

# FACTS AND COMMENTS

(OLAYLAR VE YORUMLAR)

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**Abstract:** *This article examines the relations of Turkey with Armenia and the Diaspora for the whole year of 2015, especially with the commemoration of centennial of Armenian Resettlement of 1915, as well as the countries whose parliaments adopted resolutions on genocide allegations. Latest developments on the Karabakh issue and Perinçek case in European Court of Human Rights are also studied in this article.*

**Keywords:** *Turkey, Armenia, Commemorations of the Centennial of the Armenian Resettlements, recognition of Armenian genocide allegations, Karabakh question, Perinçek case at ECtHR, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Ahmet Davutoğlu, Mevlut Çavuşoğlu, Serzh Sargsyan, Edward Nalbandian*

**Öz:** Bu yazı tüm 2015 boyunca Türkiye ile Ermenistan ve Diaspora arasındaki ilişkileri, Ermeni tehcirinin 100. yıldönümü anmalarını ve soykırım iddialarıyla ilgili parlamento kararı alan ülkeleri incelemektedir. Ayrıca, Karabağ sorunuyla ilgili son gelişmeler ve Avrupa İnsan Hakları Mahkemesi'nde görülmüş olan Perinçek davası da irdelenmektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** *Türkiye, Ermenistan, Ermeni Tehcirinin 100. Yıldönümü anmaları, Ermeni soykırım iddialarının tanınması, Karabağ sorunu, AIHM'de Perinçek davası, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Ahmet Davutoğlu, Mevlut Çavuşoğlu, Serj Sarkisyan, Edvard Nalbantyan*

ARTICLES

## I - EVENTS IN ARMENIA ON THE OCCASION OF THE CENTENNIAL

The most important event in 2015 within the context of the Armenian issue and Turkey-Armenia relations is no doubt the centennial of the Armenian Resettlement.

Several resolutions were adopted and new organizations were formed in Armenia regarding the commemoration of the 1915 events and to make demands from Turkey regarding these events. We touch upon the most important ones below.

### 1) Pan-Armenian Declaration on the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide

In order to commemorate the centennial in the most spectacular manner (and hereby promote and support genocide allegations internationally and lay the foundation for demands to be made from Turkey), and to coordinate Armenians around the world, “The State Commission on Coordination of the Events Dedicated to the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide”<sup>1</sup> was established on 23 March 2011. This Commission, which works with the broad participation from Armenia and the Diaspora, gathers once each year under the chairmanship of President Sargsyan.

On 29 January 2015, the Commission adopted the “Pan-Armenian Declaration on the Centennial of Armenian Genocide”. In his speech on this occasion,<sup>2</sup> stating that this document of national significance was for the first time adopted not through some state body or by separate segments of the Armenian nation, but with the participation of all the organizations representing Armenians all over the world and with the approval of Armenian churches, President Sargsyan indicated that the Declaration was embraced by all Armenians.

Furthermore, Sargsyan stated, “*We were frequently accused of not knowing what to demand from the world and from Turkey, regarding the Armenian Genocide. Do we expect various states to officially recognize it? What do we expect from Turkey? What do we want, and what is the foundation for our fight? Where are we going, and what is our precept for coming generations?*” and thus, implied that the Declaration includes the answers to these questions.

1 Ömer Engin Lütem, “Facts and Comments”, *Review of Armenian Studies*, issue 28, 2013, p. 9.

2 “The Pan-Armenian Declaration On The 100th Anniversary Of The Armenian Genocide Was Promulgated At The Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex”, *President of the Republic of Armenia*, press release, 29.01.2015, <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2015/01/29/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-visit-Tsitsernakaberd-Genocide/>

Sargsyan also indicated that the Declaration is both an ideological basis for the commemoration events of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and a roadmap for future activities.

### 1.1) Content of the Declaration

Penned in the format of resolutions by international organizations, the Declaration consists of two parts. The most significant point in the first part are the references to principles, events, and documents. The second part, which can be called “procedure”, includes points that will be done or must be done.

A remarkable statement in the first part is that the crime of genocide cannot go unpunished and statutory limitations cannot be applied to this crime. This part also includes several accusations made against the Ottoman Empire and Turkey without producing any evidence. The issue brought up are nothing new and are for propaganda purposes, and are extreme enough to impede a settlement among Turks and Armenians.

The most important paragraph in the first part is paragraph 9, as it seems to be about territorial demands. The words “appreciating [...] the role and significance of the Sevres Peace Treaty of 10 August 1920 and US President Woodrow Wilson’s Arbitral Award of 22 November 1920 in overcoming the consequences of the Armenian Genocide” stands out. As it is known, the phrase “overcoming the consequences of the Armenian Genocide” amounts to Turkey paying indemnities and returning Armenian properties and territories determined under the Woodrow Wilson Arbitral Award to Armenia. By placing this sentence into the Declaration, Armenian demands are indirectly touched upon. However, this part of the Declaration does not amount to an official demand from Turkey.

The “procedure” part of the Declaration also includes more important matters.

The first paragraph is related to the commemoration of 1.5 million people who were allegedly killed during the alleged Armenian genocide.

In the second paragraph, the commitment of Armenia and the Armenian people to the prevention of genocides, the restoration of the rights of people subjected to genocide, and the establishment of historical justice is confirmed.

In the third and fourth paragraphs, the feelings of gratitude are expressed and it is stated that states and international or religious organizations that recognized and condemned the alleged Armenian genocide are appreciated.

The fifth paragraph, appeals are made to UN member states, international organizations, and all people of good will to unite their efforts aimed at restoring historical justice and paying tribute to the memory of the victims of the alleged Armenian genocide. It is uncertain how the “historical justice” will be restored.

The sixth paragraph is on the collection of legal files regarding the “Armenian genocide” and determination of the norms and principles of international law. This subject is being linked to the worldwide recognition of the “Armenian Genocide” and the elimination of the consequences of this alleged genocide (indemnities, properties and territorial claims) and it is stated that the preparation of a file of legal claims to this end would be the point of departure in the process of restoring individual, communal, and pan-Armenian rights and legitimate interests. Thus, it is understood that Armenia will make several “legal” demands from Turkey on a yet undetermined date.

The seventh paragraph condemns the alleged illegal blockade of Armenia by Turkey, Turkey’s anti-Armenian stance in international organizations, and its imposition of preconditions in the normalization of relations between the two countries. However, what is interesting is the fact that all of these are being linked to things such as the impunity of the “Armenian genocide” that has nothing to do with the issue.

The eighth paragraph calls upon Turkey to recognize and condemn the “Armenian genocide” committed by the Ottoman Empire and to face its own history and memory. Also, in the paragraph, support for members of the Turkish civil society who “dare” to speak out against the official position of the Turkey is also enunciated.

The ninth paragraph expresses the hope that the recognition and condemnation of the “Armenian genocide” by Turkey will serve as a starting point for the historical reconciliation of Armenian and Turkish people.

The points in the tenth paragraph could be considered as “self-praise”. Indeed, in this paragraph, it is stated that the Armenian people, through their unbending will and national self-consciousness, restored the Armenian state; preserved and developed their national values, achieved the renaissance of their national culture, science and education; established a powerful and effective network in the Armenian diaspora, thus contributing to the preservation of their Armenian identity in Armenian communities worldwide and the protection of the legitimate rights of the Armenian people.

The meaning of the phrase in this paragraph that the Armenian people “united and restored the national gene pool that was facing extermination” is not clear. On the other hand, when analyzed “word by word”, it evokes a rather racist approach.

The eleventh paragraph considers the “centennial” an important milestone in the ongoing struggle for historical justice and states that the slogan is “I remember and demand”. This means that the campaign against Turkey will continue in the coming years.

The twelfth and last paragraph contains a message to the coming generations of Armenians. Accordingly, the coming generations of Armenians must protect their sacred native heritage with patriotism and consciousness. Furthermore, they must struggle for a stronger homeland, a free and democratic Republic of Armenia, the progress and strengthening of independent Nagorno-Karabakh, the efficient unity of Armenians worldwide, and the realization of the centuries-old sacrosanct goals of all Armenians.

This is an idealist call and it is disconnected from reality. What is true regarding Armenia is a stagnant economy, a decreasing population, a regime far removed from democracy, a foreign policy controlled by Russia and focused on looking out for Russia’s interests, and a costly Nagorno-Karabakh regime which is kept standing by artificial means.

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Sargsyan indicated that this Declaration is both an ideological basis for the commemoration events of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and a roadmap for future activities. However, it is hard to say that the Declaration is a “roadmap” due

to the fact that it includes very obscure remarks and does not make concrete demands.

### 1.2) Reactions to the Declaration

The Declaration was generally well-received in both Armenia and the Diaspora. On the other hand, it was disfavored by the Dashnaks. Nevertheless, it was not dwelled on by the media and it was not criticized nor praised much, probably due to its unclear wording.

Turkey, on the other hand, even though it concerns Turkey and might be a future source of disagreement between both countries, did not officially react to the Declaration. The Turkish media, also, did not dwell much upon this document.

Soon afterwards, the Armenian media ceased to speak of the Declaration.

### 1.3) Ter Petrosyan's objections

Armenia's first President Levon Ter Petrosyan (1991-1998) contested the Declaration, stating the following:<sup>3</sup>

Although Armenia supports the international recognition of the "Armenian genocide", the issue of recognition of "genocide" should not be the cornerstone of its foreign policy and should not be put in front of Turkey to recognize the genocide claim, considering it to be an internal affair of the latter country. The genocide issue must be solely regarded as a human rights issue.<sup>4</sup> Other states can call on Turkey to face its own history. However, Armenia must not do the same because that would damage Armenia-Turkey relations. Turkey would recognize the genocide only after such a normalization followed by an atmosphere of trust. Successive Armenian governments have avoided to make territorial claims to Turkey until now despite pressure from nationalist groups, as it will make the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations even more unlikely.<sup>5</sup>

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3 "Levon Ter-Petrosyan calls to stop putting pressure on Turkey over 'genocide'", *VestnikKavkaza.net*, 27.03.2015, <http://vestnikkavkaza.net/news/politics/68525.html>

4 "Levon Ter-Petrosyan: Diaspora Should Draft its own Genocide Agenda: Recognition Not A Cornerstone of Armenia Foreign Policy", *Hetq.am*, 24.03.2015.

5 "Ter-Petrosyan Critique Sarkissian et La Diaspora arménienne", *Armenews*, 12.02.2015.

The Declaration is a document fraught with dangers for Armenia and Karabakh and it cannot express the will of all Armenians unless it is adopted through a referendum.<sup>6</sup>

Ter Petrosyan's objections are in line with his policies towards Turkey during his presidency. He saw the genocide issue and territorial claims as elements impeding the establishment of relations with Turkey or ruining the already established relations. He possessed the opportunity to establish normal relations with Turkey and also tried to prevent Turkey from aiding Azerbaijan, which was an important matter at the time.

The last topic we will touch upon is whether this document is binding or not. The Declaration is not a law. It was not adopted through a referendum, but by the commission on the centennial commemoration at Sargsyan's request. Its bindingness is limited to the Commission's continued existence and President Sargsyan's tenure. In other words, the person succeeding President Sargsyan might not see himself bound to the Declaration and might change or even abolish it.

## 2) The Withdrawal of the Protocols from the Armenian Parliament

On February 16, 2015, Serzh Sargsyan sent a letter to the speaker of the National Assembly Galust Sahakyan, informing him that he recalled the Protocols signed by Turkey and Armenia in Zurich in 2009 from the National Assembly. He showed Turkey's alleged lack of a political will, its distortion of the letter and spirit of the protocols, its continuous introduction of pre-conditions, and the momentum in its "policy of denial" in the centennial of the "Armenian Genocide" as excuses for his decision.

Even though this behavior was well-received by the Armenian public, the fact that is overlooked is that the Protocols, although they were withdrawn from the Parliament, were not rejected. This provides the Armenian government the opportunity to send the Protocols to the National Assembly and request them to ratify the Protocols at any time later on.

As for Turkey's reaction to this incident, Tanju Bilgiç, spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey stated: "*We do not approve this attitude taken by Armenia. In our opinion, it is a wrong and unfortunate step. This move actually displays Armenia's incoherent and insincere stance it has maintained*

6 "Ter-Petrosyan No Longer Deems Meeting With Sarkisian 'Necessary'", *RFE/RL*, 20.02.2015.

*all along. It could also be regarded as Armenia's effort to create a new reason to accuse Turkey ahead of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1915 events.*<sup>7</sup>

The Protocols was enabling Armenia to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey and get its borders with Turkey opened. In return, Armenia was not required to abandon its genocide allegations, demands for compensation, or the return of properties. Ultimately, the Protocols are in favor of Armenia and therefore, Armenia cannot be expected to reject these documents completely.

### 3) Global Forum against the Crime of Genocide

One of the important events organized on the occasion of the centennial was the “International Social and Political Global Forum against the Crime of Genocide”. According to press reports, the Forum, held on April 22 and 23, was attended by over 600 people from 50 countries consisting of political and public figures, representatives of the clergy, journalists, editors, and national media.<sup>8</sup>

President Sargsyan, who made the opening speech,<sup>9</sup> stating that the Forum was one of the central events to mark the “Armenian genocide” centennial, continued by saying that he hoped that comprehensive discussions would be made and mechanisms would be developed for the prevention of genocide.

Indicating that the recognition and condemnation of the past crimes of genocide play an invaluable role in the prevention of genocide, Sargsyan touched upon the resolution on the Prevention of Genocide (A/HRC/28/L.25) adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council on March 23, 2015 upon Armenia's proposal and said that this resolution condemned the international public denial of the crime of genocide.

A “Yerevan Declaration” was read at the end of the Global Forum.<sup>10</sup> The most remarkable parts of the Declaration in our opinion are as follows:

7 “Dışişleri Bakanlığı Sözcüsü Tanju Bilgiç'in Basın Bilgilendirme Toplantısı”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, 17.02.2015, Ankara, [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakanligi-soz-cusu-tanju-bilgic\\_in-basin-bilgilendirme-toplantisi\\_-17-subat-2015\\_-ankara.tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakanligi-soz-cusu-tanju-bilgic_in-basin-bilgilendirme-toplantisi_-17-subat-2015_-ankara.tr.mfa)

8 “Two Day International Social and Political Global Forum against the Crime of Genocide”, *Panorama.am*, 22.04.2015.

9 “Address By H.E. Serzh Sargsyan, President Of The Republic Of Armenia, At The International Social And Political Global Forum Against The Crime Of Genocide”, *President of the Republic of Armenia*, press release, 22.04.2015, <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2015/04/22/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-Genocide-global-forum-April-22/>

10 “Global Forum's Declaration read during Armenian Genocide Commemoration”, *News.am*, 24.04.2015, <http://news.am/eng/news/263734.html>

Paying tribute to the memory of the victims of past genocides. The cases regarding Armenians, Pontic Greeks and Assyrians, Holocaust, Rwanda, Cambodia, Darfur are listed as past genocides, but there is strangely no mention of the Srebrenitsa Genocide that took place in Bosnia. The cases regarding the Pontic Greeks and Assyrians and the events in Cambodia and Darfur cannot be characterized as genocide in terms of international law, since there are no court verdicts. On the other hand, there is a judgement by the International Court of Justice regarding Srebrenitsa.

The last sentence of the Declaration, which is in our opinion the most significant part of the Declaration, reads “The Forum calls upon the international community on the eve of the Centennial commemorations of the Armenian Genocide to support the continuous efforts aimed at its worldwide recognition” and thus reveals what is expected from the Declaration.

As regards to what sort of a function does the Global Forum’s have regarding the Armenian genocide allegations, it is possible to see it as the final phase of the efforts to carry the struggle of forcing Turkey to acknowledge the alleged Armenian genocide from a bilateral ground to the international arena. Within this context, the Global Forum is closely related to the resolution on the Prevention of Genocide (A/HRC/28/L.25) adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council, which we mentioned above. This resolution, with the participation of several other countries, was proposed by Armenia and with its adoption, Armenia gained a primary position in the public opinion on the subject of the prevention of genocide.

#### **4) Canonization of Armenians Who Died During the Armenian Resettlement**

In some denominations of Christianity, especially among Catholicism, the church entitles people who strived to protect and develop Christianity and (occasionally) people who died for this cause as “Saint”.

Most saints are people who lived during early centuries of Christianity. The number of saints has declined after Christianity became established and became the official religion in many countries. On the other hand, in recent years, especially during Pope John Paul II’s papacy, there has been an increase in the people who have been canonized. His successors, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis also maintained the same policy.

The tradition of canonizing certain people or declaring them as saint also exists

in the Armenian Apostolic (Gregorian) Church. However, it is understood that this practice has not been implemented in the past four centuries. As in the Catholic Church, there conditions or criteria for canonization in the Armenia Church. These are: 1) Martyrdom for the faith 2) Leading a pious life, 3) Existence of miracles, and 4) Preaching the faith and spreading the belief.<sup>11</sup>

Certainly, in a setting where the number of 1.5 million is incorrect, and the names of even the more realistic 500-600,000 victims and the conditions under which they lost their lives is unknown, it was not possible to examine each event to see if it fit the criteria for sainthood. In fact, such an endeavor was not even attempted.

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Presided by Catholicos Karekin II and Catholicos Aram I, the Bishops' Synod of the Armenian Church was gathered on 24 September 2013 in Etchmiadzin and a decision on "the collective canonization of the victims of the Armenian Genocide" was adopted in principle.<sup>12</sup> No information was given on the

specific number of victims and their names at the canonization ceremony on 23 April 2015.<sup>13</sup> Thus, a new rank of sainthood that can be referred to as "anonymous saints" was created.

On the other hand, it can be said that a record was set by the canonization of 1.5 million in one day, whereas not a single person was canonized in the previous four centuries.

## 5) Speeches of Armenian Statesmen

It is seen that events regarding the commemoration of the centennial have two political functions. The first is the wide dissemination of the genocide allegations to the world public opinion. The second is putting pressure on Turkey in order to obtain concessions through continuous criticisms and by encouraging others to criticize.

11 "Canonization Ceremony Of Armenian Genocide Martyrs To Be Aired In Greece", *ArmenPress.am*, 12.03.2015, <http://armenpress.am/eng/news/797321/canonization-ceremony-of-armenian-genocide-martyrs-to-be-aired-in-greece.html>. For further information, please see; Michael Daniel Findikian, "From Victims to Victors, the Holly Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide", *Hye-Tert*, 19.04.2015.

12 "Bishops' Synod Considers Canonization of Genocide Victims", *Asbarez*, 30.09.2013, <http://asbarez.com/114512/bishops-synod-considers-canonization-of-genocide-victims/>

13 "Armenian killings were genocide - German president", *BBC*, 23.04.2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-32437633>

To this end, President Sargsyan began to utter the genocide theme on every occasion since the beginning of the year 2015, while Foreign Minister Nalbandian was rather active in the international arena. We summarize below their speeches in this regard.

### 5.1) Speeches of President Sargsyan

Turkey had sent invitations to the heads of state of various countries as well as Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan to take part in the commemoration ceremonies to marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Gallipoli.

Sargsyan responded to the invitation on 16 January 2015 and at the same time, the response was provided to the press.<sup>14</sup> In his response, Sargsyan touched upon Turkey's policy of "denialism", stating that peace and friendship first and foremost shall be based on the courage to confront the past, on historical justice, as well as on recognition of full-fledged universal memory but never on selective approach. He asserted that the purpose of organizing the ceremonies on 24 April, despite the fact that the Gallipoli land battles took place on 25 April was to distract the attention of the international community from the events dedicated to the centennial of the "Armenian genocide". Claiming that Turkey has much more important obligation towards its own people and the entire humanity such as the recognition and condemnation of the "Armenian genocide", he advised President Erdogan to commemorate 1.5 million innocent victims and give the world the message to not forget the "Armenian genocide".

As it is seen, Sargsyan began to attack Turkey in the early days of 2015.

President Sargsyan, who made a long speech at the 5<sup>th</sup> session of the State Commission on Coordination of the events for the Commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian Genocide,<sup>15</sup> mentioned the importance of broad participation from abroad and asserted that Turkey took a short-sighted and cynical decision to mark the anniversary of the Gallipoli Battle on the same day of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "Armenian genocide". He stated that although all means were permissible in politics, Ankara had done itself a disservice by taking this decision. He said that when he received that

14 "Armenia President Responds to Erdoğan Invitation", *News.am*, 16.01.2015.

15 "State Commission On Coordination Of Events For Commemoration Of 100th Anniversary Of Armenian Genocide Holds Its Fifth Session", *President of the Republic of Armenia*, press release, 29.01.2015, <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2015/01/29/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-participation-100th-anniversary-of-the-Armenian-Genocide-session/>

“immodest” invitation, he had deemed it necessary to instantly and publicly respond to President Erdoğan in order to prevent it to be misunderstood an misinterpreted by international community and media outlets, and he thought that his response and its repercussions in Turkey had proved the emptiness of the invitation.

Sargysan indicated that denialism was a manifestation of political weakness and an inferiority complex and it linked present-day Turkish authorities to their predecessors (Ottoman Empire) and rendered them accessory to that gravest crime against humanity.

On 31 January 2015, Turkey’s Presidential Spokesman İbrahim Kalın, speaking to the Anadolu Agency,<sup>16</sup> stated that the Armenian government was trying to

*Turkey’s Presidential Spokesman İbrahim Kalın, stated that the Armenian government was trying to turn the year 2015 into an international campaign against Turkey and Turks, and to this end was making statements that contained insults and hate speech that violated diplomatic practices, and were thus unacceptable.*

turn the year 2015 into an international campaign against Turkey and Turks, and to this end was making statements that contained insults and hate speech that violated diplomatic practices, and were thus unacceptable. Indicating that Sargysan’s remarks - unbecoming of a statesman- were returned to him, Kalın stated that Turkey will continue to stand against all attempts to manipulate a one-sided view of history through exploitative politicking.

Touching upon the steps taken by Turkey for the normalization of relations between the two countries (call for the establishment of a “Joint

Historians’ Commission” in 2005, signing of the 2009 Protocols, condolence message by President Erdoğan on April 23, 2015), Kalın said that Armenia, on every occasion, gave no response to these steps by Turkey. He further said that Armenia was welcoming towards neither having a discussion through a fair historical perspective without a political agenda for the events of 1915, nor ending the occupation in Nagorno-Karabakh to normalize its relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan and to establish peace and stability in the region. He stated that this attitude was particularly damaging to Armenia and Armenians and added that long-established Turkish-Armenian friendship will continue to survive despite the provocations of radical groups.

16 “Cumhurbaşkanlığı Sözcüsü Kalın’dan Sarkisyan’a Cevap: “Bir Devlet Adamının Ağzına Yakışmayacak Bu İfadeleri Aynen İade Ediyoruz””, *Presidency of the Republic of Turkey*, 31.01.2015, <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/2755/cumhurbaskanligi-sozcusu-kalindan-sarkisyana-cevap-bir-devlet-adaminin-agzina-yakismayacak-bu-ifadeleri-aynen-iade-ediyoruz.html>

Stating that Çanakkale land and sea battles have been commemorated on 18 March and 24-25 April for years, Kalın stressed that this year the centennial ceremony would be conducted with the highest participation at the national and international level, and it would issue a message of peace and brotherhood to the world.

Issuing a press release on the same day, the Turkish Foreign Ministry<sup>17</sup> also voiced similar issues and indicated that Sargsyan's tone, which was not fitting of a representative of the Armenian nation, was strongly condemned. The Foreign Ministry diagnosed that the aim was to transform 2015 into a year of hatred against Turkey, that all means of the state were being allocated to this end, and thus, it was sought to prevent the Armenian people and the world public opinion from focusing on the current issues of the country. Another diagnosis is that the attitude of radical Armenian circles to exploit past events was also observed in those who are governing the State. Describing this attitude as archaic, the press release indicated that Turkey did not see this approach as an obstacle for Turkey from embracing the Armenian people and the Armenian diaspora that it saw as the Anatolian diaspora, and indicated that Turkey will resolutely continue to take decent steps in this regard.

“At the Foot of Ararat” is a forum organized each year by the Union of Russian Journalists, the Ministry of Culture of Armenia, and an international organization called Media Congress. It aims to further develop relations between South Caucasus countries.<sup>18</sup>

Sargsyan, who attended this forum on 18 March 2015, devoted a majority of his speech to the Armenian genocide allegations.<sup>19</sup> Sargsyan said that they wanted to commemorate the “centennial” with the Turkish people, and therefore, they invited President Erdoğan to honor the memory of the Armenian genocide victims, but they once more encountered “denial”. He indicated that Turkey decided to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Gallipoli on April 24 in order to distract the attention of the international community from the centennial of the “Armenian genocide”.

17 “No: 45, 31 Ocak 2015, Ermenistan Cumhurbaşkanlığı'nın 29 Ocak 2015 Tarihli Beyanı Hk.”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_45\\_31-ocak-2015\\_ermenistan-cumhurbaşkanlığı\\_nin-29-ocak-2015-tarihli-beyanı-hk\\_tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_45_31-ocak-2015_ermenistan-cumhurbaşkanlığı_nin-29-ocak-2015-tarihli-beyanı-hk_tr.mfa)

18 “Annual media forum of Russian media “At the foot Of Ararat” takes place in Armenia”, *MediaCongress.ru*, [http://mediacongress.ru/en/proekty/2014\\_en/mediaforum\\_of\\_the\\_russian\\_mass\\_media\\_at\\_the\\_foot\\_of\\_mount\\_ararat/](http://mediacongress.ru/en/proekty/2014_en/mediaforum_of_the_russian_mass_media_at_the_foot_of_mount_ararat/)

19 “Address By President Serzh Sargsyan At The 5th Media Forum ‘At The Foot Of Mount Ararat’”, *President of the Republic of Armenia*, press release, 18.03.2015, <http://www.president.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2015/03/18/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-speech-Media-forum-speech>

Sargsyan indicated that Turkey's policy of denial set a precedent for the recurrence of new genocides, and efforts to avoid responsibility or consign the "Armenian genocide" to oblivion can be characterized as continuation of the crime and encouragement of new genocides. He added that larger segments of the Turkish intelligentsia and progressive youth, nevertheless, were demonstrating courage to confront their historical past.

Stating that Turkey's policy of "zero problems with neighbors" turned into "zero neighbors and numerous problems", Sargsyan indicated that Turkey's real intention was to impose its own views in its relations with its neighbors, which Sargsyan deemed was a manifestation of Turkey's Neo-Ottoman policy.

In an interview with France 24 on 23 March 2015,<sup>20</sup> Sargsyan criticized Turkey's decision to hold events to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gallipoli Battles at the same time with commemoration ceremonies for the centennial of the "Armenian genocide", and claimed that Turkey was trying to sabotage the "Armenian genocide" centennial ceremonies on 24 April.

President Sargsyan, who gave an interview to Rossiya 24,<sup>21</sup> said that Turkey did not fulfill its commitments regarding the protocols signed in Zurich in 2009 to establish relations between Turkey and Armenia.

Mentioning that awareness in the Turkish public opinion on the "Armenian genocide" in 1915 was increasing, Sargsyan said, "We see a positive move and we are grateful to those Turkish citizens, who have started the movement."

In an interview he gave to the Italian Corriera Della Sera on 12 April 2015, President Sargsyan said that the reality of the "Armenian genocide" was undisputed and even Ankara recognized the fact that Armenian civilians were killed. Indicating that some countries referred to it as genocide and others referred to it as massacres or tragedy, he claimed that countries who did not recognize acted as such due to their interests with Turkey.

In an interview with CNN Türk on 22 April,<sup>22</sup> President Sargsyan claimed that Prime Minister Davutoğlu's statement on 20 April on the "Ottoman Armenians Who Lost Their Lives" aimed at the international public opinion and said, "I

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20 "Sarkisyan: Soykırımı anmak Türkiye karşıtlığı değil", *DemokratHaber.net*, 22.03.2015, <http://www.demokrathaber.net/dunya/sarkisyan-soykirimi-anmak-turkiye-karsitligi-degil-h46569.html>

21 "Sarkisyan: Türkiye'ye önköşul belirtmedik", *DemokratHaber.net*, 07.04.2015, <http://www.demokrathaber.net/dunya/sarkisyan-turkiye-ontkosul-belirtmedik-h47309.html>

22 "Ermenistan Cumhurbaşkanı Sarkisyan: Umarım Erdoğan 24 Nisan'da...", *Hürriyet*, 22.04.2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/28809858.asp>

hope President Erdoğan sends a stronger message on 24 April and relations can be normalized“, suggesting that they expected Erdoğan to make a statement apologizing and/or recognizing the genocide allegations.

In an interview with Euronews correspondent Olaf Bruns on 23 April,<sup>23</sup> President Sargsyan said that the recognition of the genocide by the Turks is the shortest path to reconciliation between the two nations and he asserted that if it is done as such, relations would be elevated to a high level in a short period of time.

Regarding Turkey’s proposal to form a commission of historians, Sargsyan stated that he was not aware of a case where historians settled a dispute and he further indicated that he did not know how such a commission would operate since allegedly Turkish historians would be under pressure from Turkish society and Turkish authorities, and Armenian historians would be under the pressure of Armenian society and Armenian authorities. He also said that this proposal was an insult as it questions the veracity of the Armenian genocide.

On 24 April 2015, the newspaper Hürriyet published Cansu Çambel’s lengthy interview with President Sargsyan.

Sargsyan explained the aim of the invitation to the President of Turkey to participate in the commemoration events on April 24 as “giving tribute to the innocent victims of the Armenian Genocide and proclaiming from the memorial to the whole world that we join our efforts in condemning the crimes of genocide of the past, thus preventing the possible recurrence of genocide.”

Regarding the Sub-Commission on the Historical Dimension included in the 2009 Protocols, which Turkey hopes to be an organ in which the genocide issue will be discussed, Sargsyan indicated that this proposal is *only* to delay the process of the “Armenian genocide” recognition, and divert the attention of international community from that crime. He also said that protocols contain no clause of establishing any “commission on historical studies”.

About the question of genocide, Sargsyan stated: “*the veracity of the Armenian Genocide has been studied by various scholars, social and political figures, international law experts, the International Association of Genocide Scholars, lawmakers, and also a number of Turkish historians for about a century now. The unanimous view of all of them was that what happened to the Armenian people in the Ottoman Empire definitely constituted genocide.*”

23 “They did not succeed in erasing us from the earth”: Armenian president interview”, *Euronews*, 22.04.2015, <http://www.euronews.com/2015/04/22/armenian-president-sargsyan-pledges-remembrance-on-massacre-centenary/>

To the question “Does the Republic of Armenia have any territorial claims on Turkey”, he responded: “*The Republic of Armenia has never declared any territorial claims either on Turkey, or any other country since our independence. There has never been such an issue on the foreign policy agenda of our country, and there is none today. That is a clear-cut position. We are a fully-fledged and responsible member of the international community.*”

On 24 April at the Genocide Memorial in Yerevan, in the presence of top state officials and foreign guests,<sup>24</sup> President Sargsyan gave a speech similar to ones he makes every year on the “Armenian genocide”. Although he did not use the word Turkey, he explained what happened to Armenian in the Ottoman Empire within the known clichés.

Towards the end of his speech, Sargsyan stated that they were grateful to those who gathered at Taksim Square in İstanbul that day and he asserted that these were people who are standing for the righteous cause for their fatherland (Armenia?).<sup>25</sup>

It is possible to explain Sargsyan’s -contrary to expectations- lack of use of the words “Turkey” and “Turks” with François Hollande and Vladimir Putin’s attendance and their unwillingness to being a party to remarks that would cause tensions with Turkey.

In an interview he gave to Channel One Russia correspondent Vladimir Pozner on 28 April,<sup>26</sup> President Sargsyan said that the “Armenian genocide” was not present-day Turkey’s fault, however Turkey was being an accomplice by denying the alleged genocide. He indicated that they invited Turkey relieve itself of this burden by recognizing “the genocide”.

Touching upon the fact that the US and Israel do not describe the events of 1915 as genocide, Sargsyan stated that these two countries attached more importance to their interests than humanitarian values and they preferred to not offend Turkey due to their interests in Turkey.

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24 Four Heads of State attended the ceremonies: Russian President Vladimir Putin, French President François Hollande, South Cyprus President Nikos Anastasiades, and Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic.

25 “President Serzh Sargsyan Pays Tribute To Memory Of Armenian Genocide Victims At Tsitsernakaberd”, *President of the Republic of Armenia*, press release, 24.04.2015, <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2015/04/24/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-Genocide-April-24/>

26 “Erdogan’s visit would have been signal to both Armenians and Turks – Serzh Sargsyan”, *Tert.am*, 28.04.2015, <http://www.tert.am/en/news/2015/04/28/pozner-sargsyan-interview/1659665>; “Atatürk’ün mozolesine çelenk konması bize acı veriyordu”, *Milliyet*, 28.04.2015, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/-ataturk-un-mozalesine-cicek/dunya/detay/2051010/default.htm>

According to Milliyet's report regarding this interview, Sargsyan expressed that they were hurt when the Soviet Foreign Minister laid a wreath at the mausoleum of Atatürk during his visit to Turkey. With such a statement, Sargsyan revealed his racial hatred against Turks.

Apart from this, he indicated that they will approve the protocols as long as Turkey does the same and he reiterated that they do not have any territorial demands from Turkey.

On the dates of 5-7 May 2015, President Sargsyan made a working visit to Washington. However, he was not able to hold bilateral meetings with President Obama and Vice President Joe Biden, who are his direct interlocutors.<sup>27</sup>

In his speech during a prayer performed at the Washington National Cathedral on 7 May,<sup>28</sup> Sargsyan reminded that this cathedral was the resting place of President Woodrow Wilson, who also wanted to give lands to Armenia from Anatolia through the Treaty of Sevres, and stated that they have constantly felt the support of the US in their century-long struggle for justice and truth. He praised the US by saying that progressive American public and political figures strongly condemned the anti-Armenian policy of the Sultan and reached out a helping hand to the Armenians.

*Sargsyan expressed that they were hurt when the Soviet Foreign Minister laid a wreath at the mausoleum of Atatürk during his visit to Turkey. With such a statement, Sargsyan revealed his racial hatred against Turks.*

As we have tried to explain above, since the beginning of 2015 and especially in March and May, President Sargsyan on many times spoke about the topics of genocide allegations and relations with Turkey. Later, starting from the middle of May, discussions on these topics died out and were kept in the background due to several internal developments in Armenia. Similarly, both the general elections and terrorism in Syria and especially PKK's attacks left the Armenian question off the agenda in Turkey.

Following ISIS's attack to the town of Suruç which killed 28 people, President Sargsyan's letter<sup>29</sup> to President Erdoğan, in which he condemned terrorism in

27 "President Serzh Sargsyan Meets With U.S. Senators In Washington DC", *Armenpress*, 06.05.2015.

28 "In Washington President Serzh Sargsyan Takes Part In Ecumenical Prayer In Memory Of Armenian Genocide Victims", *President of the Republic of Armenia*, press release, 08.05.2015, <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2015/05/08/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-at-Washington-Church-Armenian-Genocide/>

29 "Armenia Condemns Deadly Blast in Turkey", *RFE/RL*, 21 July 2015.

all its manifestations and conveyed his condolences, was well-received in Ankara.

## 5.2) Speeches of Foreign Minister Nalbandian

During this period, Foreign Minister Nalbandian touched upon the topic of genocide and relations with Turkey. He also complained about Turkey's support to Azerbaijan on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and indicated that Turkey must stay away from this issue if she wants to positively contribute to it.<sup>30</sup>

With respect to the Protocols, Nalbandian occasionally repeated that Turkey was not respecting the international law principle of *pacta sunt servanda*, in other words, Turkey was not keeping its promise to implement the Protocols.<sup>31</sup> Since the Protocols were not ratified by both countries, it is not possible to put the blame solely on Turkey.

In a speech he made following European Parliament's resolution dated 15 April 2015 confirming that it recognized the Armenian genocide allegations,<sup>32</sup> Nalbandian said: *"It has been clear for a long time that the policy of denial has no perspectives. By recalling ambassadors, by harshly criticizing those states, organizations, which pay tribute to the memory of 1.5 million innocent victims of the Armenian Genocide, and which are raising their voices against denial for prevention of new crimes against humanity, Turkish authorities find themselves more and more isolated on the sinking boat of denialism."*

Another opinion frequently voiced by Nalbandian is that the international recognition of the genocide is an irreversible process. Considering the fact that the genocide claim was for the first time recognized in 1965 by a foreign country (Uruguay) and only 26 countries recognized in 50 years, it is possible to say that at this rate, it will take around 350 years for all countries (approximately 200 countries) to recognize the Armenian genocide allegations.

Another point Nalbandian mentions on occasion is the fact that more and more Turks are starting to question their government's policy of denialism was

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30 "E. Nalbandian Met en Gadre l'Europe Contre L'Attitude Négative de la Turquie Dans le Conflit du Karabagh", *NAK*, 20.03.2015.

31 "FM E. Nalbandian's Interview to Sloven Daily Newspaper 'Dnevnik'", Groong.usc.edu, 14.03.2015.

32 "Turkey's increasingly isolated on sinking boat of denialism, says Nalbandian", *ArmeniaNow.com*, 17.04.2015, [http://armenianow.com/news/62443/armenia\\_foreign\\_minister\\_nalbandian\\_turkey\\_european\\_parliament\\_resolution](http://armenianow.com/news/62443/armenia_foreign_minister_nalbandian_turkey_european_parliament_resolution)

encouraging for the future. As we will see when we will talk about public opinion polls, the ratio of people in Turkey who recognize the genocide allegations is around 9%. What is more important than the low ratio is the fact that the majority of those who recognize the genocide allegations do as such not because of an humanitarian interest for Armenians who died during and after the resettlement, but in order to use it as a means to criticize or vilify the present order in Turkey.

## II – TURKEY’S REACTION, SPEECHES OF TURKISH STATESMEN

### 1) Speeches of President Erdoğan

Since 2002, the first four month of 2015 is the period where President Erdoğan talked the most on the Armenian question, made detailed speeches and strongly defended Turkey’s policy on this issue. The increase in criticisms and even accusations against Turkey by Armenia and the Diaspora, resolutions passed by countries and institutions and the tendency to do as such by others on the occasion of the centennial seem to be the reason behind this. As the reconciliation efforts towards Armenia and the Diaspora, it is understood that President Erdoğan felt the need to personally join the struggle.

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Below, we summarize President Erdoğan’s most important speeches on the Armenian question.

In his speech at the Ambassadors Conference -held in the first day of January 2015- gathering Turkey’s heads of missions (ambassadors and permanent representatives) in order to review the past year and determine the positions to be taken against issues to be encountered in the coming year, touching upon the Armenian question, President Erdoğan stated that Armenia was imposing its own memory and point of view by reading historical event one-sidedly and politicizing the issue. He further stated: “I’m confident that the Foreign Ministry and other relevant authorities will work in a coordinated and active manner to overcome these claims.”<sup>33</sup>

33 “Enerjimizi Güçlü Ekonomiye, Dış Politikaya ve Müreffeh Bir Toplum İnşasına Yoğunlaştırmalıyız”, *Presidency of the Republic of Turkey*, 06.01.2015, <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/170/91874/enerjimizi-guclu-ekonomiye-dis-politikaya-ve-mureffeh-bir-toplum-insasina-yogunlastirmaliyiz.html>

The fact that President Erdoğan's remarks were reported in the Armenian press with the titles "Erdoğan will combat Armenian 'allegations'"<sup>34</sup>, "Turkey Will Not Allow the Distortion of Historical Truths, According to the Turkish President"<sup>35</sup>, "Turkey Vows to Actively Counter Armenian Genocide Allegations"<sup>36</sup> revealed that the possibility of Turkey, which continuously sought to reconcile with Armenian and the Diaspora, to oppose the campaign against Turkey in 2015 was concerning them.

In January 29, President Erdoğan answered questions from several Turkish columnists in an interview in TRT.<sup>37</sup> Erdoğan said that no positive response was received from Armenia to his condolence message on 23 April 2015, although other foreign leaders expressed their appreciation. He indicated that in his message, he also prayed for the souls of Muslim Turks since the tragedies were not one-sided and Muslims also suffered losses like Armenians. Stating that the Armenian Diaspora was trying to draw Turkey into some sort of a fight, Erdoğan said that Turkey did not have to accept the so-called Armenian genocide because someone told them to do.

President Erdoğan stated that Turkey opened its archives and wanted Armenian and third country historians to study these genocide allegations. Indicating a report would be presented following these studies, Erdoğan said: "*If Turkey is actually guilty, if it actually committed a crime, if there is a price we have to pay, then we will discuss this and take the necessary steps.*" However, he indicated that Armenia was not in such an effort and Armenia was content with saying "Turkey is guilty". He said: "*we should all respect the report of researchers who will be commissioned*".

Erdoğan also indicated that Davutoğlu started a process following the Protocols, in which Switzerland was also involved, however Armenians ran away from the table. He indicated that Armenians were getting resolutions issued in the parliaments of irrelevant countries which, he added, hardly found or will find place in the world.

During his visit to Colombia, in a speech he made in the Externado University of Colombia, President Erdoğan touched upon his condolence message he issued in 23 April and said: "*We have made an effort to fix relations with*

34 "Erdoğan Va Combattre les "Allégations" de Génocide Arménien", *Collectif VAN*, 08.01.2015.

35 "La Turquie ne Permettra Pas de Déformer les Faits Historiques Selon Le Président Turc", *Armenews*, 07.012015.

36 "Turkey Vows to Actively Counter Armenian Genocide Allegations", *Global Post*, 06.01.2015.

37 "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Biz Arşivlerimizi Açtık", *Haberler.com*, 30.01.2015, <http://www.haberler.com/cumhurbaşkanı-erdogan-biz-arsivlerimizi-actik -bir-6917107-haber/>

*Armenia and open a new page. Unfortunately, our hand of peace has always been rejected by the influence of the Armenian diaspora. On the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1915 events, we repeat our sincere call to Armenia. Let's take this issue out of the area of politics and refer it to scholars and scientists."*

Indicating that they invited Armenia to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Gallipoli, Erdoğan indicated that this invitation was rejected and thus, doors of dialogue and peace was once again closed. He further said: *"We will not give up on our efforts for peace and dialogue concerning 1915 events."*

Reminding that millions of Muslims lost their lives in conflicts and exiles in the Balkans just before World War I, President Erdoğan said: *"However, we do not accuse anybody of genocide because of that. Commemorating the lost lives is different than trying to yield political and diplomatic results by using them. We support showing respect for memories but we will never allow them to carry out a hostile campaign against our nation and country by using those memories."*<sup>38</sup>

In a speech he delivered at the Ottoman Archives Congress Center on 19 March 2015, touching upon the Armenian issue,<sup>39</sup> President Erdoğan said that the Armenian diaspora was trying to instill hatred against Turkey everywhere in the world through campaigns on genocide allegations and that the purpose of these campaigns were to treat Turkey and Turks as an enemy instead of keeping Armenians' sorrow alive. He indicated that pains and tragedies could be experienced during the years of the Great War and Armenians were not the only people affected by them. He said that the greatest massacres targeting Muslims in the Balkans and in Caucasia happened in the same period and as many as Armenians were harmed, there were hundreds of thousands of people who were harmed by Armenians in Anatolia.

Lastly, Erdoğan indicated that Turkey had nothing that it could account for and said that if Turks' 100-150 years of sorrow were to be examined, far more [suffering] would be found than Armenians allegedly went through.

During an interview conducted by France24's Marc Perelman on 27 March,<sup>40</sup> in response to the question *"the president of Armenia is accusing you of*

38 "Erdoğan'dan flaş 'Ermeni soykırımı' açıklaması", *TimeTürk*, 12.02.2015,

<http://www.timeturk.com/tr/2015/02/11/erdogan-dan-flas-ermeni-soykirimi-aciklamasi.html>

39 "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: 'Ey Ermeni diasporası, belgelerimiz burada'", *Hürriyet*, 19.03.2015,

<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/28494448.asp>

40 "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan France24'e Konuştu", *Milliyet*, 28.03.2015,

<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-france24-e-konustu-ankara-yerelhaber-696238/>

*sabotaging the commemoration of the events by hosting a commemoration in Turkey on the same day—on April 24. What’s your response?”, Erdoğan stated: “Until today, when it comes to the problems between Turkey and Armenia, we have always been the ones to take positive steps. Armenia has never taken any positive steps. We have always extended our hand in peace, but our hand was never met by theirs. Last year, on the 23rd of April, I published a letter. This letter received quite positive feedback, but I did not get the same positive feedback from Armenia. This year, we are commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gallipoli land battles. We are not obligated to obtain permission from Armenia to do so. It is a date in history. It is set in history. It is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the land battles of Gallipoli, and it has nothing to do with the ceremonies to be held by Armenia.”*

In a speech he delivered in Kocaeli on 18 April 2015, President Erdoğan stated that Armenians, who were provoked by the Russians, French, British and others that were active in the region, engaged in provocations against hundreds of thousands of Muslims and thus opened the doors leading to the resettlement. Pointing out that the biggest proof that Turks had no problems with Armenians was the Armenian population of 80,000 in Turkey, many of them living illegally, President Erdoğan said: *“If we had a systematic animosity toward Armenians, we would not have let this happen in the first place.”* Indicating that Turkey fundamentally had no issues with the Armenians, he stated that Armenians in Turkey are able to freely get education, trade, participate in political party activities, become candidates to parliament, and work in the public sector, in other words, they enjoy equal rights possessed by other citizens.

President Erdoğan, who said *“those who have an issue with us and our brothers are the Armenian diaspora and the Armenian state”*, indicated that they, as Turkey, repeatedly extended their hand and expressed their good-will but did not get any result since Armenia was unable to free itself from the Diaspora’s and other countries’ control. Indicating that their doors are still open with regard to relations with Armenia, he said: *“We are for cooperation with Armenia in the event of positive steps regarding the so-called Armenian genocide allegations and the occupation of Karabakh. We are always ready to discuss with Armenian politicians and authorities who are willing to show the necessary will and courage. But first, the Karabakh issue must be resolved.”*

President Erdoğan underlined that Armenians have ended up becoming pawns to the anti-Turkish front and Turkey. He indicated that Turkey’s calls were actually proving the opportunity for Armenians to protect their own will. Stating that Turkey was a true-hearted country, he once more called on Armenians to use this opportunity.

Mentioning the archives issue, Erdoğan said that Turkey's archives were open and asked Armenian and other countries to open their archives. He further said: *“Bring your documents and let us establish a joint commission. Let the commission research and evaluate the issue in all its parts. Let them reach a just memory and let us proceed accordingly.”*

Delivering a speech at the Peace Summit attended by foreign guest and organized in 23 April on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Land Battles of Galipolli, President Erdoğan largely talked about the Armenian issue and emphasized the importance he attached to this issue.<sup>41</sup>

Talking about the reasons of the resettlement, Erdoğan said that all qualified men were fighting on the fronts during WWI and therefore, Armenian gangs, provoked by various powers, had launched attacks on civilian people in the somewhat vulnerable Anatolia. He said that the Ottoman Empire, which had experienced similar problems and suffered great losses in Balkans before, in the light of these experiences, felt the need to take measures, one of them being the resettlement of the Armenian population in Anatolia to southern lands. Voicing that Turkey is well aware of the difficulties faced during this process, President Erdoğan stated that it is all recorded in the archives and said: *“I would like to sincerely express that all Armenian allegations concerning the 1915 events, particularly the figures, are baseless, groundless.”*

***Erdoğan stated: “It is not the politicians’ or parliaments’ job to investigate these allegations. It is the historians who should examine the period between 1870 and 1920. I invite those who support the Armenian allegations and claim to share their sufferings to share the sufferings of our 4 million brothers who lost their lives at the same period. I want them to remember the pain and sufferings of more than 40 Turkish diplomats, who lost their lives as a result of the attacks carried out by Armenian terrorists between 1970s and 1990s, and the pain of their families”.***

Erdoğan stated that of all the 30 million people who died during World War I, only the deaths of Armenians were being highlighted and he added that its use as a means for campaigning against Turkey and the Turkish nation was unacceptable. He further stated: *“[...] Unfortunately, the hand I extended has always gone unreciprocated. [...] It is not the politicians’ or parliaments’ job to investigate these allegations. It is the historians who should examine the*

41 “Öne Sürülen Ermeni İddialarının Hepsı Dayanaksızdır, Mesnetsizdir”, *Presidency of the Republic of Turkey*, 23.04.2015, <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/31981/one-surulen-ermeni-iddialarinin-hepsi-dayanaksizdir-mesnetsizdir.html>

*period between 1870 and 1920. I invite those who support the Armenian allegations and claim to share their sufferings to share the sufferings of our 4 million brothers who lost their lives at the same period. I want them to remember the pain and sufferings of more than 40 Turkish diplomats, who lost their lives as a result of the attacks carried out by Armenian terrorists between 1970s and 1990s, and the pain of their families. The Armenian terrorist organization ASALA is making threats again. [...] We should stand united in solidarity against international terrorism so that we can protect the rights of the wronged, so that justice and truth can reign over this world.”*

President Erdoğan sent a message to the religious ceremony held in the Armenian Patriarchate of İstanbul on 24 April 2015.<sup>42</sup> (Appendix I)

The purpose of this message is to commemorate all the Ottoman Armenians who lost their lives during World War I and extend the President’s condolences to their children and grandchildren. In the message, not only Armenians but also all the Ottoman citizens, regardless of their ethnic and religious identity, are commemorated with compassion and respect.

The message states that the sorrowful events experienced in the past by the Armenian community is known and their pain are sincerely shared. Hereby, the state’s highest-ranking official indicated that Armenians experienced sorrowful events during World War I.

Another significant point of the message is the statement that the Republic of Turkey was established not by forgetting these sufferings but by learning to cope with them, which carries the meaning that what is important is not to keep sorrows alive but to carry on.

Also calling on the diaspora Armenians, the message reiterates Turkey’s good will by stating “please rest assured also that our hearts remain wide open.”

President Erdoğan’s message was read at the ceremony held in the Armenian Patriarchate of İstanbul on 24 April in Kumkapı. The ceremony was attended by EU Minister Volkan Bozkurt to represent the Turkish Government. It was the first time a Turkish minister attended such a ceremony.

In his speech at the General Assembly of Independent Industrialists’ and

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42 “Sayın Cumhurbaşkanımızın 24 Nisan 2015 Günü İstanbul Ermeni Patrikhanesi’nde Yapılan Dini Törene Gönderdiği Mesaj”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sayin-cumhurbaskanimizin-24-nisan-2015-gunu-istanbul-ermeni-patrikhanesi\\_nde-yapilan-dini-torene-gonderdigi-mesaj.tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sayin-cumhurbaskanimizin-24-nisan-2015-gunu-istanbul-ermeni-patrikhanesi_nde-yapilan-dini-torene-gonderdigi-mesaj.tr.mfa)

Businessmen's Association (MÜSİAD) on April 25, President Erdoğan also addressed several countries' approach regarding the Armenian issue.<sup>43</sup>

Stating that countries, including Russia, France, Germany, Austria, were supporting an allegation based on Armenia's lies and that the US was, unfortunately, joining them, President Erdoğan invited these countries to clean up the bloody stains on their own history.

Addressing German President Joachim Gauck's several statements which we will also address below, Erdoğan indicated that there were nearly 1 million German citizens of Turkish origin and 3 million Turks were living in Germany, therefore Gauck's behavior did not make sense.

Also touching upon Russia, Erdoğan said that more than 10 million people lost their lives due to practices in this country since 1917. He further said that what has happened in the Caucasus and Ukraine was crystal clear. On the other hand, he also pointed out that France's bad record from Morocco to Rwanda was well-known throughout the world.

President Erdoğan said: *“those who criticize the resettlement application for self-defense under World War I conditions must first answer for the blood stains in their own history. While were struggling to defend our nation, they were committing crimes against humanity for their imperialistic purposes.”* He further said: *“Henceforth, the process will be far more different. We will never be on the defensive. We will be a country where information, science and research are put forth with evidence.”*

## 2) Speeches of Prime Minister Davutoğlu

In this period that we analyze, Prime Minister Davutoğlu have talked to the press several times on the Armenian issue and allegations which became one of the hot topic in the media on the occasion of the “centennial”. Furthermore, he took several steps regarding the minorities in Turkey, especially Turkish Armenians.

In a statement he issued on 19 January 2015 on the occasion of the death of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink (Appendix II), Prime Minister Davutoğlu indicated that the resettlement had inhumane consequences. He also stated that Turkey shared the sufferings of Armenians and, “with patience and resolve”, was endeavoring to re-establish empathy between the two peoples. Within this

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43 “Amaçları İmam Hatiplere Kilit Vurmak”, *Hürriyet*, 26.04.2015.

context, he referred to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's message dated 23 April 2015.

One of the most important findings in the statement is the fact that although time froze in 1915 for Armenians, Turkey left behind the generalizations and stereotypical assertions of the past.

Another important point is that it is only Turks and Armenians who can effectively address their issues together and work jointly to find ways forward, as other countries' involvement to Turkish-Armenian relations have, both in the past and today, complicated the problems rather than contribute to their resolution.

The statement also refers to the re-acquaintance between Turks and Armenians, the development of mutual trust and cooperation and re-establishment of friendship between the two people.

In the first months of 2015, Prime Minister Davutoğlu came together with representatives of minorities twice.

At a lunch with Christian and Jewish religious leaders in İstanbul, Davutoğlu criticized the rising Islamophobia and racism in Europe and said: *"We have never attempted any discrimination against our citizens. On the grounds of the fundamental principle of citizenship, the lives, commodities, minds, and honor of our citizens are sacred to us, regardless of religious, sectarian, or ethnic differences."*<sup>44</sup>

Prime Minister Davutoğlu also said that the principle of equal citizenship will be the fundamental principle in the return of foundation properties. During this meeting, it was also decided to build a new church in Yeşilköy.<sup>45</sup> According to one source, this is a first in the Republic's history.<sup>46</sup>

One and a half months later, on 11 February 2015, Prime Minister Davutoğlu came together in Ankara Palace with representatives of religious foundations, non-government organization and journals from minorities, which half of them, nearly 40, were Armenian.

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44 "Gayrimüslim Ruhani Liderleri Ağırlayan Başbakan A. Davutoğlu, "Türkiye Toprakları ile Musevi İnancı Arasında da Bağ Kurdu", *KeHaber.org*, 03.01.2015, <http://keh Haber.org/2015/01/03/davuto-glu-turkiye-topraklari-ile-musevi-inanci-arasinda-bag-kurdu/>

45 "Davutoğlu İle Azınlık Temsilcilerinin Bir Araya Geldiği Görüşmede, Kilise Yapılması Kararlaştırıldı", *Anadolu Ajansı*, 02.01.2015.

46 "MHP'li Vural' dan 'kilise' çıkışı", *GerçekGündem.com*, 04.01.2015, <http://www.gercekgundem.com/siyaset/95036/mhpli-vuraldan-kilise-cikisi->

According to press reports, Prime Minister Davutoğlu, in his speech, said: *“You are genuinely children of this land. You did not come from abroad, you will not be leaving to go abroad. These traditions have lived in this land and they will continue to live in this land. At a time when an ideology where everyone is isolated, where everyone takes refuge in their own neighborhoods, whereas with PEGIDA the Muslims are ostracized in Germany, where Europe is cleansed of Muslims is in existence, know that we will be the first line of defence against anyone who want to cleanse Turkey of any religious congregation.”*

On the Armenian issue, indicating his hope that Turkish Armenians will not be affected by Turkey-Armenia relations, Davutoğlu said: *“If Armenians had withdrawn from at least one district, the border could have been opened. However, there was resistance on this matter.”*<sup>47</sup>

On 20 April 2015, Prime Minister Davutoğlu issued a statement on the “on the Ottoman Armenians Who Lost Their Lives during the Last Years of the Ottoman Empire”, which we provide the full text in Appendix III.

Prime Minister Davutoğlu, as President Erdoğan did one year ago, offered his condolences to the descendants of “innocent” Armenians who lost their lives in World War I.

Furthermore, he stated that it would have been much more meaningful if Turkey and Armenia had been able to commemorate Ottoman Armenians together, history must not be exploited for political purposes, and two nations must understand each other and contemplate a future together. He indicated that it is important to face the past with honesty and the blame should not be laid solely on the Turkish nation. Indicating that the scars left by the exile and massacres that Turkish and Muslim Ottomans were subjected to a century ago were still vivid in minds today, Davutoğlu said that there should be no discrimination between pains suffered. He indicated that memories should not be imposed upon one another and the memories and convictions of all Ottoman citizens must be heard and respect, and he added that every viewpoint must be freely expressed and openly debated. Indicating that century old wounds must be healed and human ties must be re-established once again, the Prime Minister stated that Turkey will do its utmost for friendship and peace. He underlined that, rather than aggravating old wounds, an approach based on just memory and a common peaceful future must be adopted.

47 “Siz bu toprakların asli çocuklarıdır”, *Agos*, 12.02.2015, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/10569/siz-bu-topraklarin-asli-cocuklarisiniz>

As it is seen, this statement is a search for reconciliation and is filled with expressions of goodwill. However, despite the well-known views of Armenians that they were the only ones who suffered, the statement gives utterance to the suffering of Turks and Muslims, and mentions the exile and massacres they were subjected to.

Reactions to Davutoğlu's statement in Armenia and the Diaspora were unfortunately negative. It seems that this reaction was due to the fact that Davutoğlu's conciliatory and peaceful statement was divergent from the aggressive, incriminating, demanding attitude prevailing in Armenia at a time when 24 April was drawing closer.

Speaking at an election rally in Kars on 5 May 2015, Davutoğlu called on the whole Caucasus, especially on Armenia with the following statement: *"From Kars, I would to extend our regards to the Caucasus. Let's solve our differences and discuss history. Let's build peace and a new Caucasus. However, Armenia must also immediately withdraw from occupied Azerbaijani territories and return those territories to their true owners."*<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand, several speeches of Prime Minister Davutoğlu shed light to the contacts he made with Diaspora representatives when he was the Foreign Minister.

It is understood that these contacts were made in Los Angeles<sup>49</sup> and New York<sup>50</sup> for the most part. The Armenians who attended these meetings did not want their identities to be made public.<sup>51</sup> Since they wanted to remain unidentified, it could be inferred that these Armenians have no ability to influence the Armenian community. Incidentally, it must be noted that the majority of Armenian Americans are under the influence of the Dashnak Party, but the supporters of the Armenian Assembly of America are out of this influence and lack the ability to reach out to large Armenian masses.

In the aforementioned meetings, Davutoğlu indicated that in World War I, not only Armenians but also Muslims (Turks) suffered pains and declared Turkey's position with the following statement: *"We should not adopt an approach which interprets suffering in a one-side manner and from one perspective. We*

48 "Başbakan Davutoğlu Kars mitinginde konuştu", *NTV*, 05.05.2015, [http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/basbakan-davutoglu-kars-mitinginde-konustu.\\_Alz1hzbPEayS2dtuPY-bkg](http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/basbakan-davutoglu-kars-mitinginde-konustu._Alz1hzbPEayS2dtuPY-bkg)

49 "Başbakan'dan muhalefete 'Ermeni Açılımı' eleştirisi!", *SanalBasın.com*, 19.04.2015, <http://www.sanalbasin.com/basbakandan-muhalefete-ermeni-acilimi-elestirisi-9425583>

50 "Başbakan Davutoğlu: İstanbul'un en zengini Ermeni", *Hürriyet*, 22.04.2015.

51 "Ahmet Davutoğlu'dan Diaspora Açıklaması", *Anadolu Ajansı*, 21.04.2015.

*must be able to share all sufferings. We exhibit an approach based on understanding each other through mutual sharing in our sufferings and on building a common future. Let us understand history correctly and reflect it to today's politics in a peaceful manner and let's build a future together. This is Turkey's official approach.*"<sup>52</sup> However, it is understood that those who were at the meeting did not agree with this and said "let us talk about our sufferings, not yours".<sup>53</sup>

Prime Minister Davutoğlu expressed that Armenians had been using a language of hate and anger for years and the Diaspora was continuing its existence through this. He indicated that the sufferings and the ethnic cleansing in the Balkans during World War I and the Khojaly Massacre was being made to be forgotten, and he reiterated the proposal to form a joint historical commission.<sup>54</sup> Stating that the whole goal of the Armenian diaspora is to take revenge,<sup>55</sup> Davutoğlu stated: "*If you speak with them, they say it is a trap, if you issue condolences, they say it is not sufficient, if you keep your distance from them, they say Turks are not open-minded. So what do they want us to do? We say 'let us share our pain, they say 'no, your pain should be forgotten, you should understand our pain and apologize for it.' We say let us speak amongst each other, they say 'you should first recognize the genocide, then we will talk'. We cannot move on with such a mind-set.*"<sup>56</sup>

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Regarding Turkey's stance, Davutoğlu indicated that Turkey will respond if Armenians accuse Turkey of a collective crime (genocide)<sup>57</sup> and said "*if they think that they could gain something by pressuring Turkey, they will neither gain anything nor will we give up.*"<sup>58</sup>

52 "Başbakan'dan muhalefete 'Ermeni Açılımı' eleştirisi!".

53 "Başbakan'dan muhalefete 'Ermeni Açılımı' eleştirisi!".

54 "Başbakan Davutoğlu: İstanbul'un en zengini Ermeni".

55 "Başbakan Davutoğlu: İstanbul'un en zengini Ermeni".

56 "Ahmet Davutoğlu'dan Diaspora Açıklaması".

57 "Davutoğlu Ermeni Diasporası İntikam Almak İstiyor", *Haberler.com*, 22.04.2015.

58 "Başbakan'dan muhalefete 'Ermeni Açılımı' eleştirisi!".

Another important point Davutoğlu mentions is the fact that the issue would be solved easily if the issue remained between Turks and Armenians, but third parties continuously keep causing provocations regarding this issue.<sup>59</sup>

### 3) Speeches of Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu

Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu also made several statements about the developments regarding the Armenian issue.

In an interview he delivered to Sabah, he pointed out that Yerevan must give back Karabakh territories to normalize ties with Ankara.<sup>60</sup>

During his visit to Azerbaijan, which also coincided with the anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre, Çavuşoğlu said “*Armenia could not pass the sincerity test; we see that they are being malevolent against neighbors,*” and pointed out that Armenia should withdraw from occupied Azerbaijani territories for the protocols to take effect. He indicated that unless Armenia fulfills this condition, the implementation of the protocols was out of question and added that this condition was known to the world. He indicated that Armenia could be included in the regional cooperation mechanisms in the South Caucasus if Armenia corrects its mistakes, withdraws from the territories it occupies, and respects Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity.<sup>61</sup>

In a speech on 13 March, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu said: “*Although we [Turkey] repeatedly hold out the hand of friendship, they [Armenia] reject it unkindly. They are at the center of problems in the South Caucasus. Armenia, having problems in its relations with all neighboring countries, must reconsider its foreign policy.*”<sup>62</sup>

In response to Çavuşoğlu’s remarks, Armenian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Tigran Balayan reiterated Armenia’s common and “classical” attitude.<sup>63</sup> This attitude could be summarized as:

- Normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations without preconditions.

59 “Başbakan Davutoğlu: İstanbul’un en zengini Ermeni”.

60 “Turkish Foreign Minister Reiterates Conditions for Opening Border”, *Asbarez*, 20.02.2015.

61 “Dışişleri Bakanı Çavuşoğlu: Ermenistan protokollerin içini boşalttı”, *Anadolu Ajansı*, 25.02.2015.

62 “Çavuşoğlu Gündeme İlişkin Soruları Yanıtladı”, *Diyanet.net*, 13.03.2015.

63 “Tigran Balayan: Ermenistan, Soykırım gerçeğini asla şüphe altında bırakmaz”, *ArmenianGenocide100.org*, 29.03.2015, <http://armeniangenocide100.org/tr/official-armenian-will-never-question-fact-of-armenian-genocide-3>

- Armenia would never question the “fact” of the Armenian genocide. It would never cease the process of its international recognition.
- Turkey must keep away from the Karabakh issue.

Delivering a speech in April at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington on “Turkey’s Role in a Turbulent Middle East”, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu touched upon relations with Armenia. Indicating that it was easy to convince foreign parliaments to adopt resolutions, he said that these did not help to solve the problem and underlined that Turkey and Armenia should solve the issue together. Touching upon a sensitive issue for Americans, he said that minorities in Turkey were enjoying all rights and mentioned that properties of religious minorities were given back, and churches and synagogues were being renovated.

Stating that Turkey was for the normalization process and that it had spent much effort in this regard since 2009, Çavuşoğlu said: *Of course, this year, Armenia and the Armenian diaspora focus on influencing world public opinion on the events of 1915. So, we are not expecting any positive response from our Armenian friends. But we have to look forward and we need to overcome these issues.*<sup>64</sup> In his speech, Çavuşoğlu also stated that Turkey took bold steps in the normalization process (President Erdoğan’s message of condolence in 2014 and Prime Minister Davutoğlu’s messages regarding Hrant Dink and those Armenians who lost their lives), that Armenia too needed this normalization, that Turkey would not give up on the normalization and that it would continue to spend effort in this issue.

Reminding that Turkey proposed to Armenia to set up a joint committee of historians and scientist and to open the archives, he said that they proposed third countries to participate in the committee and open their archives.

In an interview with Daily Sabah, Çavuşoğlu indicated that Armenian lobbies’ constant push over the issue of the 1915 incidents onto the agenda every year had created fatigue in Washington, adding that it was no surprise that the number of U.S. representatives who signed proposals supporting Armenian genocide allegations was decreasing.<sup>65</sup>

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64 “Çavuşoğlu: Bu sene Ermeni dostlarımızdan olumlu bir karşılık beklemiyoruz”, *Agos*, 21.04.2015.

65 “Turkey, Armenia could mourn together, says FM Çavuşoğlu”, *Daily Sabah*, 22.04.2015, <http://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2015/04/22/turkey-armenia-could-mourn-together-says-fm-cavusoglu>

### III - ARMENIAN ISSUE IN PARTIES' ELECTION MANIFESTOS AND THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM

#### 1) The Election of Three Armenian MPs

The ceremonies and other events held in Armenia and other countries on the occasion of the centennial of the Armenian Resettlement was pushed on the back burner, even forgotten by the Turkish public due to the general elections held on 7 June 2015 and on 1 November 2015 and the terrorist incidents in that period.

The fact that there are three MPs of Armenian origin in the Turkish parliament is an unprecedented event since half a century and even more. This is due to the small number of the Armenian community that is lacking the numbers to delegate MPs to the parliament. However, since several political parties attach importance to the election of one Armenian from their candidates list, the election of three MPs of Armenian origin was made possible. Incidentally, an interesting, even contradicting, development is the fact that although parties ensured the election of MPs of Armenian origin, they barely mentioned the Armenian issue in their election campaigns.

#### 2) Armenian Issue in Parties' Election Manifestos

Below, we provide passages from the election manifestos of four parties who won seats in parliament at the general elections on the Armenian issue and relevant sections and analyze them.

##### 2.1) Justice and Development Party (AKP)<sup>66</sup>

*In accordance with the peaceful settlement of conflicts in South Caucasus, our country will continue to strive for the cessation of the occupation in Azerbaijani territories and Upper Karabakh, and the ending of tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In the upcoming period, we will continue steps aimed at normalizing relations with Armenia.*

*We expect from Armenia to turn towards an inclusionary understanding*

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66 Source: AKP Manifesto for the June 7, 2015 General Elections, <http://www.akparti.org.tr/site/dosyalar#!2015-secim-beyannamesi-fasikulleri>

*in search of a just memory which will pave the way to mutual benefits and cooperation, and to respond to our initiatives in a farsighted manner. We think that an environment of peace, stability and prosperity in the Caucasus can be possible only in this way.*

It is seen that Azerbaijan's problems with Armenia are included in AKP's approach to the Armenian issue and Armenia, which is also in line with the Turkish government's policy currently pursued.

It is understood that Turkey's efforts for normalization, despite its initiatives for reconciliation having failed, will continue. However, success of these efforts depends on a change in Armenia's approach on both the genocide allegations and the Karabakh issue.

## 2.2) Republican People's Party (CHP) <sup>67</sup>

*We will make attempts on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh within the framework of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and through negotiations.*

*We will to aim at the establishment of good-neighbor relations and endeavor to resolve problems between Turkey and Armenia.*

It is envisioned to make attempts for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict through negotiations within Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, in other words, without giving territories to Armenia. It must be noted that the Azerbaijani government, since the relevant territories are forcibly occupied, asserts that it has the right to "self-defense" in accordance with article 51 of the UN Charter. However, CHP's manifesto gives the impression that it does not include this point.

As for Turkey's problems with Armenia, the manifesto is limited with the statements that it is aimed to establish good neighbor relations and efforts will be made for the resolution of issues with Armenia. On the other hand, CHP's approach is similar to AKP's stance to continue "*steps for the normalization of relations with Azerbaijan*".

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67 Source: CHP Election Manifesto 2015, <http://yasanacakbirturkiye.com/CHP-SECIM-BILDIRGESI-2015.pdf>

### 2.3) Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)<sup>68</sup>

#### *European Union*

*Continuation of accession negotiations and rejection of any approach outside of Turkey's full membership to the EU will form the basis of our policy, on the condition that EU's approach will not harm Turkey's interests on basic foreign policy issue areas such as national unity and integrity of Turkey, terrorism and separatism, Cyprus, Greece, and Armenia. (p. 246)*

As it is seen, there is no mention of Armenia other than it being Turkey's "basic foreign policy issue", which is linked to the harm that might be caused by EU's approach during accession negotiations. In other words, it is indicated that Armenia must not gain any advantage during accession negotiations.

### 2.4) Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)<sup>69</sup>

#### *Facing the Past and Truths*

*HDP will take necessary steps to establish "Truth Commissions" with the aim of researching genocides, massacres, executions, disappearances, and similar practices that took place in the past and uncovering the truth about these incidents.*

*It will remove the economic embargo on Armenia, enhance economic, political and diplomatic relations, and build bridges of friendship with the Armenian people. It will unconditionally open the Turkey-Armenia border unilaterally closed by Turkey. It will support efforts the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue between Armenia and Azerbaijan.*

HDP's manifesto addresses two subjects.

The first one is the establishment of "Truth Commissions" for "genocides, massacres, executions, disappearances and similar practices that took place in the past", without mentioning the Armenian genocide allegations. It is understood that these commissions will research events, including the

68 Source: MHP 7 July 2015 Election Manifesto, [http://www.mhp.org.tr/usr\\_img/mhpweb/MHP\\_Secim\\_Beyannamesi\\_2015\\_tam.pdf](http://www.mhp.org.tr/usr_img/mhpweb/MHP_Secim_Beyannamesi_2015_tam.pdf)

69 Source: HDP 2015 Election Manifesto, <http://www.hdp.org.tr/images/UserFiles/Documents/Editor/HDP%20Se%C3%A7im%20Bildirgesi%20Tam%20Metin.pdf>

suppression of Kurdish insurrections and resettlement of Armenians, and the result they come up with will be “officially recognized” and approved.

However, since many HDP officials state whenever possible that they recognize the Armenian Resettlement as “genocide”, it is surprising that there is no clear statement that HDP recognized the alleged Armenian genocide in the election manifesto. It is inferred from the manifesto that in order to describe the events of 1915 as genocide, a “Truth Commission” must take a decision to that effect.

On the other hand, the idea of “Truth Commissions” is similar to the Turkey’s proposal to Armenia to set up a group of historians and other experts, which is shortly known as “Commission of Historians.” This group was to research the events of 1915 and declare its findings to the world public. As it is known, this proposal was rejected by Armenia.

The second subject addressed in HDP’s manifesto is about relations with Armenia and foresees the acceptance of certain demands by Armenia. These are: the removal of economic embargo on Armenia, and the unconditional opening of the Turkey-Armenia border. Furthermore, it is desired to enhance economic, political and diplomatic relations and build bridges of friendship with the Armenian people. However, it is not clear how relations will be enhanced and bridges of friendship will be built without the resolution of issues such as genocide allegations, rejection of current borders, and occupation of Azerbaijani territories including Nagorno-Karabakh. As to supporting the efforts to resolve the Karabakh issue, manifesto does not put forth any disagreement.

### 3) Relations with Armenia in the New Government’s Program

The section related to Armenia in the Turkish Government Program announced by Davutoğlu on 25 November 2015 at the Grand National Assembly is below:

*“In accordance with the peaceful settlement of conflicts in South Caucasus, our country will continue to strive for the cessation of the occupation in Azerbaijani territories and Upper Karabakh, and the ending of tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In the upcoming period, we will continue steps aimed at normalizing relations with Armenia.*

*We expect from Armenia to turn towards an inclusionary understanding*

*which research history in search of a just memory and which will pave the way to mutual benefits and cooperation, and to respond to our initiatives in a farsighted manner. We think that an environment of peace, stability and prosperity in the Caucasus can be possible only in this way.”*

For the new government, the cessation of the occupation in Karabakh and other Azerbaijani territories is one of the issues that must be resolved. The program indicates that the government will strive accordingly.

As for Turkey-Armenia relations, it is seen that the new government will continue its steps for the normalization of relations between the two countries.

*Armenia is expected to turn towards an “understanding that examines history in search of a just memory”. This statement reveals Turkey’s proposal to establish a Commission of Historians in 2005 and/or its desire to discuss genocide allegations within the framework of the “Sub-Commission on the Historical Dimension”.*

On the other hand, Armenia is expected to turn towards an “understanding that examines history in search of a just memory”. This statement reveals Turkey’s proposal to establish a Commission of Historians in 2005 and/or its desire to discuss genocide allegations within the framework of the “Sub-Commission on the Historical Dimension”. Yet, as it is known, Armenia is against these as it will open the “fact” of genocide up for discussion.

Turkey, on the other hand, wants Armenia to respond to Turkey’s initiatives and proposals. Furthermore, it is stated that an environment

of peace, stability, and prosperity in the Caucasus can be possible only in this way. In other words, if Armenia continues to be silent over Turkey’s proposals or rejects them, there will be no environment of peace, stability, and prosperity in the Caucasus.

#### IV - PUBLIC OPINION POLLS

Public opinion polls are important in terms of identifying opinions and trends among the people, and providing governments insight regarding policies they will pursue.

Several researches done in Turkey and Armenia, which we summarize below, gives an idea about what the Turkish and Armenian public think about the Armenian issue and each other’s countries.

## 1) Research Of The Center For Economics And Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM)<sup>70</sup>

A public opinion poll was conducted by The Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM) with 1508 participants on “Turkey’s Potential Policies on the Armenian Issue” between November 7, 2014, and December 7, 2014. Below are the questions asked and the percentages of the answers given:

- *Turkey should apologize for the Armenians that lost their lives in 1915 and admit that what happened was a genocide: 9.1%*
- *Turkey should apologize for the Armenians that lost their lives in 1915 but should take no other steps: 9.1%*
- *Turkey should express its regret over the Armenians that lost their lives in 1915 but should not apologize: 12.0%*
- *Turkey should express that not everyone that lost their lives in 1915 were Armenians and express its regret for all the Ottoman citizens that perished in that period: 23.5%*
- *Turkey should take no steps: 21.3%*
- *No idea/No response: 25.0%*

We can list the conclusions as follows:

Firstly, it must be noted that the percentage of people who accept the Armenian genocide allegations is as low as 9.1%. The poll also shows the political parties supported by the participants. The percentage of people who accept the Armenian genocide allegations and vote for BDP (HDP), which is usually voted by citizens of Kurdish origin, is 24.4%. Excluding those of Kurdish origin, remaining Turkish citizens accept the genocide thesis at a percentage lower than 9.1%, which is very low and shows that a large majority of the Turkish people do not believe the “genocide” assumption, despite the efforts of certain liberal intellectuals supported by the EU and the US.

On the other hand, the percentage of those wanting some kind of a reconciliation with Armenians or a statement of sorrow is as high as 44.6% (9.1% + 12.0% + 23.5% = 44.6%), possibly meaning that there is a desire for a reconciliation with Armenians without recognizing the genocide claim.

70 “Türk kamuoyu Ermeni meselesine üzgün ama...”, *Hürriyet*, 25.12.2014, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/27841379.asp>.

## 2) Orc Research On The Armenian Issue<sup>71</sup>

The Objective Research Center (ORC) conducted a poll in 17-20 April and tried to identify what Turkish citizens and academics think about Western countries, the European Parliament, and international law (judiciary), and what their general opinion on Armenia is.

The questions asked in the poll and their answers are below:

*In your opinion, what is the reason for the West's interest in the Armenian issue and them being a party to it?*

### Citizens

1. To Create Chaos and Disorder:	18.5%
2. To Discredit Turkey:	15.6%
3. For Religious Reasons-Their Christianity:	9.1%
4. To Take Revenge From Turks:	6.9%
5. Their Common Interests:	6.2%
6. Objection to a Strong Turkey:	6.1%
7. To force Turkey to Give Lands to Armenians:	5.7%
8. Other:	6.5%
9. No Opinion:	25.4%

### Academics

To Put Turkey in a Tight Spot - Turcophobia:	52.8%
Religious Reason - Islamophobia:	28.4%
Common Interests:	11.5%
Diaspora:	7.3%

It is not easy to make a comparison since citizens and academics did not answer the same questions. In order to make a comparison between questions, we tried to find the equivalent of the "Turcophobia" question, which was asked to academicians, in the citizens section and when we summed up the percentages of the answers given to questions 1,2,4,6, and 7, we found the same percentage (52.8%) of the answers given to the "Turcophobia" question.

Ultimately, citizens and academics believe that the main reason for the West's

71 "ORC'nin Ermeni Meselesi Anketi", *SonSeçimAnketi.com*, 28.04.2015, <http://www.sonsecimanketi.com/orcnin-ermeni-meselesi-anketi>

interest in the Armenian issue is “Turcophobia”. The second reason is the fact that Armenians are Christians.

*In your opinion, what should be Turkey’s attitude about EU membership following the European Parliament’s statements on the Armenian resolution?*

*Citizens = C, Academics = A*

<i>EU Negotiations Should Be Suspended:</i>	<i>C (62.8%)</i>	<i>A (29.3%)</i>
<i>EU Negotiations Should Be Completely Terminated:</i>	<i>C (28.9%)</i>	<i>A (26.8%)</i>
<i>EU Negotiations Should Continue:</i>	<i>C (6.2%)</i>	<i>A (39.0%)</i>
<i>No Opinion:</i>	<i>C (2.1%)</i>	<i>A (4.9%)</i>

Considering these answers, the opinions of “citizens” about Turkey’s membership to the EU are highly negative, since the total percentage of those who want EU negotiations to be suspended or terminated is 91.7%. It is beyond doubt that the European Parliament’s resolution dated 15 April 2015 had an effect on this. A majority of academics (56.1%) share the same opinion. However, a good part, as high as 39%, want EU negotiations to continue. As is known, the Turkish government is also in favor of the continuation of negotiations.

*General Opinion about Armenia*

*Citizens = C, Academics = A*

<i>Friendly Country:</i>	<i>C (-)</i>	<i>A (2.1%)</i>
<i>Enemy Country:</i>	<i>C (32.0%)</i>	<i>A (39.8%)</i>
<i>Neighbor Country:</i>	<i>C (67.8%)</i>	<i>A (56.4%)</i>
<i>No Opinion:</i>	<i>C (0.4%)</i>	<i>A (0.4%)</i>

What is interesting regarding this answers is the fact that the percentage of people who perceive Armenia as an enemy is rather low. The high percentage of people who see Armenia as a neighbor points to a tendency to reconcile with Armenia.

*Do you believe that verdicts adopted and to be adopted by the international judicial organs are unbiased?*

*Citizens = C, Academics = A*

<i>Yes:</i>	<i>C (1.3%)</i>	<i>A (1.6%)</i>
<i>No:</i>	<i>C (95.2%)</i>	<i>A (85.4%)</i>
<i>No Opinion:</i>	<i>C (3.5%)</i>	<i>A (13.0%)</i>

These answers confirms the present negative opinions in Turkey against international judiciary.

### 3) Research of the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC)

A public opinion poll was conducted in Armenia on relations with Turkey at approximately the same period.<sup>72</sup> However, since questions are very different, in principle, both polls are incomparable.

Below are the answers given to the questions asked in this survey, which was conducted by the organization called The Caucasus Research Resource Centers as part of an EU project to promote direct contacts between the Turkish and Armenian civil societies:

<i>Those who want the opening of the Armenia-Turkey border:</i>	51%
<i>Those who oppose it:</i>	33%
<i>Undecided:</i>	16%
<i>Those who think that the opening of the border would benefit the Armenian economy:</i>	57%
<i>Those who think that the opening of the border would damage Armenia's national security:</i>	50%
<i>Those who think Turkey is untrustworthy:</i>	82%

These answers show that Armenian public opinion is divided over the opening of border with Turkey. While 51% support it and 57% think that it would be beneficial for the Armenian economy, a nearly same percentage of people (50%) think that it would damage their country's national security. The amount of those who look at opening of borders in economic terms and those who look at it from an anti-Turkish point of view are nearly the same. On the other hand, the high percentage of those who think that Turkey is untrustworthy suggests a paranoia in Armenia against Turkey. In short, as a result of the continuous propaganda against Turkey, it is seen that these negative feelings and thoughts prevalent in the Armenian public are at such a level that it could prevent reconciliation, let alone peace, between both countries.

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72 "Armenians Divided Over Turkish Border Opening", *RFE/RL*, 21.04.2015.

#### IV - THE ATTITUDE OF CERTAIN COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANITIONS AT THE “CENTENNIAL”

In this section, we will examine countries and international organizations who took an attitude in favor of the views of Armenia and the Diaspora and/or recognized the Armenian genocide allegations.

##### 1) The Vatican

The Italian Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who was elected as Pope on 13 March 2013 and took the name Fransiscus (Francis), appeared to have recognized the Armenian genocide allegations and uttered these allegations on various occasions.<sup>73</sup>

Due to the extremely pro-Armenian climate in Argentina, it was normal in a sense for Cardinal Bergoglio to feel such sentiments. However, his responsibilities had changed as he had become the Pope and should have also considered Turkey’s stance against Armenian genocide allegations. The new Pope, who had no experience outside Argentina and therefore, could not look at certain things globally, came across Turkey’s negative reaction to his remarks regarding the genocide allegations. In

*Due to the extremely pro-Armenian climate in Argentina, it was normal in a sense for Cardinal Bergoglio to feel such sentiments. However, his responsibilities had changed as he had become the Pope and should have also considered Turkey’s stance against Armenian genocide allegations.*

a statement on 8 June 2013, the Turkish Foreign Ministry indicated that the Pope expressed views reflecting the one-sided opinions of Armenians regarding 1915 events. The Ministry said that reliable factual information was required in order to understand this period and to this end, Turkey had proposed the establishment of a joint commission composed. Indicating that there was no competent international court decision regarding the events of 1915, the Ministry also underlined that there were differing opinions among the scholars on the events. Stating that history should not be exploited for political reasons by passing one-sided judgments, the Ministry indicated that the Office of the Pope had to contribute to world peace instead of bring out enmity from historical events.<sup>74</sup>

73 Lütem, “Facts and Comments”, pp.107-108.

74 “No: 163, 8 Haziran 2013, Papa’nın 1915 Olaylarına İlişkin İfadeleri Hk.”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-163\\_-8-haziran-2013\\_-papa\\_nin-1915-olaylarina-iliskin-ifadeleri-hk.tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-163_-8-haziran-2013_-papa_nin-1915-olaylarina-iliskin-ifadeleri-hk.tr.mfa)

For Armenians, the support of the Vatican was essential at the centennial of the Armenian Resettlement. Although Pope Jean-Paul had recognized the Armenian genocide by using the word “Metz Yegern” (“Great Calamity”) at a prayer during his visit to Armenian on 2001,<sup>75</sup> his successor Pope Benedict XVI had kept away from this subject.

In his speech during his official visit to the Vatican on May 2015,<sup>76</sup> Catholicos Karekin II invited the Pope to visit Etchmiadzin in 2015 on the occasion of the centennial of the Armenian genocide. The pope did not mention this invitation in his reply speech. On the other hand, he referred to the events of 1915 as “tragic events” and mentioned that many Armenians died.<sup>77</sup>

In March, President Sargsyan visited the Vatican and met with the Pope.<sup>78</sup> A statement from the Vatican only indicated that political issues were discussed. However, some websites reported that Sargsyan had invited the Pope to Armenia for the centennial commemoration ceremonies, which was probably true.

Pope Francis met with President Erdoğan during his official visit to Ankara on 29 November 2015. The next day he went to İstanbul and visited the Patriarchate of Phanar and met with Patriarch Bartholomew. He signed a Joint Declaration with Patriarch Bartholomew that addressed religious/moral subjects more so than other subjects. He also attended the Liturgy for the Feast of St. Andrew and left İstanbul on the third day.

In the plane that had left İstanbul, journalists asked him why he did not bring up the Armenian issue during his visit. Referring to Erdoğan’s condolence message on April 23, the Pope said: *“some judged it to be too weak, but it was, in my judgment, an extending of the hand. And this is always positive. Something that I had very much at heart was the Turkish-Armenian border: if that border could be opened, it would be something good.”*<sup>79</sup> It seems that the Pope continued to be interested in Turkey-Armenia relations.

With 24 April drawing near, what the Pope was going to do on that date was an object of curiosity. In the end, it appeared that he was going to lead a special

75 Ömer Engin Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar”, *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, issue 3, 2001, pp.14-15.

76 “Pope Francis Hosts Armenian Catholicos at Vatican”, *Asbarez*, 08.05.2015.

77 “Papa, Sözde Ermeni Soykırımı Ayini Yapacak İddiası”, *TurkishNY.com*, 13.11.2014, <http://www.turkishny.com/headline-news/2-headline-news/166040-papa-sozde-ermeni-soykirimi-ayini-yapacak-iddiasi#.VdODK7Ltmko>

78 “Sarkisyan’dan Vatikan’a Ziyaret”, *Haberler.com*, 19.09.2014, <http://www.haberler.com/sarkisyan-dan-vatikan-a-ziyaret-6502525-haberi/>

79 “Türk-Ermeni Sınırı Keşke Açılrsa”, *Hürriyet*, 01.12.2014.

mass for the Armenians in St. Peter's Basilica on 12 April. The mass, according to the Vatican, was celebrated for the centenary of the "Armenian Martyrdom" and to proclaim Saint Gregory of Narek, who was an Armenian priest scholar who lived between 950-1005, as "Doctor of the Church".

During the mass, there was no mention of Turkey, the Ottoman Empire, or Turks. The word genocide was used once during a plea to God to accept victims of war and genocide to his presence without referring to Armenians. In general, what will be said during Catholic liturgies is known beforehand and with the exception of prayers, no additions can be made to these. This mass did not have a satisfactory feature apart from its name. In order to make up for this, the Pope (or the Vatican's relevant departments) resorted to the following: before the mass, the Pope issued a message on the occasion of the "the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Metz Yeghern and Proclamation of St Gregory of Narek (Surp Krikor Naregatsi in Armenian) as a Doctor of the Church".<sup>80</sup> Before the mass, he also made a speech addressing to those present there.<sup>81</sup> In both the message and the speech, he clearly touched on the subject of genocide. The words "Metz Yeghern" was used twice in the message, in the title and in the first paragraph. In Armenian, this word means "Great Calamity". At the same time, it also comes to mean genocide for Armenians. During his visit to Armenia in 2001, Pope Jean-Paul II, bearing in mind Turkey's sensitivity, had used this word instead of genocide.<sup>82</sup> Afterwards, President Obama, using the same tactic, had said Metz Yeghern instead of "genocide" in his 24 April messages. However, Pope Francis, in addition to Metz Yeghern, also used the word genocide in his message.

In his speech, the Pope said that the humanity has lived through three massive and unprecedented tragedies. After stating that the first one struck the Armenians (as well as Syriacs, Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Pontic Greeks), he indicated the Nazi era as the second and the Stalin era as the third. He also mentioned the more recent massacres and killings in Cambodia, Rwanda, Burundi, and Bosnia. Thus, it is seen that the Pope wanted to categorize events in a biased manner quite contrary to international law.

The only thing in the Pope's message that could be considered as positive are

80 "Message Of His Holiness Pope Francis On The 100th Anniversary Of "Metz Yeghern" And Proclamation Of St Gregory Of Narek As A Doctor Of The Church", *Vatican.va*, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150412\\_messaggio-armeni.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150412_messaggio-armeni.html)

81 "Pope Francis: Opening address to Armenian Christians during Mass on Divine Mercy Sunday", *IndependentCatholicNews.com*, 12.04.2015, <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=27182>

82 Lütem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar" (2001), pp. 13-15.

his words about Armenia and Turkey taking up again the path of reconciliation and peace coming to Nagorno-Karabakh. The Pope said that despite conflicts and tensions, Armenians and Turks have lived long periods of peaceful coexistence in the past and, even in the midst of violence, they have experienced times of solidarity and mutual help. He added that this could open a path for the new generations.

Turkey reacted to the Pope's message and speech on the same day. The Turkish government's views on the Pope's statements, outlined in the Foreign Ministry's press release and of which we provide the full text in Appendix IV, was conveyed to the Ambassador of the Holy See in Ankara, who has been summoned back to Turkish Foreign Ministry.

The main points of the Turkish Foreign Ministry's press release can be summarized as follows:

- The statements of the Pope contradict historical and legal facts
- Pope Francis made a discrimination between the sufferings by solely emphasizing the sufferings of the Christians and foremost the Armenians.
- His statements include contradiction to international law.
- Pope's Statements deviate from the remarks he has made during his visit to Turkey at the end of November.
- His statements were made under the influence of the Armenian narrative which persists to derive enmity from history.
- The Pope is expected to support joint approaches and peace.
- The Pope's statements are declared null and void by the Turkey and the Turkish nation, and are rejected.
- Turkish Ambassador at the Holy See, has been called back to Turkey for consultations.

Turkish politicians reacted strongly to the Pope's message and statements. We briefly touch on them below.

President Erdoğan, stating that he greatly regretted that the Pope's description of events experienced by everyone as genocide, said that they will not let historical events be brought out of their own course and turned into a campaign against Turkey and the Turkish nation. Reminding his statement (condolence message) last year on 23 April, he indicated that Turkey was not in an effort to

gain political benefits from sufferings. Erdoğan said that facts needed to be revealed in order to discuss the issue and indicated that it was historians' duty to do this. Indicating that Turkey opened its archives, Erdoğan stated that Armenia and third countries must also open their archives. Stating that no one was willing to do this, he said that there was only an effort to get results from lobbies and parliaments against Turkey. Erdoğan said that whenever politicians, religious functionaries assume the duties of historians, then delirium comes out instead of fact, and he reiterated Turkey's proposal to establish a joint commission of historians. He then condemned the Pope and warned him to not repeat such mistakes.<sup>83</sup>

In a statement he made the same day with the Pope's speech,<sup>84</sup> Prime Minister Davutoğlu expressed: *"If there had been no external factors, the painful events of 1915 would probably not have been experienced. It was unbecoming of Pope and his office to read the events of 1915 one-sidedly and hide the tragedies of others by owning the suffering of only a part of humanity."* Stating that he would like to make an appeal to the Pope, Davutoğlu said that the elements which would be ashamed the most would be the ones in Europe if we were to reopen historical cases, and he reminded that the Turkey had been the refuge for Muslims and Jews who had escaped from Spain due to the Inquisition.

Stating that an environment of peace emerges only when sufferings are mutually understood and sufferings are owned with a just memory, Davutoğlu said that the Pope's statements were not only an incorrect and inadequate reading of history, but were also unilaterally owning the sufferings of one group while glossing over the sufferings of the other group. He also underlined that the Pope's statements were giving credence to the increasing racism in Europe and were accusing Muslims and Turks with a collective crime. Davutoğlu emphasized that these statements were unfortunate, incorrect, and inconsistent.

Calling for the establishment of a new era between Turks and Armenians and between Turkey and Armenia, Davutoğlu asked to consider the events of 1915 as a beginning of a new era of friendship where common pains are shared with the understanding of just memory. He indicated that in a period in which all Muslims and Turks in particular are blamed with a collective crime and racism and anti-Islamism are spreading, the Pope's statements were leading a very faulty movement.

83 "Tarihçilerin İşini Din Adamları Aldığı Zaman Oradan Hakikat Değil Hezeyan Çıkar", *Presidency of the Republic of Turkey*, 14.04.2015, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/170/92945/tarihçilerin-isini-din-adamlari-aldigi-zaman-oradan-hakikat-degil-hezeyan-cikar.html> - 14.04.2015

84 "Acıların tek taraflı okumak Papa'ya yakışmamıştır", *Memurlar.net*, 12.04.2015, <http://www.memurlar.net/haber/509733/>

EU Minister Volkan Bozkır said that Pope Francis' statements will go down in history as an historical enmity. He indicated that such unacceptable statements were null and void for Turkey and condemned this statement.

As it is seen, Turkish state officials directed heavy criticisms to the Pope. It is possible to say that the Pope, after his election, was criticized the most on this occasion. Considering the fact that Popes are rarely criticized in the Christian world, the attitudes of Turkish statesmen probably surprised the Vatican and its associates. However, due to the principle of "papal infallibility", Vatican is not expected to make a major policy change.

The reaction by the Turkish press was parallel to the views of government officials. Let's list some examples of newspaper titles: *Hurriyet*: "1915 Crisis with the Pope"; *Habertürk*: "Credence to Racism"; *Milliyet*: "Strong Response to the Pope Who Said 'Genocide'"; *Akşam*: "The Pope Contradicted with Himself"; *Birgün*: "Genocide Crisis with Pope Francis"; *Cumhuriyet*: "The Pope Said 'Genocide', Ankara Govt Angered"; *Milli Gazete*: "He Slandered Turkey as Genocider in Front of the World"; *Sabah*: "Turkey's Anger to the Pope"; *Star*: "Pope! Mind your own business"; *Zaman*: "Ankara's Strong Reaction to the Pope's Statements".<sup>85</sup>

With regard to how reactions from Turkey were received in the Vatican, according to a press report, the Pope responded to criticisms from Turkey by saying "people should say things with frankness, we cannot keep silent about what we have seen and heard."<sup>86</sup>

Answering journalists' questions, Vatican spokesman Rev. Federico Lombardi said: "The Pope always speaks clearly. He referred to the joint declaration made by John Paul II and Karekin II in 2001, that is, he used the term genocide as a quote." Describing the Pope's speech as clear and rich, he indicated that the Pope, at the end of the mass, wished for a reconciliation and dialogue between the Turkish and Armenian people, and said that this was positive.

"We take note of Turkey's reaction, but we have no intention of turning this into a polemic", said Lombardi and added: "Erdoğan's offer to establish a mixed historical commission and the historical archives is interesting. The Pope's intention was open up historical and present debates. He also wants dialogue to be further considered."<sup>87</sup>

85 "Gazeteler Papa'nın Soykırım Açıklamasını Nasıl Gördü?", *Agos*, 13.04.2015.

86 "Papa'dan yeni açıklama: Olayları adıyla telaffuz etmek gerekir", *Agos*, 14.04.2015, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/11266/papa-dan-yeni-aciklama-olaylari-adiyla-telaffuz-etmek-gerekir>

87 "Vatikan'dan Papa'nın 'Soykırım' İfadesine İlişkin İlk Resmi Açıklama", *Doğan Haber Ajansı*, 15.04.2015.

As it is seen, the Vatican spokesman, stating that the Pope did not say anything new and was quoting to the joint declaration in 2001 by John Paul II and Karekin II, tried to tone down Pope's remarks and drop the subject by indicating that he did not want to create a polemic.

As for reactions from Armenia, talking to an Armenian news agency, President Sargsyan said: "I am sure that the Pope's statements will be perceived as stinging by the Turkish government and Turkish leaders. I distinguish the Turkish nation from the Turkish government. I am sure that the Pope's statements will touch the heart and minds of many Turks and will make them once again think of the genocide committed against Armenians and conduce them to relieve themselves from this historical burden."<sup>88</sup>

What were the results of the Pope's 12 April message and speech?

First of all, it is seen that, several parliamentary resolutions on Armenian genocide allegations were adopted more easily in dates close to 12 April following the Pope's statements. Among these are: 15 April resolution by the European Parliament, 14 April resolution by the Chilean Parliament, 14 April resolution by the Foreign Relations Commission of the Czech Parliament, and the 22 April resolution by the Austrian Parliament. German President's speech on 23 April might have been also influenced by the Pope's approach. However, it is not possible to say that each Christian or Catholic country were under such an influence. For instance, this was the case for Italy, in which the Vatican is based, Spain, which is one of the biggest Catholic countries, and the US, which is of particular importance regarding the genocide allegations.

As for Turkey, the reaction against the Pope reinforced the opinion that the 1915 events was not a genocide, which is adopted by nearly %90 percent of the public. On the other hand, the reaction led those who oppose this opinion not to silence but to use a restrained language, even if for a short period of time.

What will be the course of Turkey-Vatican relations from now on?

Before answering this question, we have to examine the nature of the relations. Although the Vatican has a state status, it is not a state in the true sense of the word, but an international religious organization. Therefore, except the fields of religion and occasionally culture, it is not possible to establish relations with

88 "Sarkisyan: Papa'nın sözleri Türk halkının kalbine dokunacaktır", *ErmeniHaber.com*, 13.04.2015, <http://www.ermenihaber.am/tr/news/2015/04/13/Sarkisyan-Papa-n%C4%B1n-s%C3%B6zleri-T%C3%BCrk-halk%C4%B1n%C4%B1n-kalbine-dokunacaktır/55459>

the Vatican on fields such as trade, finance, military, communications, or technology. The fact that 99% of Turkey's population is Muslim restricts relations with the Vatican on the religious field. When viewed from this aspect, Turkey's relations with the Vatican are not so important. Its influence over the Christian world, especially Catholics, provides the Vatican a relative importance. For this reason, Turkey, for many years, did not establish diplomatic relations with the Vatican. The first embassy was established at the end of 1950s upon the insistence of Roncalli, who served in Turkey for the papacy in the 1930s, after he became the Pope taking the name Jean XXIII.

On the other hand, Turkey is an important country for the Vatican. As Pope Jean-Paul II told me during my Ambassadorship, this importance stems from the following facts: Christianity spread from the territories of present-day Turkey; Christian artefacts from that period, although not as many, still exist; Greek Orthodox Patriarch of İstanbul, who is the spiritual representative of Orthodoxy, resides in İstanbul.

After his accession, the Pope's only request from Turkey was to meet the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate (Patriarch Bartholemew who is the spiritual leader of Orthodox Christians). His request was granted. From now on, the Pope, in principle, will have no further requests from Turkey. As his predecessors, he will not come to Turkey again. For this reason, it is understood that the Pope feels at liberty against Turkey.

Indeed, despite reactions against his message and speech at the mass on 12 April, the Pope continues to support the Armenian genocide allegations. In his speech at a mass which he co-led with Krikor Bedros XX Gabroyan on 7 September 2015, the Pope said that Armenians suffered for being Christians, and then indicated that in 1915, during the "Armenian genocide", 1.5 million Armenians, Assyrians and Greek Christians were killed and millions more were displaced. Furthermore, he said that Armenians, who he describes as the first nation to convert to Christianity, were persecuted, driven away from their homes and sent into the desert just for being Christians.<sup>89</sup>

It seems that the Pope will continue to do so in the coming period. Within this context, Mar Flavianus Michael Malke, a Syriac Catholic Bishop who was allegedly killed in 1915, was canonized in August.

Furthermore, the publication of documents in the Vatican archives on the Armenian issue from the Abdulhamid Period till the first years of the Republic

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89 "Pope Francis Urges Armenian Catholics to Remember Their Martyrs", *Catholic News Agency*, 01.09.2015.

in November 2015, and as expected, its presentation in the Armenian media as the revelation of Armenian genocide documents<sup>90</sup> are acts that, although indirectly, support the genocide allegations.

In the face of these developments, the Turkish Ambassador to Vatican did not resume his duty.

Lastly, let's point out that an unexpected opposition against the Pope, who recognized the Armenian genocide allegations and began to utter this openly, came from the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric stated that the Secretary General Ban Ki-moon considered the killings of Armenians by Turks 100 years ago "atrocities" and was not supporting Pope Francis' description of the killings as "the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century".<sup>91</sup>

*The UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric stated that the Secretary General Ban Ki-moon considered the killings of Armenians by Turks 100 years ago "atrocities" and was not supporting Pope Francis' description of the killings as "the first genocide of the 20th century".*

## 2) European Parliament

The European Parliament's interest in the Armenian issue and genocide allegations is quite old and waxes and wanes in direct proportion to developments in Turkey's candidacy to the European Union. In other words, the European Parliament will continue to be interested in the Armenian allegations to the extent that Turkey's EU candidacy has a future.

### 2.1) European Parliament's 1987 resolution

Turkey applied to the European Union for full-membership for the first time in 1987. While the European Commission was reviewing this application, the European Parliament adopted a resolution titled "a Political Solution to the Armenian Question".<sup>92</sup> The merits of the resolution is briefly as follows: the European Parliament recognizes the Armenian Resettlement as genocide within the meaning of the 1948 UN Charter and calls on Turkey to recognize this

90 "Armenian Genocide Documents From Vatican Archives Published In 7-Volume Set", *ArmRadio*, 24.11.2015.

91 "UN Chief won't call 1915 Slaughter of Armenians 'genocide'", *TimesofIsrael.com*, 14.04.2015.

92 For information about under which circumstances this resolution was adopted, see: Pulat Tacar, "Avrupa Parlamentosunun 1987 Yılında Aldığı 'Ermeni Sorununa Siyasal Çözüm' Başlıklı Kararın Öyküsü", *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, issue 18, Summer 2005, p. 60.

“genocide”. It is further stated that Turkey refusal to recognize will be an obstacle in Turkey’s full membership route. However it is stated that present Turkey cannot be held responsible for the events and neither political nor legal or material claims (such as indemnities and lands) will be derived from the recognition of this genocide. The Armenian terrorism is also condemned. In this way, the 1987 resolution regarded the recognition of genocide allegations as a “moral” obligation which does not result in material consequences.

The European Union rejected Turkey’s membership application on the grounds that it was not yet ready and the 1987 resolution, which was based on the assumption of Turkey’s membership at that time, ceased to have any relevance.

## **2.2) Developments Following the Approval of Turkey’s Candidacy**

Nearly 10 years later, the 1987 resolution came to the fore again when Turkey reapplied to the European Union for membership and appeared in European Parliament resolutions regarding annual progress reports on Turkey, either as a reference or as a separate item. Beginning from 2008, the Armenian genocide issue disappeared from European Parliament resolutions, probably due to the preparation and signing process of the Turkey-Armenia Protocols.<sup>93</sup> The failure of the Protocols did not change this.

Probably due to the European Parliament resolutions of 1987 and 2000, it is seen that there is a belief in the Armenian media that Turkey has to recognize the Armenian genocide allegations in order to become a full member to the EU. However, this is not true since there is nothing about the “Armenian genocide” among the Copenhagen criteria that define the requirements to become a member to the Union. In the event that a Treaty of Accession can be signed in the future, it is unlikely that the European Parliament will oppose this.

## **2.3) European People’s Party’s Resolution**

It was important for Armenia to have a resolution passed in the European Parliament on the occasion of the centennial. In order to achieve this, it is seen that Armenia, instead of attempting to persuade the members of the European Parliament and wait for its impact on the European Parliament, is implementing the strategy of having the European People’s Party adopt a resolution.

93 For information on how the Armenian genocide issue is addressed within the European Union, please see: Deniz Altınbaş, “Avrupa Birliği Kurumlarında ‘Ermeni Meselesi’”, *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, issue 39, 2011, p. 67.

No political party from Turkey joined the EPP, although Turkey signed an Association Agreement with the EU. On the other hand, along with the ruling Republican Party of Armenia, the Heritage Party, and the Rule of Law Party in the opposition are observer members of the European People's Party. President Sargsyan, as the leader of the Republican Party of Armenia, is attentive to participate and speak in the meetings of the EPP.

Apart from the fact that Turkey is not being represented in the Party, the interest shown to the European People's Party by Armenia has led to a sympathy within the party towards Armenia's stance on issues such as genocide allegations and Nagorno-Karabakh.

The European People's Party, on 3 March 2015, adopted a resolution titled "The Armenian Genocide, Turkish Responsibility, and European Values".<sup>94</sup>

In brief, the resolution condemns "genocidal acts" against the Armenian people by the Ottoman Empire and various regimes of Turkey in 1894-1923, the "dispossession" of the homeland of the Armenians, and the "destruction" of the Armenian heritage, and claims that not only Armenian people but also the Pontic Greeks and Assyrians were subjected to such acts.

The resolution invites Turkey to face its history, to recognize, and condemn the "Armenian genocide", to resolve issues relating to the freedom of expression worthy of a European country, to allow references to be made for the "genocide" in state, society, and educational institutions, to repair religious and cultural sites and allow their return to the Armenian and other relevant communities, and to ensure the normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations.

Apart from these, the resolution also invites the European Union, its Commission, Council, and Parliament, and the international community as a whole, to recognize 24 April as a day to remember and condemn the "Armenian genocide".

As it is seen, the resolution largely adopts Armenian views. Due to its one-sidedness, it is impossible for this resolution to contribute to the settlement of Armenia-Turkey conflict and the reconciliation between Turks and Armenians in general.

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94 "EPP's Resolution is a Serious Blow to Turkish Denialist Policy", ARKA, 03.03.2015; "Avrupa Halk Partisi Soykırımın 100. Yılına İlişkin Bir Tasarı Kabul Etti", *News.am*, 04.03.2015, <http://news.am/tur/news/255195.html>

## **2.4) European Parliament's Human Rights Report**

The European Parliament, on 12 March 2015, adopted the “Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2013”.

Article 77 of the report reads as follows: “Calls, ahead of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian genocide, on all the Member States to acknowledge it, and encourages the Member States and the EU institutions to contribute further to its recognition.” In short, according to this article, not only will EU members recognize the Armenian genocide assumption, but the European Parliament will also work with other EU institutions for the recognition of the genocide by other countries.

In a statement on 14 March 2015, Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman stated that the report included assertions which are devoid of historical reality and legal basis, and therefore was condemned. He indicated that the report interpreted a tragic period of the Ottoman Empire one-sidedly and put forward illogical and unlawful demands.

## **2.5) European Parliament Resolution on the Centenary of the Armenian Genocide**

On April 15, 2015, the European Parliament adopted a resolution numbered 2015/2590(RSP) regarding the Armenian genocide allegations.

Below, we summarize important points of the resolution:

- tragic events that took place in 1915-1917 represent a genocide as defined in the 1948 Convention,
- the timely prevention and condemnation of genocides should be among the main priorities of the international community and the European Union,
- statements by the President Erdoğan, and the Prime Davutoğlu are welcomed and are a step in the right direction. Turkey should use the commemoration of the centenary of the Armenian Genocide as an important opportunity to continue its efforts, including the opening of the archives, to come to terms with its past and to recognize the Armenian Genocide, and thus to pave the way for a reconciliation between the Turkish and Armenian peoples,

- Turkey should realize its obligations for the protection of cultural heritage, and conduct an inventory of the Armenian cultural heritage,
- Turkey and Armenia, taking the examples of reconciliation between European nations into consideration, should give priority to the cooperation between peoples, and support civil society initiatives between the two countries. Both countries should proceed to a normalization of relations by ratifying and implementing, without preconditions, the Protocols and by opening the borders. Both countries should improve relations through cross-border cooperation and economic integration.

This text, in all aspects, pays regard to Armenian demands and does not reflect Turkey's approach in any way, except for the references to President Erdoğan's and Prime Minister Davutoğlu's messages.

The resolution met with strong reaction from Turkey. The reason for this is the fact that European Parliament, which remained silent against Armenian genocide allegations for the past seven years, by taking advantage of the "centennial", took an approach which adopted the Armenian theses.

The relevant reactions could be found below.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry, in its statement on 15 April escribed the resolution as preposterous which repeated the anti-Turkish clichés of the Armenian propaganda and indicated that they do not take seriously those who adopted this resolution by mutilating history and law. The Ministry said that the participation of the EU citizens with a rate of 42% in 2014 elections already implied the place that this Parliament occupies in the political culture of the EU, and added that this text of unprecedented incoherence was returned to the European Parliament. It was further stated that this selective and one-sided approach of the European Parliament with regards to the 1915 events had the potential to harm the relations between Turkey and EU and fell far behind from bringing a solution to the issue between Turkey and Armenia. It was indicated that the reason behind this was religious and cultural fanaticism and indifference towards others regarded as different.

As for the 1915 events, the Ministry said that Turkey had assiduously fulfilled its duty with regards to memory, and indicated that it hoped that Armenians also achieve such a level of maturity as soon as possible. The Ministry stated that members of the European Parliament would better face up to their own past and remember especially their roles and responsibilities in the most

abhorrent calamities of humanity such as World War I and World War II, well before dealing with the 1915 issue.

Turkish statesmen also reacted to this resolution.

President Erdoğan said that Turkey would ignore any decision by the European parliament qualifying the 1915 events as genocide, because it was not possible for Turkey to accept such a sin or crime.<sup>95</sup> Later, Erdoğan, calling on Armenians, proposed to leave history to historians and build a new future in the light of common interests and common past.<sup>96</sup>

Prime Minister Davutoğlu also made a statements<sup>97</sup> and stated the European Parliament could adopt resolutions only when there was a low level of participation and that many of its resolutions lacked seriousness. He added that all manner of racist, anti-Islamic, and anti-Turkish elements had found the opportunity to enter the European Parliament. Davutoğlu said that he told European Parliament President Martin Schulz: *“If we are to open the history of Europe, we would have to discuss what was done in Asia, Africa, Australia, and what happened to the aboriginal tribes that seem have disappeared.”* He said that if Europe wanted to maintain the multicultural, multi-religious status of Europe, the European Parliament had to refrain from making decisions that would provoke hatred against a certain religion or nation based on history. He indicated that this was a move that could provoke the rising trends of anti-Islamic and anti-Turkish sentiments. He indicated that the situation was beyond the Turkey-Armenia and Turkish-Armenian issue and it was another reflection of racism in Europe.

Davutoğlu said that Turkey was ready to develop good neighbor relations with Armenia, provided that Armenia also take steps to develop good neighbor relations with Azerbaijan.

Prime Minister’s statements feature the resentment against the European Parliament resolution, Turkey’s objections against the rising discriminatory trends in Europe against Turks and Muslims, and also the fundamentals of Turkey’s policy towards Armenia, as well as its support to Azerbaijan.

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95 “Turkey Cannot Accept Armenian Genocide Label, Says Erdogan”, *The Guardian*, 15.04.2015.

96 “Erdogan Says European Parliament’s 1915 Vote Shows Enmity Against Turkey”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, 16.04.2015.

97 “Yeni Yargı Reformu Stratejisi Başbakan Davutoğlu tarafından açıklandı”, *Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey*, [http://www.basbakanlik.gov.tr/Forms/\\_Article/pg\\_Article.aspx?Id=2d68b3f5-5bb3-42db-a4a1-ceba48d62323](http://www.basbakanlik.gov.tr/Forms/_Article/pg_Article.aspx?Id=2d68b3f5-5bb3-42db-a4a1-ceba48d62323)

EU Minister Volkan Bozkır, in his statement that touched on the same points,<sup>98</sup> stated that the European Parliament resolution contradicted historical and legal facts and added that such resolutions were considered null and void by Turkey and Turks. Bozkır further said that the resolution would be returned to the European Parliament by Turkey's Permanent Representation to the EU without even opening its envelope.

As for the opposition parties, Republican People's Party Chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu stated that European Parliament resolution calling on EU countries to recognize the alleged Armenian genocide were unacceptable, as they constituted political moves that did not serve for the reconciliation of the two people.<sup>99</sup>

Nationalist Movement Party Chairman Devlet Bahçeli, making a statement on the issue,<sup>100</sup> expressed that European Parliament's hostile and one-sided hostile attitude, reeking of ignorance and perversion, was illegitimate and could not be considered as just and felicitous. Stating that no trace of a genocide could be found in the glorious history of the Turkish nation, Bahçeli said that Europe should look at its own history if it was searching for a genocider. He further requested for the withdrawal of President Erdoğan's condolence message on 23 April 2014 regarding the 1915 events, and the immediate suspension of Prime Minister Davutoğlu's message on 20 January 2015.

Upon the initiative of the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey Cemil Çiçek, the National Assembly adopted a joint declaration expressing Turkey's reaction to European Parliament's resolution. In the joint declaration, it is stated that the European Parliament resolution was exceptionally unfortunate in all aspects and was condemned regretfully, and that it - emphasized only the pain of Armenians- proved the European Parliament's biased and selective approach. It is further stated that this inappropriate resolution was unacceptable and was considered null and void. Furthermore, it is stated that the European Parliament, by assuming the role of historians and international courts and by rewriting history and arriving at its own verdict on a very serious crime such as genocide, was going against human rights, justice, history, and law.

98 "AB Bakanı Bozkır: Karar yok hükmünde", *T24*, 15.04.2015, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/ab-bakani-bozkir-karar-yok-hukmunde,293673>

99 "TBMM'den Ermeni tasarısını kabul eden Avrupa Parlamentosu'na yanıt", *Milliyet*, 16.04.2015, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/tbmm-den-ermeni-tasarisini-kabul/siyaset/detay/2045255/default.htm>

100 "Bahçeli: Avrupa Parlamentosu'nun kararı insanlık vicdanına aykırı, paçavra", *Cihan*, 16.04.2015, <http://www.cihan.com.tr/tr/bahceli-avrupa-parlamentosunun-karari-insanlik-vicdanina-aykiri-pacavra-1750021.htm>

In a statement issued by the National Security Council convened on 29 April 2015 under the chairmanship of President Erdoğan, it was indicated that “*the remarks and decisions of some organizations and countries over the 1915 events were evaluated and it was expressed that these remarks and decisions were devoid of historical facts, had political characters and therefore, they were null and void.*”<sup>101</sup>

As it is seen, European Parliament’s resolution led to resentment and strong reaction in Turkey from nearly all segments. On the other hand, the majority of the few supporters of the Armenian genocide thesis, in the face of these reactions, chose to remain silent for a while.

*In our opinion, the main reason for the European Parliament’s recognition of these allegations on the occasion of the “centennial”, which for years did not touch on the Armenian genocide allegations, is the rising Islamophobia in Europe, partly owing to several terrorist acts.*

In our opinion, the main reason for the European Parliament’s recognition of these allegations on the occasion of the “centennial”, which for years did not touch on the Armenian genocide allegations, is the rising Islamophobia in Europe, partly owing to several terrorist acts. In such an environment, we believe that, with the rising Islamophobia,

a consensus was reached in the European Parliament to keep Turkey, which is already hard to “absorb” for Europe due to its size and population, from becoming an EU member, and the Armenian genocide allegations were used in this regard.

## **2.6) The European Parliament’s Resolution regarding the 2014 Progress Report on Turkey**

Each year, the European Commission prepares a report called “progress report” that addresses the developments in Turkey regarding its accession to the EU and sends it to the European Parliament for its opinion. As we mentioned above, there was no mention of the Armenian genocide allegations in these reports since 2007.

Within this framework, the 2014 Progress Report on Turkey was discussed in the European Parliament and a resolution about it was adopted on 10 June 2015. The opening section of the resolution included the phrase “*having regard*

101 “Milli Güvenlik Kurulu’ndan açıklama”, *NTV*, 29.04.2015, [http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/milli-guvenlik-kurulundan-aciklama.GrsL3MBOE-wzBS\\_3nbSCg](http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/milli-guvenlik-kurulundan-aciklama.GrsL3MBOE-wzBS_3nbSCg)

to its resolution of 15 April 2015 on the centenary of the Armenian Genocide.” Apparently, there was a return to the tradition of referring to Armenian genocide allegations in European Parliament resolutions regarding Progress Reports. This, of course, indicated a decline in Turkey-EU relations.

In a statement on 10 June 2015, the Foreign Ministry indicated that this resolution, with its reference to the Armenian issue, was a one-sided text far from being objective and would not contribute to Turkey’s cooperation with the European Parliament. It was stated that the resolution was not accepted and would be returned, as it contained unfounded allegations against Turkey in many fields.

As we have mentioned above, the European Parliament’s relevant resolutions aim to prevent Turkey’s EU membership. However, such resolutions of the Parliament are advisory. The European Commission and the European Council are the authorized bodies for Turkey’s accession to the European Union. Although there are doubts within these institutions regarding Turkey’s full membership, when conditions change, they adjust to these new conditions accordingly. As a matter of fact, when the need to cooperate closely with Turkey emerged due to the large number of refugees from the Middle East, contrary to the European Parliament’s tendency, a decision to revive Turkey’s accession process to the EU was taken at the EU-Turkey summit on 29 November 2015.<sup>102</sup>

### 3) Parliamentary Assembly of the Council Of Europe

Comprising of 47 member states, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has 318 members, of which 18 are Turkish. The Armenian genocide allegations or the “centennial” issue was not brought into the agenda of the Assembly. However, 171 members signed a declaration uttering Armenian genocide allegations,<sup>103</sup> and the Secretariat printed and distributed the declaration, stating that “*it committed only those who have signed it.*”

This declaration is not a Parliamentary Assembly resolution as it was not put on the agenda, discussed and voted, and it only reflects the views of the signees on a specific subject. Notwithstanding its lack of legal status, since the number of signees is more than half of the number of members of the Parliamentary

102 “AB- Türkiye Zirvesi Sona Erdi: Ortak Bildiri Hazırlandı”, *Imctv.com*, 29.11.2015.

103 “Commemoration of the Centennial of the Armenian genocide”, *Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, written declaration, no. 591, doc. 13770, 16.07.2015, <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=22003&lang=en>

Assembly, the declaration, though not legally, has nevertheless a moral significance. However, although Armenian members of the Assembly had employed this method in the past, the signatures they collected was well below the absolute majority of the Assembly.

#### 4) France

France has a special place regarding the recognition of Armenian genocide allegations. President François Mitterand had personally recognized these allegations, and a law regarding the recognition of the events of 1915 as genocide by France was introduced during the presidency of Jacques Chirac. During the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy, a law punishing denial of the Armenian genocide was passed but was cancelled by the Constitutional Council of France. His successor François Hollande tried to put this law into force one way or another, but was unsuccessful.

François Hollande's close ties with Armenians has been long known. Hollande, forgetting his presidential duty or tradition to treat ethnic groups in a balanced manner, maintains a partial attitude. What is interesting is the fact that François Hollande has no political reason to support Armenian views to such a degree. Indeed, French Armenians are not a minority group large enough to have a president elected or not elected. Whether Hollande has a personal reason to support Armenians to such an extent is not known.

Prime Minister Valls is a supporter of Armenian views as well, and his support is enough to draw Turkey's objections.

Each year, on 24 April, events are organized to commemorate the "genocide" in various places in Paris. The most important among these is the ceremony held before the statue of composer-priest Komitas, who is presented as a genocide victim, despite the fact that he did not die in 1915 but in 1935 in Paris. This year, while President Hollande was in Yerevan, Prime Minister Manuel Valls attended this ceremony.

*"Even today, to ask for peace between Turks and Armenians, to say that the Armenian genocide must be recognized in Turkey can cost your life. This is insupportable and we should say this in front of the world,"* said Valls during his speech.<sup>104</sup> Emphasizing that denialism was a crime and the government

104 "Manuel Valls: Türkiye'de soykırımın tanınmasını savunmak hayatınıza mal olabilir", *Cihan*, 25.04.2015, <http://www.cihan.com.tr/tr/manuel-vallsturkiyede-soykirim-taninmasini-savunmak-hayatınıza-mal-olabilir-1765102.htm?language=tr>

would fight denialism, he indicated that this should be condemned and should also have a legal consequences (in other words, should be punished). Valls' statements are direct contradiction with ECHR's Perinçek case verdict.

Attending the ceremony in Yerevan on 24 April 2015, François delivered a speech as long as Sargsyan's speech.<sup>105</sup> After explaining the "genocide" process in his own way, he talked about what France has done for the recognition of the "genocide". Since he claims that he does not make a distinction between tragedies, he should have talked about the atrocities committed (especially by Armenians) against the Muslim people of Anatolia during and after the World War I. However, he did not in any way mention this subject during speech.

François Hollande, like many heads of state, was invited to the commemoration ceremonies for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gallipoli Battles. France suffered a total of 27,169 casualties, of which 9,798 were killed and 17,371 were wounded, and was the third country with the most losses after Britain and Australia.<sup>106</sup> French battleships sunk in the first days of the war should be included into this. Under normal circumstances, François Hollande should have come to Çanakkale and paid his respects to French soldiers buried there. However, he chose instead to go to Yerevan.

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In a statement on 24 April 2015, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said that François Hollande once again reiterated his support to the Armenian narrative by participating at the ceremony held in Yerevan, which turned out to be an occasion to slander Turkish identity, history, and society. The statement also said that Prime Minister Valls distorted historical facts and violated legal principles during his speech at the event he participated in Paris, and that it was not held with the understanding of cultivating no peace and friendship from history but was rather held to cultivate hostility.<sup>107</sup>

105 "Génocide arménien: Discours de François Hollande en Arménie", *Collectif Van*, 25.04.2015.

106 "Gallipoli Campaign", *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallipoli\\_Campaign#Casualties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallipoli_Campaign#Casualties)

107 "No: 132, 24 Nisan 2015, Fransa Cumhurbaşkanı Hollande'ın Erivan'daki Etkinlikte Yaptığı Konuşma ile Başbakan Valls'ın Paris'teki Açıklamaları Hk.", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_132\\_24-nisan-2015\\_fransa-cumhurbaskani-hollande\\_in-erivan\\_daki-etkinlikte-yaptigi-konusma-ile-basbakan-valls\\_in-paris\\_teki.tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_132_24-nisan-2015_fransa-cumhurbaskani-hollande_in-erivan_daki-etkinlikte-yaptigi-konusma-ile-basbakan-valls_in-paris_teki.tr.mfa)

Furthermore, it was stated that Hollande, during these ceremonies, once again chose to continue his discriminatory approach by not mentioning that all Ottoman citizens endured tragic sufferings during the process of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

### 5) Russia

Until now, the conflict between Turkey and Armenian had never affected Turkey-Russia relations. Despite its close relations with Armenia, Russia not giving the impression that it supported Armenia against Turkey had played a major part in this. However, despite Turkey's opposition, President Putin went to Yerevan to attend the 24 April ceremony. In his speech he made at the ceremony, Putin said that Russia had sincere sympathy for the Armenian people, and that Armenians went through one of the greatest tragedies in human history. He stated that 1.5 million Armenians were killed or injured, 600,000 were driven from their homes,<sup>108</sup> and numerous valuable monuments and objects were destroyed.

Putin, indicating that Russia remained resolute in its judgement that there cannot be any justification for mass murder, said that the international community must do everything possible to ensure that these tragic events never happen again.<sup>109</sup>

The Russian Duma, in a resolution adopted on the same day, expressed its deep sympathy to fraternal Armenia in connection with the centenary of the "Armenian Genocide" and to other peoples who suffered during the tragic events of the World War I, and emphasized that complex historical issues needed to be resolved by peaceful means.<sup>110</sup> Hereby, it must be noted that the Russian Duma adopted a resolution on the Armenian issue for the first time in 1995 and then again in 2005. With the latest resolution, the Duma has adopted a resolution regarding the Armenian genocide allegations in every 10 years.

Turkey reacted strongly to Putin's speech in Yerevan. In its statement on 24 April 2015,<sup>111</sup> the Foreign Ministry indicated that Putin's labelling of the 1915 events as "genocide", despite all warnings and calls, was rejected and

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108 According to Armenian Patriarchate figures, there were 1,914,622 Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire in 1914. When 300,000 Armenians who were subjected to relocation are added to the figures given by Putin, the number of Armenians increase to 2.4 million.

109 "Armenia, Armenia Forum", *Topix.com*, <http://www.topix.com/forum/am/armenia>

110 "Russian State Duma Adopts Statement on Armenian Genocide Centenary", *ArmRadio*, 24.04.2015.

111 "No: 129, 24 Nisan 2015, Rusya Federasyonu'nun 1915 Olaylarına Yaklaşımı Hk.", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-129\\_-24-nisan-2015\\_-rusya-federasyonu\\_nun-1915-olaylarina-yaklasimi-hk\\_.tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-129_-24-nisan-2015_-rusya-federasyonu_nun-1915-olaylarina-yaklasimi-hk_.tr.mfa)

condemned, and that such political statements, which are flagrant violation of law, were null and void for Turkey. Mass atrocities and exiles in Caucasus, in the Central Asia and Eastern Europe committed by Russia for a century; collective punishment methods such as Holodomor as well as inhumane practices especially against Turkish and Muslim people in Russia's own history were also mentioned, and the resolution adopted by Duma was condemned.

It was also stated that the only thing that Russia could do in this issue was to leave its biased attitude aside and encourage Armenia and Armenians to respond positively to the calls of Turkey for peace and friendship.

President Erdoğan's reaction was also strong. He stated;

*"It is not the first time Russia has used the word genocide on this issue. France has also used a similar word. I am disappointed that Putin took such a step, and I relayed this disappointment to him. Russia should look at its own history if it is to take such a step regarding genocides. What is happening in Crimea is evident. They should first explain these. Turkey never committed genocide."*<sup>112</sup>

Russia's response to Turkey's reaction was appeasing. Kremlin spokesman Peskov said that Erdoğan's criticism had been conveyed to the Russian president, and they hoped that relations between Russia and Turkey would develop despite these criticisms.<sup>113</sup>

The downing of a Russian plane when it entered the Turkish border from Syria caused a crisis between both countries and a bill on the criminalization of Armenian genocide denial was immediately introduced in Duma by several extremist groups.

## 6) The United States

Commemoration of the centennial of the Armenian Resettlement and events held on this occasion in the US can be discussed in three different levels.

The first one is the centennial commemoration and other events held by American Armenian organizations or individuals. Such events were widely organized all over the US, especially in the states of California and Massachusetts with large Armenian population, in an unprecedented fashion.

112 "Erdoğan'dan Putin'e Sert Cevap", *Yeni Şafak*, 27.04. 2015.

113 "Soykırım' gerilimi, Rusya ile ilişkileri zora sokabilir", *Zaman*, 30.04.2015,  
[http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya\\_soykirim-gerilimi-rusya-ile-iliskileri-zora-sokabilir\\_2291769.html](http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya_soykirim-gerilimi-rusya-ile-iliskileri-zora-sokabilir_2291769.html)

The second one is adoption of resolutions recognizing the Armenian genocide in state parliaments or city councils. Such resolutions adopted in connection with the centennial were rather limited, as they were already done before.

The third one is the adoption of resolutions recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations and the characterization of the 1915 events as genocide by both houses of the Congress, the House of Representatives and/or the Senate. In this

*There are at least two factual errors in the message. The first one is that “Meds Yeghern” was the “first atrocity” of the century, which is wrong as the first mass killing graver than atrocity was committed against the Herero and Nama peoples by Germans in South-West Africa (modern-day Namibia). The second error is about the allegedly 1.5 million Armenians died during the Armenian Resettlement. There is no evidence supporting this allegation and this number is not a result of a proper calculation.*

context, the “centennial” did not influence the Congress or the President, and the current situation did not change. In other words, the Congress did not adopt a new resolution on the occasion of the “centennial” and the President did not use the word “genocide” in his 24 April message.

On the occasion of the “centennial”, Armenian organizations in the US, in order to attract the attention of the public, organized several events. Climbing to Mount Everest, bicycle tours, walking tours, hanging large banners about the “genocide” along highways, concerts by rock star Serj Tankian, programs by reality TV star Kim Kardashian, attendance by famous actor George Clooney to several

events could be counted among these. Furthermore, many documentaries were screened, but no big feature film was filmed about the “genocide” topic. Armenian organizations, due to their disagreements, could not open a genocide museum in Washington despite the building being ready. This deficiency was tried to be removed by including 1915 events to the Holocaust museums owned by Jews.

The “24 April” message issued this year by President Obama was not so different than the messages in previous years. Instead of the word genocide, the word “Meds Yeghern”, which is apparently the equivalent of genocide in Armenian, was used. There are at least two factual errors in the message. The first one is that “Meds Yeghern” was the “first atrocity” of the century, which is wrong as the first mass killing graver than atrocity was committed against the Herero and Nama peoples by Germans in South-West Africa (modern-day Namibia). The second error is about the allegedly 1.5 million Armenians died during the Armenian Resettlement. There is no evidence supporting this

allegation and this number is not a result of a proper calculation. Furthermore, referring to Ambassador Morgenthau, the majority of whose statements have been established to be false,<sup>114</sup> is not a proper way to act.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry, in its statement regarding this message, said that it noted with disappointment that this message was highly far from assessing, based on a just memory, the painful period of the shared history between Turks and Armenians. Indicating that what happened during World War I was as sensitive for the Turkish people as it was for the Armenians, the Ministry said that the message was problematic as it reflected a unilateral point of view, therefore this selective and biased understanding of justice was rejected.

It was further stated that the message of condolences issued by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 23 April 2014 during his tenure as the Prime Minister, and the subsequent statements made by Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu on 20 January 2015 and 20 April 2015, were sincere calls to share, without denying, the sufferings of the past with accurate definitions and attitudes, to collectively and respectfully commemorate all our losses including those of the Ottoman Armenians, and above all to rebuild our common future.

## 7) Germany

Germany's approach to Armenian genocide allegations have never been uniform and there have always been marked by disagreements.

After World War I, the German public never sided with its ally, the Ottomans, but with instead sided with Armenians due to their Christian identity. As a matter of fact, the jury who tried the Talat Pasha's murderer Tehlirian created a scandalous injustice when it exonerated the aforementioned person despite him having confessed that he killed Talat Pasha knowingly and willfully.

In the years following the war, just like almost everywhere else, the Armenian issue was forgotten in Germany.<sup>115</sup> The battalion created by Dashnaks under the German Army in order to fight Russians, despite constituting the proof of Nazi-Dashnak collaboration, still does not get quite noticed today.

Although the Armenian issue and the Resettlement was not remembered after World War II, this issue started to show itself in the 1970's, probably as a

114 For the review of Morgenthau's book see, please see; Heath Lowry, *The Story Behind Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (İstanbul: ISIS Press, 1990).

115 The accuracy of the remark attributed to Hitler - "Who now remembers the Armenians?", which is still being used by several Armenian authors, is questionable, for it has not been mentioned during the Nuremberg Trials.

byproduct of the reaction against the large number of Turkish workers who moved to Germany and with the support of the Protestant Church. In order to slightly ease the moral burden of perpetrating the genocide of Jews, the idea that the Armenian genocide, not the genocide of Jews, was the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was put forth.<sup>116</sup> It is also seen that, in general, during the same period, leftist political movements recognized and supported the Armenian genocide allegations, and certain Turks, such as Taner Akçam, begin to be trained for this issue.

German politicians became closely interested in Armenian genocide allegations with Turkey's candidacy for EU membership and later, the initiation of membership negotiations. Upon the proposal of certain MPs who endeavored to prevent Turkey's EU membership, a long resolution was adopted in the Bundestag (German Federal Parliament) that contained many contradictions and several factual errors. In our opinion, this text, although not including the word genocide, literally acknowledged Armenian genocide allegations.

In the following ten years, the Armenian "genocide" subject, while always being handled academically in line with Armenian allegations, was put on the back burner. In connection with the centennial of the Armenian Resettlement, the issue came to the fore again, but there was no consensus about using it. Christian Democrat Norbert Lammert, who is also the President of the Bundestag, is an example of this. Norbert Lammert, during a meeting to commemorate the "centennial" on 24 April 2015, did not refrain from saying "What happened in the midst of the World War I in the Ottoman Empire, before the eyes of the world, was a genocide."<sup>117</sup>

On the other hand, Federal Government's approach was different. Answering a parliamentary question on Armenian allegations, the German Foreign Ministry indicated the following:<sup>118</sup>

- Making an assessment regarding the 1915-1916 events is, first of all, the concern of Turkey and Armenia.

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116 It is a known fact that the first mass destruction of the 20th century was perpetrated in the German colony of South-West Africa (modern-day Namibia) between 1904 and 1907, during which around 80.000-100.000 natives from the Herero and Nama tribes were killed by German colonial forces. In 2005, on the centenary of the said event, Germany apologized, but refused to pay reparations. Norbert Lammert, President of the Bundestag, said that the crimes committed by Germans in Namibia must be recognized as genocide.

117 *German Bundestag*, [http://www.bundestag.de/htdocs\\_e/documents/kw17\\_armenier/371446](http://www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/documents/kw17_armenier/371446)

118 Hakkı Keskin, "Bundesregierung will keine eigene Gedenkveranstaltung zum Genozid an den Armeniern durchführen", *AGA Newsletter*, Berlin, 23.01.2015.

- We see the establishment of a commission of historians in order to research this issue as a correct approach.
- United Nations Genocide Convention entered into force in 1951. It cannot be retroactively applied.
- The German government does not plan a commemoration event on the occasion of the centennial of 1915/1916 events.

As it is seen, these opinions, in essence, coincide with the Turkish views.

These being the German government's stance, German President Joachim Gauck, who was elected as president in 2012 and who has been intervening in current politics in an unprecedented manner, began to support the Armenians regarding the genocide allegations.

Germany holds a significant place in the Gallipoli Battles due to being the primary ally of the Ottoman Empire. Gauck, although being invited, refused to attend ceremonies on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of these battles.

Joachim Gauck, however, on the same day (24 April 2015), attended a mass commemoration of "the genocide of Armenians, Assyrians and Pontic Greeks" held at the Berlin Cathedral and delivering a long speech, he openly accused the Ottoman government for committing genocide against Armenians and other minorities. Although indicating that the grandchildren (today's Turks) of the perpetrators of the crime cannot be blamed for the crime, Gauck said that they should recognize this crime.

Gauck's speech shows that he does not have clear knowledge on the 1915 events. It also shows that he is unfamiliar with certain rules of international law. According to article 6 of the convention, only a competent tribunal of the State in the territory of which the act was committed or an international penal tribunal can decide whether an act amounts to genocide. Gauck, who said that the 1915 events was a genocide, acted as if he was the court.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry, in a statement issued on 24 April 2015, regarding Gauck's speech, stated that Gauck, contrary to law and historical facts, did not have the right to attribute on the Turkish people a crime which they have not committed, and it was astonishing that Gauck has also disregarded the opinions of hundreds of thousands of Turkish-German citizens whom he also represents. It is indicated in the statement that Turkish history and identity is an integral part of Turkish-German society, and members of this community would not remain silent against initiatives aimed at defaming their

identity. It is stated that the Turkish nation would not forget and forgive President Gauck's statements.

It is further stated that it was hoped that the Bundestag, which was planning to discuss a resolution on the events of 1915 in the forthcoming days, would take a neutral and constructive stance and would not present an approach which would have long term negative repercussions on Turkish-German relations.

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By taking sides on an issue that does not directly concern his country, Gauck created a new problem between Germany and Turkey. His attitude consolidated the anti-German sentiment of the Turkish public and the majority of Turks in Germany that has become more apparent in recent years arising from Germany's prevention of Turkey's membership to the EU and the discrimination against Turks in Germany on various areas. In brief, Gauck's behavior damaged the relations between Turkey and Germany.

A session to mark the centennial of the 1915 events was held in the Bundestag. A motion prepared by the coalition government stating, "the destiny of Armenians during the First World War constitutes an example for the history of mass destructions, ethnic cleansings, forced deportations and genocides in the 20th century," was submitted in the parliament. However, due to it being found inadequate by the opposition and due to disagreements over a common wording, the motion was not agreed on<sup>119</sup> and was returned to the parliament's foreign affairs committee.<sup>120</sup>

## 8) Belgium

Although the Belgian Senate approved a resolution regarding genocide allegations in 1998, the Belgian Chamber of Representatives, despite all efforts, did not approve such a decision.

119 "German parliament's 'genocide' motion remains undecided", *Anadolu Ajansı*, 24.04.2015, <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/499069—german-parliament-s-genocide-motion-remains-undecided>

120 "Germany ambassador: Armenian Genocide resolution not yet over in Bundestag", *News.am*, 01.06.2015, <http://news.am/eng/news/269588.html>

However, an incident that occurred in 2015 revived the Armenian genocide allegations.

Mahinur Özdemir, a member of the Brussels Regional Parliament, was expelled from her party CDH<sup>121</sup> on 29 May 2015, for refusing to acknowledge the Armenian genocide allegations as “genocide.” Özdemir, who was elected from the CDU in 2009, was the first headscarf-wearing member of the parliament.

It is believed that the CDH, under the influence of the rising Islamophobia, did not want to see a headscarf-wearing person in their party and expelled Özdemir on the under the pretense that she did not recognize the “Armenian genocide”. Thus, they planned to end her political career, or at least to damage it, and in this way receive more votes from “Christian Belgians”.

The commotion created regarding Mahinur Özdemir is actually about Belgian Turks preserving their Turkish characteristics. A columnist wrote that Belgian Turks were under the influence of Turkey, and complained that this prevented Turks from integrating into the Belgian society.<sup>122</sup> Actually the integration that is referred to in the columnists writing amounts to assimilation. In other words, what is meant here is Turks forgetting their roots and customs and the weakening of their religious beliefs. This fact is not limited to Belgium, and the integration (assimilation) is an issue which exists in Christian countries to which Turks migrated, especially in Germany.

On the other hand, it is possible that the incident regarding Mahinur Özdemir was actually aimed at Emir Kır, who is a very significant political personality in the Brussels region. Emir Kır, who was a minister in the Brussels Regional Government, is currently the Mayor of Saint-Jose, a municipality in the same region. Kır was much criticized for not recognizing the Armenian genocide allegation, however, he was able to successfully maintain his political career.

The two reasons why the Chamber of Representatives did not adopt a resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide allegation, whereas the Belgian Senate did, could be summarized as follows: to maintain good relations with Turkey and to avoid a situation that leads to the disturbing of 150,000 Turks in Belgium. However, there have been some major changes lately. It is understood that the Pope’s remarks at the mass on 12 April that echoed in the Catholic world, the European Parliament’s resolution on 15 April, François Hollande’s speech in Yerevan, the fact that all of Belgium’s neighbors recognized the

121 CDH = Centre Démocrate Humaniste (Humanist Democratic Centre)

122 Eric Burgraff, “Analyse ‘Un Nationalisme Turc Pregnant’”, *Le Soir*, 01.06.2015.

genocide allegations,<sup>123</sup> and also the rising Islamophobia in Europe which in many cases turned into Turcophobia, prompted the Belgian Prime Minister to do something about this issue.

In a speech he delivered on 18 June 2015, in the Chamber of Representatives,<sup>124</sup> Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel stated that he believed that the tragic events 1915-1917 should be described as genocide. He also emphasized the importance of a prospective dialogue between Turkey and Armenia.

In a statement regarding Charles Michel's remarks, the Turkish Foreign Ministry stated that his remarks were inconsistent with historical facts and incompatible with international law. The Ministry's statement also said that it was neither acceptable nor justifiable in any way for the Belgian Prime Minister to presume impertinently to pass a judgment on an issue over which there has never been a judicial decision. It is also stated that several political circles in Belgium had practices to obtain political gains through "bashing Turks", comprising of racist, xenophobic and anti-Islamist dimensions. The Ministry indicated that this state of affairs would offend the Turkish community in Belgium and would not make any positive contributions to their further integration, and it was inevitable that this attitude would give rise to unfavorable results in relations between Belgium and Turkey.

Following the Belgian Prime Minister's statement, while political parties forming the government coalition proposed a rather moderate text, the remaining parties endeavored to pass a resolution which extended the definition of the term genocide and asserted that Assyrians, Yazidis, Chaldeans and Pontic Greeks too were subjected to genocide. Ultimately, through Turkey's diplomatic efforts, a lighter text emerged and was approved by a vote of 124 and 8 abstentions.<sup>125</sup> This very long text included Prime Minister Charles Michel's speech in the Chamber of Representatives on 18 June 2015 and stated that his speech taken into note.

The resolution also states that modern-day Turkey cannot be held responsible for the tragedies suffered by Armenians in the Ottoman era and President Erdoğan's and Prime Minister Davutoğlu's messages, which recognized that Armenians were ill-treated and showed empathy towards them, were positive

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123 Genocide allegations were recognized by France in 2001, Germany and Hollande in 2005 and Luxembourg 2015.

124 "Le Premier ministre Charles Michel, au nom du gouvernement belge, reconnaît le génocide arménien", *Sudinfo.be*, 18.06.2015, <http://www.sudinfo.be/1313573/article/2015-06-18/le-premier-ministre-charles-michel-au-nom-du-gouvernement-belge-reconnait-le-gen>

125 "'Soykırım' yasasında Türk imzası", *Gazete Vatan*, 24.07.2015, <http://www.gazetevatan.com/-soy-kirim-yasasinda-turk-imzasi-836021-dunya/>

developments. Furthermore, encouraging Turkey to recognize the “Armenian genocide” in order to pave the way toward a genuine reconciliation between Turkish and Armenian peoples, establishment of diplomatic relations to normalize relations, the approval and implementation of the Protocols without preconditions, opening of borders, and development of relations through cooperation and economic integration in the border zones are the several points included in the resolution.

What is striking in the text of the resolution is the fact that, although Prime Minister Michel openly recognized Armenian genocide allegations, the text only made due by “noting” the Prime Minister’s speech. While mentioning the Armenian genocide several times, the resolution does not state that the Belgian Chamber of Representatives recognized the Armenian genocide. On the other hand, it called upon Turkey to recognize the Armenian genocide “in order to pave the way toward a genuine reconciliation.”

The Turkish Foreign, in a statement on 24 July regarding this resolution, indicated that Turkey was unfairly being accused, historical facts were being distorted, and law was being disregarded. The Ministry indicated that the grave picture that emerged with the resolution was being also regretted by the Turkish Belgian community and had reached a stage profoundly affecting bilateral relations. It stated that this resolution and other similar ones did not serve to the interests of Turkish-Armenian reconciliation in any way, and this resolution, ignoring historical facts and the memory of Turkish people, was condemned.

## 9) Austria

In recent years, Austria have witnessed the conflict between proponents of democracy and human rights on one side, and extreme right-wing and xenophobic groups on the other side. About 80% of Austria’s population is Catholic. Due to the both extreme forms of Catholic and right-wing trends, there is ongoing discrimination against foreigners, especially Turks and Muslims in the country. Ambassador Ecvet Tezcan’s utterance of these issues in 2011, despite being the truth, was not well-received and caused Austrian President Fischer to postpone his visit to Turkey.<sup>126</sup>

Although Austria did not recognize the Armenian genocide allegations, a tendency to do so became apparent when President Heinz Fischer visited the Genocide Memorial and observed a minute of silence during his visit to

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126 Ömer Engin Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar”, *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, issue 45, 2013, p. 30.

Yerevan on July 2012.<sup>127</sup> This subject came to the fore once again with the “centennial”. Pope Francis’s speech on 12 April, the aforementioned statements of German President Gauck who has a great influence in Austria, and the belief that the Bundestag will shortly adopt a resolution recognizing genocide allegations removed the reservations of the Austrian Parliament.

On 22 April 2015, a moment of silence was observed to commemorate the victims of the “Armenian genocide”, and on the same day, a joint declaration prepared by six parties indicating “Austria’s duty to recognize and condemn the terrible events as genocide” was issued in the Parliament. The declaration also asked Turkey to confront a dark and painful chapter of its history and recognize the crimes of the Ottoman Empire against the Armenians as genocide.<sup>128</sup> Since the declaration was not put to a vote, no formal parliamentary resolution was adopted.

On the same day, The Turkish Government expressed its reaction through the Foreign Ministry’s statement. The Ministry indicated that the declaration caused great resentment and that the Austrian Parliament had neither the right nor the competence to accuse the Turkish nation of a crime in a manner contrary to law and historical truth, and Turkey and the Turkish nation would not forget this slander uttered against their history. The statement further indicated that the fact that the declaration did not even care to mention the Muslims who lost their lives during that same period, all the while sharing the suffering of all Christian groups, was a sad and clear indication of religious discrimination.

The statement also indicated that viewing the events of World War I from a one-sided perspective, a selective and discriminative understanding, and describing these events as genocide, was a massacre of law and this behavior was rejected by Turkey. It is stated that it would not be possible to get such a crime, which was not even committed, acknowledged by Turkey.

On the other hand, the statement indicated that the declaration issued by the Austrian Parliament would leave permanent stains on Turkish-Austrian friendship and relations, and the Turkish Ambassador in Vienna would be recalled to Turkey for consultations.

As we will see later on, in the face of Turkey’s reaction, the Austrian Government made statements toning down the declaration.

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127 Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar” (2013), p. 30.

128 “Austrian parliamentarians acknowledge Armenian genocide”, *Deutsche Welle*, 22.04.2014, <http://www.dw.com/en/austrian-parliamentarians-acknowledge-armenian-genocide/a-18398976>

## 10) Czech Republic

The Czech Republic is under pressure to recognize Armenian genocide allegations due to being an EU member. It being influenced by the Pope's partial attitude regarding the Armenian issue could be considered normal, since the large majority of the country is Catholic. On the other hand, it enjoys good relations with Turkey, especially in the economic field, and wants to preserve these relations. Under these contradictory circumstances, the Czech Republic, while tacitly accepting the existence of a genocide, tries to avoid recognizing it legally. For instance, Czech statesmen visiting Yerevan, without declaring that they recognize the genocide, observed a minute of silence at the Genocide Memorial.

During his visit to Armenia on January 2014, Czech President Milos Zeman, going a step further, stated that the coming year was the centennial of the Armenian genocide and 1.5 million Armenians were killed in 1915.<sup>129</sup>

The Czech Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee, going a step even further, in its resolution adopted by unanimous vote on 14 April 2015, referring to the resolutions of the states and international organizations that have already recognized the Armenian genocide, condemned genocide denial. In the resolution, the committee also expressed condolences to the Armenian people, and indicated that it was in solidarity with Armenians, Pontic Greeks, Syrians, Assyrians and Yazidis who were allegedly subjected to genocide in the same period were also commemorated in the resolution.<sup>130</sup>

From a legal perspective, it is apparent that statements of foreign ministers and even heads of state are not enough for the official recognition of the Armenian genocide. In this context, the Foreign Affairs Committee's resolution which was adopted by unanimous vote has no meaning or effect as long as it is not adopted by the General Assembly of the Czech Parliament.

## 11) Bulgaria

Bulgaria's interest in the Armenian issue is based on two reasons. The first one is the presence of an Armenian community which increased in number following the Armenian Resettlement and is estimated to be around 30.000. They are traditionally against Turkey and Turks.

129 "Czech President Recognizes Genocide", *Asbarez*, 31.01.2014.

130 "Çek Cumhuriyeti de Ermeni Soykırımını Tanıdı", *T24*, 15.04.2015.

The second reason is the long-standing nationalist political movement and parties which grew even stronger after the collapse of communism. They are also against Turkey and Turks (especially Bulgarian Turks) and support Armenian genocide allegations in this context. Among these parties, ATAKA stands out today.

These parties made many attempts to have the Armenian genocide allegations recognized by the Bulgarian Parliament. However, they were unsuccessful due to the opposition of governments which attached importance to having good relations with Turkey.<sup>131</sup> The parties then went to a change of tactics and without giving up the efforts to have the Parliament adopt a resolution, tried to have such resolutions be passed in city councils and became partially successful in this. Such resolutions were passed in about ten city councils. However, when Turkish cities that had “sister city” status with these cities suspended this status, some of these Bulgarian cities abandoned their resolutions.

The ATAKA party brought the issue of “Armenian genocide” recognition to Bulgarian Parliament’s agenda in April 2015. However, Prime Minister Borisov stepped in, asking the word “genocide” in the draft resolution to be changed, and claimed that “mass extermination” would be the correct term.<sup>132</sup> Ultimately, the parliament passed a resolution recognizing the mass extermination of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in the 1915-1922 period. In the resolution, it was stated that Bulgaria drew a distinction between the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, and supported a dialogue between Turkey and Armenia regarding historical truth. Also, 24 April was declared as “Victims Remembrance Day”.<sup>133</sup>

In the voting, all parties voted in favor of the resolution with the exception of the Movement for Rights and Freedom, which is predominated by Bulgarian Turks.

In a statement on 25 April 2015, the Turkish Foreign Ministry indicated that this resolution demonstrated an antagonistic attitude towards Turkey, and stated that Turkey rejected this slander against its history. Furthermore, the statement

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131 On this subject, please see; Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar” (2013), pp. 31-33. Also see; the “Olaylar ve Yorumlar” sections in the following issues of *Ermeni Araştırmaları*: #20-21 (Winter 2005-Spring 2006), pp 20, 46-47; #25 (2007), pp. 24-25; #27-28 (2007), pp. 35,36; #29 (2007), pp.15-17; #32 (2009), pp. 53-54.

132 “Parliament Passes Resolution on Armenian Mass Extermination in Ottoman Empire in 1915–1922 Period”, *Bulgarian News Agency*, 24.04.2015. In this article, it is stated that Prime Minister Borisov saw the term “mass extermination” and the word “genocide” as being equivalents of each other.

133 “Bulgaristan 1915 İçin ‘Katliam’ Kararı Aldı”, *Anadolu Ajansı*, 24.04.2015.

indicates that the Bulgarian Parliament has been taken hostage by the extremist elements within itself, is ignoring the humanitarian and concrete initiatives that Turkey had taken in this historical issue, and that the resolution would negatively affect Turkey-Bulgaria relations.

## 12) Luxembourg

This small but very rich country of Europe, under the influence of its neighbors' recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations, European Parliament's resolution regarding the "Armenian genocide" and the Pope's 12 April speech, in order to not be isolated, turned onto recognizing the "Armenian genocide".

In a resolution unanimously adopted by the Luxembourg Parliament on 5 May 2015, it is stated that the tragic acts perpetrated against Armenians in the Ottoman Empires was a genocide, and the recognition of the genocide perpetrated against Armenian would be honorable gesture by Turkey. It is also stated that the Luxembourg Parliament agrees with European Parliament's proposal to establish an international remembrance day for genocides. Furthermore, the resolution praised Tayyip Erdoğan and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's messages. The resolution also indicated that it encouraged Turkey to face its past, and both Armenia and Turkey to work on the normalization of relations.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry, in its statement issued on 7 May 2015, regarding this resolution, indicated that it condemned and strongly rejected the unfair resolution the Luxembourg Parliament adopted by distorting the historical facts and the law. It indicated that Parliaments would abuse history and law if they put themselves in the place of international courts and try to render judgements on such a serious crime such as genocide. The statement also announced that the Ambassador of Turkey to Luxembourg had been recalled to Ankara for consultations.

As we will see later on, in the face of Turkey's reaction, the Austrian Government made an attempt to tone down the this resolution.

## 13) The Netherlands

The Dutch Parliament recognized the Armenian genocide allegations on 21 December 2004, and asked the Dutch government to raise this issue within the framework of its dialogue with Turkey.

The very active Armenian community in the Netherlands occasionally tries to have the “genocide” issue discussed in the Dutch Parliament. This was also the case in the “centennial” and a group of pro-Armenian MPs submitted several motions, including one proposing King of the Netherlands and the Prime Minister’s visit to Yerevan on the occasion of 24 April.<sup>134</sup> However, these motions were overruled, with the exception of the motion calling both Turkish and Armenian to come to an agreement regarding their pasts.<sup>135</sup>

#### 14) Brazil

After genocide allegations became a current issue on the occasion of the “centennial”, Pope’s recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations,

*Furthermore, the Ministry explained the political system in Brazil and the Senate’s duties, and told him that the traditional position of the Brazilian government remained unchanged.*

although it was with reference to Pope Jean-Paul II, was effective on political circles and as a result, the Brazilian Senate, in a resolution unanimously adopted on 1 June 2015, recognized the Armenian genocide allegations and paid tribute to its victims. It also expressed its appreciation to Brazilians of Armenian descent for their economic, social, and cultural contributions.<sup>136</sup>

The Turkish Foreign Ministry, in its statement on 8 June 2015, condemned the resolution of the Brazilian Senate on the events of 1915, which distorted the historical truths and ignored the law, and considered it as an example of irresponsibility. Also, the Turkish Ambassador in Brazil was recalled to Ankara for consultations.

The Brazilian Senate’s resolution apparently put the Federal Government in a difficult position. The Brazilian Foreign Ministry invited the Turkish Ambassador, who had not yet returned to Turkey, and indicated that it regretted Turkey’s decision to recall its ambassador. Furthermore, the Ministry explained the political system in Brazil and the Senate’s duties, and told him that the traditional position of the Brazilian government remained unchanged.

#### 15) Chile

In 2007, the Chilean Senate had adopted a resolution recognizing the Armenian

134 “Hollanda meclisi’nde ‘1915 olayları’ önergeleri”, *Kanal B*, 10.04.2015, <http://www.kanalb.com.tr/haber.php?HaberNo=64857#.VebBQfbtmko>

135 “Ermeni soykırımı için kral gitsine ret”, *Dünya*, 10.04.2015, <http://www.dunya.com/dunya/ulkeler/ermeni-soykirimi-icin-kral-gitsine-ret-258814h.htm>

136 “Brazilian Senate Recognizes Armenian Genocide”, *RFE/RL*, 03.06.2015.

genocide allegations. About 8 years later, this time, the Chilean Chamber of Deputies adopted a new resolution on this subject on 15 April 2015. Expressing solidarity with the Armenian nation, the resolution, in brief, indicated that 24 April 1915 marked the beginning of the systematic extermination of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, and 1.5 million Armenians were killed between 1915 and 1923, which was the first ethnic cleansing of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 16) Bolivia

On 26 November 2014, the Bolivian Parliament unanimously approved a resolution condemning all denialist policy regarding the “genocide and crimes against humanity suffered by the Armenian nation”. The resolution also expressed solidarity with the Armenian people for the fight of their claims, the preservation of human rights, and the establishment of justice. President of the Bolivian Senate Zonia Guardia Melgar said that this resolution was approved by the Bolivian Foreign Ministry, and Bolivia offered support to the Armenian and Kurdish people.<sup>137</sup>

The Bolivian senate, in its declaration unanimously approved on 3 June 2015, similarly to the above resolution of the Bolivian Parliament, expressed solidarity with the Armenian people for the fight of their claims, the preservation of human rights, and the establishment of justice, and condemned denialism of genocide and crimes against humanity.<sup>138</sup>

The Turkish Foreign Ministry, as in the case with Chile, criticized Bolivia’s resolution.

## 17) Argentina

The country which adopted the highest number of resolutions on the Armenian genocide allegations is Argentina. This has affected bilateral relations and an attempt to solve this problem was made with President Cristina Kirchner’s recent visit to Turkey. In Argentina, which was ruled by military dictatorship for years, human rights is regarded as the most important issue and the Armenian issue remains on the country’s agenda as it is presented as a violation of human rights.

137 “Bolivia Legislature Unanimously Recognizes Armenian Genocide”, *Asbarez*, 01.12.2014.

138 “Declaracion Camaral N°.122/2014-2015”, posted on *Armenian-Genocide.org*, [http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.456/current\\_category.7/affirmation\\_detail.html](http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.456/current_category.7/affirmation_detail.html)

President Cristina Kirchner, meeting with representatives of the Armenian community on 14 April 2015, expressed her solidarity with the Armenian people in hundredth anniversary of the “Armenian genocide”.<sup>139</sup>

The city council of Buenos Aires, in its resolution adopted in March 2015, indicated that 1.5 million Armenian were killed in the Ottoman Empire and announced that posters featuring forget-me-not flower logos –the symbol of the “centennial”- would be placed in billboards in the city.<sup>140</sup>

Buenos Aires Mayor Mauricio Macri won presidential elections held in Argentina on 22 November 2015. In 2010, Macri, who is long known to support Armenian views, hours before Prime Minister Erdoğan’s visit to Argentina, had canceled the inauguration ceremony of a monument dedicated to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Buenos Aires, causing Erdoğan to call off his visit to the country. Macri continues to make statements regarding Armenian genocide allegations. In 2014, he authorized the allocation of some an area for the construction of an Armenian genocide memorial in Buenos Aires.<sup>141</sup>

## 18) Paraguay

Since Paraguay, unlike its neighbor Uruguay, was a country which remained silent about Armenian genocide allegations, Paraguayan Senate’s adoption of a resolution recognizing these allegations on 29 October 2015, came as a surprise.

The text of the resolutions is very short: “The Senate of the Republic of Paraguay recognizes the genocide that Armenians suffered between 1915 and 1923 at the hands of Turkish-Ottoman Empire and commemorates this crime against humanity on its 100th anniversary.”<sup>142</sup>

The fact that Turkey and Paraguay have minimal relations and have not disagreements makes it difficult to understand the adoption of this resolution by unanimous vote. Since the resolution would not benefit Paraguay in any shape or form and only induce Turkey’s resentment, under normal conditions,

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139 “Argentina President Expresses Solidarity on Armenian Genocide Centennial”, *Asbarez*, 15.04.2015.

140 “‘Arjantin’den Ermeni Soykırımı Kararı”, *Demokrat Haber*, 15.03.2015.

141 “Argentina’s newly-elected President and Armenian Genocide: review”, *PanArmenian.net*, 23.11.2015, [http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/201084/Argentinas\\_newlyelected\\_President\\_and\\_Armenian\\_Genocide\\_review](http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/201084/Argentinas_newlyelected_President_and_Armenian_Genocide_review)

142 “Mario Nalpanian: Paraguay Realizes that Armenian Nation Should Exercise Its Rights”, *News.am*, 30.10.2015, <http://news.am/eng/news/293561.html>

it is possible to think that the Paraguayan government is not happy with this resolution and sees it as the Senate's interference to the government's powers in the foreign relations.

## 19) Parlatino

PARLATINO (the Latin American Parliament) is a consultative organ consisting of representatives of parliaments of Latin American countries and several Caribbean states (23 countries). It was established in 1987 and its headquarters is situated in Panama.

In its session on 31 July 2015, PARLATINO, approved with one abstention a resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations.<sup>143</sup>

*The resolutions of both organizations have no legal value.*

Another organization called MERCOSUR (Mercado Comùn del Sur, Güney Ortak Pazarı), which aims to regulate economic cooperation between several Latin American countries, also had recognized the Armenian genocide allegations in 2007.<sup>144</sup>

The resolutions of both organizations have no legal value.

## 20) Syria

Despite the Armenian minority of more than 100,000 in Syria and the fact that a portion of this community looks for every opportunity to act against Turkey, the Syrian government, taking into consideration its relations with Turkey, mostly had not allowed such acts go through in the past. However, after the deterioration of bilateral relations, a change of attitude in this regard was seen in Syria and Hafez al-Assad personally began to mention that 1.5 million Armenians and half a million Assyrians were killed in Turkish lands.<sup>145</sup>

President Bashar al-Assad, in his speech on Martyr's Day on 6 May 2015, stated that the Ottoman Empire had carried out executions of Syrian patriots. He also indicated that millions of Armenians, Syrians and members of other groups were killed, giving Cemal Pasha's name, who he described as "butcher".<sup>146</sup>

143 "Latin American Parliament Recognizes Armenian Genocide", *PrensaArmenia.com.ar*, 01.08.2015, <http://www.prensaarmenia.com.ar/2015/08/latin-american-parliament-recognizes.html>

144 Ömer Engin Lütem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar", *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, issue 27-28, 2007, pp. 37.

145 Ömer Engin Lütem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar", *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, issue 49, 2014, pp. 42-43.

146 "Bashar al-Assad Mentions Armenian genocide in his Martyrs Day Address", *ArmenPress*, 07.05.2015.

Although it was reported in media outlets that Syria would recognize the Armenian genocide allegations,<sup>147</sup> such a thing did not happen.

## 21) Israel

Israel is country that has hesitations on recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations. Bilateral relations that can be considered as “bad” due to both the Palestine issue and the “Mavi Marmara” incident led certain circles in Israel to advocate the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations. However, Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Israeli Foreign Ministry, believing that such an act would worsen the problems with Turkey, do not lean towards doing this. Ultimately, the recognition of the Armenian “genocide” is occasionally brought up in the Israeli Parliament to threaten Turkey. However, related proposals come and go between commissions without any decisions taken, and no one in Turkey is being affect from this situation.

Although President Reuven Rivlin believes that the Armenian genocide happened and said this prior to becoming president, he acts as if he does not want to use the word genocide in his new post.

## 22) Armenia

“Centennial” commemoration ceremonies and events kept the Armenian public occupied from the beginning of March till the end of May of 2015. However, despite discourses that these would continue for a long time, the events began to drop to the back burner, and virtually disappeared by autumn.

It is seen that the main purpose of these ceremonies and events was not to mourn, but to disseminate the narrative that there was an Armenian genocide which was perpetrated by the Ottomans (Turks), and the removal of the consequences of genocide in order to administer justice which would be possible through support for Turkey’s fulfillment of certain political demands: the recognition of the Armenian genocide; an apology; the opening of borders; indemnities; if possible, Armenia’s annexation of some territories in Eastern Anatolia or the provision of certain privileges to Armenians in that region.

Ceremonies and other events held in 2015 on the occasion of 24 April were basically not so different from previous years, there was only an increase in their number. In order to attract the attention of the public, several foreign

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147 “Beşar Esad Yakında Ermeni soykırımını tanıyacağını bildirdi”, *ErmeniHaber.am*, 01.06.2015.

statesmen and celebrities such as Kim Kardashian, who is famous especially in the US, were invited to these events.

Apart from the Presidents of France and Russia, no well-known statesmen attended the ceremonies. The attendance of the Greek Cypriot Administration leader and Serbian President did not draw any attention and was even ignored. There was also no high-level participation from Armenia's neighbors. The lack of participation from Turkey and Azerbaijan due to known reasons was considered normal. However, the fact that there was no high level participation was observed to create displeasure. On the other hand, the non-attendance of the Russian Orthodox Patriarch to the canonization ceremony of 1.5 million Armenians who were allegedly killed during the Resettlement also drew attention, and although no statement was made about this, gave rise to the thought that this was due to the fact that this canonization did not suit religious rules. Furthermore, the fact that the Deputy Patriarch of the Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate of the Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate did not come to the ceremonies from Turkey, in which the Armenian Resettlement occurred and about 60,000 Armenians live, also drew attention.

*On the other hand, with 17 heads of state, 3 parliament speakers, 5 prime ministers and 28 ministers, the attendance to the ceremonies held in Çanakkale was incomparably high.*

On the other hand, with 17 heads of state, 3 parliament speakers, 5 prime ministers and 28 ministers, the attendance to the ceremonies held in Çanakkale was incomparably high.<sup>148</sup>

It is seen that every opportunity was used in order to propagate the Armenian genocide allegations. For instance, Armenia tried to participate in the 2015 Eurovision Song Contest with the song "Don't Deny", but, upon Turkey's objection, the name of the song was changed. Another method used to draw the attention of the public was bringing celebrities popular in the US such as Kim Kardashian, Serj Tankian, and Conan O'Brien. The opinion that such people, especially Kim Kardashian, have an influence over large masses is actually accurate. However, people who follow Kim Kardashian closely are rather young and have no interest in politics. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that they learning about the genocide allegations will bear political results.

Ultimately, although Hollande and Putin were present in the ceremonies, 24

148 "Dünyanın Gözü Türkiye'de! Çanakkale'de 100. Yıl Törenleri Başladı", *Haberler.com*, 24.04.2015, <http://www.haberler.com/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-canakkale-ye-geldi-7232754-haberi>

April ceremonies seemed to be made of mostly Armenian attendance, rather than being international event.

## 23) Turkey

### 23.1) “Centennial” Events by those Espousing the Armenian Narrative in Turkey

Pro-Armenian narratives and events in Turkey began approximately ten years ago and has gradually increased each year. The main reason for this is because

*Armenian organizations from foreign countries which attended these events were nationalist, even ultranationalist, while the ideologies of Turkish organizations who joined them are far-left, mixed with liberalism. The element bringing these totally different political tendencies together is most probably anti-Turkism and anti-Turkey views.*

claiming that genocide was perpetrated against Armenians in 1915 is now not seen by Turkish prosecutors as an act insulting the Turkish nation and state. Since 2015 is the centennial of the events of 1915, as in most countries, commemoration ceremonies and events were expected and encouraged to be held in Turkey. Armenians from abroad were also expected and encouraged to attend these events.

Indeed, the number of people who came from abroad for these commemoration ceremonies was higher in 2015 compared to previous years. However, it is difficult to give a specific number. According to one source,

3000 people, including Turks and foreigners, attended a rally in front of the French Consulate situated at the entrance of the İstiklal Avenue.<sup>149</sup> There are other sources giving higher numbers.<sup>150</sup> Although the number of attendees were higher in 2015, compared to previous years, there were not many changes in “centennial” commemoration ceremonies.

Armenian organizations from foreign countries which attended these events were nationalist, even ultranationalist, while the ideologies of Turkish organizations who joined them are far-left, mixed with liberalism. The element bringing these totally different political tendencies together is most probably anti-Turkism and anti-Turkey views.

149 “Taksim’de 1915 Anması”, *Doğan Haber Ajansı*, 24.04.2015.

150 “Centenaire du Génocide arménien: Des Manifestants ‘Du Monde Entier’ à İstanbul”, *Libération.fr*, 25.04.2015.

It is seen through speeches delivered in ceremonies held in İstanbul that the aforementioned Turkish organizations have fully embraced Armenian views. For instance, Eren Keskin, president of the İstanbul branch of the Human Rights Association, in a press conference she held ahead of the ceremonies, stated that as long as the Turkish State and the majority of the Turkish society fed by the official ideology refused to recognize the genocide and the irreversible losses are not compensated, they would continue their search for justice.<sup>151</sup> Making a press release on behalf the Platform for Commemorating the Armenian Genocide, Nurcan Kaya said that 24 April marked the beginning of a systematic genocide attempt of the State and Armenians were purged as a result. Later, she said: "... We expect an apology, not condolences, from those who talk about mutual suffering. They should (she refers to President Erdoğan's condolence message dated April 23, 2014) apologize. The centennial is a good opportunity to face the facts."<sup>152</sup> In the statement made on the steps of the Haydarpaşa Terminal, it was indicated that concrete demands were for genocide recognition, apology, compensation, and restitution, and the state of the Republic of Turkey was called on to fulfill these demands.<sup>153</sup> According to one press report, the aforementioned Turkish organizations, issuing a statement, asked world leaders to reject Erdoğan's invitation to the Gallipoli ceremonies on 24 April, and go to Yerevan instead of Çanakkale.<sup>154</sup>

Despite press reports stating that the centennial was to be commemorated in 28 provinces of Turkey,<sup>155</sup> there was no significant events other than in İstanbul and Diyarbakır, and highly circulated newspapers reported that there were small-scale events held in Ankara, İzmir, Gaziantep, Van, Kars and Muğla/Bodrum. Although it was not possible to follow regional and local press, the claims that events were held in 28 provinces seems unrealistic.

It is understood that events in Diyarbakır were held under the auspices of and in cooperation with this city's municipality.

In conclusion, although the number of participants to the "centennial" commemorations were higher than previous years' 24 April commemorations, their reflection in the public opinion were limited. The reasons are thought to be as follows:

151 "Génocide de 1915: Programme des Commémorations en Turquie", *Collectif Van*, 14.04.2015.

152 "Taksim'de 1915 Anması"

153 "Soykırım Yürüyüşünden Görüntüler", *Hye-Tert*, 24.04.2015.

154 "Appel des ONG turques aux leadeurs mondiaux: Boycottez Gallipoli Allez à Erevan", *Collectif VAN*, 05.03.2015.

155 "Le génocide des Arméniens commémoré dans 28 villes en Turquie en *Armenews*, 03.01.2015.

First of all, ceremonies and events held were the same as previous years. Also, speeches and statements made were the same too. These factors reduced interest to such events.

Furthermore, grand ceremonies commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gallipoli Battles overshadowed the “centennial” events held the same day.

Since 24 April commemorations and events were organized by circles that could be defined as leftist/liberal and these political ideologies have few supporters in Turkey, interest and support to these ceremonies and events was low and is not expected to increase in the future.

Even though the number of supporters of Armenian allegations increased with the adoption of these allegations by pro-HDP and pro-PKK Kurds, the fact that those in line with HDP/PKK’s views constitute a maximum of 10% and the insurmountable political differences between them and the rest of Turkey is a factor preventing Armenian genocide allegations and demands to reach large masses.

### 23.2) Reactions in Turkey to “Centennial” Events

The opposition of several Turkish civil society movements, their declarations and rallies against 24 April commemorations and other events organized by Armenians and their supporters was the highlight of 2015.

Foremost among these was the Patriotic Party (Vatan Partisi) headed by Doğu Perinçek. The Patriotic Party and several organizations supporting this party organized a march on 24 April in İstanbul under the slogan “The Genocide Lie is an Imperialist Plan.” In his speech, Perinçek stated that the sufferings of 1915 were the sufferings of the whole nation. Addressing Obama, he said; “your narrative regarding 1915 events today, as was in the past, is a war propaganda.” Perinçek also placed a wreath before the Republic Monument in Taksim.<sup>156</sup> The Nationalist Turkey Party (Milliyetçi Türkiye Partisi) and the Turan Hearths (Turan Ocakları) placed a black wreath in front of the new building of AGOS on 24 April in the morning.<sup>157</sup>

On the other hand, it was also seen that several grassroots movements took a stance against 24 April commemorations and events.

156 “Perinçek Taksim’e Çıktı”, *Aydınlık*, 25.04.2015.

157 “Agos’un önünde siyah çelenk”, *Agos*, 24.4.2015, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/11383/agos-un-onunde-siyah-celenk>

About 60 well-known authors, scholars and politicians, issuing a declaration,<sup>158</sup> stated that the sole truth was that the country was facing a plot similar to those conspired a hundred years ago. The declaration stated that according to the UN Genocide Convention, competent national courts or international criminal courts can decide whether an incident amounts to genocide, that there were no court verdicts characterizing the events of 1915 as genocide, and that the resolutions adopted by certain countries were political statements. Furthermore, it was emphasized that all judicial processes regarding the events of 1915 and the Armenian state were finalized with the Treaty of Moscow dated 16 March 1921, Treaty of Kars dated 13 October 1921, and Treaty of Lausanne dated 24 July 1923.

In another declaration signed by about 400 well-known people,<sup>159</sup> it was stated that the disregard shown by some foreign people under the influence of the propaganda of imperialist countries in World War I for the atrocities committed against the Turks was being condemned, and those who try to accuse Turkey for committing genocide were violating the international law. It was further stated that the Genocide Convention authorized only certain competent courts to decide whether an incident amounted to genocide, and parliaments, international organizations, and politicians who ignored these stipulations of the UN Convention were putting themselves in the place of authorized legal institutions.

Furthermore, it was indicated that those influenced by anti-Turkish propagandas distracted people into forgetting the Khojaly Massacre where 613 Azeris were killed at the hands of Armenians. It was also stated that the forced exile of about one million Azeris from Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia's occupation of 20% of the sovereign territories of Azerbaijan were also overlooked.

The declaration also stated that it was not appropriate to distort history for the political purposes of today, and history should be left to historians, but Armenia, who had not accepted the proposal of the Turkish Parliament in this regard, had blocked this path leading to a solution. The declaration also condemned the irresponsible policies of Armenia, invited Turkish politicians to pursue a more resolute position in this regard, and called on foreign statesmen

158 "Aydınlardan Ermeni soykırımı iddialarına karşı bildiri", *Oda TV*, 29.04.2015, <http://odatv.com/aydinlardan-soykirima-karsi-bildiri-2904151200.html>

159 "Biz Aşağıda İmzası Olanlar; 'Sözde Ermeni Soykırımı' İddialarını Reddediyoruz", *İlk-Kursun.com*, 07.05.2015, <http://www.ilk-kursun.com/haber/226829/biz-asagida-imzasi-olanlar-sozde-ermeni-soykirimi-iddialarini-reddediyoruz-turk-siyaset-adamlarini-bu-konuda-daha-kararli-bir-tutum-izlemeye-davet-ediyor-yabanci-devlet-adamlarini-ve-pa/>

and parliaments to refrain from unrealistic accusations that hurt the pride of the Turkish people.

On the other hand, retired ambassadors, retired officials of the foreign ministry and family members of victims of Armenian terrorist organizations organized a protest march on 25 April 2015.<sup>160</sup>

As it is known, between 1973 and 1986, several Armenian terrorist organizations, in order to disseminate their genocide claims, committed assassinations against Turkish diplomats and other government officials and killed 31 people, including 5 ambassadors. These terrorist organizations caused the death of 70 people in total, both Turkish and foreign, while injuring 524 people.<sup>161</sup>

#### 24) Efforts to Tone down Several Parliamentary Resolutions

The Armenian Government and the Diaspora expected that the number of resolutions adopting genocide allegations would increase on the occasion of the centennial of the Resettlement, and believed that these would put pressure on Turkey. A lot of effort was put by Armenians to reach this goal. However, ultimately, only five countries recognized the Armenian genocide allegations for the first time: Austria, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Brazil, and Paraguay. Furthermore, these countries do not have the capacity to put pressure on Turkey, as four of them are small countries with limited influence. Brazil, on the other hand, despite being a large country, has no such intention and besides, has no such means. Bulgaria is a country which endeavors to maintain good relations with its big neighbor Turkey. In fact, Bulgarian Parliament's resolution, while actually recognizing the genocide, does not include the word "genocide".<sup>162</sup>

Austria and Luxembourg, due to several economic interests and especially the considerable amount of Turkish citizens or people of Turkish origins living in them, wish to have good relations with Turkey. Turkey's strong reaction led the governments of Austria and Luxembourg to find formulas to tone down the resolutions of their parliaments. Since it was not possible for parliaments to take back their resolutions overnight, Foreign Ministers of these countries,

160 "Şehit Edilen Türk Diplomatları, Aile Mensupları Ve Devlet Görevlileri Anıldı", *AVİM*, 27.04.2015, <http://www.avim.org.tr/yorumnotlarduyurular/tr/SEHIT-EDILEN-TURK-DIPLOMATLARI—AILE-MENSUPLARI-VE-DEVLET-GOREVLILERI-ANILDI/4019>

161 Ömer Engin Lütem, *Armenian Terror* (Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies, 2007).

162 Ömer Engin Lütem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar", *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, issue 51, 2015, pp. 164-165.

through explanatory statements, attempted to alter the meaning of these resolutions. In this context, talks were held with Luxembourgian and Austrian Foreign Ministers.

In a press conference held with Turkish Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirlioğlu during his visit to Luxembourg on 4-5 April 2015, Luxembourgian Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn stated that all parties in the Luxembourgian Parliament confirmed the importance of maintaining good relations with Turkey. He also stated that the term “genocide” had a legal definition in international law and such crimes could only be established by a competent court. Thus, the Luxembourgian Foreign Minister tried to express that the parliament and the government did not share the same opinion regarding genocide allegations.

In his response to certain questions posed to him in the Austrian parliament on 11 September and also during a press conference on 19 September with Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirlioğlu, which took place during his Ankara visit, the Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz said: “The decision here was not a parliamentary decision. It was the opinion, declaration of an opinion of six political parties represented in the Austrian parliament. These political parties and politicians have a right to express their ideas, however, it did not have the quality of a court decision.” He also stated that the position of Austrian government had not changed and the 1948 United Nations Convention cannot be retroactively applied.<sup>163</sup> He, thus, pointed out that government’s opinions differed from opinions in the resolution by the six parties in the parliament.

*Therefore, two types of parliamentary resolutions on genocide emerged: Firstly, resolutions that could be label as “full”, which openly recognize the Armenian genocide allegations, include the word “genocide” and are supported by the government, and secondly, resolutions that could be described with the term “defective”, which are opposed by governments or do not include the word “genocide”.*

Therefore, two types of parliamentary resolutions on genocide emerged: Firstly, resolutions that could be label as “full”, which openly recognize the Armenian genocide allegations, include the word “genocide” and are supported by the government, and secondly, resolutions that could be described with the term

163 Turgut Kerem Tuncel, “1915 Olaylarının Soykırım Olarak Tanımlanmasına İlişkin Avusturya Ve Lüksemburg’un Geri Adımı”, *AVİM*, 23.10. 2015, <http://www.avim.org.tr/yorumnotlarduyurular/tr/1915-OLAYLARININ-SOYKIRIM-OLARAK-TANIMLANMASINA-ILISKIN-AVUSTURYA-VE-LUKSEMBURG%E2%80%99UN-GERI-ADIMI---Turgut-Kerem-TUNCEL/4232>

“defective”, which are opposed by governments or do not include the word “genocide”.

Apart from the aforementioned resolution of the Bulgarian Parliament, the Belgian Parliament’s resolution dated 24 April 2015 can be given as an example to resolutions which recognize the Armenian genocide allegations without using the term genocide.<sup>164</sup> Also, the German Parliament’s resolution on 2005 also does not include the term genocide. Aside from those of Austria and Luxembourg, resolutions of Switzerland (2004) and Sweden (2010) could be given as examples of resolutions upon which the parliaments and governments do not agree upon. Ultimately, the number of “defective” resolutions is seven and constitutes one fourth of all these resolutions.

## V - THE PERİNÇEK CASE AT THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The “Perinçek Incident” which began in 2005 when Doğu Perinçek publicly called the Armenian genocide allegations an “international lie”, was submitted to the Swiss courts when he was sued by the Switzerland-Armenian Association. At the end of the trial, he was sentenced to 90 days imprisonment and fined 3000 Swiss Francs. Perinçek was also sentenced to pay 1000 Swiss Francs in compensation to the Switzerland-Armenia Association for non-pecuniary damage and 10,000 Swiss Francs for court expenses.

When the verdict of the first instance court was upheld at the end of the appeal process in Switzerland, Perinçek carried his appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). Reaching a judgment on 17 December 2013, the ECtHR ruled that the Swiss court’s judgment had violated Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the European Convention of Human Rights - in other words, Perinçek won the case.

The Swiss Government took the case to the “Grand Chamber”, the highest chamber of the Court. The case was heard on 28 January 2015, and Perinçek’s exoneration became absolute when the Grand Chamber’s judgement on 15 October 2015 upheld the lower chamber’s verdict.

The Perinçek Case was of great importance for Turkey. Even though there is no court verdict on whether the events of 1915 amounted to genocide, Perinçek losing the case would have carried the meaning that the ECtHR confirmed that

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164 Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar” (2015), pp. 152-159.

the events of 1915 was a genocide, or at least, Armenia and the Diaspora would have presented as such. This would have rendered Turkey's half a century old thesis that there was "no genocide" untenable.

Our journal closely followed the "Perinçek incident" and related lawsuits since 2005, and informed its readers on the related developments. Furthermore, issue 29 of the *Review of Armenian Studies* titled "Special Issue on ECHR – Perinçek v. Switzerland Case" was devoted to the Perinçek case.

In this article, we will mention several subjects regarding "Grand Chamber" trial and briefly speak of our opinions about the possible outcomes of Perinçek winning the case.

Switzerland is the party who legally lost the case. Following ECtHR Second Chamber's judgement absolving Perinçek on 17 December 2015, no one doubted that the Grand Chamber would pass the same judgement, since a judgement by the Grand Chamber convicting an acquitted person, although legally possible, would have been inappropriate. Therefore, Switzerland was not expected to take the case to the Grand Chamber, and Switzerland and Turkey reportedly had come to an agreement in this regard. However, in the last minute, Switzerland decided to take the case to the Grand Chamber. It is very likely that several external factors, especially demands by France, played a role in this.

Switzerland losing the case will have certain consequences. Foremost among these is a changing of the legislation which led to the conviction of Perinçek, which is understood to be an issue Switzerland refuses to discuss in its Parliament due to internal politics. This might be because the EHtCR judgement does not ask Switzerland to change its legislation. However, this will leave Swiss courts the possibility to pass judgements similar to the Perinçek case, which will lead Switzerland to be tried and convicted again by ECtHR.

France intervened in the Perinçek case as a third party. The reasons behind this are François Hollande's promise to his Armenian friends about the introduction of a legislation punishing "denial, his failure to keep this promise due to the French Constitutional Council's clear stance, and to give Armenians the impression that he was helping Armenians by intervening in the Perinçek case. However, Perinçek's victory made France one of the losing parties.

As for Armenia, it did not have to intervene in the Perinçek case, as the related incident did not occur in its territories. However, Armenia, probably due to

pressures from the Diaspora, intervened in the case as a third party but eventually lost the case along with Switzerland and France.

Nevertheless, Armenia declared that it was pleased with the Grand Chamber's verdict. It is possible to explain this situation, which could be considered as being bizarre, as follows:

It is understood that Armenia is not content with several statements in the Second Chamber's verdict on 17 December 2013 that cast doubts on the Armenian genocide allegations, and court's distinction between Armenian genocide allegations and the Holocaust. It is for these reasons that at the Grand Chamber hearing on 28 January 2015, Armenia's counsels Geoffrey Robertson and Amal Alamuddin (Clooney), in their defense, tried to ensure that these statements that cast doubts on genocide allegations were removed from the Grand Chamber's verdict. They did this by making excessive statements that claimed that the 1915 events was genocide, despite this no being the subject of the case. Hence, the opinion in the Second Chamber's verdict that there was no general consensus on whether the 1915 events amounted to genocide was not found in the Grand Chamber's verdict. Furthermore, the statements that made a distinction between the 1915 events and the Holocaust were not clearly made as the Second Chamber's verdict. Therefore, Armenia believes that its demands were realized and is thus pleased with this outcome. On the other hand, it is seen that ECtHR's final judgement is criticized by the Diaspora.

However, the truth is actually different. First of all, it is not the court's duty to decide on genocide allegations, which was clearly stated in the Grand Chamber's ruling. Therefore, the fact that certain explanatory statements in the Second Chamber's verdict are not repeated in the Grand Chamber's verdict is just a detail that does not require to be greatly pleased with.

Another point that must be noted is that Grand Chamber ruling is final; it replaces and invalidates the Second Chamber's verdict. Therefore, the Second Chamber's explanations for its verdict would be invalid. However, what is special about the *Perinçek* case is the fact that verdict of the Grand Chamber is the same as the verdict of the Second Chamber. Thus, there is no reason for the explanations of the Second Chamber's verdict to become invalid. Furthermore, there is no statement in the Grand Chamber's explanations criticizing or rejecting the Second Chamber's explanations. In brief, both verdicts complement each other.

In our opinion, ECtHR's final judgment is important from two aspects.

Firstly, the judgement puts an end to efforts to silence people who reject the Armenian genocide allegations by propounding that denialism (indicating that there was no Armenian genocide) must be prevented and punished. From now on, expressing, defending, and writing that there was no Armenian genocide, as long as they do not aim for hatred or contempt against Armenians, will no longer be a crime in countries who signed the European Convention on Human Rights.

Secondly, although there is no ruling on the character of the events of 1915 (whether it was a genocide or not) in the Grand Chamber's verdict, the fact that Doğu Perinçek, who said that the Armenian genocide was an international lie, won the lawsuit has consolidated the opinion adopted by the majority of people in Turkey that the Armenian genocide allegations are not true. Thus, the verdict produced a result completely opposite of what the Armenians wanted.

## **VI - DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING NAGORNO-KARABAKH**

2015 was a year in which Armenia suffered great failures regarding Nagorno-Karabakh and understood that this issue would not be resolved the way it wanted.

### **1) Failure Of The Minsk Group**

During the 21 years since the ceasefire in 1994, the Minsk Group and its co-chairs, despite their proposals and plans for the resolution of the conflict, failed to make any progress. Although Armenia is to blame primarily, the Minsk Group co-chairs, namely the US, Russia, and France, are also responsible for this situation, as they do not use their authority and influence as required, do not exert serious effort for the resolution of the conflict and therefore, although indirectly, take a pro-Armenian stance by maintaining the status quo.

The insistence of Azerbaijan, which became the most powerful country of the South Caucasus by making good use of its energy sources, on a swift resolution of the conflict, Turkey's support in this regard, and several Muslim countries taking Azerbaijan's side, showed that the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding Azerbaijani territories can no longer continue. As a matter of fact, the increasing skirmishes along the ceasefire line prove that Armenia's occupation must come to an end.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, in a speech he made in early 2015,<sup>165</sup> indicated that Armenia was resorting to (armed) provocations and Azerbaijani army was giving a fitting response to these provocations. He further said, “Azerbaijani army can at any time restore its territorial integrity. It is just better that issue is resolved through negotiations.” He also emphasized that Azerbaijan would further strengthen its army, and stated that huge funds were allocated for this purpose and these funds exceeded Armenia’s total budget twofold.

Despite Aliyev’s implicit criticism of the Minsk-Group (and its co-chairs), it is seen that the countries composing this Group still seek a resolution in line with their opinions. Russian President Putin brought Aliyev and Sargsyan together in August 2014. US Foreign Minister Kerry also brought about a meeting between both presidents in September the same year. Aliyev and Sargsyan also met once again in Paris in October upon the initiatives of President Hollande. However, Armenia’s military exercises in the occupied Agdam district of the Republic of Azerbaijan with the involvement of about 40,000 military troops, the opened fire on Azerbaijan’s position, and later the downing of Armenian helicopter by Azerbaijan, conflicted with the mediation efforts mentioned above. On the other hand, this incident served as a military warning against Armenia.

## **2) European Court Of Human Rights’ (ECtHR) Judgement Regarding Nagorno-Karabakh**

While Azerbaijani and Armenian authorities continued to criticize each other in every occasion, the case brought to ECtHR by six Azerbaijani nationals for being forced to abandon their homes in Lachin due to Armenian occupation was concluded on 16 June 2015.<sup>166</sup>

Armenia, in its defense in the court, as if Nagorno-Karabakh was independent, had claimed that Armenia did not have effective control and jurisdiction over Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding territories. In its judgment, ECtHR overruled Armenia’s claims and stated that the “Nagorno-Karabakh Republic” (NKR) was not recognized by any State or international organization. The court indicated that Armenia and the “NKR” were highly integrated, the “NKR” survived by virtue of the military, political, financial, and other support given to it by Armenia, and Armenia exercised effective control over Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding territories.

165 “President Aliyev: Some World Forces Not Interested in Karabagh Conflict Being Solved”, *Trends News Agency*, 11.01.2015.

166 “Azerbaijan Refugees, Rights Violated by the Lack of Access to their Property Located in the District Controlled by Armenia”, *ECtHR*, 206 (2015), 16.06.2015.

ECtHR's judgement,<sup>167</sup> contrary to Armenia's claim, determined that "NKR" is not an independent state or a separate entity from Armenia. Since ECtHR judgements are final, it is now impossible to legally recognize the idea of an "independent" NKR. In brief, the argument of an "independent Nagorno-Karabakh", which is not much supported in the international arena, has collapsed. This is a big blow to Armenia's policies.

### 3) Parliamentary and Local Elections in Nagorno-Karabakh

In 2015, parliamentary and local elections were held in Nagorno-Karabakh on 3 May and 13 September respectively.

Many countries and international organizations declared that they did not recognize these elections and/or called them illegal. Among them are the European Union, the US, the UK, Germany, Ukraine, China, Pakistan, Indonesia, and the Islamic Cooperation Organization.<sup>168</sup> Even OSCE, which is tasked with resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, announced that they did not accept these elections as affecting the legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>169</sup>

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The Turkish Foreign Ministry, in its statement on 11 September 2015, declared that it would not recognize these elections and its results.

### 4) Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

Established following the World War I in 1949 to facilitate cooperation between European countries, the Council of Europe and especially its Parliamentary

167 For more details on ECtHR's decision, please see: Turgut Kerem Tuncel, "Hukuki Açıdan Dağlık Karabağ Sorunu, Chiragov ve Diğerleri v. Ermenistan Davası", *AVİM*, 26.06.2015, <http://www.avim.org.tr/yorumnotlarduyurular/tr/HUKUKI-ACIDAN-DAGLIK-KARABAG-SO-RUNU:-CHIRAGOV-VE-DIGERLERI-V—ERMENISTAN-DAVASI-/4132>

168 Ali Murat Taşkent, "Dağlık Karabağ'da 'Seçimler'", *AVİM*, 05.10.2015, <http://www.avim.org.tr/yorumnotlarduyurular/tr/DAGLIK-KARABAG%E2%80%99DAKI-%E2%80%98SECIMLER%E2%80%99—Ali-Murat-TASKENT/4213>

169 "International Community Condemns Illegal Elections in Nagorno-Karabakh", *Eurasia Review*, 16.09.2015.

Assembly is an international forum in which the people of Europe freely express their views and opinions.

The Parliamentary Assembly has been interested in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which is a major issue in Europe, and discussed it many times. In these discussions, Armenia, making a wrong interpretation of the principle of self-determination, argued that a majority could determine a region's political future without taking minorities' rights into consideration.

#### **4.1) Resolution 1416 (2005) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe<sup>170</sup>**

This resolution is important in the sense that it shows that nations' right to self-determination is valid under certain conditions.

According to the resolution, independence and secession of a regional territory from a state may only be achieved through a lawful and peaceful process based on the democratic support of the inhabitants of such territory and not in the wake of an armed conflict leading to ethnic expulsion and the de facto annexation of such territory to another state.

Resolution 1416 (2005) of the Parliamentary Assembly proves that Nagorno-Karabakh cannot gain its independence through the nations' right to self-determination. This is also confirmed by the top judicial organ of Europe, the ECtHR in the abovementioned resolution dated 16 June 2015.

#### **4.2) Draft Resolution dated 4 November 2015 of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

In the wake of increasing armed skirmishes in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy of the Parliamentary Assembly discussed the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and after several investigations, approved a draft resolution titled "Escalation of Violence in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Other Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan" on 4 November 2015.<sup>171</sup>

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170 "The Conflict Over the Nagorno-Karabakh Region Dealt with the OSCE Minsk Conference", *Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, Resolution 1416 (2005).

171 "Escalation of Violence in Nagorno-Karabakh and Other Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan", *Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, draft resolution.

This draft resolution will take its final shape after being discussed and voted in the Assembly's January 2016 session.

The draft resolution states that considerable parts of the territory of Azerbaijan are still occupied by Armenian forces and regrets that separatist forces are still in control of the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Referring to abovementioned ECtHR resolution dated 16 June 2015, the resolution mentions that Armenia exercises effective control over Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding territories, and thus indicates that Nagorno-Karabakh is not independent.

The draft resolution embraces the abovementioned Resolution 1416 (2005) and the related Recommendation 1650 (2005) by repeating their fundamental points. Incidentally, the draft resolution indicates, as in Resolution 1416, that ethnic expulsion of Azeris and the creation of mono-ethnic areas (areas populated by Armenians) resemble the terrible concept of ethnic cleansing.

One of the most important feature of the draft resolution is its call on the OSCE Minsk Group to consider reviewing its approach to the resolution of the conflict in light of the lack of progress over the last twenty years, which undermines the credibility of international institutions. This proves that the Minsk Group is considered to be unsuccessful.

The draft resolution indirectly blames Russia for selling weapons to both sides and calls for Russia to recognize the arms embargo on both parties.

The draft resolution makes the below proposals for the resolution of the conflict:

- Cessation of military activity in the vicinity of the region,
- Demilitarization of the line of contact on both sides,
- Withdrawal of Armenian armed forces and other irregular armed forces from Nagorno-Karabakh and the other occupied territories of Azerbaijan,
- Establishment of full sovereignty of Azerbaijan in these territories,
- Establishment of an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh,
- Establishment by OSCE of an international peacekeeping force to maintain security within Nagorno-Karabakh and the other occupied territories;
- Safe return and resettlement of displaced persons.

These measures aim to change the situation created in the early 1990s by Armenia, partially with the help of Russia. Furthermore, in the event that they are implemented, there is no doubt that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will be resolved.

## VII - AN ASSESSMENT OF TURKISH-ARMENIAN RELATIONS IN 2015

The flashy ceremonies and events for the commemoration of the Armenian Resettlement's centennial held in Armenia and the Diaspora undoubtedly left its marked on Armenia-Turkish relations in 2015.

*As for the recognition of these allegations, the situation is different and out of about 200 parliaments, only 26 have resolutions recognizing the events of 1915 as genocide, which are declarations of opinion rather than anything else.*

It appears that these ceremonies and events, apart from commemorating Armenians who died during World War I, were expected to serve two purposes: promote the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations in the international area, and the assertion of Armenian demands from Turkey.

It is possible to say that European as well as the South and North American public became aware of the Armenian genocide allegations with the efforts of the Diaspora in the last 50 years and Armenia in the last 25 years. These allegations appear to be unknown and/or disregarded in the remaining regions, except for a small minority.

As for the recognition of these allegations, the situation is different and out of about 200 parliaments, only 26 have resolutions recognizing the events of 1915 as genocide, which are declarations of opinion rather than anything else. Among international organizations of political significance, only the European Parliament has such resolutions.

However, what the Armenian public expected was the recognition of the genocide allegations by a large number of countries and international organizations. Yet, the number of countries which recognized these allegations for the first time was five. These are Austria, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Brazil, and Paraguay. These countries have no power or position to have an influence over Turkey. On the contrary, several countries were obliged to tone down their resolutions due to Turkey's reactions such as recalling ambassadors and

insinuating that relations would be reviewed. For instance, Austria and Luxembourg toned down their parliaments' resolutions through the statements of their foreign ministers. Bulgarian Parliament, by not using the word genocide, tried to prevent any conflicts with Turkey from the very beginning. On the other hand, the Brazilian Government declared that it would not change its position. As for Paraguay, it is possible to think that the Paraguayan Foreign Ministry circles were unhappy with the Senate's decision since it would not serve any purpose other than creating a controversy with Turkey.

As for countries that could influence Turkey, it is seen the US Government did not attach a special importance to 2015 and President Obama's 24 April message was not different from the messages of previous years. The draft resolution prepared for the German Bundestag was sent back to the Foreign Affairs Committee due to disagreements between political parties and was never submitted again to the Parliament. In France, despite Hollande's promises, no legal measures regarding the punishment of genocide denialism was taken. Even President Putin, in his speech in Yerevan on 24 April, tried to use a cautious language against Turkey.

As for international organizations, the only resolution regarding genocide allegations that must be noted is the European Parliament's resolution dated 15 April 2015. The European Parliament has adopted many resolutions linked with Turkey's full membership to the EU since 1987. Therefore, its position regarding genocide allegations is not new. On the other hand, the aforementioned resolution did not affect Turkey, since there was no statement indicating that Turkey cannot become a member of the EU as long as it refuses to recognize the Armenian genocide allegations. It must be noted that there was such a statement in the European Parliament's resolution in 1987, and this statement was reiterated by means of references to the 1987 resolution. On the other hand, despite the European Parliament's highly critical approach towards Turkey, the decision by the Union's executive organs in late December to revive negotiations with Turkey indicates that the European Parliament's resolution was not taken into consideration.

Ultimately, it is possible to say that the efforts for the international recognition of the genocide allegations were limited. The only exception is the Vatican and Pope Francis continues to support Armenian genocide allegations.

The reason why Armenians attach great importance to the international recognition of these allegations is the thought that if more countries and international organizations, including influential countries such as the US, were to recognize the Armenian genocide allegations, Turkey would be forced to

recognize these allegations and this would ensure or at least facilitate the acceptance by Turkey of Armenian demands such as indemnities. President Erdoğan's condolence message on 24 April 2014 during his tenure as the prime minister, his message to the religious ceremony held in the Armenian Patriarchate of İstanbul on 24 April 2015 as the president, Prime Minister Davutoğlu's message on the anniversary of the death of Hrant Dink and his statement 20 April 2015 on the Ottoman Armenians who lost their lives during the last years of the Ottoman Empire, are statements of sentimental, rather than political value made with the intention to share the sufferings of Armenians with a view to facilitating Turkish-Armenian reconciliation. However, these were found insufficient and it was insinuated that a lot more was expected. The abovementioned statements by President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Davutoğlu during the 24 April period of 2015 and the Foreign Ministry's response to Parliaments recognizing the genocide claims obviously do not meet the hopes for Turkey's recognition of genocide allegations. When considered from this point of view, it is possible to say that the year 2015 was a failure for Armenians.

Another expectation from 2015 was the demands from Turkey. These demands can be summarized as indemnities to the grandchildren of those who were resettled, restitution of seized properties to inheritors, and cession of some territory to Armenia. While an official commission was formed two years ago to determine the legal bases of these demands, there is no information on the results of the commission's studies. In short, despite the special significance of the year for Armenians, no demands were made from Turkey in 2015.

Despite the failures regarding the international recognition of Armenian genocide allegations, many events to commemorate the genocide allegations were held especially in the Diaspora. Armenians attended these events nearly in all countries and it is possible to say that they reinforced their Armenianness through such attendance. However, these did not lead to any changes in Turkish-Armenian relations.

There are two more failures for Armenia in 2015: losing of the Perinçek case and the elimination of the possibility of the recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent state.

Armenia, although it did not directly concern it, intervened in the Perinçek case as a third party and lost the case together with Switzerland and France with ECtHR's exoneration of Doğu Perinçek. It is now possible to openly say, without belittling Armenians, that there was no Armenian genocide in countries that are signatories to the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). ECtHR's verdict is a major defeat for Armenia and the Diaspora, which claim that the Armenian genocide is an indisputable fact. On the other hand, it is

likely that ECtHR's verdict will affect Armenia's demands from Turkey.

2015 was also a year of negative developments for Armenia regarding Nagorno-Karabakh. Foremost among these was ECtHR's verdict on 16 June 2015 which ruled out the assumption that Nagorno-Karabakh was an independent state. This judgement, in principle, prevents the recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent state by signatories to the ECHR. Although there are no countries intending to recognize Nagorno-Karabakh or defending its independence, it is seen that there are still hopes of an independent Nagorno-Karabakh.

Furthermore, the draft resolution approved by Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 4 November 2015, indicated that Nagorno-Karabakh was not an independent state and the principle of self-determination cannot be applied. Also, it likens the forceful removal of Azerbaijanis from Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding territories to ethnic cleansing. The adoption of this draft resolution by the Assembly would make the argument of "independent Nagorno-Karabakh" untenable.

*It is for the benefit of a "land-locked" country such as Armenia, which suffered economic difficulties and lost a significant portion of its population due to migration to other countries, to work on having no troubles with its neighbors within the bounds of possibility.*

Another fact that must not be ignored is that Armenia was the losing side in the increasing number of skirmishes in 2015 in border areas with Azerbaijan or at least was the party which could not respond to Azerbaijan. Armenia brought this issue before the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which is, in principal, responsible for ensuring the security of its members. However, when it saw that Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan - Muslim members of the CSTO- were unwilling to support Armenia against Azerbaijan, Armenia began to openly bemoan about it.

It is for the benefit of a "land-locked" country such as Armenia, which suffered economic difficulties and lost a significant portion of its population due to migration to other countries, to work on having no troubles with its neighbors within the bounds of possibility. However, it is possible to say that Armenia, which cannot free itself from the influence of historical events and its century old territorial demands, does the opposite by maintaining its problems with Turkey and Azerbaijan, thus preventing the establishment of security and cooperation in South Caucasus. It is possible to say that Armenia itself suffers the most from this policy.

APPENDIX I

MESSAGE SENT BY H.E. MR. RECEP TAYYIP ERDOĞAN,  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY, TO THE RELIGIOUS  
CEREMONY HELD IN THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE OF  
İSTANBUL ON 24 APRIL 2015

**Reverend Patriarch Aram Ateşyan**

Acting Patriarch of the Armenian Patriarchate of Turkey

On this day that carries a special significance for our Armenian citizens, I once again respectfully commemorate all the Ottoman Armenians who lost their lives amid the conditions of the World War I and extend my condolences to their children and grandchildren.

I fondly recall all the memories - engraved all across these lands - of the Armenian community, whose economic, social, cultural and political contributions both to the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey will always be remembered with appreciation.

Taking this opportunity, I also extend my best wishes for the recovery of Archbishop Mesrob Mutafyan, who is undergoing treatment for his illness.

**My distinguished Armenian citizens,**

In World War I, which ranks among humanity's major catastrophes, millions from all nations also perished within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire.

I commemorate with compassion and respect all the Ottoman citizens, regardless of their ethnic and religious identity, who lost their lives under similar conditions during this War.

We succeeded in establishing the Republic of Turkey not by forgetting these sufferings, but by learning to cope with them.

Today, we are working and striving together with all our citizens and friends, regardless of their ethnic or religious identities, to attain a better future on the basis of peace, harmony and fraternity.

It is due to these values that we are able to enthusiastically host today in Çanakkale, the grandchildren of those who had arrived from all over the world a century ago to invade our shared homeland, so as to condemn war and promote peace and friendship,

Let me reiterate that we are cognizant of the sorrowful events experienced in the past by the Armenian community and that I sincerely share your pain.

Please rest assured also that our hearts remain wide open to the grandchildren of the Ottoman Armenians all around the world.

With heartfelt salutations, I extend my best regards and wishes.

**Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**

## APPENDIX II

### STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY AHMET DAVUTOĞLU ON THE COMMEMORATION OF HRANT DINK

It has now been eight years since Hrant Dink was taken from us. Throughout his life, he strived, mind, heart and soul, to shed light on one of the major issues that the Ottoman Empire passed down to the Republic of Turkey. We wish patience to Dink's bereaved family and all those who held him dear.

Hrant Dink was an invaluable Anatolian intellectual who, without compromising either his Armenian heritage or his loyalty to Turkey, sought to help find the ways and means through which Turks and Armenians may build a common future. As someone who personified Turkish-Armenian friendship, he worked selflessly and gave his all, so that the bonds of a historic coexistence could be remembered, and the deep-rooted suffering overcome. As we commemorate the anniversary of his demise, and guided by the seeds of friendship he sowed, we wish to open new paths into hearts and minds.

With this understanding, we call on all Armenians, and invite all those who believe in Turkish-Armenian friendship to contribute to a new beginning:

Having already underscored the inhumane consequences of the relocation policies essentially enforced under wartime circumstances, including that of 1915, Turkey shares the suffering of Armenians and, with patience and resolve, is endeavouring to re-establish empathy between the two peoples. Our 23 April 2014 message of condolence, which included elements of how, primarily through dialogue, we may together bring an end to the enmity that has kept our relations captive, was a testament to this determination. Only by breaking taboos can we hope to begin addressing the great trauma that froze time in 1915. For its part, Turkey has transcended this critical threshold and relinquished the generalizations and stereotypical assertions of the past.

There is every reason to believe that these two ancient nations can demonstrate the wisdom to understand each other and contemplate a future together. Having shared the same geography and a long history, it is only Turks and Armenians who can effectively address their issues together and work jointly to find ways forward. Fostering a sense of mutual trust and cooperation; getting reacquainted against the backdrop of an 800 years-old common history and promoting human interaction will be essential. Accordingly, we invite our

Armenian friends to visit Turkey more often and do away with respective prejudices.

Furthermore, we will press ahead with resolve to give due recognition to the Armenian cultural heritage in Turkey and to those Armenian personalities who made inestimable contributions to Ottoman/Turkish culture. Our desire to share in the pain, to heal the wounds and to re-establish friendships is sincere. Our course is set towards a horizon of friendship and peace.

**Ahmet Davutođlu**

### APPENDIX III

#### STATEMENT BY H. E. MR. AHMET DAVUTOĞLU, PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY ON THE OTTOMAN ARMENIANS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES DURING THE LAST YEARS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

During the last years of the Ottoman Empire, a very large number of Ottoman citizens from different ethnic and religious backgrounds endured great suffering, leaving deep scars in their memories. They had all lived together for centuries in peace and harmony.

As descendants of nations with different ethnic and religious origins who endured these sufferings amid the conditions of the First World War, we understand what the Armenians feel. We remember with respect the innocent Ottoman Armenians who lost their lives and offer our deep condolences to their descendants.

It is both a historical and humane duty for Turkey to uphold the memory of Ottoman Armenians and the Armenian cultural heritage.

With this in mind, a religious ceremony will be held by the Armenian Patriarchate on 24 April this year and Ottoman Armenians will be remembered in Turkey, just as they will be across the world.

On this day, it would have been much more meaningful if Turkey and Armenia had been able to commemorate Ottoman Armenians together with a ceremony that befits both nations. This is what our President, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, stated in his message on 23rd of April 2014, when he was the Prime Minister.

We believe that when history is no longer exploited for political purposes, such a mature and morally sound outcome can be attained.

Ancient Anatolian civilization teaches us to stand up for our history, to remember both our joys and pains, to heal our wounds collectively and to look to the future together.

As I declared in my message on 20 January 2015, on the anniversary of the passing away of Hrant Dink, “two ancient nations can demonstrate the wisdom to understand each other and to contemplate a future together”.

As a consequence of our historical responsibilities and humane mission, and without making any distinction among those who suffered, we respectfully remember today all those who lost their lives in those events that transpired a century ago.

We also believe that, in order to ease the ongoing suffering, it is just as important to face the past with honesty, as it is to remember the deceased.

It is possible to establish the causes of what happened in World War One and those who were responsible for it.

However, laying all blame - through generalizations - on the Turkish nation by reducing everything to one word and to compound this with hate speech is both morally and legally problematic.

The scars left by the exile and massacres that Turkish and Muslim Ottomans were subjected to a century ago are still vivid in our minds today.

To ignore this fact and discriminate between pains suffered is as questionable historically as it is mistaken morally.

Indeed, recent years have shown that nothing can be achieved by trying to impose conflicting narratives upon one another.

In this context, the memories and convictions of all Ottoman citizens must be heard and respected.

To reach the truth, it is sufficient to attain a just memory, empathy, respectful language and a reasonable and objective way of looking at things.

In Turkey, every viewpoint is freely expressed and openly debated. Documents and knowledge of every kind can be investigated. By providing these means, Turkey is taking significant and positive steps towards the building of a common future.

As descendants of two ancient peoples who a hundred years ago shared the same destiny whether in joy or in sorrow, our common responsibility and calling today is to heal century old wounds and re-establish our human ties once again.

Turkey will not remain indifferent to this responsibility and will continue to do its utmost for friendship and peace.

As such, we are calling on all third parties to adopt an approach based on just memory and a common peaceful future, rather than aggravating age old wounds.

It is with these feelings and thoughts that we once more commemorate with deep respect the Ottoman Armenians who lost their lives during the relocation in 1915 and we share in the grief of their children and grandchildren.

**Ahmet Davutoğlu**

#### APPENDIX IV

### **NO: 110, 12 APRIL 2015, PRESS RELEASE REGARDING THE STATEMENTS DELIVERED DURING THE LITURGY IN VATICAN ON APRIL 12, 2015**

The statements of Pope Francis and the Armenian representatives delivered during the liturgy held at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican on 12 April 2015 regarding the 1915 events contradict historical and legal facts.

Having underlined his willingness to promote the establishment of peace and friendship among different groups in the world since the day he was elected to the Pontificate, Pope Francis has made today a discrimination between the sufferings by solely emphasizing the sufferings of the Christians and foremost the Armenians. With a selective point of view, he ignored the tragedies that befell on the Turkish and Muslim people who had lost their lives in World War I.

During this Holy Mass, history was instrumentalized for political aims. While overlooking the great sufferings and dark pages in remote geographies far away from Anatolia, and disregarding completely the cruelty of colonialism, only referring to our Christian brothers with whom we lived side by side in Anatolia for centuries, and who have nothing to do with the events of 1915, is unacceptable.

Genocide is a legal concept. Claims not fulfilling the requirements of law, even if they are attempted to be explained on the basis of widespread conviction, are bound to remain as slanders. Pope Francis, in his statement, refers to the tragic events that took place in Bosnia and in Rwanda as "mass killings", whereas these are recognized as genocides by competent international courts. He, however calls the events of 1915 a "genocide", despite the absence of any such competent court judgment. This is meaningful. It is not possible to explain this contradiction with the concepts of justice and conscience.

It is regrettable to see that, the statement delivered by Pope Francis in today's liturgy presents a great deviation from the remarks he has made during and on his return from his visit to Turkey on November 2830, 2014. In those remarks, the Pope had pointed out that "both sides are in good will" and that "third parties should encourage and pray for the reconciliation of the peoples".

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