.2015. <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2014/04/18/President-Serzh-Sarkisian-meeting-in-the-Ministry-of-Defence/>

17 "Statement By President Serzh Sarkisian At High-Level Meeting Held On 5th Anniversary Of Eastern Partnership", 24.04.2014, Access Date: 03.02.2015. <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2014/04/24/President-Serzh-Sarkisian-visit-Czech-Republic-April-24/>

He asserted that hundreds of Armenian intellectuals – writers, artists, doctors, public figures – were detained and slaughtered in accordance with a premeditated criminal plan and thus, the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had been launched. Claiming that there was no statutory limitation for the crime of genocide, Sarkisian referred to the importance of the international community's recognition and condemnation of that unprecedented crime with the Armenian Genocide Centenary ahead and claimed that Turkey strived for an EU membership continued to avoid its own past, circumvented responsibility, had been falsifying history by pursuing policy of denial and moreover, spared no effort in order to force by all means upon other nations

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its denialism. Asserting that today, thousands of Turkish citizens, whose numbers grow from year to year in spite of persecution and prosecution, repudiated Turkey's policy of denial and stood by truth, Sarkisian said that collating with one's own history and understanding its consequences were important prerequisites for reconciliation, encouraging people to people contacts was another important prerequisite for reconciliation but was almost impossible since

there are artificial impediments, and the border was closed. Lastly, Sarkisian said that the lack of normalization of the Armenian-Turkish relations and last closed border of Europe was a factor that weakened the Pan-European security, and it was paradoxical that the EU membership aspiring Turkey sealed off its border with a neighboring country considering the borders within European Union have long become history and free movement is a basic principle.

This speech of the Armenian President should be emphasized. First, Armenia, under pressure from Russia, agreed to join the Eurasian Customs Union and as a result didn't sign or more precisely, couldn't sign the Association Agreement with the EU. However, the EU attaches importance to maintain relations with Armenia, in order to prevent Armenia further getting closer to Russia. Armenia on the other hand, in order to prove that they are not trapped in Russia's orbit, is putting the effort to show that relations with the EU continue. In fact, this might be the reason for Sarkisian's attendance at the meeting, which rather had an importance in terms of the Protocols. However, using this opportunity, Sarkisian tried to harshly criticize, even smear Turkey. Nevertheless, none of the participants made statements supporting Armenia, on the contrary, President Ilham Aliyev, representing Azerbaijan, opposed Sarkisian's comments regarding Turkey.

According to the press<sup>18</sup>, the President made the following statements regarding this issue: “Today, unfortunately, the Armenian President has taken advantage of the opportunity to launch another attack on Turkey. It is easy to do so because there are no Turkish representatives in this meeting. But I am here and I can tell you why the Turkish-Armenian border remains closed”... “Erdogan suggested that the Armenian leadership open all the archives but was not properly received. Finally he extended his condolences to people of Armenian origin who lost their lives in the events, but unfortunately Armenia did not issue a relevant reaction to that either. Although the US and the EU have supported Erdoğan’s position, the Armenian government found the statement not sufficient. This clearly shows who it is that doesn’t want peace in the region. We want peace and our lands to be returned. Armenia must end its occupation. It is very easy to do that. It only requires political will from the Armenian government.”

Ilham Aliyev also emphasized the Karabakh issue. Stating that a double standard policy was pursued on this issue, he said: “The Azerbaijani people are asking one question: why is not there a sanction policy imposed on Armenia? Why isn’t Armenia deprived of the right to vote in the European Council? They are occupying the territory of another country. Four resolutions of the UN Security Council are not implemented and no punishment is imposed.”

We can draw these conclusions from the speech made by Sarkisian.

Although Armenian President’s effort, right or wrong, to protect his countries’ interests is normal, he should do this with proper wording and arguments. However, it is seen that Sarkisian rather uses the wording of Diaspora propagandists and does not hesitate to adopt an exaggerated Diaspora claim such as “On 24 April 1915, hundreds of Armenian intellectuals – writers, artists, doctors, public figures – were detained and slaughtered.” The number of Armenian intellectuals arrested in Istanbul on 24 April, 1915 was 235 and they were transferred to Ayaş and Çankırı unharmed<sup>19</sup>.

The claim that the Armenian relocation was the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is another propaganda item. Taking into account that according to the 1948 Convention competent national courts or the International Criminal Court can determine if an event is genocide, to characterize events, in a period

18 “Türkiye’den Temsilci Yok Fakat Ben Buradayım” (There is no representative of Turkey, but I am here) and “Ermenistan Cumhurbaşkanı Türkiye’yi Eleştirince Aliyev Sert Çıktı.” (Aliyev reacted harshly when the Armenian President criticized Turkey), *AA*, 25 April 2014.

19 Yusuf Sarıınay, *24 Nisan 1915’te Ne Oldu?*, İstanbul 2012, p.196 (What happened in on 24 April 1915?)

of time when the term genocide was not found, as genocide is wrong. On the other hand, the first mass massacre of the 20<sup>th</sup> century occurred in Namibia between 1904 and 1907, which was a German colony at that time. Also Muslim civilians were occasionally suffered massacres during the Balkan Wars in 1912-1913.

On the other hand, it is seen that Sarkisian tries to get the border opened through pressures on Turkey by the EU. Although EU advocates the opening of the Turkey-Armenia border all along, it never made an attempt about this issue other than expressing its opinion. Even if it did, it is beyond any doubt that it would have a negative effect on its strained relations with Turkey.

The last point we would like to emphasize on this matter is on what Sarkisian expects from his policy of criticizing and even accusing Turkey on every occasion. It is unlikely that Turkey will make changes in its policies, for example open the border, due to Sarkisian's criticisms and accusations. It is conceivable that Sarkisian, taking into consideration the year 2015, acts in this manner because he doesn't expect a settlement or an agreement in the short run and even in the medium run, and will pursue this policy until the end of his term in office in 2018.

Armenian Foreign Minister Nalbantian also didn't hold back to criticize Turkey at every turn.

In his speech in the High-Level Panel held on 7 March 2014 on the occasion of the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide<sup>20</sup>, he presented his country as the victim of the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and also mentioned that the Allied Powers used the term crime against humanity for the atrocities committed against Armenians in a declaration on 24 May 1915.

Mehmet Ferden Çarıkçı, Permanent Representative of Turkey, in his response to Nalbantian<sup>21</sup>, stated that to create hostilities by labeling others using the 1915 events is to look at the past one-sidedly and accusatorily, genocide is a legal term and can't be based on opinions, and the events should be studied from historical and scientific aspects. He added that the improper use of this term will harm the prevention of future genocides.

In response to Çarıkçı, after making some statements meaning that Turkey

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20 "Edward Nalbandian: Armenian People Feel Moral Responsibility..." *Armradio*, 8 March 2014.

21 "BM Temsilcisi Çarıkçı Ermeni İddialarına Yanıt Verdi" (UN representative Çarıkçı responded to the Armenian claims), *En son Haber*, 8 March 2014.

should apply to countries that made the 24 May 1915 declaration, Nalbantian pointed out the articles of the Convention regarding reparations for victims but what he meant was not understood as the 1948 Convention does mention reparations<sup>22</sup>.

The Azerbaijani representative, referring to the Khojaly Massacre, stated that Armenians aimed at partial or full extermination of the people, and asked this genocide to be recognized. This appeared in the conference report as Azerbaijan accused Armenia of committing genocide<sup>23</sup>. Nalbantian said that this tragedy should not be used as a propaganda tool and to spread racist ideas.

Despite being in a difficult position in this meeting, Armenian Foreign Minister joined another similar meeting on 1 April 2014, a conference titled “The Responsibility to Defend” organized by the Belgian Foreign Minister on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rwandan genocide and made a speech and talked about the Armenian genocide rather than the Rwandan genocide.

President Sarkisian, in his speech in Erivan on 27 May 2014 meeting of the State Commission established to coordinate commemoration events dedicated to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the relocation and presided by him, said that Turkey has no alternative other than facing the history and recognizing and condemning the Armenian Genocide and not to become an accomplice of the Ottoman Empire. He also said that thousands of Turks demand from their own government justice and an end to their policy of denialism<sup>24</sup>. He stated that Turkey proposed the establishment of a committee of historians and disclosing the archives but Armenian archives have always been open to the researchers. He said there is no need of archival research to face the truth of the “Armenian genocide” and every Armenian Family has information on this and it is enough to visit the Armenian Genocide memorial. He also invited the Turkish President to visit Erivan on 24 April 2015 to face vocal evidences of the history of the Armenian Genocide.

President Sarkisian sent a congratulatory message to Recep Tayyip Erdogan

22 “Human Rights Council Discusses the Prevention of Genocide” *The UN Office*, Geneva, 9 March 2014.

23 “Human Rights Council Discusses the Prevention of Genocide” *The UN Office*, Geneva, 9 March 2014.

24 “The State Commission On Coordination Of The Events Dedicated To The 100th Anniversary Of The Armenian Genocide Held Its Fourth Session” 27.05.2014, Access Date: 03.02.2015. <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2014/05/27/President-Serzh-Sarkisian-Commission-on-coordination-of-activities-dedicated-to-100th-anniversary-of-Armenian-Genocide/>

on his election as president<sup>25</sup> and after wishing Erdoğan good health and prosperity and progress to the people of Turkey, he stated: “Assuming the office of President of the Republic of Turkey, you will indeed have the opportunity to make a personal effort to give effect to our bilateral agreements without preconditions.”

We would like to point out that when countries recognize each other, no matter how problematic bilateral relations are, it is a common practice to send such congratulatory messages and especially not to include opinions on existing issues other than congratulatory and greeting statements. However Sarkisian,

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in this congratulatory message, reproachfully mentioned the implementation of the protocols without preconditions which is an important disagreement in bilateral relations. His aim in doing this is probably to form such an opinion that he pressured the Turkish President in the Armenian public opinion.

Foreign Minister Edward Nalbantian, who joined the reception organized on 28 August 2014 on the occasion of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s inauguration, delivered Erdoğan an invitation letter from Serzh Sarkisian. This is also an improper action. Normally this invitation letter should have been delivered to

the Presidency through Diplomacy Protocol. For a minister to look for the President and to give him a letter by hand in a crowded reception is quite unseen. However it is understood that this move was to influence the public opinion and to show everyone that an invitation on the genocide was delivered to the Turkish President.

In this context, we would like to indicate that Armenians tend to mix up propaganda and politics and this often overcomplicates issues.

The purpose of inviting the President of Turkey - a country where a big majority of the population believes that the 1915 events does not constitute genocide and which perceives it as an insult besides rejecting it- to Erivan on 24 April and trying to make him pay homage in the Armenian Genocide Memorial is probably to humiliate him. This also means that Sarkisian does

25 “President Serzh Sarkisian Congratulates President Of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan” 13.08.2014. Access Date: 03.02.2015. <http://www.president.am/en/congratulatory/item/2014/08/13/President-Serzh-Sarkisian-congratulation-to-the-President-of-Turkey/>

not find Prime Minister Erdoğan's political initiative by offering his condolences to the families of Armenians who died in World War I satisfactory.

The abovementioned purpose of the invitation could also be understood from the statement made by the Deputy Speaker of Armenian National Assembly and press secretary of the ruling Republican Party Edward Sharmazanov: "If Turkey's leaders come and visit the Memorial to Armenian Genocide victims, Tsitsernakaberd, it means they acknowledge the heinous crime of Genocide. That is, they do not consider the butchers and their victims equal. If they do not come, we re-state that Turkey is continuing its denial policy."

That said, it is understood that the fact that there is no statement from Turkey on whether the Turkish President will accept the invitation or not left question marks over minds in Armenia and Turkey. Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister of Turkey who is of Armenian descent, stated that the President's visit to Armenia on 24 April would be an important gesture. He added that that he deemed this unlikely and that there is no possibility of such a gesture from Turkey as long as the Armenian side continues to adopt its strict approach<sup>26</sup>.

Prime Minister Erdoğan's message on 23 April 2014 that expressed condolences to Armenians aroused interest both in Armenia and Diaspora but have not received any positive response. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu stated in an article published in Turkish Policy Quarterly Journal that Erdoğan's message of condolence should not be seen as a conjunctural step. It should be seen as a prelude for transformation of minds and memories because this is not only an offer of condolence but also a sincere invitation to all parties to ensure a common future based on lasting peace. But the Armenian side did not receive the Prime Minister's message as such and did not give due importance to it. Following these developments, in a statement that he gave to a newspaper<sup>27</sup>, Davutoğlu said that he believes Armenia and the Armenian diaspora will choose to take "bold steps" like the one Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan took in April, adding that if this happens Turkish-Armenian relations will enter a "new era. Stating that Armenia is not acting behave enough, these words immediately received reactions. Sharmazanov, who had been mentioned above, indicated that Davutoğlu is mistaken as in 1915 there was not a relocation but a genocide, a systematic annihilation of as many as

26 "Maḥcupyan'dan Yeni Türkiye Perspektifi" (Maḥcupyan's new perspective towards Turkey), *CNN Türk*, 4 November 2014.

27 "Turkey Mulls "Bold Steps" of Armenia to Begin "New Era", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 25 June 2014.



1,500,000 Armenians living in their historical land. “So, I think for a ‘new era’ to start in Armenian-Turkish relations, Turkey must take steps to face its own history and to recognize the first genocide of the 20th century.”<sup>28</sup>

In July, President Sarkisian visited Argentina, Uruguay and Chili, the countries that recognized Armenian genocide in Latin America.

The fact that in Argentina-the country that supports Armenian genocide claims the most-Sarkisian has not been accepted by President Mrs. Cristina Kirchner, because of her “illness” got attentions. Considering that Argentinian Parliament’s successive decisions on the genocide claims in the previous years put Argentina on the spot towards Turkey and that President Cristina Kirchner visited Turkey in 2011 to partially make up for it, Mrs. Kirchner’s “illness” might be a “diplomatic” one.

During his speech in Argentina, Sarkisian opposed Davutoğlu’s view of “just memory” stating that this view is actually an updated, developed and re-shaped version of denial of Armenian genocide claims. During the speech, he said that the genocide will not come to an end as long as Turkish officials deny that the genocide has been made, that Turkey is not far away from facing her history and thousands of Turkish people reject their own government’s policies and stand together with Armenian people in solidarity.<sup>29</sup>

Sarkisian visited Uruguay as well, the first country that recognized genocide claims in the world in 1964-5, and he was welcomed very well. In the joint declaration<sup>30</sup> that was published following the meetings between Sarkisian and, the president of this country, Joe Mujica, it has been stated that Karabakh issue should be resolved exclusively through peaceful means and mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and there is a need for other countries and international organizations to take an impartial stance. It was further indicated that blockades, road restrictions and economic isolation is unacceptable and contradict the norms of international law. The parties called all countries of the world and international organizations to recognize and condemn the crime of 1915 committed against the Armenian people. The Armenian side mentioned with gratitude that Uruguay is the first country of

28 “Sharmazanov: It is Turkey That Must Take A “Bold Step” by Recognizing and Condemning the Armenian Genocide”, *Arminfo*, 27 June 2014.

29 “Sarkisian Rejects Davutoğlu’s ‘Just Memory’”, *Asbarez*, 8 July 2014.

30 “Joint Statement on Results Of Meeting Between President Serzh Sarkisian Of Republic Of Armenia And President Jose Mujica Of Oriental Republic Of Uruguay”, 9 July 2014. Access Date: 03.02.2015 <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2014/07/09/President-Serzh-Sarkisian-Joint-Statement-with-the-President-of-Uruguay>

the world to recognize the Armenian Genocide. In addition, it welcomed the decision of the Uruguayan authorities on founding an Armenian genocide museum in Montevideo. In the basis of Uruguay's extreme Armenian support, we see activities of small but active and rich Armenian community; on the other hand we don't see any existence of Turkey.

There are approximately 1.500 Armenians living in Chili; although this small community succeeded to issue a decision from the Chilean parliament in 2007. There is no news in the press regarding Sarkisian's expressions against Turkey during his visit to Chile or a monument to be built in 2015 reflecting the genocide allegations.

Foreign Minister Edward Nalbantian, who accompanied Sarkisian during his Latin America visits, joined the discourse against Turkey. In an interview Edward Nalbantian gave to Buenos Aires Herald journal<sup>31</sup>, he blamed Turkey and stated that since Erdoğan set conditions impossible to fulfil, normalization between the two countries is not taking place. He claims that Turkey started to impose new conditions and it has less to do with the reparation that Turkish state would have to pay than the fact that it is difficult to look at your own people in the eye and say: 'we've been lying to you for 99 years'.

Nalbantian continued the campaign against Turkey that he was trying to maintain through newspapers. In an article sent to the French newspaper *Le Figaro*<sup>32</sup>, he criticized Prime Minister Erdoğan's message of condolences and Davutoğlu's reiteration of the proposal to establish a commission of historians, and defended clearing the way for the reconciliation process through concrete steps such as the ratification of the Zurich Protocols, the normalization of bilateral relations, opening of borders instead of dated tactics. He criticized Erdoğan's speech on 23 April 2014<sup>33</sup> in which he extended his condolences. Nalbantian, who stated that the international community expected of Turkey to recognize the Armenian genocide and thousands of Turks have already recognized it, indicated that Turkey needed to make peace with its past in

31 "Edward Nalbantian: It's Difficult for Turkey to look at its Own People in the Eye and Say: 'We've Been Lying to You For 99 Years'", *Arminfo*, 10 July 2014.

32 "Génocide des Arméniens: Erdoğan Doit Dire la Vérité" *Le Figaro*, 6 September 2014. "Armenian Genocide: Erdoğan has to tell the truth".) Armenian Foreign Ministry published this document in English under the title of "Turkey Should Reconcile With Its Own Past" on the same date. <http://www.tert.am/en/news/2014/09/06/Nalbandian-lefigaro/> This text is longer than the one published on Figaro. French historian Maxime Gauin replied Nalbantian's article with a long text he published on the bulletin of Center for Eurasian Studies. Turkish version is available on: <http://www.avim.org.tr/analiz/tr/1915-OLAYLARIYLA-ILGILI-OLARAK-EDWARD-NALBANDIAN%E2%80%99IN-YAZISI-VE-MAXIME-GAUIN%E2%80%99IN-CEVABI/3661>

33 *Ermeni Araştırmaları* (Armenian Studies), Issue 47, p 27-43

order to build its future and he expected Erdoğan to accept Sarkisian's invitation to visit Erivan on 24 April 2014. The importance of Nalbantian's article is that it rejects the new reconciliation process proposed by Turkey through Erdoğan's condolence message. It is understood from Nalbantian's article that unless Turkey recognizes Armenian Genocide claims and opens the borders, positive relations with Armenia cannot be developed.

In response to a question asked during his visit to Baku after being elected as President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said "If the Azerbaijan-Armenia issue will be resolved then the Turkey-Armenia issue will be resolved but unless this will happen, the issue between Turkey and Armenia will continue as in the current state."<sup>34</sup> Erdoğan stressed that the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations depended on the resolution of the issues between Azerbaijan and Armenia. These remarks were welcomed in Azerbaijan and President Aliyev's statement of "Turkey and Azerbaijan will jointly counter the lie about the genocide of Armenians"<sup>35</sup> had a great impact in the Armenian press.

Turkey's new Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavuşoğlu's statement, which indicated that Turkey will struggle with sister Azerbaijan together against the so-called Armenian genocide, unite power and efforts with Azerbaijan in every area, took place in the Armenian press.<sup>36</sup> Later, even though it is a fact that should be or already has been known by everyone and has been said every time, Çavuşoğlu's remarks in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey indicated that it is not possible to recognize the Armenian genocide allegations which are attributed to past generations and the Turkish nation. This was a major headline in the Armenian press.<sup>37</sup> The reason of this attention is, most probably, the view which was adopted particularly by some part of the Diaspora that Çavuşoğlu's statement was going to recognize the genocide allegations or will be forced to recognize it. The program of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Government read by Prime Minister Davutoğlu on 1 September 2014 in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey included a section on the relations with Armenia under Caucasus section.<sup>38</sup> The section is as follows: "One of

34 "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan Bakü'de" (President Erdoğan is in Baku), *Ülkehaber.com*, 3 September 2014.

35 "Aliiev vows Support for Armenian Genocide Denial", *RFE/RL*, 3 September 2014.

36 "Mevlut Çavuşoğlu: 'Nous Allons Lutter Ensemble Avec L'Azerbaïdjan Contre le soi-disant Génocide Arménien (Mevlut Çavuşoğlu: 'Together with Azerbaijan we will fight against the so-called Armenian Genocide')", *NAM*, 4 September 2014.

37 "La Turquie Ne Reconnaitra Jamais le Génocide A Déclaré Le Ministre Turc des Affaires Etrangères" (Turkey Will Never Recognize Genocide, Says Turkish Foreign Minister) *NAM*, 7 November 2014; "Turkey Will Never Recognize Genocide, Says Turkish Foreign Minister", *Asbarez*, 6 November 2014.

38 62. Hükümet Programı, Access Date: 03.02.2015.  
[http://www.basbakanlik.gov.tr/Forms/Global/Government/pg\\_GovernmentProgram.aspx](http://www.basbakanlik.gov.tr/Forms/Global/Government/pg_GovernmentProgram.aspx)

the strategic priorities of our government is to establish peace and stability in the Caucasus and minimize the tension and the conflicts in the region. In this context, our country will continue her efforts to end the occupation of Azerbaijan territories and Upper Karabakh, and abolish the tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in accordance with resolving the conflicts in the South Caucasus. In the upcoming term our steps towards normalizing relations between Turkey and Armenia will continue. We are expecting from Armenia to tend towards a position to seek for “just memory”. We think that this is the only possible way to extend environment in peace, stability and welfare in the Caucasus.”

Prime Minister Davutoğlu’s statements during his first visit to Azerbaijan after he came into office, once more confirmed Turkey’s policy towards Armenia and Davutoğlu’s willingness to act in concert with Azerbaijan.<sup>39</sup> The Prime Minister said that as long as Armenia continues her uncompromising attitudes on the Karabakh issue, Armenia remains excluded from regional projects; though if Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity was respected, a peaceful environment could be built within this context. Armenia will benefit from this as other countries do and “as the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey here in Baku, we, once again say this as the representative of the people of Turkey that Turkey will stand together with Azerbaijan in her fight until the day every inch of Azerbaijani territory is liberated. International law states this. Until the requirements of international law are fulfilled, Turkey will work shoulder to shoulder with Azerbaijan to make the region as a region of peace. Any negative attitude against Azerbaijan will be reacted the same way in Turkey as it is in Azerbaijan.

In a speech President Erdoğan made<sup>40</sup> when he was in France to discuss the situation in Syria with François Hollande, he stated that Turkey has been a victim of misinformation and defamation; that Armenia and the Diaspora have non-constructive ideological approaches on the 1915 events; that Turkey does not view this as a political matter; that Turkish archives are open and historians, legal experts, archaeologists should study on the events of 1915 for these events to be understood better.<sup>41</sup>

39 Davutoğlu’ndan Karabağ Mesajı: “Azerbaycan Kurtulana Kadar”, (“Karabakh Message from Davutoglu: Until Azerbaijan is liberated”), *AGOS*, 19 September 2014.

40 “Remarks By President Serzh Sarkisian At The 5th Armenia-Diaspora Conference” 20.09.2014. Access Date: 03.02.2015. <http://www.president.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2014/09/20/President-Serzh-Sarkisian-Armenia-Diaspora-conference/>

41 “Les Quatre vérités sur le terrorisme de Président Erdoğan” (“The four truths about the President Erdoğan’s terrorism”), *La Croix*, 1 November 2014.

One of the important events for Armenia is the gathering of approximately 700 delegates from approximately 60 countries in Yerevan for the 5<sup>th</sup> Armenia-Diaspora meeting between the dates 19-20 September, 2014. Prime Minister Sarkisian made a speech at this conference and he said that the 1915 would witness unique actions and events on the occasion of the meaning and dimensions of the 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary; that, in this context there would be wide political actions and he expects some of the presidents of some of the countries will pay visits to Armenia. Moreover, he stated that 2015 would be the new target for the Armenian national awakening. He brought forward that Turkish society is questioning the false reflection of the history; thousands of Turkish people reject their country's policy of denial; and therefore the Turkish authorities' policy of denial has reached a deadlock. Sarkisian stated that they would continue to ask Turkey to stop her hopeless denialist policy; refresh her memory; review the dark pages of the past; face history; accept and condemn old crimes; and get rid of this chronic burden via cleaning its conscience.

What is interesting with regard to Sarkisian's words is that he mentions the events not as they are but as he wished them to be. If there is a group in Turkey that supports the Armenian view, they are not strong and ineffective in contrast to what Sarkisian said. The most striking proof of this is that the political parties which have more than %90 of the votes in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Justice and Development Party, Republican People's Party, Nationalist Movement Party) in total, adopt almost the same position towards the Armenian issue. Only the Peoples' Democratic Party supports the Armenian views, though in case the "reconciliation process" succeeds, it is possible that they will change their stance.

It has drawn attention that the aforementioned declaration<sup>42</sup> which had been adopted during the 5<sup>th</sup> Armenia-Diaspora Conference and which touches upon various issues, included Turkey's acceptance of its responsibility, recognition of the genocide, and abolishing of the consequences; and the ability of those Armenians who converted their religion to declare that they are in fact Armenians.

Sarkisian dedicated a major part of his speech in the United Nations General Assembly on 24 September, 2014<sup>43</sup> to his country's relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey. On the section about Turkey, the following issues draw particular

42 "Remarks By President Serzh Sarkisian At The 5th Armenia-Diaspora Conference" 20.09.2014, Access Date: 03.02.2015. <http://www.mindiaspora.am/en/News/3369>

43 "Sarkisian Says Yerevan Considering Recall of Turkey-Armenian Protocols", *Asbarez*, 24 September 2014.

attention. First of all, as it has become a tradition, it has been stated that Turkey should be brave and face her own history, recognize the Armenian genocide allegations and repeated that Turkey should save next generations from this heavy burden. Moreover, probably referring to then Prime Minister Erdoğan's condolences, he stated that Turkey is giving ambiguous messages. Sarkisian said that Armenia never makes a connection between normalization of Turkish–Armenian relations and recognition of genocide by Turkey. He further added that the normalization process, which resulted in the signing of Protocols, was actually initiated by Armenia; but Turkey linked ratification of the Protocols to the Karabakh issue; and from now on people in Armenia and Karabakh are saying “hell with the ratification” and hence, Armenia is considering recalling the Protocols from the parliament.

These tough statements in fact repeat the already-known views of the President of Armenia. While his statements about withdrawing the Protocols from the parliament seem new, these in fact did not give any signal of change. After all, Protocols are not on the agenda of the Armenian Parliament. Therefore, his remarks about withdrawing the Protocols do not have a meaning. By doing so, Sarkisian might be trying to build pressure on Turkey or aiming to lead the US and the EU countries to build pressure on Turkey by creating concerns in these countries which give unnecessary importance to the Protocols. It is also possible that he might have thought of gaining favor in his own public opinion by rejecting the Protocols if he fails to influence Turkey's policies with these pressures.

President Sarkisian's article published on the New York Times on 26 September 2014 was inspired by the elements of his speech at the General Assembly. It is seen that the real aim is to ask Turkey to recognize Armenian genocide, prevent a new reconciliation process that Erdoğan wanted to start by expressing condolences.

Insistent opinions of particularly Sarkisian, other Armenian Officials and Armenian authors in the Diaspora on recognition of genocide, abolishing the consequences of it and especially opening the Turkish-Armenian border have been met with lack of interest on the official level in Turkey.

A small minority in the public continues to support the Armenian views. It constitutes an example that a meeting was organized by Hrant Dink Foundation together with Ankara University Faculty of Political Science on the topic of “Sealed Gate: Prospects of the Turkey-Armenia Border”, and took place in the faculty building between the dates 22–23 November 2014. At this meeting which some Turks, whose ideas are already known, Armenians and

3<sup>rd</sup> parties participated in, the idea of how beneficial the opening of the border would be was discussed very intensively. There is no doubt in benefits of the opening of the borders for Armenia. In economic terms, the benefits would be very limited for Turkey. In terms of politics, opening the borders without receiving anything in return is unfavorable for Turkey as it is disadvantageous for Azerbaijan.

## II- THE PRIME MINISTER’S MESSAGE ON THE EVENTS OF 1915

The office of the Prime Ministry released a statement titled “The Message of the Prime Minister of the Republic Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s on the Events of 1915” on 23 April 2014 in 9 different languages<sup>44</sup>.

*There is no doubt in benefits of the opening of the borders for Armenia. In economic terms, the benefits would be very limited for Turkey. In terms of politics, opening the borders without receiving anything in return is unfavorable for Turkey as it is disadvantageous for Azerbaijan.*

The message has been a surprise in Turkey, in the world and especially among Armenian circles and aroused interests, received comments.

### 1. Content of the message

Original form of the message is available in the “Recent Documents” part of our Journal.

We can sum up the general ideas of the message as follows:

- Late period of Ottoman Empire is full of sufferings. There sufferings, including the suffering of Armenians, should be understood, commemorated and shared.
- The events of 1915 should not become a new area of antagonisms and political conflict.
- The Relocation is an inhumane action but this should not be an obstacle for Armenians and Turks to establish mutual humane attitudes and behaviors towards each other.
- Despite the disagreements, parties should communicate with each other.

44 Turkish, English, German, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Eastern Armenian, Western Armenian



In this context, Turkey's proposal to establish a joint history commission is still valid.

- Turkey wishes Armenians who lost their lives in the context of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century rest in peace, and conveys her condolences to their grandchildren. Turkey also pays tribute with compassion and respect, to all Ottoman citizens who lost their lives in the same period and under similar conditions.

The message was written with expressions of goodwill and with a moderate language seeking reconciliation. It is seen that the aim of the message is to appeal to the humanistic side of the Armenian issue. Indeed, this dimension of the issue is overbalancing for the great majority of Armenians. It is understood that statements in the message indicating that the relocation was an inhumane act and wishing condolences to the grandchildren of the Armenians who lost their lives in the relocation aim to address the feelings of Armenians and to reach rapprochement and reconciliation between parties more easily.

On the other hand, the message indirectly touches upon a fact which is an obstacle for reconciliation: Armenians' one sided point of view about the 1915 events and their history in general. Sincerely, Armenians take only their own sufferings into consideration and ignore or look down sufferings of other groups in the same period. This approach prevents the objective examination of historical events and particularly having outcomes that are acceptable for other parties. This results in having no process on a critical issue such as genocide allegations and moreover, in transformation of an event that took place 100 years ago into a dispute today.

It is not only the Armenians who suffered and experienced difficulties during the First World War. If we take the subject in terms of civil causalities, according to Prof. Justin McCarthy's calculations in this period (between the years 1912–1922) there were a decrease of 2.462.250<sup>45</sup> in the Muslim population and approximately a decrease of 600.000<sup>46</sup> in the Armenian population. Though Armenian authors, and accordingly the public opinion in Armenia and the Diaspora, increase this number up to the fantastic 1.5 million and pretend as if Muslims did not have any loss; even if they did, as if it is not directly the Armenians' concern. Considering that it was fully documented that 518,000 Muslims were killed in the massacre by the Armenian gangs in

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45 Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities*, New York University Press, 1983, p.134

46 *ibid*

Easter Anatolia<sup>47</sup>, this approach grows worse and prevents the parties from objectively examining their joint history.

The message emphasizes this attitude with some statements such as “understanding of all the sufferings in this period”, “establishing hierarchies of pain”, “comparing and contrasting sufferings”, “approaching different discourses with empathy and tolerance” and besides “events that took place are our all shared pain” and “we should evaluate the history through perspective of just memory”.

By including statements like “deriving enmity from history and creating new antagonisms” and “using the events of 1915 as an excuse for hostility against Turkey and turning this issue into matter of political conflict”, the message stresses another critical point. The last war against the Armenians was in 1920; the Armenians were defeated and the contemporary border between the two countries was established by the Moscow and Kars Treaties in 1921. Moreover, the Treaty of Lausanne determined the rights of Armenians in Turkey in addition to the other minorities, and laid out the principles regarding their properties. Hereby the Armenian problem was legally solved. However, the Armenian Diaspora since 1965 and the new Armenian State since 1991 have had the aim of reviving the Armenian problem and to reopen the closed cases. This prevented the establishment of peace and cooperation in the region, as well as between the two countries. Thus, there is an ongoing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, while Turkey and Armenia do not have official relations and the border has remained closed for 21 years.

This situation has isolated Armenia in the region and has had huge negative effects on her economic development. To sum up, in order to fulfill her historical wishes, Armenia has become to contradict her own benefits. However, its faith in delusions is so strong that today’s realities are almost invisible. When we consider this situation which dominates Armenia and the Diaspora, it is necessary to have a logical as well as an emotional approach in the relationship with Armenians, which is what Erdoğan tried to do with his message.

The message did not mention a necessity for condolences to Turks (Muslims) from Armenians. However, since it was tried to balance the sufferings of both sides and “just memory” are emphasized the message, it would be normal for the necessity of expression of condolences by Armenians to be on the agenda in the future when the reconciliation process takes place.

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47 Yusuf Sarıncay (ed), *Documents of massacres executed by Armenians*, General Directorate of State Archives, 2001.

Lastly, we would like to remark the difference between “condolence” and “apology”. Expressing condolences means “expressing sympathy on the death of a person’s relative”. To apologize means “to express regret for something that one has done wrong”. In other words, and an apology requires responsibility. The Turkish Republic, which was established eight years after the events of 1915, is in no way responsible for these events, thus, it is not required to apologize.

After the release of the statement, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister made some complementary statements on it.

The statement, which for the most part was about the 1915 events, did not include the Karabakh issue. At the reception in the Turkish Parliament on 23 April, Erdoğan stressed that “Armenia-Turkey relations will not be normalized unless the Karabakh conflict is resolved”.<sup>48</sup> In a briefing about the message at his party’s group meeting, Erdoğan said: “I hope Armenia and the Armenian diaspora recognize our courageous step and reciprocate in the same courageous manner”.<sup>49</sup>

On 28 April, the famous American TV reporter Charlie Rose conducted an interview with Erdoğan<sup>50</sup> after his message gained international attention. In the interview, Erdoğan was asked: “Armenians obviously like to use the word genocide. Is it impossible for the Prime Minister of Turkey to characterize it as genocide?” His response was: “This is not possible. If such a genocide occurred would there have been any Armenians living in this country?” Moreover, Rose asked whether recognizing the Armenians’ suffering would mean there is an apology. Erdoğan’s answer to this question was as follows: “This is not something that happened during the Republic of Turkey. This was during the Ottoman Empire. If the documents show that our ancestors made a mistake... then we would pay whatever the consequence of that is.”

Then Foreign Minister Davutoğlu referred to the possibility of having negative comments from Armenia on the message saying that: “We hope the hand we offered will be reciprocated.”<sup>51</sup> He stated during a TV show he attended that the statement reached its goal and received positive comments. He added that even if Armenia does not react as expected, Turkey will not take the message of condolence back and it expects the same revolutionary step from Armenia.

48 “Normalization Condition with Armenia”, *imctv.com*, 26 April 2014.

49 “Prime Minister Erdoğan, We expect the same brave attitude from Armenia”, *iha.com.tr*, 29 April 2014.

50 “Erdogan Tells Charlie Rose There Was No Genocide”, *Asbarez.com*, 29 April 2014.

51 “Normalization Condition with Armenia”, *imctv.com*, 26 April 2014.

He also stressed that Turkey has the right to ask if Armenia will offer condolences for the Turkish diplomats who were assassinated by terrorist acts.<sup>52</sup>

Then President Gül, who has a major impact on the reconciliation process with Armenia and on the signing of the Protocols, strongly supported the message of the Prime Minister.<sup>53</sup>

It was emphasized in the press as well that some new measures are foreseen to be taken for Armenians. According to the press, one of the most important of these measures would be to offering Turkish citizenship to the grandchildren of the Armenians who left or had to leave the Ottoman Empire.<sup>54</sup> It is understood that this was welcomed by some Armenians. The officials of an institute called the West Armenians Congress expressed their positive view on this and stated that Ottoman land registration records should be opened for the Armenian who wish to have citizenship. The head of Armenian Heritage Party Raffi Hovannisian demanded the authorities give the right of return to the Armenians who were forced to leave Anatolia, and stated that this could be a pilot project to establish relations. He further stressed that if Turkey wants to take a determined step it has to recognize that a genocide occurred.<sup>55</sup> In an article published in the British newspaper the *Guardian*<sup>56</sup>, then Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu stressed that then Prime Minister Erdoğan's message allowed to recapture the opportunity of a conciliation which was eluded in 2009 between Turks and Armenians. He explained that the Armenians were among the best integrated communities in the Ottoman Empire, that they contributed to Ottoman music and architecture and held important positions in the government. He stated that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Empire's strength declined continuously, five million Muslims were driven away from their homes due to ethnic cleansing in the Balkans and the Caucasus. He also emphasized that while much of western history told of the suffering of the dispossessed and dead Ottoman Christians, the colossal suffering of Ottoman Muslims remained largely unknown outside of Turkey. Davutoğlu stated that results of the Armenian relocation in that period were unacceptable and inhumane, and that this tragedy continued to distress the Turks and Armenians and continued to keep them apart. Along with the importance of national memories, he also mentioned the importance

52 "Davutoglu: We reached to the target", *Stargundem.com*, 25 April 2014

53 "President Gul Backs Erdogan's Armenia Condolences", *Cihan News Agency*, 28 April 2014.

54 "Step for Armenians is coming from Turkey", *Haberler.com*, 24 April 2014.

55 "Turkey Considers Citizenship for Heirs of Displaced Armenians", *Al Monitor*, 25 April 2014.

56 "Turks and Armenians – We must follow Erdogan's Lead and Bury our Common Pain", *The Guardian.com*, 2 May 2014.

of the Turkish and Armenian narratives coming closer and the emergence of a just memory, and stated that Turkey proposed to establish a joint historical commission for this purpose. Mentioning that the problem could not be resolved without listening and understanding each other, he stressed that all Diasporas with roots in Anatolia was the diaspora of Turkey too. He stated that he asked Turkish ambassadors to treat the Diasporas with open arms and they carried out his instructions despite losing many friends to the Armenian terrorism.

Davutoğlu, in his article, appealed to everyone to seize the moment and to reconstruct a better future for Turkish-Armenian relations and stated that Prime Minister Erdoğan's message was an unprecedented and courageous step taken in this direction.

Davutoğlu's article received negative reactions from both Armenia and the Diaspora.

Edward Sharmazanov, the Vice President of the National Assembly and spokesman of the ruling Republican Party stated that the pain of people must not be buried, but cured; that the Armenian genocide was not a common pain of Turks and Armenians; and that was a shame of the Turkish (Ottoman) Empire. He indicated that it was necessary to eliminate the consequences in order to cure the pain and that Ankara should follow Germany and admit that genocide was perpetrated against the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>57</sup>

Davutoğlu's article was also criticized in the Diaspora press.<sup>58</sup>

## 2. Reactions to the statement

This section will explain the views on Erdoğan's statement from the Armenian authorities, the Armenian Diaspora organizations, the authorities of the other countries and some political parties in Turkey, as well as some media reactions from Turkey and other countries.

57 "Armenian Official: Genocide is Shame of Turkish Empire", *NEWS.am*, 5 May 2014.

58 Two examples; one of them is from the Diaspora in France, the other one is from the Diaspora in USA. Please see: *Collectif Van*, 7 May 2014 Davutoğlu: "Turcs et Arméniens, Nous Devons Enterrer Notre Douleur Commune", *Asbarez*, 7 May 2014. (Davutoğlu Says We Have to Bury Our Common Pain)

### a. Official Declarations of Armenia

While President Sarkisian had the opportunity to respond to Erdoğan's statement, he avoided doing so. However, in his 24 April speech which mentioned above and in the European Union Eastern Partnership meeting on 24 April, he used harsh words against Turkey without referring to Erdoğan's statement directly.

Foreign Minister Edward Nalbantian acted similarly. On the contrary, the Deputy Foreign Minister mentioned that Erdoğan's statement bears evidence that Turkey will recognize the Armenian genocide sooner or later.<sup>59</sup>

Armenian Head of Staff of Presidency Vigen Sarkisian said that they tried to find if Erdoğan's message was an attempt to face history, but then they decided that the statement was a more advanced expression of denial and concealing of the crime of genocide.<sup>60</sup>

Hayk Demoyan, director of the Armenian Genocide Memorial and Museum near Yerevan, who is also Secretary of the State Commission, that is presided by Serzh Sarkisian and was founded to organize 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1915 events, published a statement addressing Prime Minister Erdoğan<sup>61</sup>. It states that Erdoğan's message is an important step but not in the direction of revealing the truth, facing history and enabling reconciliation between the Armenian and Turkish people.<sup>62</sup>

Just as Sarkisian, Armenian Catholicos Karekin II, who resides in the town of Etchmiadzin near Yerevan, did not react to Erdoğan's statement. On the contrary, the head of the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, Aram I, who resides in Antelian, Lebanon, stressed that the distortion of the historical facts cannot deny the truth and what happened in 1915 was a genocide against the Armenians planned by Talat Pasha and Enver Pasha. Thus, the Armenian people do not expect just condolences and kind words from the Turkish State, but recognition and compensation of the Armenian genocide.<sup>63</sup>

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59 "Shavarsh Kocharian: Turkey Will Recognize Armenian Genocide Sooner or Later", *Panorama.am*, 24 April 2014.

60 "Erdogan's Statement is Advanced Form of Armenian Genocide – Vigen Sarkisian", *Panorama.am*, 24 April 2014.

61 "Director of Armenian Genocide Museum Responds to Erdogan's Statement", *Radio.am*, 24 April 2014.

62 "Director of Armenian Genocide Museum Responds to Erdogan's Statement", *Radio.am*, 24 April 2014.

63 "Catholicos of Cilicia Aram I Responds to Turkish PM's Statement", *Nyut.am/archives*, 24 April 2014.

## b. The Reaction of the Diaspora

Aram Hamparian, the executive director of the Dashnak foundation Armenian National Committee of America, said that the message of Prime Minister Erdoğan is a repackaged denial and it is an obstruction to justice.<sup>64</sup>

The co-chair of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnak Party) in Western Europe, Mourad Papazian, also shares the view that Erdoğan's message strengthens denialism in Turkey and that the aim of this expression of condolence is only to make a good impression on the public opinion.<sup>65</sup> His organization released a statement expressing the same opinions and demanding the recognition of the Armenian genocide by the Turkish state as well as compensation for moral and financial damages, and for the loss of land.<sup>66</sup>

The representative of the Armenian Assembly of America, an organization of wealthy Armenians in the United States, stated that the message of Erdoğan does not recognize the Armenian Genocide, and that the victims of the Armenian genocide cannot rest in peace as long as Turkey continues its campaign of denial. The Assembly remains encouraged by the trend that has begun to question the official Turkish thesis on the Armenian Genocide within the Turkish society. From Orhan Pamuk to Elif Shafak and Ragıp Zarakolu the number of those who courageously speak about the Armenian genocide continues to grow.<sup>67</sup>

Having various Armenians gathered under the same roof, the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy released a statement<sup>68</sup> affirming that it is Turkey's renewed denial tactics under international pressure to accept its past and reconcile with it - especially with the centenary of the Armenian Genocide approaching. President of the Federation, Kaspar Karampetian, expressed his opinion saying that there can be reconciliation and peace between Turks and Armenians, but only when Turkey accepts her genocidal past, condemns it, and pays the necessary financial and territorial reparations.

64 "Repackaging Denial: Erdogan Issues Statement on events of 1915", *Asbarez*, 23 April 2014.

65 "Réactions Mitigées Après les Condoléances d'Erdoğan aux Arméniens" (Mixed Reactions After Erdoğan's Message of Condolences to Armenians), *RFI*, 24 April 2014.

66 "Déclaration d'Erdoğan: La Poursuite de la Stratégie d'Ankara" (Erdoğan's statement: The pursuit of Ankara's strategy), *Armenews*, 24 April 2014.

67 "Armenian Assembly of America Response to Turkish PM Erdoğan's Statement on Armenian Genocide Anniversary", *Panorama.am*, 24 April 2014.

68 <http://www.eafjd.org>



After Turkey recognizes the genocide and apologizes, the file will not close, according to Tania Babanazarian from the 'Armenian Case Organization' in France, and there will be financial and territorial reparations.<sup>69</sup>

Congrès National des Arméniens Occidentaux (National Congress of Western Armenians) in Paris made a statement<sup>70</sup> saying that Erdoğan's message did not fulfill the expectations, but it is hoped that the Turkish authorities would join the constructive dialogue started by Turkish NGOs. The importance of taking concrete steps to the requests of the Congress was stressed and it was mentioned that the new requisition of the Congress will be published soon.

The Zoryan Institute, an Armenian Diaspora institution, focuses on the scientific research regarding the genocide claims especially in North America. On the 5 May, this organization published a response<sup>71</sup> to Erdoğan's message, defining it as an unprecedented step by the Turkish government. They used weak arguments to respond to the points in the message and indicated that it is desirable that the Turkish government recognizes the responsibility of the Ottoman Empire in this case. As a first step to build dialogue between the two nations, it is demanded that Turkey starts unconditional diplomatic relations and opens the common border.

Other statements by other diaspora organizations, although being different, are generally negative.

On the contrary, some well-known people in the Diaspora- even though they are only a few- reacted positively to Erdoğan's message. Among them are Patrich Devedjian, former lawyer of ASALA who got involved in politics later on and rose to the Ministry level; Ara Toranian who used to be the spokesperson of ASALA and then hold high-level positions in Armenian organizations and currently manager of the monthly journal *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*; Ara Sarafian who is the Director of Gomidas Institute in the UK; Richard Giragosian, Director of Regional Studies Center in Armenia, and Alexis Govciyan co-president of the Armenian Federation of France.

While these people took this message positively, it is observed that some had reservations. According to Govciyan, the message is an interesting one, yet

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69 "Génocide Arménien: 'On ne Veut Pas d'une Reconnaissance Au Rabais'" (We do not want a reduced recognition), *Nouvel Observateur*, 23 April 2014.

70 "Bati Ermenileri Ulusal Kongresi'nden 'taziye mesajına' cevap" (National Congress of Western Armenians responds to the 'message of condolence', *Agos*, 15 May 2014.

71 "Zoryan Institute Response to the Message of The Prime Minister of Turkey", 05.05.2014, access date: 03.02.2015. <http://orer.eu/en/english-zoryan-institute-response-to-the-message-of-the-prime-minister-of-turkey/>

not enough and further steps should be taken.<sup>72</sup> Devedjian stated that the message itself is not a big step but it is a progress and should be the first step towards recognition<sup>73</sup>, whereas Toranian stressed that this message is the consequence of the pressures on Turkey<sup>74</sup>. Sarafyan expressed that this message is important for the both people but since it does not recognize the genocide it is a different form of denial.<sup>75</sup> Giragosian stated that the Prime Minister's message is constructive and right but that Diaspora will not find it sufficient. He added that the era of "worst reactions" that might come from Diaspora is over.<sup>76</sup>

### c. Reactions of Some Countries and International Organizations

A few countries stated their positions towards Prime Minister Erdoğan's message.

President Obama did not touch upon Prime Minister Erdoğan's message at his message published on 24 April. Spokesperson of Foreign Ministry Jen Psaki stated that they welcomed this message.<sup>77</sup>

During his visit to Turkey, President of Germany Joachim Gauck described Prime Minister's message as a "new page".<sup>78</sup>

During his speech in the Armenian Genocide memorial, President of France did not refer to Prime Minister Erdoğan's message, he indicated that this message means progress but it is not enough<sup>79</sup> in the aftermath of the ceremony when journalists addressed questions regarding this issue. As far as we understand, Hollande was expecting at least an apology from Turkey on this issue and maybe recognizing the genocide claims. In fact, during his

72 "Fransız Siyasetçilerinde Başbakan Erdoğan'ın Mesajına Destek" (Anadolu Agency, "Support from French Politicians to Prime Minister Erdoğan's Message), *AA*, 25 April 2014.

73 "Taziye Mesajı Fransa'daki Ermenileri Umutlandırdı" (Condolences gave hopes to Armenians in France), *Zaman*, 25 April 2014.

74 *ibid*

75 "Ermeni Tarihçiden Başbakan Erdoğan'a Destek" (Support to Prime Minister from Armenian Historian), *ensonhaber.com*, 27 April 2014.

76 "Ermenistan İçin Başka Alternatif Yok" (There is no other alternative for Armenia), *sabah.com*, 27 April 2014.

77 "Ermeniler Memnun Değil" (Armenians are not satisfied), *NTV*, 23 April 2014.

78 "Germany Gauch: Turkey Condolences to Armenians A News Page", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 29 April 2014.

79 "L'Evolution de la Turquie Ne Suffit Pas" (Turkey's evolution is not enough), *20 Minutes*, 26 April 2014.

visit to Armenia on 12 May, Hollande said that the only solution is Turkey's recognition of Armenian genocide.<sup>80</sup>

Stefan Füle, who is the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood, confined himself to indicating that they encourage the message and reconciliation is a key value to the EU.

#### **d. Reactions in Turkey**

##### **i. Political Parties' Stance**

Main opposition party CHP's stance regarding then Prime Minister Erdoğan's message on 23 April, has been laid out by a written statement made by Deputy Chairman Faruk Loğoğlu.<sup>81</sup>

CHP indicated in the statement that it commemorates those who lost their lives during the events of 1915 and shares the sorrow and pain of the descendants of them. Stating that Turks and Armenians lived brotherly in the past, the statement indicated that the two sides have different accounts of the past; that it is not possible to overcome these differences by making one superior to the other one; and this is why peoples of Turkey and Armenia could reach reconciliation through a constructive dialogue. The statement recalls that CHP proposed the establishment of a joint historical commission in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in 2005 and that this was communicated to Armenia. The statement calls on the two countries to open dialogue based on documents. Moreover, CHP wishes in the statement for 2015 to be a year of reconciliation and peace between the peoples of Turkey and Armenia and between the two states, and not a year of divergence. Lastly, the statement proposes the establishment of a "dialogue group" within the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, where political parties are represented.

MHP Chairman Devlet Bahçeli said about the message that "there is nothing to evaluate about this, this nation has suffered enough"<sup>82</sup>. Moreover, in a written statement<sup>83</sup>, Bahçeli stated that the message was received with

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80 "Hollande Says the only solution is Turkey's acknowledgment of Armenian genocide", *News.am*, 13 May 2014.

81 "Loğoğlu'dan Türk-Ermeni Halklarının İlişkilerini Değerlendiren Yazılı Açıklama" (Loğoğlu's Statement regarding the relations between Turkish and Armenian peoples), *Yerelgündem.com*, 28 April 2014.

82 "Muhalefet Tepkili" (The Opposition reacts), *Yeni Şafak*, 24 April 2014.

83 "Bahçeli'den Başbakan'ın 1915 Açıklamalarına Tepki" (Bahçeli's reaction to the Prime Minister's Statements regarding 1915), *Heberler.com*, 25 April 2014.

astonishment and bitterness, that it seemed as if it was written in Yerevan, and that it was far from reflecting the realities of the Turkish history. Expressing that the decision of relocation was taken with the intention to block the intense and merciless attacks by the Armenian gangs, to block their sources, and to save the future of the country, Bahçeli stated that relocation was pretty consistent and even compulsory when the conditions of the period are considered. He further stated that there were some undesirable losses with different reasons and that “the Turkish nation does not have anything in the past that it would be ashamed of, and would ask for mercy.”

Bahçeli, who also spoke during the group meeting of the party, stated that it was neither humane nor Islamic for one to compete his pain with that of the other, and asked what would be done regarding the 518,105 Muslim Turks in Eastern Anatolia who were killed by the Armenian gangs, and whether these martyrs would be disregarded. He emphasized that the Turkish nation would not apologize for the events of 1915.<sup>84</sup> Later on, in a briefing made in the Youth Assembly on 3 May Nationalists Day, he said, “they express condolences and tacitly apologies to the Armenian Diaspora, the dishonorable who violently massacred hundreds of thousands of Muslim Turks.”<sup>85</sup>

BDP, on the other hand, declared in a written statement that it considered then Prime Minister Erdoğan’s message insufficient and called for the Turkish state to express apologies to the Armenian nation. It further emphasized that it was inevitable to confront one another and that facing the history and paying the price before history would be an assurance that there won’t be pain again.”<sup>86</sup>

Workers’ Party Chairman Doğu Perinçek stated regarding the message that such a statement could only be made by a spokesman of imperialism; that the then Prime Minister did not defend the country, its independence, and sovereignty; and that, he, just like the imperialists, convicted the relocation.<sup>87</sup>

As one can see, MHP and the Workers’ Party, which are predominantly nationalist in nature, do not approve the then Prime Minister’s message. On the contrary, CHP and BDP, even though they have some reservations, do not oppose the message. When this situation is reflected on the Grand National

84 “Erdoğan Ermeni Açılımında Kararlı “ (Erdoğan is determined about the Armenian Opening), *Amerikaninsesi.com*, 1 May 2014.

85 [www.cnnturk.com](http://www.cnnturk.com), 3 May 2014

86 “BDP’den Ermeni Çıkışı: Özür Dilensin” (BDP’s Reaction with regard to the Armenians: An apology must be issued), *Net Gazete*, 24 April 2014.

87 “Perinçek’ten Başbakanı 1915 Tepkisi” (Perinçek’s Reaction to the Prime Minister regarding 1915), *Haberler.com*, 25 April 2014.

Assembly of Turkey, it is possible to state that the message is supported by over %80.

Human Rights Association Istanbul office, which spearheaded the planning of activities to commemorate 24 April in Turkey, organized a press conference on 5 May and stated that there has been an improvement regarding the language used by the Turkish Republic up until then; thus, the state was obliged to switch from a denialist approach that is full of insult and lies to a denialist approach that is refined to some extent. The association also indicated that despite these developments, the message denied the genocide<sup>88</sup>.

## ii. Armenian Community's Stance

Shortly after the Prime Minister's message, the Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul issued a press release<sup>89</sup> and strongly supported the message.

The press release stated that the message laid the foundation of a bridge between peoples of Turkey and Armenia and turned over a new leaf in the Turkish-Armenian relations. Moreover, it is stated in the Patriarch's press release that the message respected the memories of the non-Muslim citizens of the Ottoman Empire, and that it emphasized that events like relocation, which brings inhumane consequences, should not prevent sympathy and mutual humane attitudes to be established between Turks and Armenians. The press release also stated that the message could overshadow resolutions adopted in foreign parliaments. It emphasized that discourse full of grudge and hatred that instigates hostility should be left aside for the Turkish and Armenian peoples to embrace each other. The Patriarch further stated that they said "Amen" to the Prime Minister's wish for resting in peace to the Armenians who lost their lives and that they accept the condolences with love.

Thereafter, Deputy Patriarch Ateshian met with the then Prime Minister at the office of the Prime Ministry. According to the press<sup>90</sup>, the then Prime Minister, said to the Deputy Patriarch, "We took the initiative. Now we expect Armenia to take a step. The ball is in their court now. If they take the necessary step, we will take new steps. We open our archives. You have your own duties in

88 "İHD'den Başbakan'ın Taziyesi'ne Cevap", 05.05.2014, Accessed Date: 03.02.2015. <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklar%C4%B1/155444-ihd-den-basbakan-in-taziyesi-ne-cevap>

89 "Türkiye Ermeni Patrikliği Basın Bildirisi" (Press Release by Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul), *Hürriyet*, 24 April 2014.

90 "Uzatılan Zeytin Dalı Kurumasın İstiyoruz" (We don't want the Olive Branch to Dry Out), *Milliyet*, 2 May 2014.

this matter as well. Hold official visits and convoke certain officials”. Ateshian said to the press following his visit that the Prime Minister’s message was first of its kind in the sense that for the first time a prime minister of the Republic of Turkey shared the pain of the Armenians, and, that this extended an olive branch to the Armenians. He called on both parties and said: “Come close to each other and lay the foundation of the bridge of friendship and peace.” He added, “I believe that this first step initiated by our honorable prime minister has been met with appreciation by the majority of our community. As the Patriarchate, we also regard it with appreciation.”

Indeed, it is observed that the majority of the Armenian community supported the Prime Minister’s message. President of the Foundation of the Armenian Hospital Bedros Şirinoğlu, who was in the delegation that visited the Prime Minister, said that the prime minister made all their wishes come true and he returned their properties in the past. He further expressed their wish for God to bless him; stated that they are grateful to him in all aspects, and stated that he could be a nominated as a Nobel Laureates.<sup>91</sup> Other Armenians also supported this view.<sup>92</sup>

Bedros Şirinoğlu, in fact, showed that he has a “just memory” by stating that “Armenians should offer condolences as well, as deaths occurred on both sides during the war.” He further stated, “Our Muslim brothers were also killed. This was a fight between two brothers, two friends. For me it would be more just if both sides apologized.”<sup>93</sup> However, by saying that “Our people won’t like what I am saying”, he also drew attention to the fact that the Armenian atrocity is ignored by the whole Armenian community.

It is seen that a minority within the network of Agos newspaper and the Hrant Dink Foundation evaluated the message as denialist, while accepting the fact that it is first of its kind. Thus, this minority supports the Diaspora’s view of the message. It is stated in an article published by Agos<sup>94</sup> that the message was “based on a foundation that denies the reality”, and that AKP government’s stance on the Armenian issue was based on calculations like “how can get the most of what by giving the least? How can we make it with the least harm?”

91 “Ermeni Cemaati: Başbakan, Nobel’e Aday Olursa Destekleriz”, 26.04.2014, Access Date: 03.02.2015. <http://www.sondakika.com/haber/haber-ermeni-cemaati-basbakan-nobel-e-aday-olabilir-5952475/>

92 For example the President of Armenian Association on Tolerance Jerry Hirimyan, Journalist Markar Eseyan, source: “Ermeni cemaatinden Başbakan mesajı: ‘Nobel adayı olabilir’”, *Türkiyegazetesi*, 26.04.2014. ‘<http://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/gundem/151874.aspx>

93 Ibid.

94 “Taziye Mesajı: Yeni Ama Hâlâ İnkârcı” (Message of Condolence: New but Still Denialist), *Agos*, 12 May 2014. Rober Koptaş.

On the other hand, it is pointed out that “commemorating Armenians as the people killed in the conditions of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, together with the other victims of the First World War, amount to normalize and simplify what is a crime against humanity.” Thus, it was intended to distinguish Armenians from the others who died in the First World War and to give them a special place. However, the Prime Minister’s message puts emphasis on “not to compare and contrast suffering” and in this regard “to evaluate history through a perspective of just memory”.

### iii. Reactions by the Media

It is observed that the media in Turkey generally welcomed and supported then Prime Minister Erdoğan’s message. In a study we conducted based on 17 most popular newspapers,<sup>95</sup> it is determined that there were 110 commentaries in the aforementioned newspapers in the five days between 24-28 April 2014. It is observed that 89 of these supported the message, although to different extents. Opposing were 16 and these were mainly in two newspapers.<sup>96</sup> 5 commentaries, on the other hand, did not show a favorable or unfavorable tendency.<sup>97</sup> In this case, we reach the conclusion that Erdoğan’s message was supported by a high ratio of %81 by the media, even though they were all for different reasons. This ratio is the same with the ratio of those who supported the message in the Grand National Assembly.

In our view, this reflects the wish of the majority of the Turkish public opinion for the Armenian issue to be resolved as soon as possible. On the other hand, main reason behind the support to the message was that the message approached the Armenian issue from a humanistic perspective.

## 3. Possible Consequences of the Message

What is expected from the Prime Minister’s message would be to soften the anti-Turkey stance which became more apparent after the Protocols failed; thus, to ensure that the contacts between the two countries and two peoples

95 The aforementioned newspapers are alphabetically like the following: *Akşam, Aydınlık, Cumhuriyet, Haber Türk, Hürriyet, Milliyet, Posta, Radikal, Sabah, Sözcü, Star, Türkiye, Vatan, Yeni Asya, Yeni Şafak, Yurt ve Zaman*

96 *Aydınlık* and *Yeni Asya*.

97 Following the first five days after the message was released, we observed a few commentaries in some newspapers regarding the insufficiency of the message. One of them reflected the views of the Diaspora. Today’s “The External Dynamics of the MP’s statement on 1915, *Zaman*, 18 May 2014, Alin Ozinian.



in more favorable conditions; and in the future to promote to the conduct of anew negotiations between Turkey and Armenia in this benign environment.

Is it possible to achieve this goal? The answer to this can be found in the reactions shown to the Prime Minister's message.

Armenian Diaspora organizations- of which most are either Dashnak or Dashnak-oriented- reacted negatively to the message. Dashnaks are against reconciliation with Turkey unless "the consequences of the genocide are overcome", in other words unless the border with Turkey is opened, the properties are returned, compensation is paid, and even some land is given to Armenia.

Conversely, some influential people in the Diaspora were impressed by the Prime Minister's message. However, for most of them, this message is just a first step; this must be followed by other steps- compromises so as to say. In the meantime, it is natural that some civil society organizations, which are regularly in contact with each other, support the message, even though they do not speak out much.

As far as the Armenian media is considered, the Armenian public opinion did not show much interest in the Prime Minister's message. The same is true for the Russian Federation in which the highest number of Armenians lives after Armenia. It is understood that they would follow Armenian government's stance regarding the message.

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As for the Armenian government, President Sarkisian and Foreign Minister Nalbantian preferred to keep silent with regard to the message for they intended to look not to care. By a lower level representation through the Deputy Foreign Minister Shavarsh Kocharyan the Armenian government put forth that they considered the message negatively. This stance probably stems from the view that Erdoğan's message was intended to decrease the influence of the activities planned for 2015. On the other hand, it is observed that Armenia's stance towards Turkey has been in parallel with Diaspora's stance since the failure of the Protocols, especially in the last three years. In other words, while Turkey previously was not openly demanded to recognize the

genocide allegations, to pay compensation and to return properties; when Armenia's current stance is considered, it is understood that the Armenian government did not want to take the message seriously as it conflicts with this policy.

When it is considered in a wider perspective, we see that the Turkish-Armenian reconciliation efforts is a process of which the first phase constitutes the efforts to establish normal relations between the two countries between 1991-1993; however, continuous occupation of Azerbaijani soil nullifies these efforts, and even led to closure of the border. Moreover, we see that Turkey took a second step about 12 years later when it proposed the establishment of a joint historical commission; however, these efforts did not succeed because of Armenia's disinterest. The third step, the signing of the Protocols, did not succeed either; this time it was the Karabakh issue which was as an obstacle to the ratification of the Protocols. As there are other countries in addition to the two countries, namely the US, Russia and the EU, that want the normalization of the relations between Turkey and Armenia, this process will continue; however, Armenian expectations for 2015 will postpone new initiatives to be made for some period but it is likely resume after a while.

Regardless of the fact that Armenia has toughened its stance under the influence of 2015, Turkey's expression of condolences has, in fact, put Armenia on the spot in the eyes of the other countries and the public opinion. Armenia still stands as the party that doesn't want reconciliation. As Armenia and the Diaspora need permanent support from others, Turkey's expression of condolences may cause a decrease in this support, although it may vary in terms of area of support and the country that is providing the support. This, in turn, will strengthen Turkey's hand when new initiatives are started to be taken.

### III- ACTIVITIES PLANNED TO COMMEMORATE 24 APRIL

As in every year, 24 April was commemorated this year with ceremonies and/or religious rites in the countries where Armenian communities live. We observe a certain characteristic of these commemorations compared to the commemorations that took place in the past.

We will examine this issue in four sections. President Barack Obama's 24 April message, President François Hollande's speech at the genocide memorial in Paris, ceremonies in Armenia, President Sargysian's speech and lastly, commemoration activities in Turkey for 24 April.

## 1. President Obama's Speech

When he was a presidential candidate, Barack Obama recognized the 1915 events as genocide upon Armenian militants' demand and he stated that he would pursue this stance in case he is elected. Nevertheless, after being elected, within the realities of his country's foreign policy, he could not keep this promise as he wanted to pursue good relations with Turkey. However, like his predecessors, he had to release a message on 24 April 2009 and he used the words "Medz Yeghern", the equivalent of genocide in Armenian, which means the great disaster. Thus, he partly satisfied the Armenians and partly the Turks as he did not directly use the word genocide. In the following years, Obama acted the same way.

This year's message by the American President<sup>98</sup> resembles the last year's message to a great extent. Some statements are repeated in this year's message. As in last year's message, it is stated that 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or were marched to death. While there is no doubt that Armenians obliged to take a difficult journey, there is no evidence that they were sent to death. Even critical Armenian researchers in our day do not bring forward the argument that 1.5 million Armenians died in the events of 1915.<sup>99</sup>

American President stated that a full, frank and just acknowledgment of the facts is in everyone's interest and that peoples and nations grow stronger by reckoning with painful elements of the past. With these expressions, he indirectly asked Turkey to recognize the genocide allegations. Moreover, he recognized and commended the growing number of Armenians and Turks who have taken this path. We understand that these are the Turks who recognize the allegations and make efforts so that the allegations are recognized.

This year's message state "the extraordinary courage and great resilience of the Armenian people in face of tremendous adversity and suffering" and it applauds the contributions that the Armenian-Americans have made to American society and culture.

Despite the compliments it made to the Armenians, President Obama's message did not satisfy the militant Armenians for their sole expectation from the President is the recognition of the genocide allegations.

98 "Obama, Again Fails to Recognize the Genocide", *Asbarez*, 24.04.2014.

99 Please see the section titled "François Hollande's Speech" for why the number 1.5 million cannot be correct.

Turkish media, as well, has had interest in the message regarding this issue. The message's tone against Turkey and especially the indirect demand of the President from Turkey to recognize the genocide allegations were not highlighted in the media.

## 2. François Hollande's Speech

French President François Hollande, has long supported the Armenian views and made efforts for the recognition of the allegations. In this framework, he played a significant role in the adoption of the bill in 2001 that ensured the official recognition of the genocide allegations by France.

When he became a presidential candidate in 2012, imitating then President Sarkozy, he made a speech in the genocide memorial in Paris on 24 April, and said that in case he is elected, a new bill would be prepared to penalize those who deny the genocide allegations and that he would attend the 24 April commemoration ceremonies every year.<sup>100</sup> He was indeed elected president; however, he did not join the ceremonies in 2013 with the excuse of his visit to China.<sup>101</sup>

The reason behind this stance is the fact that the relations between France and Turkey were damaged because of the Armenian issue. The new French government tried to repair the relations through Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, and following Turkey's positive reaction, Hollande made an official visit to Turkey on 27-28 January 2014. This was the first time a French President visited Turkey in 22 years. France's signal that some Chapters in the EU negotiations could be opened, the lack of mention of the genocide allegation unless it is required, and the lack of it even if it seemed required were the signs that this visit was a successful one.

Having ensured significant progress in relations with Turkey, Hollande tried to establish better relations with the Armenian community in France as well, and, in this framework, organized some meetings with them. Following these developments, he delivered a long speech at the genocide memorial on 24 April.<sup>102</sup> We will examine some sections of this speech below.

Hollande stated that what the Armenians had gone through in 1915 could only

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100 *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 41, p.51

101 *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 44, p. 42

102 <http://www.elysee.fr/chronologie/#e6133,2014-04-24,ceremonie-de-commemoration-du-genocide-armenien>

be described by one word, genocide; and, that 1.5 million Armenians died and hundreds of thousands were deported. He further said that Komitas was arrested on 24 April in addition to the 650 Armenian intellectuals; and, that Komitas was influenced by this event for the rest of his life in Paris. Hollande added that France firmly strive for the recognition of the Armenian genocide.

By mentioning the issue of recognition of the Armenian genocide in the world, Hollande stated that this struggle would continue without any abandonment, hesitancy or appeasement. He said that he accepted to be the president of the international commission on examining the Armenian genocide in this framework; that he long supported the establishment of an Armenian center on memory and civilization by municipality of Paris, and the government will support this. He added that the government will also support the establishment of an awareness-raising and educational program across Europe.

Stating that the commemoration activities scheduled for the centennial of the Armenian genocide are planned in cooperation with Armenians, Hollande reported that he would be in Armenia in the next year on 24 April.

On denial of the Armenian genocide, the President said that the Constitutional Council of France had revoked the bill on denial; and that instructions were given in order for preparation of a new text that can't be revoked. On Perinçek-Switzerland case, he said that the European Court of Human Rights declared the Swiss Court's decision null and void; the Swiss government objected to this decision; and he instructed the government to ensure that France supports Switzerland on this matter.

Among other things, it is observed that there are some errors of fact in Hollande's speech. The number of Armenians arrested in Istanbul on 24 April 1915 and sent to exile (to Ayaş and Çankırı) is not 650, but 235.<sup>103</sup> As mentioned above with regard to Barack Obama's speech, the allegation that 1.5 million Armenians were killed in the events of 1915 were in no way proved; even critical Armenian scholars do not use this number. The reason why we emphasize this issue is the fact that Armenians always provide unrealistic numbers with the idea that the more it is exaggerated the more influential it will be. Moreover, leaders like Barack Obama and François Hollande are in the position of serving the Armenian propaganda by using these numbers without they are examined first.

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103 Yusuf Sarıay, *24 Nisan 1915'te ne oldu?*, İstanbul, 2012 p. 196

### 3. Activities planned in Armenia and President Sarkisian's Speech

President Sarkisian, as all Armenian Presidents, releases a message addressing the nation on 24 April every year.

In the past, these messages did not mention Turkey, and, thus, Turkey was not directly accused of the events of 1915. Sarkisian followed this practice for a while however he targeted Turkey in his message on 24 April 2013 and kept his stance in his message in 2014 as well. Therefore, Sarkisian started implementing his policy of criticizing and even accusing Turkey in every occasion in his messages on 24 April as well.

*In his message, Sarkisian stated that Turkey continues its policy of utter denial; that centennial of the Armenian genocide serves as an opportunity for Turkey to repent and set free the state's future from this heavy burden.*

In his message in 2013, Sarkisian claimed that material assets accumulated through the millennia by the Armenian nation has been appropriated by the Turkish state and peoples (referring to Turks and Kurds). Further claiming that denial of the genocide constitutes direct continuation of that crime—a formula used by the Diaspora that does not have a legal meaning—, he claimed that very crime is being carried out in modern Turkey.<sup>104</sup>

On the other hand, he put more emphasis to Turkey in this year's message<sup>105</sup>. In his message, Sarkisian stated that Turkey continues its policy of utter denial; that centennial of the Armenian genocide serves as an opportunity for Turkey to repent and set free the state's future from this heavy burden. Expressing that 2015 should convey a strong message to Turkey, he said that the attitude towards Armenia can no longer be measured by words but by opening of borders and establishment of normal relations. He claimed that Armenia's position on protocols has not changed and added that they do not consider the Turkish society as their enemy. Furthermore, Sarkisian stated that they recall those Turks who lent a helping hand to their Armenian friends "being annihilated by the barbarians" during the relocation.

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<sup>104</sup> *Armenpress*, 24 April 2013

<sup>105</sup> "Address By President Serzh Sarkisian On Remembrance Day Of Armenian Genocide Victims", 23.04.2014, Access Date: 03.02.2015.  
<http://www.president.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2014/04/23/Address-by-President-Serzh-Sarkisian-on-remembrance-day-of-Armenian-Genocide-victims/>

#### 4. Activities Planned in Turkey

In recent years, some liberal-leaning intellectuals (who were actually left-leaning in the past), organized some commemoration activities on the occasion of 24 April together with some people with Kurdish origins and relatively a few Armenians. Although pretty modest at the beginning, these activities have developed in time. However, they could not reach a significant level and could not go beyond the reach of the groups mentioned above.

It was intended last year to bring an international character to these events by inviting some foreigners.<sup>106</sup> It is observed that efforts were made this year, as well, to ensure broader participation, especially by the foreigners. Human Rights Association and DurDe from Turkey, as well as Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and European Grassroots Antiracist Movement (EGAM), released a declaration which includes the main Armenian allegations and invited people to commemorate 24 April in Istanbul.

This declaration is available on the web<sup>107</sup> in 17 languages. The readers were asked to sign this declaration, which is called a “petition”. It was opened for signature on 21 February 2014 for the first time. 3,090 people signed the declaration until 24 April. After this date it remained online, and as of the end of the year – on 30 December-, it was 3,493. For a declaration that is expected to reach a few billion people – since it is released in 17 languages- this is a small number.

As for the activities organized in Turkey on 24 April 2014, they were mainly in the same line with the activities planned last year. They were mainly in Istanbul and the media did not show much interest in them.

#### IV- DEMANDS FROM TURKEY IN THE CENTENARY OF THE RELOCATION

As of now, there is no official demand by the Armenian government from Turkey. However, there are some elements that are put into words by President Sarkisian in various speeches that have the potential to turn into official demands in the future. These are as follows:

106 For activities of 2013 please see *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 44, sp.45-53

107 [www.remember24april1915.eu/petition](http://www.remember24april1915.eu/petition)



**a. Demand that Turkey recognize the genocide allegations**

Following the failure of the protocols, since circa 2010, Sarkisian has increasingly started stating in his declarations that Turkey should recognize the events of 1915 as genocide. The difference between Sarkisian and his predecessors is that Ter Petrosyan and Kocharyan did not directly mention Turkey in their demand from the “international society” to recognize the genocide allegation. Thus, by not mentioning it, they avoided a potential dispute with Turkey. It is seen that Sarkisian does not have such a concern.

**b. Demand that Turkey abolish the consequences of the genocide**

This expression refers to compensating grandchildren of those who were relocated, returning of properties and giving land of an undefined size to Armenia from the region of Eastern Anatolia of Turkey.

As a response to a question directed to Sarkisian following his speech in the European Council Parliamentary Assembly in 2013, he stated that Armenia never demanded land from Turkey.<sup>108</sup> It would be appropriate to rather consider this declaration as a retrospective fact and that it does not include the future. On the contrary, it is not considered that any country would support any demands of land from Turkey; this may exclude the South Cyprus regime and Syria which have hostile relations with Turkey. Besides, there would be those who think that it is normal for “small” Armenia to ask for land from “big” Turkey and even those who consider this as a matter of humor. Moreover, as will be mentioned below, it is seen that Diaspora is getting aware of the unrealistic side of demanding land and that it started looking for alternatives.

While there have not been any discussion in the third countries, it is considered that there are some who support Armenians with regard to compensating grandchildren of those Armenians who were subject to the relocation and returning of properties. It is also probable that a strong support would be provided by third countries regarding the returning of Armenian churches and other religious structures.

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108 *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 47, p. 17. We indicated in this issue that Sarkisian’s remarks reflect only one side of the truth, and that both Sarkisian and his predecessor Robert Kocaryan made remarks indicating that some territories must be demanded from Turkey in the future.

### **c. Demand that Turkey open its border with Armenia**

These demands have been expressed for many years not only by Presidents of Armenia, but also by other officials on the grounds that closure of the border is illegal. Besides, while there is no time limit for the recognition of the so-called genocide or abolishing of the consequences of it, opening of the borders is considered as emergent. United States and the European Union support Armenia with regard to the opening of the borders without a precondition whereas Azerbaijan strictly objects to it.

### **d. The Legal Basis of these demands**

The most important consideration regarding the official demands of Armenia is that these demands have no precise legal basis. There is no bilateral agreement between Turkey and Armenia except the Kars Agreement of 1921. The multilateral agreements, to which both sides are a party, are not directly relevant to the Armenian demands in principle. On the other hand, it is possible that these demands will be rejected on the grounds that they are related to the issues that are resolved in the past and some were related to Turkey's sovereignty rights.

Among other things, the fact that there is no substantial and precise legal basis that can serve as a foundation for the Armenian demands is considered by the Armenian government as well. As a matter of fact, Pan-Armenian Forum of Lawyers that was assembled in Yerevan on 5 July 2013 took the following decision to bring it forward against Turkey: to compile a list of complete and substantiated documents based on the views expressed during the Forum, the existing studies and documents as well as the norms and principles of International Law in order to eliminate the consequences of the Armenian genocide.

In addition, the Forum took the decision to establish a special committee that will make the package of legal documents on key issues related to the Armenian Genocide.<sup>109</sup>

Thus, it may be expected that, after legal foundations are determined, these documents will be sent directly to Turkey or a competent international court such as International Court of Justice by the Armenian government.

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109 *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 28, 2013 p. 13

## 2. Demands of the Armenian Churches

As is known, there are two main Armenian religious institutions; the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin (located in Etchmiadzin, which is near Yerevan, Armenia) and the Catholicosate of Cilicia (located in Antelias, Lebanon). These institutions too have made demands upon Turkey in recent times.

### a. The Joint Demands of the Two Catholicos

The Catholicos Karekin II and Aram I published a joint statement on 24 April 2013 and put forth the following demands<sup>110</sup>: That Turkey should recognize the Armenian genocide; recompense all losses of Armenians in terms of human life and human rights; and give back Armenian churches, monasteries, church real estate, and cultural monuments to the “Armenian people”.

On 13 December 2011, the US House of Representatives adopted the resolution H.RES.306, which requested that Turkey “return to their rightful owners all Christian churches and other places of worship, monasteries, schools, hospitals, monuments, relics, holy sites, and other religious properties, including movable properties, such as artwork, manuscripts, vestments, vessels, and other artifacts”<sup>111</sup>. Since the US House of Representatives has no authority on this issue, the resolution can be viewed as a statement of opinion. Despite the opening of Turkey’s Akdamar Church (Church of the Holy Cross) and other places of worship, and the returning of the properties of Armenian foundations, another resolution by the House of Representatives numbered H. RES.4347 was adopted on 28 March 2014,<sup>112</sup> but was not able to pass the voting stage.

In conclusion, the US at least pays attention to the returning of the Armenian churches and other religious properties. It can be expected that the European Parliament, completely comprised of the representative of Christian countries, might pay the same attention.

On the other hand, another important point on this issue is that, despite normally being in competition and sometimes experiencing friction, the two Armenian Catholicos easily come together when it comes to the genocide claims and making demands towards Turkey. The most recent development

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110 For details about this, please see; *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 44, p. 22-23.

111 *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 44, p. 39-41.

112 *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 47, p. 58-59.

on this issue has been the gathering of the Synod of the Archbishops on 11-13 November 2014 that convened in Etchmiadzin, which is the largest body of the Armenian Apostolic Church and which comprises of bishops and archbishops of all countries including Turkey. The Synod agreed on a statement which called upon the international community to “condemn and recognize the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that was carried out by Ottoman Turkey.” Also, the Synod called upon Turkey to “recognize the Armenian genocide and to return the rights of the Armenian people.”<sup>113</sup>

### **b. The Demand of the Catholicos of Cilicia**

Catholicos of Cilicia delivered a speech on 19 September 2014 during the 5<sup>th</sup> Armenia-Diaspora Meeting held in Yerevan, during which he said that they would soon apply to the Turkish Constitutional Court for the returning of the historic centers (buildings) in Sis (Kozan county) to the their rightful owners the Armenian Church and the Armenian people, and that if the Court rejects their case, they will take the case to the European Court of Human Rights. Aram I indicated that such initiatives require important funds, but that they have confidence in the support of the Armenian people. Aram I expressed that even if they lose the case it will still be a victory, since the opening of the case will show the international community that Armenians are committed to demanding the rights of the Armenian nation no matter how many years may pass since the genocide.<sup>114</sup> A well-known Armenian columnist<sup>115</sup> objected to this by indicating that the Turkish government will abuse the issue in the event that the case is lost and that loss of this case will be shown as if the genocide claims are not being accepted. In another speech delivered on a different occasion, Aram I said that he was aware of the fact that law is not really on the side of the Armenians, but that it is necessary for efforts to converge on this area<sup>116</sup>.

### **3. The Demands of the Diaspora**

In terms of making demands towards Turkey, the Armenian diaspora has always been more active and ahead of Armenia. There are, however, different

113 “Déclaration du Synode des évêques de la Sainte Eglise apostolique Arménienne” (Declaration of Armenian Saint Apostolic Church’s Synod of Bishops), *Armenews*, 15 November 2014

114 “Catholicosate of Cilicia to Sue Turkey Over Historic Headquarters in Sis”, *Armenian Weekly*, 19 September 2014.

115 “Lawsuits, Legislations, Lobbying: All Ahead of Genocide Centennial”, *California Courier Online*, 29 September 2015, Harut Sassounian.

116 “Catholicosate of Cilicia Consistent With Return of Catholicosate of Sis”, *Armenpress*, 19 November 2014.

opinions in the diaspora on this issue. While some make due with Turkey recognizing the genocide claims and apologizing for it, many also want Turkey to pay restitution, return properties and even cede territory to Armenia.

Certain organizations of the Diaspora have expressed their demands on this issue. Certain well-known individuals within the Diaspora have stated their opinions. Since we have limited space, we will not delve into every single one of them and will instead give weight to the Diaspora organizations by listing the summary of the demands below.

Here we have analyzed the demands of three important Diaspora organizations. The main one of these three is the Dashnak Party (Armenian Revolutionary Federation), which has influence on a large section of the Diaspora. This Federation adopted a statement concerning the demands to be made from Turkey<sup>117</sup>, and had a report prepared in order to support such demands. The report, titled “Resolution with Justice – Reparation for the Armenian Genocide”, attempts to find a legal basis for the demands<sup>118</sup>. Besides these, the Armenian Bar Association in the US has also prepared a list of demands<sup>119</sup>.

It is possible to aggregate the sometimes overlapping demands of these three documents under five headings. These are: genocide, returning of properties and the paying of restitutions, ceding of land to Armenia, relations with Armenia, and other demands. The specific demands that are being made under these main headings have been shown in the list below:

## TOPIC BASED LISTING OF THE ARMENIAN DEMANDS TOWARDS TURKEY

### GENOCIDE ISSUE

*Turkey’s Recognition of the Genocide, Turkey’s Apology, Turkey Commemorating 24 April as the Armenian Genocide Day, Including the Genocide in the Education Curriculum, Establishing Genocide Museums in Turkey, Reusing Armenian-Origin Place Names in Turkey, Ending Denialism*

117 “ARF’s Statement of Demands for Justice for the Armenian Genocide, *Asbarez*, 23 June 2014.

118 The Report of the Armenian Genocide Reparations Study Group, *Resolution with Justice*, Final Report September 2014.  
[http://www.armeniangenocidereparations.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/20140918-Armenian\\_Genocide\\_Reparations\\_Study-Intro\\_and\\_ExecSum-EN-web.pdf](http://www.armeniangenocidereparations.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/20140918-Armenian_Genocide_Reparations_Study-Intro_and_ExecSum-EN-web.pdf)

119 “Armenian Bar Association on Justice for the Armenian Genocide”, 10.06.2014. Access Date: 03.02.2015. <http://www.horizonweekly.ca/news/details/40424>

*in Turkey, Annulment of Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, and Armenians Who Had Become Muslims Being Able to Return to Their Real Identities*

## RETURNING OF PROPERTIES AND THE PAYING OF RESTITUTIONS

*Returning the Real Estate Expropriated During Relocation, Restitution of Properties No Longer Present, Restitution Due to the Owners' Not Having Been Able to Use Their Property, Returning of All the Properties Of Armenian Churches, Being Able to Freely Access Legal Procedures in Respect to Properties, Restitution to be Paid to the Grandchildren and Their Organizations of Those Who Had Been Relocated, Restitution for the Deaths and Pain Suffered, Creation of a Schedule for the Returning of Properties and Payment of Restitutions, Considering Armenians As A Single Group for the Payment of Restitutions for Properties With No Documents and the Deaths and Pain Suffered, Turkey Giving Aid to Armenian Charity Institutions, Determining the Restitution to be Paid by Turkey*

## TERRITORY TO BE CEDED TO ARMENIA

*Ceding the Territory of the Arbitration of President Wilson, Turning Territories of the Arbitration of President Wilson Into Demilitarized Zones that Permit the Economic Activities and Living of Armenians, Ceding of Historic Armenian Homeland – Including Mount Ararat and Ani – to Armenia, Allowing Armenia to Use The Natural Resources of Turkish Regions Close to the Border with Armenia, Providing Access to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea for Armenia, Recognition of the Independence of Nagorno-Karabakh, Returning of Nakhchivan to Armenia*

## RELATIONS WITH ARMENIA

*Turkey Looking Out for and Protecting Armenia, Ending the Embargo Being Applied to Armenia, Opening of the Borders, Refraining from Carrying Out a Military Operation Against Armenia and Karabakh, Giving Economic Aid to Armenia, Signing of Security Pacts Between Armenia and Turkey and Its Other Neighbors*

## OTHER DEMANDS

*Giving Status of Independence to the Istanbul Patriarchate and Other Armenia Religious Institutions, Making No Discrimination against Armenians*

*in Turkey, Protecting the Armenian Religious and Cultural Structures that are to Remain in Turkey, Inspection of this Protection by Armenia*

As can be seen, the demands that the Armenian Diaspora has made is quite detailed, and it is evident that much time has been spent working on these demands. These demands have been determined with a maximalist mindset. Yet Armenia is not in a position to impose any demand on Turkey, so it is difficult to understand why such detailed studies are being done and published. On the other hand, Diaspora organizations too seem to have a no legal way through which to affect Turkey.

The most interesting demands among all of these are the ones about territories.

The Dashnak Party wants Turkey-Armenia border to be redrawn on the basis of the 22 November 1920 dated Arbitration of the US President. The Armenian Genocide Reparations Group - which has been indicated to be financed by the Dashnak Party – has stated the following, probably due to the realization that there is no possibility of Turkey ceding territory to Armenia: “While a complete political transfer of land (President Wilson Arbitral Award) to Armenia is optimal, the Group recognizes the alternative of demilitarization of Wilsonian Zone and allow free Armenian economic activity and residential status in it.” This alternative that does not prescribe Turkey ceding territory to Armenia is basically a “revolutionary” approach, since up until now demands for ceding of territory has been supported by all Armenians. Meanwhile, it must be mentioned that the Dashnak Party has remained silent on this alternative and that this can see as a form of unspoken agreement.

The Armenian Bar Association’s stance towards the demands of territory is different from the traditional Armenian demands as well. Although the Association has demanded the returning of the “historic homeland of Armenia”, it has not explained what is encompassed by this homeland. By stating: “Turkey must provide and guarantee to Armenia with fair use of the national resources of the area of Turkey leading to the border between the two states,” the Association has put forth a demand that does not prescribe for the ceding of this territory to Armenia. On the other hand, the Association’s naming of “the vicinity of Mount Ararat and the Armenian town of Ari and its vicinity” shows that its demands for territory are more symbolic in character.

In sum, it can be seen that Diaspora Armenians – while not expressing it explicitly – are beginning to distance themselves from the demands for territory, and in its place are giving priority to restitution and the returning of



properties and are working on preparing the legal basis for the demands that they will put forth. Lastly, the Armenian Genocide Reparations Group has indicated that, while not being exact and final, the reparations demanded of Turkey could be as high as 104 billion dollars. It would be correct to qualify such an enormous number as being in the realm of fantasies. In order give an idea of the enormity of this number: it can be calculated that this number corresponds to 1/8 of Turkey's annual national income, and if such a number is to be paid to Armenia, every Turk in a population of 75 million people would have to pay around 13,866 dollars or a family of four would have a debt of around 55,000 dollars.

## V- OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

### 1. The Fourth Meeting of the State Commission on the Coordination of Events Dedicated to the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Relocation

In 2011, the State Commission on the Coordination of Events Dedicated to the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide was established and the presidency of it was assumed by Serzh Sarkisian personally. The members of this Commission include: Catholicos of Etchmiadzin Karekin II, Catholicos of Cilicia Aram I, Catholic Patriarch Nerses Petros XIX of the Armenian Catholic Church, President of the Armenian Evangelical World Council Hovel Mikaelian, President of Karabakh State (Region) Bako Sahakian, as well as the Prime Minister of Armenia, President of the Armenian National Assembly, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora, representatives of the “traditional” Armenia parties including the Dashnaks, and representatives of some of the institutions of the Diaspora. The Secretary of the Commission is the Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Hayk Demoyan. Also, local committees have been set up in the countries where Armenians live to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the relocation.

*In sum, it can be seen that Diaspora Armenians – while not expressing it explicitly – are beginning to distance themselves from the demands for territory, and in its place are giving priority to restitution and the returning of properties and are working on preparing the legal basis for the demands that they will put forth.*

The State Commission has so far convened once per year and held its fourth meeting on 27 May 2014 in Yerevan. We have relayed the parts of speech delivered by President Sarkisian that pertain to Turkey in the “Turkey-Armenia Relations” section of this article. Besides this, Sarkisian said that

the Armenian genocide is the precursor of the other genocides of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and claiming that there is no statutory limitation on crimes committed against humanity, he requested all states and the international community to recognize the Armenian genocide.

While no detailed information has been given about the kind of activities being planned for the 100<sup>th</sup> year, President Sarkisian has informed that certain heads of state will be invited to the ceremony on 24 April 2015. The only person to have accepted this invitation so far has been President Hollande. In this framework, we have seen above that President Erdoğan too has been invited.

In many countries, certain meetings handling the Armenian genocide claims and supporting the Armenian claims against Turkey have already started being organized. It is being understood that the largest of such meetings will be organized on 21 April 2015 in Yerevan with the title “Armenian Genocide and World War I”, and that a high number of academicians and journalists will be invited<sup>120</sup>. Also, there are news about holding a large exhibition possibly in the Genocide Memorial for the same purpose<sup>121</sup>.

On the other hand, the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan is being renovated and expended, and the Museum will be opened in April or even earlier. Meanwhile, a museum about Musician-Priest Komitas will be opened again in Armenia. In the aforementioned State meeting, the “Do Not Forget Me” Flower (myositis) has been adopted as the logo and “I Remember and I Demand” has been adopted as the slogan of the 100<sup>th</sup> year.

Amongst the official activities that is most appropriate to be deliberated upon, is the one that is most important amongst the Church activities: the canonization of those that died during or after the Relocation as saints.<sup>122</sup> The canonization of the allegedly 1.5 million people who died during the Relocation is something unheard in the history of Christianity. Lastly, in order to become a “saint”, one would have to have achieved great success in religious terms or must have been killed for religion (martyrdom), yet none of these conditions are valid for the Armenians who were Relocated.

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120 “Une Exposition et une Conférence Internationale au Musée du génocide Liées au 100<sup>ème</sup> Anniversaire du Génocide” (Exhibition and International Conference at the Museum of Genocide in connection with the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Genocide), *NAM*, 19 April 2014.

121 *Ibid.*

122 “Déclaration du Synode des évêques de la Sainte Eglise apostolique Arménienne” (Declaration of Armenian Saint Apostolic Church’s Synod of Bishops), *Armenews*, 15 November 2014.

Certain information has been shared in the media about the cost of the activities planned by the Armenian government. According to one news,<sup>123</sup> Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan has said that 6 billion Drams (around 13 million Dollars) will be spent for this purpose. Later on, Deputy Minister of Finance Pavel Safaryan has given this number as being 20 billion Drams (around 43 million Dollars).<sup>124</sup> This number encompasses only the activities to be carried out by Armenia, and is separate from the expenditures of the Diaspora.

Another point that must be delved upon is for how long these activities for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Relocation will be carried out. For a long time, the Armenian public was made to believe that Turkey would recognize the genocide claims and pay restitution due to the pressures it will face for the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the Relocation. Due to the realization that the 100<sup>th</sup> year would have no noteworthy effect on Turkey's stance, President Sarkisian has indicated that 2015 is not the end but the beginning and as such has extended the duration of the activities to be carried out without pointing to their end date. Since World War I ended in 1918 and the Sarkisian's presidency ends in the centennial of it, it can be thought that the activities will be ended on that year. Basing his argument and the idea that the Armenian genocide took place between 1915 and 1923, one American columnist has put forth the idea that the centennial activities should be carried out between 2015 and 2023<sup>125</sup>. Actually, the Relocation that the Armenians refer as the Armenian genocide ended in 1916. The reason why claims are made about the lasting of the relocation until 1923 based on insubstantial grounds is to attempt to be able to hold the Republic of Turkey responsible for this event. No one besides the Armenians and their partisans support this view. On the other hand, it is not realistic that the 100<sup>th</sup> year activities will last a decade.

## 2. The 5<sup>th</sup> Armenia-Diaspora Conference

Despite having close relations with the Diaspora and especially greatly in need of the financial aid of it, Armenia did not have relations with the Diaspora in the institutional area for many years. This shortcoming was attempted to be allayed by the establishment of the Ministry of Diaspora in 2008 and the organization of Armenia-Diaspora Conferences once every year.

123 "Soykırım 100. Yılı Programları için Hükümete 6 Milyar Dram" (6 Billion Drams to the Government for the Activities on the 100th anniversary of the genocide), *News.am*, 21 August 2014.

124 "20 Billion Drams Intended For Armenian Genocide Centenary Events", *Armenpress*, 28 October 2014.

125 "Armenia Helps Coordinate Worldwide Genocide Centennial Activities", *Asbarez*, 03.06.2014. Harut Sassounian.

The fifth one organized this year on 19-20 September was the most spectacular one to date with the attendance of 700 people representing 150 Armenian institutions from 60 countries.

It is seen that mainly three events draw attention in this conference.

The first one, as was mentioned in the “Demands of the Armenian Church”, is Catholicos of Cilicia Aram I’s statement about applying to the Turkish Constitutional Court for the returning of buildings in Sis (Kozan County) that belong to the Armenian Patriarchate.

The second one is the speech delivered by President Sarkisian on the last day of the conference criticizing Turkey.<sup>126</sup> We have shared the part that pertains to Turkey in the “Turkey-Armenia Relations” section above.

The third one is that Sarkisian touched on the Karabakh issue and said that the war is not yet over and that it will end with a fire that will record Armenia’s victory.

Sarkisian stated that “each Armenian must have his house and home in his fatherland” and that “each Armenian must ask himself what he has done to make the motherland prosperous besides making other countries prosperous.” In this respect, Sarkisian had indicated that Armenia is ready to give opportunities for investment for the Diaspora Armenians.

Sarkisian furthermore mentioned Diaspora’s need to know the Armenian language and expressed that the main elements of preserving the Armenian identity is the Armenian language, the Armenian family and the recognition that the real motherland is Armenia. Such words - which carry the idea that the countries in which a majority of Diaspora Armenians have been born and raised in for four generations and in which they make a living is not the “real motherland” - is something that will not be easily acceptable by everyone. In another respect, if the motherland is accepted as being the place where people’s ancestors lived, then the motherland of the great majority of Diaspora Armenians is Anatolia.

Sarkisian; by stressing that there needs to be undertakings and achievements for the Armenia-Diaspora-Artsakh (Karabakh) triumvirate in 2015 and that

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126 “President Participates In Closing Ceremony Of 5th Armenia-Diaspora Conference”, 20.09.2014. Access Date: 03.02.2015. <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2014/09/20/President-Serzh-Sarkisian-Armenia-Diaspora-conference-speech/>

2015 will be an eventful year due to the scale and meaning of the events that will take place, has attempted to indicate the importance of the year 2015.

There are important parts in the section titled “Priorities of the Nation as the Ideological Basis for the Armenia-Diaspora Partnership” within the statement adopted at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> Armenia-Diaspora Conference. Within this section are the following headings:

- a. Building a Strong and Secure Armenia
- b. Independent and Secure Artsakh (Karabakh)
- c. Organized Diaspora
- d. Armenian Language as a Guarantee for Preservation of the Armenian Identity
- e. Centennial of the Armenian Genocide
- f. Consolidation Around the Armenian Church
- g. Security of Armenians in States of Emergency

*As can be seen, what is most focused on is security, and this is seen as the security of Armenia, Karabakh and the Armenian communities around the world.*

As can be seen, what is most focused on is security, and this is seen as the security of Armenia, Karabakh and the Armenian communities around the world. A matter that must be paid attention to here is that Armenia and Karabakh themselves have jeopardized their own safety by invading Azeri territories and causing more than 1 million Azeris to become refugees. Armenia will be able to ensure its security if it makes peace with Azerbaijan and Turkey. While showing the Armenian language as an assurance for the preservation of Armenian identity is in essence correct, it does not amount to much since the use of Armenian is close to disappearing in today’s Diaspora. It is not realistic to request that the members of the Diaspora dispersed in various countries all learn to speak Armenian or to attempt to provide the means for such an endeavor. In today’s Diaspora, Armenian identity is not attempted to be preserved through culture and tradition, but through genocide claims that breed feelings of grudge and hate. As such, this leads to problems that Armenians, both as individuals and as a society, are unable to cope with.

The heading that pertains to Turkey the most is the “Centennial of the Armenian Genocide”. The main points under this heading are: the creation of the State Commission in charge of coordinating events dedicated to the centennial of the Armenian Genocide and more than 50 regional committees which brought a new drive to the recognition and condemnation and elimination of the consequences of the Armenian Genocide planned and

perpetrated at the state level in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia (Eastern Anatolia); expression of gratitude to all the countries, who provided the Armenians with homes and ensured peaceful conditions for them; expression of gratitude especially to the countries and international organizations that have recognized and condemned the Armenian Genocide; acceptance of the norms of international law in relation to human rights and the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted in 1948 as the basis for the fight for the restoration of the individual rights of every Armenian, as well as the rights of the communities and the entire Armenian nation; the putting forth of the demand that Turkey lift that heavy burden, come to grips with its past and recognize the Armenian Genocide; proclamation that the recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide and elimination of the consequences thereof will be on the agenda for Armenian's political struggle.

### **3. Developments on the Recognition of the Genocide Claims**

It is being observed that both Armenia and the Diaspora are showing great effort to have the genocide claims recognized by certain country parliaments in 2015. Information about the main developments on this issue in 2014 has been given below.

It can be seen that through such recognitions, rather than expressing sorrow for the events of 1915, parliaments are using the genocide issue as a tool to show their reaction towards Turkey.

#### **a. Egypt and Syria**

Turkey is experiencing tense relations with these two countries for reasons that have nothing to do with the Armenian issue. Despite having no stance towards the Armenian genocide claims up until now, both countries have begun to show signs of change in their stance in recent times.

An article penned by an academician in Egypt<sup>127</sup> can be considered to be a precursor to this change.

In Syria, President Assad said the following: “The degree of savagery and inhumanity that the terrorists have reached reminds us of what happened in

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127 “Between Recognition and Denial - the Genocide Question and Turkish-Armenian Relations”, *AMT*, 14 January 2014, Dr. Ahmed Magdy Al-Soukkary.

the Middle Ages in Europe over 500 years ago. In more recent modern times, it reminds us of the massacres perpetrated by the Ottomans against the Armenians when they killed a million and a half Armenians and half a million Orthodox Syriacs in Syria and in Turkish territory.”<sup>128</sup>

### **b. Czech Republic**

The Czech Republic Parliament, despite being subject to pressures from time to time, has not recognized the Armenian genocide claims. As such, Czech Republic’s President Milos Zeman’s statement “Next year Marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. In 1915 1.5 million Armenian were killed”, made during President Sarkisian’s visit in January 2014 has been baffling. The fact that no reaction has come from the parliament or the government makes one think that the Czech Parliament is laying the ground for the recognition of the genocide claims. Indeed, Czech Senator Jaromir Stetina – who has been known to be a partisan for Armenians and Armenia for a long time – has stated his gratitude for the President’s words, and then has said that he will bring this issue as a proposal to the Parliament in 2015 and that President Sarkisian’s planned visit to Prague would be of help in the acceptance of this proposal<sup>129</sup>.

### **c. Germany**

In 2005, the German Parliament adopted a resolution that viewed the events of 1915 as genocide without using the genocide word. Armenians were not very pleased with such a resolution and requested the adoption of a second resolution that openly characterized events as genocide, but they were unable to get a result from this. Unlike in other countries, the Armenian community of 20-30 thousand in Germany, almost all of which emigrated from Turkey, is not a very strong. In this respect, initiatives on behalf of the views of the Armenians are not done due to the pressure from this community, but from the Protestant circles in the country. By the way, it is worth mentioning that, despite having been clearly shown that he engaged in some fraudulence with regards to the books he wrote about Armenians, great interest is still being shown for the Protestant Priest Johannes Lepsius who worked in the Ottoman Empire before and during World War I, and his house has been turned into a museum despite certain objections. On the other hand, as we

128 “Syrian President Finally Recognizes the Armenian Genocide”, *Asbarez*, 28 January 2014, Harut Sassounian.

129 “Le Président De La République Tchèque Identifie Le Crime Ottoman Comme Un Génocide” (President of Czech Republic identifies Ottoman crimes as a genocide), *Armenews.com*, 1 February 2014.



shall explain below, the fact that German officials are beginning to support Armenian views more and more in recent times draws attention. When the reason behind Germans' new Armenian partisanship are investigated, it leads to the conclusion that the Germans do not wish to be criticized for the relocation during the centennial and wish to shift the entire responsibility to the Ottomans (Turks). Yet, there are Armenian historians who put forth that Germans recommended, or at the least supported the relocation<sup>130</sup>.

Certain events in recent times have shown that disagreements have been experienced between Turkey and Germany due to the Armenian issue. It has been reported in the media that during Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit to Germany in February 2014, the Prime Minister said to Merkel: "funds in the budgets for the next year are being allocated for the 100<sup>th</sup> year of events of the 1915. Be more sensitive on this issue. You must warn your Group about such funds." Merkel did not reject that funds were being allocated, and replied: "Germany is democratic country, we cannot intervene. Turkey must face its own history... The Armenians in Armenia are in a very difficult situation. Turkey must open the border." In response, Erdoğan said: "Are you trying to force us to accept something that we did not do? We have opened all of our archives to historians. We have made calls to the whole world. We told them to come and analyze the archives, but no one came. Do not be unfair to Turkey."<sup>131</sup>

The second incident occurred on 3 July 2014, when the statement "deportation and mass murder became tools of war with the exile and destruction of the Armenians" was made during a meeting in the German Parliament titled "Centenary of the First World War" and which was attended by President Gauck, Prime Minister Merkel and other high state officials. These words, which give the impression that deportations and mass deaths began with World War I and that they were first applied to the Armenians, are far from reflecting the truth; such events have been seen throughout history and are continuing in today's times. On the other hand, the first mass killings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were carried out by Germany itself in Africa. Between the years 1904 and 1907, 80% of the Herero people in the German colony of South-West Africa (today's Namibia) were killed by the forces under the command of the German General Lothar von Trotha.

In respect to the meeting held in the German Parliament, Speaker of the

130 Vahakn N. Dadrian, *German Responsibility in the Armenian Genocide, A Review of the Historical Evidence of German Complicity*. 1996, Cambridge, Blue Crane Books.

131 "Merkel'den Erdoğan'a: Cumhurbaşkanı Adayı Olcak mısınız?" (From Merkel to Erdoğan: Will you run for Presidency?), *Hürriyet*, February 2014.

Turkish Grand National Assembly Cemil Çiçek sent a letter to the German Speaker of Parliament Lammer which expressed the conviction that: “Germany, with whom we had been brother-in-arms during World War I, knows perfectly well that the relocation was a matter of military necessity.”<sup>132</sup>

Lastly, during his visit to Armenia, German Minister of Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier has said that “Germany is ready to help Turkey learn lessons and accept its own past but it is Turkey that should demonstrate the will”<sup>133</sup>. Emboldened by the words of the Minister, the German Ambassador to Yerevan Reiner Morell has said that they expect that “Turkey will apologize to Armenia in the coming couple of years.”<sup>134</sup>

#### d. Greece

On 9 September 2014, on the anniversary of the liberation of Izmir from the Greek occupation, the Greek Parliament adopted a law that provisions to fine those who approve, trivialize or deny genocide, war and crimes against humanity up to 3 years in prison and up to 25.000 Euros. According to the law, for an event to be recognized as genocide, a judgment must be made by an international court or the Greek Parliament. According to Article 6 of the UN Convention on Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide dated 1948, the competent authority to rule that an event is genocide is either an international criminal court or a competent tribunal of the State in the territory of which the act was committed. In other words, parliaments are not competent to adopt decisions on genocide. The aforementioned law acted against the Convention dated 1948 as it has authorized the Greek Parliament to make a decision on genocide. The rationale behind denying authority to parliaments on genocide lies in the fact that criminalization of genocide is a legal concern, not a political one, thus it should be dealt by a national or an international court. Thus, the Greek Parliament ruled in 1995 that the events of 1915 were genocide and took similar decisions in 1994 and 1998 with regard to Pontus Greeks and other Greeks in Anatolia.

By adopting this law, Greece joined the defamation campaign against Turkey for the 1915 events planned for 2015. It is not understood what Greece gained by adding genocide allegations on top of the many issues it has with Turkey.

132 “Cemil Çiçek, Almanya Federal Meclisi Başkanı’na ‘Üzüntü’ Mektubu Gönderdi”, 11.08.2014. Access Date: 03.02.2014. <http://www.merhabahaber.com/cemil-cicek,-almanya-federal-meclisi-baskanina-uzuntu-mektubu-gonderdi-275638h.htm>

133 “Germany is ready to Help Turkey ‘Learn Lessons from Past’”, *Mediamax.am*, 23 October 2014.

134 “We Expect Turkey’s Apologies to Armenia, Says German Envoy”, *Armenian News – Tert.am*, 29 October 2014.

### e. Australia

As is in many countries, in Australia as well, Armenians' ties with their national identity, like the Greeks and Assyrians, are preserved by remembering the painful experiences and having the desire for revenge, not by conserving their cultures and traditions. The result of this is the continuous vilification of Turks and Turkey and unrealistic demands such as reparations and territorial claims. In this context, Armenians for years tried to pass a law recognizing the genocide claims in the parliaments of this country. Despite their failure in the Federal Parliament, they were successful in several state parliaments. In 1 May 2013 the Parliament of New South Wales, the biggest state in the country, passed a motion titled "Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Genocides". This motion, which is against the policies of the Australian Federal Parliament and passed despite warnings from Turkey, drew negative reaction from the Turkish Government and in a statement by the Foreign Ministry, this motion was strongly condemned and it was stated that those responsible for it would be deprived of Turkey's hospitality and friendship and not have their place in the ceremonies for the centenary of the Battle of Gallipoli<sup>135</sup>. In the course of these discussions, the Australian Federal Government stated that this motion does not reflect its own policies.

The most recent development about this issue is the response by Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop to a letter by the Australian Turkish Advocacy Alliance President Ertunç Özen. In her response, Julie Bishop stated that it was unconstitutional for Australian territories to promulgate their own foreign policy and it was Australian foreign policy not to define the Armenian case as genocide.<sup>136</sup>

### f. Sweden

On 11 March 2010, the Swedish Parliament adopted a resolution by a majority of one vote putting forth that not only Armenians, but also Assyrians, Syrians, Chaldeans and Pontic Greeks have also been subjected to genocide and Prime Minister Erdogan cancelled his visit to Sweden in reaction to this. On the other hand, the Swedish Government opposed the resolution<sup>137</sup>. The resolution requested from the Swedish Government to take initiatives in order to persuade Turkey in accepting the genocide conducted towards Armenians, Assyrians, Syrians, Chaldeans, and Pontic Greeks. The Swedish Government,

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135 For more detailed information, see *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 45, p. 23-30

136 "Australian FM: Armenian Case Not Genocide", *ATAA*, 23 July 2014.

137 *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 35, p. 36,37

which attached importance to relations with Turkey, didn't make such an attempt. The government didn't change its stance despite demands from Armenian, Assyrian, Syriac, Chaldean and Pontic Greek people or politicians supporting them.

Lastly, on 24 October 2014, in response to a question on what the Swedish Government was going to do on the centenary of the Armenian Genocide in accordance with the resolution of the parliament four years ago, Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström said that initiatives to persuade Turkey to recognize the genocide was not on their agenda<sup>138</sup> and there was no changes in their policies.

### **g. Bolivia**

In Bolivia, on 24 October 2014, the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies unanimously passed a resolution declaring condemnation "against all denialist policies regarding the genocide and crimes against humanity suffered by the Armenian nation" and solidarity with the Armenian people for the fight of their claims, the preservation of human rights and the establishment of truth and justice.

President of the Bolivian Senate Zonia Guardia Melgar stated that the unanimous passage of the resolution was fully approved by the Bolivian Foreign Ministry and said that they offered full support and solidarity to the Armenian and the Kurdish people<sup>139</sup>.

There is no reason for such a support for the Armenian (and Kurdish) views by Bolivia. Maybe they acted under the influence of the Armenians in Argentina. However it is unreasonable for them to create a problem with Turkey, which has no issues with Bolivia, because of Armenians and Kurds.

While the Armenian Foreign Minister Nalbantian expressed their gratitude to the Bolivian Parliament and the government<sup>140</sup>, the Armenian press didn't show much interest to this development. There was no reaction from Turkey either.

138 "İsveç Dışişleri Bakanı: Soykırım gündemimizde yok", 24.10.2014. Access Date: 03.02.2014. <http://www.ulusalkanal.com.tr/dunya/isvec-disisleri-bakani-soykirim-gundemimizde-yok-h39635.html>

139 "Bolivya Legislature Unanimously Recognize Armenian Genocide", *Asbarez*, 1 December 2014.

140 Ibid

**THE MESSAGE OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY, RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN, ON THE EVENTS OF 1915, 23 APRIL 2014**

“The 24th of April carries a particular significance for our Armenian citizens and for all Armenians around the world, and provides a valuable opportunity to share opinions freely on a historical matter.

It is indisputable that the last years of the Ottoman Empire were a difficult period, full of suffering for Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, Armenian and millions of other Ottoman citizens, regardless of their religion or ethnic origin.

Any conscientious, fair and humanistic approach to these issues requires an understanding of all the sufferings endured in this period, without discriminating as to religion or ethnicity.

Certainly, neither constructing hierarchies of pain nor comparing and contrasting suffering carries any meaning for those who experienced this pain themselves.

As a Turkish proverb goes, “fire burns the place where it falls”.

It is a duty of humanity to acknowledge that Armenians remember the suffering experienced in that period, just like every other citizen of the Ottoman Empire.

In Turkey, expressing different opinions and thoughts freely on the events of 1915 is the requirement of a pluralistic perspective as well as of a culture of democracy and modernity.

Some may perceive this climate of freedom in Turkey as an opportunity to express accusatory, offensive and even provocative assertions and allegations.

Even so, if this will enable us to better understand historical issues with their legal aspects and to transform resentment to friendship again, it is natural to approach different discourses with empathy and tolerance and expect a similar attitude from all sides.

The Republic of Turkey will continue to approach every idea with dignity in line with the universal values of law.

Nevertheless, using the events of 1915 as an excuse for hostility against Turkey and turning this issue into a matter of political conflict is inadmissible.

The incidents of the First World War are our shared pain. To evaluate this

painful period of history through a perspective of just memory is a humane and scholarly responsibility.

Millions of people of all religions and ethnicities lost their lives in the First World War. Having experienced events which had inhumane consequences - such as relocation - during the First World War, should not prevent Turks and Armenians from establishing compassion and mutually humane attitudes among towards one another.

In today's world, deriving enmity from history and creating new antagonisms are neither acceptable nor useful for building a common future.

The spirit of the age necessitates dialogue despite differences, understanding by heeding others, evaluating means for compromise, denouncing hatred, and praising respect and tolerance.

With this understanding, we, as the Turkish Republic, have called for the establishment of a joint historical commission in order to study the events of a scholarly manner. This call remains valid. Scholarly research to be carried out by Turkish, Armenian and international historians would play a significant role in shedding light on the events of 1915 and an accurate understanding of history.

It is with this understanding that we have opened our archives to all researchers. Today, hundreds of thousands of documents in our archives are at the service of historians.

Looking to the future with confidence, Turkey has always supported scholarly and comprehensive studies for an accurate understanding of history. The people of Anatolia, who lived together for centuries regardless of their different ethnic and religious origins, have established common values in every field from art to diplomacy, from state administration to commerce. Today they continue to have the same ability to create a new future.

It is our hope and belief that the peoples of an ancient and unique geography, who share similar customs and manners will be able to talk to each other about the past with maturity and to remember together their losses in a decent manner. And it is with this hope and belief that we wish that the Armenians who lost their lives in the context of the early twentieth century rest in peace, and we convey our condolences to their grandchildren.

Regardless of their ethnic or religious origins, we pay tribute, with compassion and respect, to all Ottoman citizens who lost their lives in the same period and under similar conditions.”

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