

FACTS AND COMMENTS

(OLAYLAR VE YORUMLAR)

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Abstract: *This article studies Turkey-Armenia relations during the first half of 2016, commemorations and other activities of the 101st anniversary of the Armenian relocations, some countries' stances concerning Armenian genocide allegations and recent developments in the Karabakh issue.*

Keywords: *Turkey, Armenia, Canada, France, Germany, Russian Federation, United States, European Parliament, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Karabakh Issue, R.T. Erdoğan, A. Davutoğlu, S. Sargsyan, E. Nalbandian, F. Hollande, B. Obama*

Öz: *Bu yazı 2016 yılının ilk yarısında Türkiye-Ermenistan ilişkilerini, Ermeni sevk ve iskânın 101. yılının anılmasını ve diğer etkinliklerini, bazı ülkelerin Ermeni soykırımı iddialarına ilişkin tutumlarını ve Karabağ sorunu konusundaki son gelişmeleri incelemektedir.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Türkiye, Ermenistan, Kanada, Fransa, Almanya, Rus Federasyonu, A.B.D., Avrupa Parlamentosu, Avrupa Konseyi Parlamenter Asamblesi, Karabağ Sorunu, R.T. Erdoğan, A. Davutoğlu, S. Sarkisyan, E. Nalbantyan, F. Hollande, B. Obama*

ARTICLES

1 - TURKEY-ARMENIA RELATIONS

During the first six months of 2016, there was no positive development in Turkey-Armenia relations; on the contrary, the tense atmosphere caused by the “centennial” commemorations, although decreasingly, continued.

The genocide allegations, which constitutes the main problem between the two countries, receded into the background due to the clashes in Karabakh. However, this is not what Armenians want. Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian stated that “centennial” commemorations will continue and that their aim was recognition, condemnation, and prevention of new genocides.¹ Thus, it is understood that, in 2016 (and probably in the coming years), the goal is continue to put pressure on Turkey through the genocide issue.

During his visit to Azerbaijan in November 2016, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavuşoğlu reiterated that Turkey supported Azerbaijan with regard to the liberation of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.² In his speech at the conference titled “Crisis Management: Humanitarian Solutions” at Gaziantep University held under the auspices of the 8th Ambassadors Conference, Çavuşoğlu indicated that several countries had historical issues with Turkey and these issues were determining their approach towards Turkey. Touching upon the normalization of relations with Armenia, he reminded that 20 percent of Azerbaijan’s territories was occupied and stated the Turkey will not normalize its relations with Armenia unless the Karabakh issue is resolved.³

Çavuşoğlu’s statements once more revealed that Turkey does not accept Armenia’s policy of reflecting the Karabakh conflict as an issue that is of no concern to Turkey and addressing bilateral relations independently from the Karabakh issue. In reaction to this, Vice President of the National Assembly of Armenia, Eduard Sharmazanov, stated that Turkey did not and cannot have anything to do in the settlement of the Karabakh conflict, and he further indicated that Çavuşoğlu’s statement demonstrated that Turkey, in violation of the international commitments it has assumed, continued to posit preconditions.⁴ Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian made incomprehensible claims such as that Turkey, which is the successor of the Ottoman Empire, continued to posit preconditions, that it was not possible to

¹ “Nalbantyan’dan 2015’e Bakış”, *AGOS*, 04.02.2016.

² *Nouvelles d’Arménie*, No. 225, p. 16.

³ “Çavuşoğlu: Türkiye-Ermenistan ilişkileri Karabağ Sorunu Varken Düzelmeyecek”, *Trend.az*, 17.01.2016.

⁴ “Şarmazanov: Karabağ meselesinde Türkiye’nin yapacağı birşey yok ve olamaz”, *News.am*, 16.01.2016.

find logic behind Turkey's foreign policy and therefore, Turkey was unable to establish normal relations with other countries.⁵

On February 12, 2016, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, in his speech with regard to the implementation of constitutional changes, touching upon relations with Turkey, stated that he did not see any possibility for progress. He indicated that the notion that Armenia cannot live well as long as the Karabakh issue is not resolved or that the "blockade" imposed by Turkey is not lifted was unacceptable. Indicating that Turkey's and Azerbaijan's policies did not yield the result both countries yearned to see, Nalbandian stated that both countries were trying to talk to Armenia from the position of threat, coercion, and force, but that this approach did not produce any results. Nalbandian also indicated that Armenia has been living in these conditions for 25 years, and was used to and adjusted to these conditions.⁶ Furthermore, he added that a peace with Azerbaijan and Turkey should not be expected in the near future.⁷

These words, which referred to Ankara's and Baku's desire for Armenia to make concessions, reveals that Armenia's main concern was to not make any concessions with domestic policy considerations and that it was ready to even take the risk of not making peace with Turkey and Azerbaijan. This approach also explains why Armenia did not respond favorably to Turkey's recent policy of reconciliation.

With regard to the effects of the closing of Turkey's borders with Armenia in 1993 to the Armenian economy, it is seen that, indeed, the Armenian economy has adapted to this situation. Between the years 2001 and 2008, the Armenian economy grew by more than 10 percent while the border with Turkey (and Azerbaijan) was closed. This growth only decreased beginning from 2009 as a consequence of the world economic crisis.⁸ The reason why Armenia's economy was not affected by the closed border is that Armenia, during the Soviet era and in the first years of its independence, had a low amount of imports from Turkey. Therefore, the closing of the border did not affect Armenia's economy in this regard. On the other hand, since Armenia's export is quite low, the closing of the border did not affect Armenia's exports as well. Although it is clear that the closed border with Turkey does not affect Armenia's economy, both the Armenian political circles and public attach great

⁵ "Nalbantyan'dan 2015'e Bakış", *AGOS*, 04.02.2016.

⁶ "President Made a Statement on the implementation of the Constitutional Changes", *President of the Republic of Armenia*, Press Release, 12.01.2012, <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2016/02/12/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-meeting-Constitution/>

⁷ *Nouvelles d'Arménie*, No. 228, p. 11.

⁸ "Peace with Azerbaijan, Turkey Not Vital for Armenia", *RFE/RL*, 16.02.2016.

importance to the opening of the border. This could be explained with the feeling of insecurity due to “siege mentality” caused by the closing of borders as well as the belief that the opening of borders with Turkey would lead to the deterioration of Turkey-Azerbaijan relations.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavuşoğlu’s visit to Azerbaijan at the end of February provided a proper basis to review Turkey-Armenia relations. In a joint press conference with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Memmedyarov, Çavuşoğlu stated that Armenia failed the test of sincerity and that it behaved with ill intent towards its neighbors. He indicated that the 2009 Protocols was

Although it is clear that the closed border with Turkey does not affect Armenia’s economy, both the Armenian political circles and public attach great importance to the opening of the border. This could be explained with the feeling of insecurity due to “siege mentality” caused by the closing of borders as well as the belief that the opening of borders with Turkey would lead to the deterioration of Turkey-Azerbaijan relations.

emptied of its value when the Protocols were sent to the Constitutional Court of Armenia. Furthermore, Çavuşoğlu said that Armenia was being left out from regional cooperation mechanisms because of its own attitude (as it is known, regular meetings are held between Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan in order to develop cooperation in different matters, such as the Kars-Akhalkalaki-Baku railway in particular). Çavuşoğlu added that Armenia could be included in regional cooperation mechanisms if it corrects its mistakes, stops occupying Azerbaijani territories, and respects Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity.

Çavuşoğlu also affirmed Turkey’s continuous support for Azerbaijan with regards to Armenia’s withdrawal from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Prime Minister Davutoğlu’s statements that certain Syrian Kurds, like the Armenian gangs in the past, was cooperating with Russia and opened a representative office in Moscow drew negative reaction from the Armenian Foreign Minister Nalbandian. Stating that Talat Pasha was also blaming Russia for arming and provoking Armenians, Nalbandian claimed that such statements was a serious signal on what can happen to the Kurds. From these statements, it is understood that Nalbandian wanted to imply that Armenians were subjected to genocide for cooperating with the Russians and the same thing may happen to Kurds. It is known by all that the aim of the 1915 Armenian relocations was to put an end to the Armenian revolts. Furthermore, this event is not even remotely close to the crime of genocide defined in the 1948 Genocide Convention.

President Sargsyan, in a speech during his visit to Cyprus in mid-March, stated that the main obstacle in bilateral relations with Turkey was Turkish-Azerbaijani relations, and added that they were ready to develop diplomatic relations with Turkey, but Ankara was associating the issue with its relations with Baku. Furthermore, he claimed that Armenia's views over the genocide issue had no relation with Turkey's obligation to reconcile with its past.⁹

With this statement, Sargsyan referred to Armenia's policy towards Turkey. Armenia wants to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey without waiting for Turkey's recognition of the genocide allegations, in order to balance Azerbaijan's influence over Turkey, to ease Russia's control over itself, to win the favor of the US and EU (since such a move will be a peaceful act), and to open the border with Turkey. Although Armenia was close to reach this goal with the signing of the 2009 Protocols, Ankara's preference to preserve its relations with Azerbaijan and to associate the ratification of the protocols with the Karabakh conflict had created great disappointment in Armenia, and ultimately, Armenia was forced to abandon the protocols in practice (but did not legally abandon them).

Armenia's desire to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey without Turkey's recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations does not mean that Armenia has abandoned its allegations or that it does not attach importance to these allegations. Turkey's recognition of the genocide allegations will very much ease at least the partial fulfilment of Armenia's demands such as restitution, return of properties, as well as territorial demands. However, Armenia, which is aware that the Turkish public opinion will not accept such claims, with the help of several circles in the US and EU, aims to change the existing opinions of the public by creating a movement within Turkey and therefore, seeks to benefit from the group known as "liberal intellectuals" in Turkey. During his visit to the US which we will further touch upon below, President Sargsyan, in his speech on March 31, 2016, at the Harvard University, stated the following: "*An intellectual generation is growing in Turkey today, and this crème de la crème of society will eventually become strong enough to make their government speak the truth. I am sure that the day will come.*"¹⁰ Considering the fact that, according to a public opinion poll conducted in Turkey, only 9.1 percent believe that the events of 1915 amount to genocide,¹¹

⁹ "Turkey Not Recognizing Cyprus Is Inconceivable, Says Armenian President", *Cyprus News Agency*, 16.03.2016.

¹⁰ "President Gave a Lecture at the Kennedy School of Governance of the Harvard University", *President of the Republic of Armenia*, Press Release, 31.03.2016, <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2016/03/31/president-serzh-sargsyan-speech-at-harvard-university/>

¹¹ *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 32, p. 43.

it is understood that President Sargsyan will have to wait for a long time for this to happen.

President Sargsyan, who attended the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington at the end of March, as mentioned above, gave a conference at Harvard University¹² and although it was not the place, he touched upon Armenia-Turkey relations with much distortions and exaggerations. Indicating that certain neighbors were pursuing a policy of economic blackmail, Sargsyan described the closed border with Turkey as the last closed border in Europe. However, as we have previously mentioned at various times, this is not true. In the South Caucasus, the Armenia-Azerbaijan border is also closed. Furthermore, it is understood that Georgia's borders with Abkhazia and Ossetia are closed as well. It is also not possible to say that Georgia's border with Russia is completely open.

Touching upon the genocide allegations in the same speech, Sargsyan said that the world now recognized and condemned this crime, but he added that what was of utmost importance to them was Turkey's recognition and Turkey facing its own history.

Stating that there was a belief that exists outside of Armenia that Armenians jubilate when bad things happen in Turkey, Sargsyan indicated that this was a non-sense and that they were strongly interested in Turkey's peaceful and democratic development. He further said that fundamental democratization was the only way in which all the peoples living in Turkey would feel as fully fledged citizens and would be able to lead a dignified life. It seems that Sargsyan, with these words, wanted to give a lesson of democracy to Turkey, but he is actually not competent to do so.

In a written statement on April 24, 2016, President Sargsyan stated that more than a century has passed since the "genocide" and Armenia was reborn as a nation and as a state during this period. He also indicated that Armenia proved to the world that Turkey failed in its genocidal plans. Sargsyan added that Turkey's denialist stance and hostile attitude towards everything Armenian did not change and this attitude meant the continuation of the crime of genocide nowadays.

What is noteworthy in this statement is that Sargsyan's statement reflected racial hatred, at the least some manner of Turcophobia or obsession, regardless of the fact that the President Erdoğan sent a very peaceful letter to the mass

¹² *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 32, p. 43.

held at the Mother Mary Church, which understood and shared the sufferings of the Armenians.

In the same statement, in order to encourage the Armenian public opinion, which was badly affected by the loss of Armenian forces during the clashes in Karabakh on 2-5 April, Sargsyan said the following: *“I declare to the entire world to hear: there will be no purging or deportation of the Armenians of Artsakh [Nagorno-Karabakh]. We will not allow another Armenian Genocide.”*¹³ What is odd here is the fact that no one has the intention such as to deport Armenians. On the other hand, it is a known fact that Azerbaijanis in Karabakh and other territories of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenians were deported and some were massacred as seen in the example of Khojaly.

Sargsyan’s animosity towards Turkey manifested itself in other occasions as well.

Regarding the agreement between Turkey and the EU on refugees, although it did not concern his country, Sargsyan said: *“The EU should not blindly trust Erdoğan in addressing the refugee crisis: they need to seek their own solutions to this problem”*. He further stated that he had a feeling that *“this deal, in any case, is not stable and with a partner like Turkey, it will be difficult to achieve in long term”*.¹⁴

In an interview he gave to the German newspaper Bild a day before the German Bundestag’s adoption of the draft resolution on the genocide allegations, Sargsyan said: *“it would not be fair to not call the genocide of Armenians ‘genocide’ just because that makes the head of state of another country angry. I am sure that Bundestag politicians see it this way too and will not be intimidated.”*¹⁵

Another remarkable subject with regard to Turkey-Armenia relations is Armenia’s efforts to present Turkey as a responsible party for the clashes in Karabakh on 2-5 April. Vice President of the National Assembly of Armenia Eduard Sharmazanov, during his visit to Moscow following the clashes, taking advantage of the anti-Turkey atmosphere in Russia, said:

Azerbaijan, as an initiator of the growth of this tension bears the whole responsibility of the escalation of the situation. Here Turkey’s one-sided criminal position, which evidently defends and encourages such

¹³ “Sergh Sargsyan: We will not allow another Armenian Genocide”, *Panorama.am*, 24.04.2016.

¹⁴ “Armenian President: We don’t Trust Erdoğan”, *Medimax*, 01.06.2016.

¹⁵ “Armenia: don’t let Erdogan bully you on genocide bill”, *The Local*, 01.06.2016.

*inhuman action is extremely dangerous. All this shows that Turkey continues remaining one of the threats for regional stability.*¹⁶

There is no point in making such statements other than displaying hostility towards Turkey despite the fact that Turkey had nothing to do with the clashes in Karabakh.

Another occasion also revealed the paranoid attitude of certain circles in Armenia towards Turkey. A movement to protest against Turkish products led by one Tatul Manaseryan, who is apparently an economist, began in Yerevan. This movement calls for the boycott of Turkish products not only Armenia, but also in the entire world on the grounds that the money paid to Turkish products could finance weapons to be used against Armenians and that Turkish foods could be used as a bacteriological weapon against Armenians.¹⁷ On the other hand, this movement means that Russia's policy of restrictions on imports from Turkey following the downing of a Russian warplane by Turkey over the Syrian border last year may be pursued by Armenia as well.

Actually, this initiative, which is the product of the delusions of several extremists, should not be taken seriously and can be regarded as a support to Russia's policy toward Turkey. However, with the Armenian Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamian's order for "a study on this issue with the focus on those Turkish products that threaten Armenian economy both in terms of quality and competition",¹⁸ the issue gained an official status and gave rise to the thought that Armenia was looking for an excuse to restrict imports from Turkey.

It must be mentioned that Turkey's yearly total exports is worth around 140 billion dollars, and Turkey's yearly exports to Armenia is around 200 million dollars. Therefore, exports to Armenia constitute only a small amount such as 1.4 per thousand. If Armenia attempts to block or restrict imports from Turkey, this will cause only a small amount of revenue loss, but will lead Turkey to take measures against Armenia in other fields.

However, despite Armenia's policy towards Turkey that could be described as aggressive, it is seen Turkey remains very silent. This attitude is also observed in the program of the 65th Government that was formed in May. In the South Caucasus section of the government program states the following:

¹⁶ "Sharmazanov Calls Turkey and Azerbaijan Regional Threat", *Armenpress*, 19.04.2016.

¹⁷ "Protest Against Turkish Products in Yerevan", *Asbarez*, 22.04.2016.

¹⁸ "PM: Armenian Government Does Not Seek to Ban Imports of Turkish Food", *ARKA*, 11.05.2016.

*In accordance with the peaceful settlement of conflicts in the Caucasus, our country will continue to strive for the cessation of the occupation in Azerbaijani territories, Upper Karabakh in particular, and the ending of tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia.*¹⁹

In short, Turkey's relations with Armenia is not found in the government program. This might be a result of Armenia's negative attitude. On the other hand, Armenia-Azerbaijan relations is found in the program and it is stated that Turkey will support Azerbaijan.

2 - COMMEMORATIONS OF THE 101st ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN RELOCATION AND OTHER EVENTS

2.1 - Events In Armenia

As mentioned above, Armenian officials attach great importance that centennial commemorations and other events are not limited to the year 2015 and are spread out to coming years. As a matter of fact, Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian had previously said that work over recognizing the "Armenian genocide" would not stop before or after the anniversaries.²⁰ Therefore, it was expected for events to be organized for the "101st" anniversary.

There are two major events held for the anniversaries of the genocide allegations. The first one is the torchlight procession on the night of April 23 toward the "genocide memorial" which is organized by the Dashnak Party and usually attended by the youth. Similar to previous years, Turkish flags were burned this year during this event. Furthermore, probably due to the clashes in Karabakh in April, Azerbaijani flags were also burned.²¹ There is no doubt that, whatever the reason, burning the flag of a country is an extremely inappropriate act that reflects primitive feelings and thoughts.

Secondly, the next day on April 24, the Armenian president as well as government officials and clergy, as a cortege, walk to the "genocide memorial" and stand in homage. After this, the memorial is opened to the public. Last year, this ceremony was attended by the Russian, French, Serbian Presidents and the Greek Cypriot leader as well as other foreign statesmen. However, it

¹⁹ "Government Program", Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, 25.05.2016, www.basbakanlik.gov.tr/forms/_global_government/pg_GovernmentProgram.aspx,

²⁰ "Work over recognizing the Armenian genocide does not stop before and after the anniversaries: Edward Nalbandian", *Armenpress*, 02.02.2016.

²¹ "Participants of Torch Light Processing Burn Turkish and Azerbaijan Flags", *Armenpress*, 23.04.2016.

appears that this year's ceremony was not attended by foreign statesmen. This lead to lesser interest to such events.

What is new this year is that, apart from the above ceremonies, two more major events were held. The first was the "International Social and Political Global Forum against the Crime of Genocide", also known as in short "Global Forum", which was established and held its first meeting last year. The second is the "Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity."

It appears that the main purpose of the Global Forum is to address the topic of genocide in accordance with the Armenian views in an international conference.

President Sargsyan, in his opening speech at the Second Global Forum Against the Crime of Genocide in which he did not mention Turkey but vilified Azerbaijan,²² stated that this conference showed the determination of the Republic of Armenia to be one of the pioneering forces to lead the struggle against the crime of genocide. Thus, it appears that Armenia wants to create a platform in which it can easily bring forward its genocide allegations against Turkey by gaining a place in the world in the field of genocide studies. Sargsyan also mentioned the need to define a special legal status for survivors of genocide and other crimes against humanity through the improvement of existing legal mechanisms or introduction of new legal norms. Sargsyan also mentioned the necessity of the recognition of the rights of the victims concerning their losses and suffering. Hence, from these words, it is understood that Sargsyan aims to establish a new legal structure which will overcome the difficulties in paying restitutions to the inheritors of the those who died and also who suffered in other ways during the 1915 events.

The "Final Statement and Recommendations" of the Global Forum, which was published on April 23, 2016,²³ although there was no direct to the Armenian genocide allegations, mentioned the commitment to combat the "evil of genocide and other crimes against humanity, and the importance of teaching history of the humankind as well as causes and consequences of genocide with a view of achieving comprehensive and objective recognition of the crimes of the past. The next Global Forum, which will be convened in April 2018, is recommended to focus on the role of education, tools, methods to eliminate hatred, intolerance, and xenophobia.

²² "Second Global Forum Against the Crime of Genocide Opens in Yerevan", *Armradio.am*, 22.04.2016, <http://www.armradio.am/en/2016/04/22-23/>

²³ "Final Statement and Recommendations of the Second Global Forum Against the Crime of Genocide", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, 26.04.2016, http://www.mfa.am/u_files/file/GF%202016/GF_Final_Statement_eng.pdf

The second initiative with regards to the “101st anniversary” is the “Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity”. This prize was created by three wealthy Armenians – Ruben Vardanyan, Nubar Afeyan, and Vartan Gregorian. The aim of the prize is pay tribute to individuals who saved lives during wars, ethnic strife, and human made disasters. The prize bears the name of Aurora Mardiganian who was a survivor of the “genocide” and narrated her experiences with a book and a film. The winner of the one-million-dollar prize, which will be awarded annually in Yerevan, is selected by a selection committee co-chaired by actor George Clooney and Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel. The winner receives 100,000 dollars, and nominates individuals and organizations that will receive the one-million-dollar award.²⁴

The inaugural prize was awarded to Marguerite Barankitse who had established an orphanage in Burundi. Barankitse chose to donate the one million dollar award to three organizations that aided needy children and orphans: Fondation du Grand-Duc et de La Grande-Duchesse du Luxembourg, Fondation Jean-François Peterbroeck (JFP Foundation), and the Fondation Briderlech Deelen Luxembourg.²⁵

What concerns Armenians and Armenia with regard to the Aurora Prize is the fact that the Prize was financed by wealthy Armenians and that the name of the prize was taken from an Armenian who was relocated. Organizations that won awards this year have nothing to do with Armenians. However, the fact that the prize is awarded in Yerevan will bring prestige to Armenia to some extent. Furthermore, the fact that the prize is awarded on April 24 will indirectly lead to connections between the prize and genocide allegations.

Although there is no doubt that people are free to use their wealth on whatever they want, it seems that it would have been a more proper move for wealthy Diaspora Armenians to help the poor in large numbers in Armenia before helping the needy in Africa or other places.

Nubar Afeyan, one of the creators of the Aurora Prize, said that their aim was to turn Armenia into a global humanitarian center. However, unfortunately, as seen in the Armenian atrocities which cost the lives of half a million Muslims in Eastern Anatolia in 1914-1921, the killings of Turkish diplomats, the Khojaly massacre in Karabakh, the attack on the Armenian National Assembly and the killings of the Armenian Prime Minister, Parliament Speaker and several parliamentarians in 1999, the deaths of 10 people at the hands of the

²⁴ “George Clooney Visits Armenia For Humanitarian Award Event”, *RFE/RL*, 22.04.2016.

²⁵ “Marguerite Barankitse Reçoit le Premier Prix Aurora”, *Armenews*, 26.04.2016.

police during demonstrations following the 2008 presidential elections, Armenians have a tradition using violence for political purposes. Therefore, it would be correct to view the initiative of turning Armenia into a humanitarian center rather as a move for propaganda purposes.

2.2 - Events In Turkey

Number and venues of ceremonies and other events in Turkey to commemorate the 101st anniversary of the 1915 events, compared to the previous year,²⁶ was less this year. Although it is not possible to know the reason for this, it appears that commemorative events, which is repeated each year with the same content, has caused weariness, and contributions and incentives from abroad has been waning.

Therefore, it would be correct to view the initiative of turning Armenia into a humanitarian center rather as a move for propaganda purposes.

The main themes of this year's ceremonies and events, which were attended by less Armenians and others from abroad when compared to previous years, were the topics such as the necessity of Turkey's recognition of the "Armenian genocide", that justice will not be served as long as Turkey refuses to recognize, and that the denial of the "genocide" means the continuation of the crime. Furthermore, the alleged Assyrian and Pontic Greek genocides were also requested to be recognized. What could be regarded as new this year are several statements claiming that what was committed against Armenians, in other words, the genocide allegations, was also intended against the Kurds today.

The most important commemorative event this year was the mass held at the Mother Mary Church. Archbishop Aram Ateşyan, General Vicar of Armenian Patriarch in Turkey, who lead the mass read the following message by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan:

I greet those who gathered for commemorating the Ottoman Armenians who died in the tragic days of World War I. Turkey is the most meaningful place for understanding the suffering of Ottoman Armenians and commemorating them; thus, I am glad that this ceremony is held in Turkey once again. In Anatolia, where humanitarian duties are not ignored and both joy and pain is shared with sincerity, conscience and sense of justice come first. In accordance with our sense of history and

²⁶ For ceremonies and events held in Turkey in 2005, see: *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 52, p. 18-28.

understanding of humanity, we will continue to protect the memory of Ottoman Armenians. We will continue to remind the thousand-years-old common life culture of Turks and Armenians. We will not give up working with the aim of friendship and peace against the ones who have been trying to alienate the two neighboring peoples with common history and similar traditions by the discourse of hatred and to make history a political issue. With this mentality, I respectfully commemorate the Ottoman Armenians who passed away and express my condolences to their families. Once again, I want to remind that we share this common pain. I would like to thank all Armenian citizens who had contributed to this country.²⁷

President Erdoğan's message is intended for the Armenians in Turkey. However, Shavarsh Kocharyan, Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia, for an inexplicable reason, responded to this message.²⁸ Shavarsh Kocharyan stated that the message was a failed attempt of denial and an attempt to put the responsibility for the genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire on Armenians. He indicated that Turkey was assuming a parity between the victims of war²⁹ and those who became the victim of state planned and implemented genocide. Kocharyan further stated that the denialist position was enlarging the gap between the Turkish and Armenian peoples, the best way for the elimination of which is facing historical truth and repentance.³⁰

It must be stated that the content of Shavarsh Kocharyan's statements has nothing to do with the President Erdoğan's message.

In the face of the negative attitude of the Armenian side, Presidential Spokesperson İbrahim Kalın stated that a one-sided historical perspective was being imposed with regard to the 1915, and underlined the necessity of looking to the future from a perspective of friendship and perceiving the incidents in that period as shared pain.³¹

²⁷ "Cumhurbaşkanı'ndan 24 Nisan Mesajı", *Agos*, 24.04.2016.

²⁸ "L'Arménie Dénonce Erdoğan Pour son Message du 24 avril", *Armenews.com*, 26.04.2016.

²⁹ What is meant with the phrase "victims of war" are the Muslims who were killed by Armenian gangs in Eastern Anatolia during and after the First World War. According to published Ottoman documents, the number of people massacred by Armenians between 1914-1922 is 518.000 (*Ermeniler Tarafından Yapılan Katliamın Belgeleri*, Editör: Yusuf Sarınoy, Başbakanlık Arşivler Genel Müdürlüğü, 2001). Armenian authors try to ignore these massacres, and when they are compelled to mention them, they try to play down these massacres by presenting them as the natural consequences of war.

³⁰ "Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia Considers Turkish President's Statement Another Failed Attempt of Denial", *Armenpress*, 24.04.2016.

³¹ "Certains tentent d'imposer une histoire unilatérale concernant les incidents de 1915", *TRT.net.tr*, 25.04.2016, <http://www.trt.net.tr/francais/turquie/2016/04/25/certains-tentent-d-imposer-une-histoire-unilaterale-concernant-les-incidents-de-1915-477731>,

3 - DEVELOPMENTS IN CERTAIN COUNTRIES REGARDING ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ALLEGATIONS

While most developments regarding the Armenian genocide allegations occurred in 2015, several events were continued also in 2016 with the efforts of both Armenians and the Armenian Diaspora. We will discuss the most important ones below.

3.1 - Germany

In 2005, the German Parliament (Bundestag) had adopted a resolution that viewed the events of 1915 as genocide without using the genocide word. There have been efforts in Germany, particularly by the Greens, for the adoption of another resolution in the German Parliament, which included the word “genocide”. The 101st anniversary of the Armenian relocations had created a suitable opportunity for this, and a motion for resolution, which included the word “genocide” and which was supported by all political parties, was submitted in the federal assembly. However, the motion was returned to the German Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee due to the opposition finding the wording inadequate.³²

After the Foreign Affairs Committee failed to reach an agreement on the motion, the Greens prepared a new motion in February 2016 that indicated that the events of 1915 amounted to genocide.³³ Although it had a text that could be approved by the Parliament, the motion was not voted due to the reservations of the Christian Democrats, especially Chancellor Merkel, since it was a period in which Turkey’s cooperation with regard to the refugee problem was needed. However, thanks to the efforts of Cem Özdemir, the co-chairman of the political party The Greens, who is closely interested in the subject, it was agreed among the political parties to vote the motion on June 2, 2016. The motion was put to vote on June 2, 2016 and was adopted with one vote against and one abstention.

Three fourths of the Parliament was not present at the voting. Chancellor Angela Merkel, Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel, and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier did not take part in the vote due to scheduling issues.³⁴ However, limited participation does not prevent the validity or “legality” of

³² *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 32, p. 69-72.

³³ “Genocide Debate Puts Germany in Tough Spot with Turkey”, *Deutsche Welle*, 23.04.2016.

³⁴ “Almanya ‘Soykırım’ı Kabul Etti, Türkiye Büyükelçisini Geri Çekti”, *Haberler.com*, 02.06.2016, <http://www.haberler.com/karslioglu-almaya-duygusal-bir-karar-aldi-8494453-haberi/>

the resolution. Those who did not participate the voting might have acted as such due to their lack of interest in the issue or their disapproval of the adoption of such a resolution, but also due to their fear to speak up about their above-mentioned opinions. By the way, let us remind that, in France, the 2001 resolution passed with regard to Armenian genocide allegations was adopted with the participation of 50 MPs, while another similar resolution was adopted in June 26, 2016, with the votes of 21 MPs.

The resolution adopted by the German Parliament, besides usual Armenian propaganda items, include the below points:

The resolution is titled “Remembrance and commemoration of the genocide of the Armenians and other Christian minorities in the years 1915-1916.”

From a legal perspective, it is clear that the German Parliament has recognized Armenian genocide allegations. However, clear expressions of recognition in resolutions of other parliaments are not found in this resolution.³⁵ This semi-uncertainty in the German Parliament’s resolution is most probably a result of negotiations on the text of the resolution. However, even if there are uncertainties, there is no doubt that the German Parliament has recognized the Armenian genocide allegations.

Another feature of the text is that it does not ask Turkey to recognize the “Armenian genocide”. In the European Parliament’s 1987 resolution, which was the first “Armenian genocide” recognition in Europe and was an inspiration for similar resolutions by several EU-member countries’ parliaments, Turkey was publicly asked to recognize the “Armenian genocide”. Some countries, taking into account the possible negative impact of such a resolution on their bilateral relations with Turkey, had only recognized the genocide allegations and did not make any demands from Turkey. The German Parliament also followed this path. However, as we will see below, other kinds of demands were made from Turkey in the resolution.

The resolution also mentions the “genocide of other Christian minorities.” These minorities are defined as Aramaic/Assyrian and Chaldean Christians. It must be mentioned that Greece’s claim that Pontic Greeks were also subjected to genocide was not included in the resolution.

An interesting aspect of the resolution are the efforts to also hold the German government during World War I responsible for the “Armenian genocide”. It

³⁵ For instance, the French resolution in 2001 very clearly recognizes Armenian genocide allegations; “France publicly recognizes the Armenian Genocide of 1915.”

is hard to explain the reason for such self-incrimination. It is possible that this is to prevent criticisms against Germany with regard to “Armenian genocide” by pleading guilty in advance, as well as to give Turkey the message that it should admit the “Armenian genocide” as Germany did for the genocide it committed (Holocaust) and seems to be readying to admit committing a genocide in colonial-era Namibia.

Actually, according to the German point of view, no crime could be attributed to Germany with regard to 1915 events; the Ottoman government is the sole responsible for the “genocide”. It must be mentioned that the resolution states that the then German government was guilty for not trying to prevent the events, but had no power to do so, and also wanted the Ottoman Empire to continue the war.

The argument that Germany's interest in the 1915 events stemmed from its failure at the time to prevent these events is not believable. Why did Germany wait for nearly 60 years since the re-recognition of its independence in 1948 to be interested in this subject? Therefore, the reason for this interest must be sought out in current developments.

There is no clarity in the resolution on why the German Federal Assembly is so interested with this subject.

The argument that Germany's interest in the 1915 events stemmed from its failure at the time to prevent these events is not believable. Why did Germany wait for nearly 60 years since the re-recognition of its independence in 1948 to be interested in this subject? Therefore, the reason for this interest must be sought out in current developments.

It could be claimed that it took so much years for such interest because human rights has gained importance in the course of time. However, the weakness of this claim is that human rights concerns the people alive and their future. Human rights cannot be implemented retroactively; the dead cannot be brought back.

The Diaspora and Armenians of Armenia have a strong desire for revenge against Turkey and the Turks. Although it could be thought that the German Parliament tried to assist Armenians in this regard, there are no indications suggesting such a motive.

In our opinion, there are two primary reasons for the German Parliament's interest in the Armenian genocide allegations.

The first reason is to prevent, or at least soften, criticisms in advance against today's Germany due to the then German government's failure (inability) to prevent the Armenian relocations in 1915.

The second reason, which is more realistic, is related to the assimilation of Turks in Germany. Around 3 million Turks live in Germany today. Since the beginning of the 1960s in which Turks began to migrate to Germany for employment, in other words, for more than half a century ago, the main concern of all German governments has been the integration of Turkish community into the German society. To put it differently, they want Turks to accept and adapt to the circumstances in Germany. Turks have completely integrated in Germany in terms of work. However, the problem is in the social field. Apart from the difference in religion, German customs, traditions, social lifestyles do not conform to those of Turks, preventing both communities to commingle. This discrepancy has led a majority of Turks to live a ghetto lifestyle, making the integration of both communities impossible. Thus, the presence of an "un-Germanized" mass in the country for years has troubled German governments. As a result, they began to implement the policy of "divide and conquer" in order to both to achieve integration and to prevent this large mass to act together. In this context, firstly, an attempt was made to separate the Kurds from the Turks with the help of the Evangelical Church, and even the PKK was unofficially supported to that end, but this decision was much regretted afterwards. Secondly, religious differentiation was used to draw out the Alevis. Alevis were separated from the Sunni majority and were encouraged to live with their own sect. Even the argument that Alevism was a separate religion from Islam was propounded. As for Sunnis, it was made possible for them to divide into several tariqas and other movements.

Ultimately, although the possibility of Turks acting together was mostly eliminated due to divisions among them, the integration of Turks into the German society, albeit with some exceptions, was not achieved. Even after half a century, Turks have continued to feel attached to Turkey. Although continuing to live in Germany, they have continued to feel as an outsider in Germany.

As for what this has to do with the Armenian genocide allegations, since genocide is considered as the gravest crime, accusing a community (Turks) of committing genocide causes them to experience a morale crisis and feel obliged to defend themselves, and the failure to do so, under the influence of the famous Stockholm Syndrome, leads them to accept the views of their accusers. It also leads, in this case, for the Turks to be engulfed in the German society, assume a low profile, and be alienated from the Turkish values and customs. Of course, this is a process that will take years, and a significant part of the Turks will resist this process.

The most significant evidence that the Armenian genocide allegation is being used with the above-mentioned purpose is the initiation of this process and the casting of Cem Özdemir, who is an integrated Turk, to play the leading role. Furthermore, other Turkish parliamentarians in the German Parliament also have embraced the Armenian genocide allegations or were forced to do so. In fact, doing the contrary could lead to obstacles in their political careers and even to the end of their political lives. It could also prevent them from being a parliamentarian again. As a matter of fact, these have occurred in several European countries. For instance, in Belgium, Emir Kır was attempted to be removed from his ministerial duty for not recognizing the “Armenian genocide”.³⁶ Again in Belgium, parliamentarian Mahinur Özdemir was expelled from her party.³⁷ Similar incidents had also occurred in the Netherlands before.

Furthermore, the attempt to include Armenian genocide allegations into the curricula and teaching materials of schools, universities, and political education is also another evidence of the forcible integration attempts. Turkish children who will, at a young age, face allegations and accusations that their ancestors committed genocide against Armenians will be overwhelmed by feelings of guilt, and in order to overcome this, they will be forced to accept what is told to them and be lost within the German society. Some will resist. Among these, there could be those who could even be caught up in radical movements.

The German Parliament’s resolution was criticized and condemned in Turkey far beyond expectations. President Erdoğan’s response was very strong. Similar reactions were shown by the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and several other ministers, as well as the leaders and officials of other political parties, except HDP. The German Parliament’s resolution, thus, consolidated the stance against Armenian genocide allegations in Turkey and became an element of unity and congruity. It was seen that Turkey’s attitude was also echoed by the Turks in Germany, and many marches and meetings were organized against the resolution in front of the German Parliament.

In order to examine Turkish government’s objections and criticisms against the resolution, it would be beneficial to look at the Turkish Foreign Ministry’s below statement issued on June 2, 2015:

No: 125, 2 June 2016, Press Release Regarding the Resolution by the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany of 2 June 2016 on the Events of 1915

³⁶ *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 51.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

The Resolution adopted by the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany on 2 June 2016 concerning the events of 1915, which is regarded as a legitimate matter of debate in the European case-law, is a disgrace to the reputation of this body.

This Resolution is an example of ignorance and disrespect for the Law as politicizing history preventing free discussion on historical issues and trying to impose the self-created taboo of Armenian narrative as an indisputable fact. We, on our part, wish once again to remind those who undersigned it, of the following:

Achieving reconciliation on the controversial events of 1915 is possible only through dialogue, empathy and a fair point of view.

With this understanding, Turkey tries to honour the memory of the Ottoman Armenians, shares their sufferings, preserves Armenian cultural heritage and takes significant steps for paving the way for reconciliation between the two neighbouring nations. In this respect, there is nothing that Turkey will learn from the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany.

If the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany wishes to learn what exactly happened during the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, it may contribute to the establishment of the Joint History Commission which will function independently on a scientific basis and open to everyone, as has been persistently proposed by Turkey since 2005.

In Germany, where freedoms can be exercised easily in many fields, there is a univocal and suppressive environment regarding the events of 1915. Instead of comprehending and explaining what had happened in 1915, numerous books, documentaries and films have been fabricated on the basis of purposeful works over so many years, to achieve the duty of forming a one-sided opinion in the German public to impose Armenian narrative on the said events.

Turcophobia and Islamophobia reaching to the level of racism, current developments in domestic politics and foreign policy, some arrogant and opportunist politicians, and the deep trauma created by Germany's record of past crimes against humanity and genocide extending from Namibia to the Holocaust may possibly be mentioned among the reasons lying behind this policy.

Even worse, this initiative of Germany constitutes an attempt to assimilate Turks and Germans of Turkish origin, who have contributed significantly to the political, economic and socio-cultural life of Germany and to alienate them from their own history and self-identity.

It is also for this reason that the initiatives for dictating the Armenian narrative to young generations by means of public education cause concern. Turkish children in Germany are expected to defend a narrative which they do not believe and know that it is untrue, so as to succeed in history classes. Such a notion of education, is not only incompatible with the ideals of a democratic country and will not help harmonization efforts either.

It goes without saying that there will be resistance against this dictum by use of all kinds of means including legal remedies.

Germany should not politicize an historical event which occurred 101 years ago, and take a fair and objective stance as a requirement of the European Law to which it is a party. In this sense we would like to remind once again the legally binding observations of the European Court of Human Rights to the effect that,

-the Armenian narrative do not reflect the absolute truth and can be discussed freely;

-the opinions questioning the Armenian narrative are under the absolute protection of the freedom of speech;

-and no parallels can be drawn between the events of 1915 and the Holocaust.

It is apprehensive that the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany interprets history arbitrarily, without taking into account the law.

It is clear that this prejudiced and illogical policy is in need of serious self-criticism.

The German public opinion should respect, as a requisite of democracy and human rights, the opinions, memories and sincere efforts of the Turks for the purpose of reconciliation,

We expect that Germany, as our ally and as a country with which we

cooperate closely for the future of Europe, will take into consideration our opinions and sensitivities to which we attach vital importance, for the sake of the future of both our bilateral relations as well as the Turkey-Europe relations.

Under these circumstances, H.E. Hüseyin Avni Karsluoğlu, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the Federal Republic of Germany has been recalled for consultations.

The adoption of this resolution also had several consequences. We can summarize these as follows:

- Bilateral relations experienced a pause, even a regression. However, economic, and military relations was not affected for the benefit of both sides.
- Anti-German sentiments that has been actually present in the Turkish people intensified.
- A significant number of Turks in Germany, which, except for a small minority, had remained silent against Armenian genocide allegations, united and held demonstrations against the resolution.
- Liberal intellectuals and some human rights activists in Turkey who have embraced and defended Armenian views chose to remain silent when anti-Germany sentiments reached the highest point in the country.
- Lastly, the resolution did not have any effects on Turkey-Armenia relations.

3.2 - France

We had previously given detailed information about France's approach in the "centennial".³⁸ In the period we cover here, it is seen that the adoption of a resolution "criminalizing the denial of the genocide" is the main issue in France with regard to the Armenian genocide allegations.

Since people of Armenian origin constitute an important voter base in France, in the French Parliament, which puts a lot of effort to meet the demands of Armenians (but not all that successful), Valérie Boyer, who is a parliamentarian

³⁸ *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 51, p. 132-137.

representing the Bouches-du-Rhône and a member of the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) party, presented once again a bill to the parliament, penalizing the denial of genocide. However, this time, to increase the chances of being adopted, the bill aimed at not only the “Armenian genocide”, but also all other genocides. On December 3, 2015, the bill was sent back to the Justice Commission upon the request of the representatives of the ruling Socialist Party. Expressing his opinion on the topic, Jean-Marie Le Guen, Minister of State for Relations with Parliament, stated that, although the government was against those who denied or questioned the “truth of the Armenian genocide”, the bill will to be returned by virtue of the existing jurisprudence and on the grounds that it would violate the freedom of expression.³⁹ Thus, the bill was taken off the agenda.

The French Constitutional Council’s (Court) decision on January 8, 2016, virtually eliminated the possibility of a resolution that criminalizes the rejection of the Armenian genocide allegations being adopted. A French citizen by the name of Vincent Reynouard, who is a Jewish Holocaust denier, lost the lawsuit he filed with the request of annulment of the “Gayssot Act”, which criminalizes Holocaust denial. The Constitutional Council, in its decision, ruled that only competent tribunals can decide whether an event or act amounts to genocide. Accordingly, legislative (parliamentary resolutions) and executive (government resolutions) powers should not take decisions with regard to genocide, and if they have already taken, these decisions should become void. As a consequence, no law criminalizing the denial of the “Armenian genocide” based on the law adopted in France in 2001, characterizing the events of 1915 as “genocide”, or any other law, can be introduced.

The decision of the Constitutional Council will have other consequences as well.

Firstly, the abolition of the law dated 2001 now appears to be possible. For this, however, a separate and probably a long judicial process will have to be initiated.

The second consequence is request for the removal of the reference to the Armenian genocide allegations from the curricula of schools in France. This also requires a separate judicial process.

In January 2016, the Coordination Council of Armenian organizations of France (Conseil de Coordination des organisations Arméniennes de France),

³⁹ “Une Proposition de loi LR Pour Réprimer la Négation des Génocides Repoussée à l’Assemblée”, *AFP*, 03.12.2015.

which embodies most of Armenian organization in France, organized a dinner for French politicians and intellectuals embracing Armenian views. Attending this dinner and making a long speech, French President François Hollande reminded that he participated in the “centennial” ceremonies held in Yerevan on April 24. Touching upon the limited participation on the presidential level at the ceremonies, Hollande stated that this showed that efforts for the international recognition of the Armenian “genocide” must continue.

Hollande later touched upon the criminalization of the denial of the genocide allegations, which is a matter that is highly important for French Armenians. As is known, on February 28, 2012, the French Constitutional Council had turned down a similar law on the grounds that it was a violation of the freedom of expression and communication. This ruling was as a disaster for the militant Armenians in France, and all efforts were directed to have a law passed that would ensure the criminalization of the genocide allegations.

Despite all efforts and behests, no progress was made to this end as there is no agreement on a formula that would ensure such criminalization without violating the freedom of expression and communication. Hollande, in his dinner speech, stressed that any formula on this matter must be in accordance with the law, and he stated that the rejection of a law by the Constitutional Council or the European Court of Human Rights would not only be a failure for France, but also for the “Armenian cause”, for it would mean a victory for “denialism”. He also stated that he appointed the former President of the European Court of Human Rights, Jean-Paul Costa, to find a solution to the problem, and that they will take action to introduce a new law in accordance with Costa’s findings.⁴⁰

Despite Hollande’s participation in the dinner organized in January by Armenians, the fact that the ceremony held before the statue of composer-priest Gomidas, which is the most important event for Armenians in France, was not attended by him, the Prime Minister or the Parliamentary Speaker, the fact that the government was represented by Secretary of State for European Affairs, Harlem Désir, which is a lower position than ministership, and the fact that the ceremony was not attended by Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo, who is known for her support to Armenians, but by her deputy, was most probably a surprise for Armenians.

Mourad Papazyan, Co-president of the Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France, revealed how unrealistic were the expectations of the

⁴⁰ *Nouvelles d’Arménie*, March 2016, p. 28.

French Armenians from the “centennial” with his statement at the ceremony: *“we [Armenians] wouldn’t have believed if someone told us that Turkey was still not recognizing the truth of the Armenian genocide in the year 2016.”*

Harlem Désir, who spoke on behalf of the government, said that commemorating the Armenian “genocide” was an exigency of the universal truth and a duty of memory not only for the Armenian people, but also the whole of humanity. In response to a question by the participants, Désir said that President Hollande appointed one of the best jurist in the country with the preparation of a law on denial.

Mourad Papazyan, Co-president of the Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France, revealed how unrealistic were the expectations of the French Armenians from the “centennial” with his statement at the ceremony: “we [Armenians] wouldn’t have believed if someone told us that Turkey was still not recognizing the truth of the Armenian genocide in the year 2016.”

After nearly two months, on June 27, 2016, the French government proposed a bill envisaging up to one year imprisonment and a fine of 40,000 euros for the denial, belittling, or trivialization of genocides and crimes against humanity, via an amendment to the law on Equality and Citizenship.

This bill was unanimously approved in the French National Assembly in a session attended by 21 MPs.⁴¹ This number is very low considering that the French National Assembly is made up of more than 500 hundred MPs; however, the voting is legally valid. On the other hand, the fact

that a large majority of the MPs were not present at the voting means that the amendment is not that much supported by the public.

In order for the amendment to be enacted, it must also adopted by the Senate and signed by the President (there will be no difficulty to get his signature). On the other hand, 60 MPs or senators, the National Assembly speaker or the president of the Senate can apply to the French Constitutional Council to review the constitutionality of such a law. As it can be recalled, in 2012, the Constitutional Council had found a similar law unconstitutional and cancelled it.

The bill speaks of genocides broadly and does not include the words “Armenian genocide”. Therefore, in the event of “denial”, there will be a need for proof that the 1915 events amounted to genocide, and for this, they

⁴¹ “Génocide arménienne; Les Députés votent la Pénalisation de la Négation”, *AFP*, 01.07.2016.

will refer to the law adopted in 2001 in which France recognized the “Armenian genocide”. However, according to the UN Genocide Convention, only a competent national court or the International Criminal Court can decide whether an act amounts to genocide; in other words, the French National Assembly’s decision on this matter is not sufficient.

Another point that must be considered is that, in France, although there have been occasional cases of Holocaust denial, there has not been such a case of open denial of Armenian genocide allegations; at least we are not aware of such an event. Therefore, efforts for about ten years to criminalize the denial of “Armenian genocide” are pointless.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry made the below statement with regard to the aforementioned bill:

QA-23, 6 July 2016, Statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tanju Bilgiç, in Response to a Question Regarding the Adoption of the Draft Amendments to the Law on the Freedom of Press Adopted by the French National Assembly

We have closely followed the preparation and adoption processes of the draft amendments to the Law on the Freedom of Press that the French National Assembly adopted concerning criminalization of the denial of war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of genocide under certain conditions.

In the event that the Draft is enacted in its present form, it has the potential to pose the risk of limiting the freedom of expression unlawfully, especially impinging the jurisprudences of the ECtHR and the Constitutional Council of France.

We will follow closely also the upcoming process at the French Senate in the near future, regarding the Draft which has not yet been enacted.

We expect that the French Senate will remove the elements that may have the potential to pose the risk of limiting the freedom of expression from the Draft.

As it is seen, the Turkish Foreign Ministry emphasizes that the bill poses a risk of limiting the freedom of expression according to the jurisprudences of particularly the European Court of Human Rights and the Constitutional Council of France.

3.3 - Russia

The downing of a Russian warplane following its entry to the Turkish airspace despite many warnings led to a crisis between Turkey and Russia. Russia stopped or decreased its cooperation with Turkey in various fields. The plane incident also led to the emergence of an anti-Turkey movement in the Russian public opinion.

A public opinion poll conducted on February 2016 revealed that 35 percent of the respondent wanted relations with Turkey to be severed, while a majority of the rest indicated that they were not ready for the normalization of relations between the two countries.⁴²

Besides taking economic measures against Turkey, the Russian government also reinforced its military base in Gyumri, Armenia, with new helicopters and missiles. This military base, which is located 10 km away, in other words, one cannon shot away from the Turkish border, is defenseless in case of an armed conflict. While it is not known whether these reinforcements have improved the state of the base, it appears that it relatively satisfied the Armenians who were very alarmed when, in October 2015, two Turkish helicopters violated Armenian borders by mistake for a short time.

The downing of the Russian warplane lead to the strong reaction of the extreme wings of the Russian Parliament and to requests to take measures against Turkey. The introduction of a bill to the Parliament that stipulated the punishment of people who reject Armenian genocide allegations, and the request to abolish the Treaty of Moscow signed in March 1921 and the Treaty of Kars signed in October 1921, are among these measures.

The bill on the punishment of those who reject the Armenian genocide allegations stipulated a fine of up to 500,000 rubles and imprisonment up to 5 years, making it the most severe penalty with regard to “denialism”.⁴³

Abolition of the 1921 Treaty of Moscow signed with the Soviet Union, and the 1921 Treaty of Kars signed with Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, amounts to territorial demands from Turkey, since these treaties determine Turkey’s borders with these countries. Among the nationalist circles in Russia, there is a strange opinion that these treaties must be abolished as they were signed during a period when the Soviet Union was weak. Therefore, in

⁴² “One Over One-Third of Russian Favor Cessation of Relation with Turkey”, *News.am*, 17.02.2016.

⁴³ “View from Yerevan: Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister on Russian-Turkish Tension”, *Armenianow.com*, 26.11.2015.

accordance with this opinion, the Soviet Union demanded territories from Turkey in 1945. Nationalist circles in Armenia, on the other hand, claimed that the Treaty of Moscow was signed without consulting Armenia, while the Treaty of Kars was signed by a representative of Armenia that was no more independent. After Stalin's death, in 1953, the Soviet Union sent Turkey a note stating that it had no territorial demands from Turkey. On the other hand, although no official territorial demands from Turkey was made by Armenia during the Soviet era or after independence, the belief that Eastern Anatolia belonged to Armenia is still present in Armenia and the Diaspora.

What was Armenia's attitude in the face of the tension in relations between Turkey and Russia?

First of all, it must be mentioned that the downing of the Russian plane led to concerns in Armenia. While, at first, President Sargsyan, Prime Minister Abrahamian and Foreign Minister Nalbantyan was silent, Defense Minister Ohanyan chose to express his opinion as if the incident was important only from a military standpoint. After condemning the downing of the plane, Ohanyan urged the international community to prevent a further escalation of Russian-Turkish tensions. He also claimed that this incident undermined international efforts to defeat terrorist groups operating in Syria.⁴⁴

Upon the introduction of the bill to the Russian Parliament with regard to the punishment of the people who reject of Armenian genocide allegations, Eduard Sharmazanov, Vice President of the Armenian National Assembly and spokesman of the ruling Republican Party, congratulated this move and said that not only to the Armenian Genocide, but other crimes against humanity must also be condemned.⁴⁵

Armenian Minister of Agriculture Sergo Karapetyan, approaching to the issue from another aspect, stated that Russia's import sanctions on Turkey might open up new opportunities for Armenia to increase exports of agricultural goods to Russia. He also stated that Armenian agricultural products, which are of higher quality than the Turkish products, could not compete with the latter because of higher cost.⁴⁶

It must be stated that the Armenian minister's approach is not realistic, because in order for Armenia to replace Turkey in the Russian market, it has to have

⁴⁴ "Armenia Condemns Turkey Downing of Russian Jet", *RFE/RL*, 25.11.2015.

⁴⁵ "Armenian Official: Danger of Impunity Became More Evident to Russian Colleagues", *News.am*, 25.11.2015.

⁴⁶ "Russia sanctions on Turkey open new opportunities for Armenia...", *ARKA*, 27.11.2013.

the capacity to increase its production within a short time, and Armenia has no such capacity. Furthermore, it is basically unlikely to increase agricultural production within a short amount of time. The claim that Armenian agricultural products are of higher quality than the Turkish products also requires proof.

With the waning down of the sentimentality caused by the downing of the Russian plane, opinions opposing the above-mentioned bill criminalizing the rejection of the Armenian genocide allegations began to be voiced. Pavel Krashennnikov, Head of the State Duma on Procedural Legislation, said that the bill was not relevant, adding that there was no one in Russia denying the “Armenian Genocide”.⁴⁷

The issue regarding the bill on “denial” was resolved three months after the plane incident with the bill’s removal from the agenda. This is because of the fact that the Russian government did not express a positive opinion on the bill. The government explained its decision by stating that there were already norms in the criminal code for crimes against the feelings of believers and on ethnic grounds, and there were no tangible data in the bill.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the Russian Constitutional Court, which was expected to give a positive opinion with regard to the bill, declared that it found the bill inappropriate due to absence of any tangible data proving the ‘genocide’ in the bill and the lack of common opinion “denying the genocide.”⁴⁹ Thus, the already tense relations between Turkey and Russia was prevented of having an additional problem.

What is noteworthy here is the fact that the Russian government did take Armenians’ request to enact this bill into consideration.

With regard to the Treaty of Moscow determining Turkey’s borders with Russia, Russian Communist Party members Valery Rashkin and Sergei Obukhov sent a letter in early February 2016 to the Russian Foreign Ministry proposing to denounce the Treaty. Answering a question on the issue, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova stated the following: “I can tell you that at this stage the query should be studied, what exactly is proposed. All this will be done in accordance with the established procedure.”⁵⁰ In 2011,

⁴⁷ “Eduard Sharmazanov to tell Russian Lawmakers About Armenia’s positive opinion on Russian Bill Criminalizing Armenian Genocide Denial”, *Arminfo.am*, 26.11.2015.

⁴⁸ “Rusya’da Ermeni soykırımını inkâr teklifine hükümetten destek çıkmadı”, *TürkRus.com*, 12.03.2016, <http://www.turkrus.com/189224-rusyada-ermen-i-soykirimini-inkar-yasasi-teklifine-hukumetten-destek-cikmadi-xh.aspx>

⁴⁹ “Rusya’da Soykırım İnkâr Yasası Rafa Kaldırıldı”, *Hürriyet*, 11.03.2016.

⁵⁰ “Russian Foreign Ministry to Study query on Annulment 1921 Treaty of Friendship with Turkey”, *Armradio.am*, 10.02.2016.

at the 90th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Moscow, Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Medvedev had come together and celebrated this occasion. On this occasion, Erdoğan had presented Medvedev a copy of the original treaty, and Medvedev had given a photograph taken during the signing of the treaty. These gestures had shown that both countries were happy that the treaty was signed. Therefore, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson should have said that the Treaty of Moscow was still valid. Instead of doing this, by saying that query from State Duma members to denounce the treaty should be studied, the spokesperson tried to put pressure on Turkey, but Ankara chose to not react.

On this occasion, it must be mentioned that, since Russia no longer has land borders with Turkey, articles of the Treaty of Moscow determining borders between the two countries has no value in practice. However, recognition or non-recognition of borders by a country such as Russia is, in principle, is always important. It must be reminded that the said border is also Turkey's borders with Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan and is determined by the still effective Treaty of Kars signed on October 13, 1921.

As we have mentioned above, although Armenian Defense Minister Ohanyan condemned the downing of the Russian plane, other Armenian statesmen, contrary to expectations, tried to not speak much of the issue or tried to use a cautious language. This is due to their concerns of not making Armenia a part of the conflict between Turkey and Russia. Four months after the incident took place and after it was clear that the issue would not grow, as expected from Russia, a condemnation came from Armenia. Vice President of the Armenian National Assembly Eduard Sharmazanov stated that they considered the downing of the Russian SU-24 jet by Turkey as a crime, in the same way they considered the downing of the Armenian helicopter by Azerbaijan on the contact line of Karabakh-Azerbaijan.⁵¹

It would be beneficial to touch upon another development that has no direct relation with the downing of the plane, but is important as it coincides with it and is about the Armenian genocide allegations.

Head of the Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill I, during an interview with the Russian "Rossiya TV" channel in the beginning of January, mentioning the difficulties Iraqi and Syrian Christians encounter, said: "Nothing similar to the current events had ever happened in the Islamic world. Take, for example, the Turkish, Ottoman Empire. Yes, there were Christian

⁵¹ "Armenia considers downing of Russian Jet by Turkey and Armenian helicopter by Azerbaijan as Crimes", *Armenpress*, 11.03.2016.

minorities there but they were not exterminated.”⁵² He further stated that the Ottoman Empire enacted laws that imposed order, ensured relative security and stability in the lives of religious minorities.⁵³

Patriarch Kirill’s above statements, which conflicted with the Armenian genocide allegations and tarnished the authenticity of these allegations, led to strong reactions from Armenian circles. The Dashnaktsutyun and Heritage parties in the opposition as well as various NGOs criticized the Russian church and found the statement insufficient. Vahram Melikyan, a spokesman of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, only said that they have received the Russian

Orthodox Church’s clarification.⁵⁴ While the Armenian Foreign Ministry did not comment on the issue at first,⁵⁵ Deputy Foreign Minister Shavarsh Kocharyan stated that the Russian Patriarch’s statement was irrelevant.

On the other hand, the real reason why Patriarch Kirill made such statements is not known. It is even possible that these statements have nothing to do with the Turkish-Armenian conflict. It might be a reflection of an unknown conflict between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church.

In the face of this criticisms, Russian Orthodox Church spokesman Alexander Volkov, in a statement, said that the position of Russian Orthodox Church toward the “Armenian Genocide” had been clearly mentioned several times in the numerous official statements,⁵⁶ and thus, tried to express that they had embraced these allegations. What is important here is the fact the Church spokesman did not

object to the Patriarch’s statements on television or did not make an excuse that these statements were misunderstood. Thus, the Church spokesman’s statement that they recognized the “genocide” and the Patriarch’s opposite statement seem to contradict. However, it must be remembered that the Russian Orthodox Patriarch, like the Pope of the Catholic Church, has the right to have the final word.

On the other hand, the real reason why Patriarch Kirill made such statements is not known. It is even possible that these statements have nothing to do with the Turkish-Armenian conflict. It might be a reflection of an unknown conflict

⁵² “Russian Church Reassures Armenians Over Genocide Recognition”, *RFE/RL*, 11.01.2016.

⁵³ “Russian Patriarch Glosses Over Armenian Genocide”, *Asbarez*, 11.01.2016, <http://asbarez.com/1444248/russian-patriarch-glosses-over-armenian-genocide/>

⁵⁴ “Statement of Patriarch of All Russia sparks discontent in political circles of Armenia, but Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin gives no response yet”, *Arminfo.am*, 12.01.2016.

⁵⁵ “Armenian Foreign Ministry Does Not Comment on Patriarch Kirill’s Statement”, *Arminfo.am*, 13.01.2016.

⁵⁶ “Propos Négationiste du Patriarche Cyrille 1er 4 de L’Eglise Orthodoxe”, *Armenews.com*, 12.01.2016.

between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church. In connection with this, the fact that Patriarch Kirill did not attend the ceremonies in Yerevan on the occasion of the “centennial”, while Vladimir Putin did, had drawn attention at the time and had given rise to the thought that there was a conflict between both churches.

Coming back to Turkish-Russian relations, Russia’s restricting measures against Turkey following the plane incident, especially those in terms of trade, has damaged both countries, it appears that there has been a silent diplomacy between the two countries to lift these measures and normalize relations.

Following President Erdoğan’s message expressing sorrow over the plane incident and his emphasis that there was no deliberate intention to down the Russian plane,⁵⁷ initial steps were taken to the normalization of relations with Russia’s lifting of several measures against Turkey.⁵⁸

3.4 - The Vatican

We had previously mentioned that Pope’s statements recognizing the “Armenian genocide” caused a serious crisis between Turkey and the Vatican.⁵⁹

3.4.1 - Normalization of Relations

Nearly ten months after the tension between Turkey and the Vatican, it is seen that, as a result of negotiations, an agreement was reached between the sides on the normalization of relations. Accordingly, a book about a naval battle in 1657 in Çanakkale was presented to Pope Francis, and Pope Francis, on this occasion, expressed his affection for and appreciation of the Turkish people.

The Vatican also issue a statement referring to the above-mentioned book: “The book, notwithstanding the painful memories of history, illustrates the importance of scholarly research and opening up archives to historical investigation in the service of truth and building bridges of cooperation and mutual understanding. In light of this, the repeated commitment of Turkey to make its archives available to historians and researchers of interested parties in order to arrive jointly at a better understanding of historical events and the pain and suffering endured by all parties, regardless of their religious or ethnic

⁵⁷ “Kremlin: Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan Rusya lideri Putin’e üzüntülerini bildirdi”, *Hürriyet*, 27.06.2016.

⁵⁸ “Putin, Türkiye kararnamesini imzaladı”, *Sabah*, 01.07.2016.

⁵⁹ *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 32, p. 47-55.

identity, caught up in war and conflict, including the tragic events of 1915, is noted and appreciated. The memory of the suffering and pain of both the distant and the more recent past, as in the case of the assassination of Taha Carım, ambassador of Turkey to the Holy See, in June 1977, at the hands of a terrorist group, urges us also to acknowledge the suffering of the present and to condemn all acts of violence and terrorism, which continue to cause victims today.”⁶⁰

Noteworthy points found in Vatican’s statement are as follows:

- The phrase “tragic events of 1915” is used instead of the word “genocide.”
- It is stated that Turkey’s commitment to make its archives available to historians and researchers of interested parties is noted and appreciated. As it can be remembered, Turkey had made offer to allow historians and researchers to work in all archives and to announce their results to the public. However, this offer was not positively received by Armenia. With this statement, Vatican seems to support Turkey’s offer.
- On June 9, 1977, Taha Carım, the Turkish Ambassador to Vatican, was murdered by Armenian terrorists. As it is known, these acts targeting Turkish diplomats is seen as not terrorism by Armenians, but as justice being served. Therefore, the recognition of the Ambassador Taha Carım’s murder as a terrorist act and its condemnation is a clear expression of contrast with the Armenians.

Vatican Spokesman Federico Lombardi stated that the above-mentioned statement was a gesture of goodwill to Turkey towards rapprochement.

This attitude by the Vatican was well-received in Ankara and Turkish Foreign Ministry Spokesman Tanju Bilgiç made the following statement:

QA-3, 3 February 2016, Statement of the Spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Tanju Bilgiç in Response to a Question Concerning the Press Release by the Holy See Press Office

We have noted the press release issued today (3 February 2016) by the Holy See Press Office as a positive development.

⁶⁰ “Vatikan Geri Adım Attı”, AA, 03.02.2016.

It is stated in the said press release that our commitment to open the archives for historians and researchers so as to better understand the history and suffering concerning the events of 1915, thereby our offer for a Joint Historical Commission, has been appreciated. It is also noted that violence and terror are condemned with reference to the memory of late Taha Carım, the Turkish Ambassador to the Holy See, who was martyred in 1977.

Within this scope, it has been decided that our Ambassador to the Holy See Mr. Mehmet Paçacı who has been in Ankara for consultations since the Mass held at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican on 12 April 2015, is to return to his post.

Thus, the tension and state of crisis between the sides was ended and normal relation was reinitiated.

3.4.2 - The Publication of Vatican Documents on the Armenian Issue

Vatican documents on the Armenian issue during the Ottoman era and the first years of the Republic of Turkey (1894-1930) were published under the title of “La Questione Armena” (The Armenian Question) in seven volumes with a total of 4.157 pages.⁶¹

It was already known for a long time that these document would be published, and these documents were presented by Armenians as “genocide documents”. However, such a phrase is not used in the title.

These documents were found by and prepared for publication by a Jesuit priest by the name of Georges-Henri Ruysen. The fact that he previously wrote a book titled “The Holy See and Massacre of Armenians, 1894-1896” reveals his approach towards the issue. As it is known, about 30 revolts took place in Eastern Anatolia between 1864-1896, which were organized with the aim of separating the region from the Ottoman Empire, and with the support and encouragement of Russia and partially Britain.⁶² The Ottoman Empire's suppression of these revolts was reflected as the massacre of Armenians in the European public and was named as “Hamidian Massacres”. This expression is

⁶¹ “La Questione Armena. Documenti dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano. A cura di Georges-Henri Ruysen. Editore Orientali Christina”, Vaticano, 2013-2015.

⁶² The places these revolts were initiated in are: Sasun, Zeytun, Divriği, Trabzon, Eğin, Develi, Akhisar, Erzincan, Gümüşhane, Bitlis, Bayburt, Maraş, Urfa, Erzurum, Diyarbakır, Siverek, Malatya, Harput, Arapkir, Sivas, Merzifon, Ayıntap, Muş, Kayseri, Yozgat, and Van.

still used today without making mention of the fact that these revolts were suppressed.

These series of books were introduced on November 21, 2015, in a meeting held at Pontifical Oriental Institute (Pontificio Instituto Orientale). Ambassador of Armenia to the Holy See Mikhael Minasyan, who was present at the meeting, stated that Father Ruysen was awarded the Order of Honour by the President of Armenia.⁶³

The fact that Armenians are Christians makes it difficult for the Catholic clergymen to have an objective perspective on the Armenian issue. On the other hand, the fact that these documents were written in Italian and partially French, that these languages are not popular in Turkey and that there are a vast number of documents, will delay the study and, if need be, criticisms of these documents.

3.4.3 - The Pope's Visit to Armenia

Although much effort was put by Armenian officials for the Pope to visit Armenia on April 24, 2015, on the occasion of the "centennial", the Pope, taking into account relations with Turkey, had decided to delay his Armenia visit to a later date. It appears that this year also Armenia invited the Pope to visit Yerevan on April 24. However, the Vatican also found this date inappropriate due to relations with Turkey. Ultimately, the date of the Pope's visit to Armenia was determined as 24-26 July.⁶⁴

On the other hand, the Pope is also expected to visit Georgia and Azerbaijan in September.⁶⁵

Pope Francis's use of the "genocide" despite all warnings during a mass he led in April 2015 had led to a crisis between Turkey and the Vatican, causing Turkey to recall its ambassador to the Vatican as a protest. With Vatican's statement in early February 2016 that reflected Turkish views, relation had returned to normal, and Turkish Ambassador had reinstated its ambassador to the Vatican.

⁶³ "Armenian Genocide Documents from Vatican Archives Published in volume set", *Armradio.am*, 24.11.2015.

⁶⁴ "Papa Haziran ayında Ermenistan'a gidecek", *Haber 3*, 19.03.2016.

⁶⁵ "Pope to Visit Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan", *Catholic News Agency*, 09.04.2016.

The Pope was expected to not use the term “genocide” during visit to Armenia on July 24-26. As a matter of fact, the Pope’s prepared and already distributed text for his speech on the first day of his visit did not include the term “genocide”.

In his speech at a meeting attended by Pope Francis, top government officials, corps diplomatique, Catholicos of Etchmiadzin Karekin II and other church members, President Sargsyan stated that the Armenian genocide was an undeniable historical fact. He also said: “We don’t look for culprits. We don’t spread accusations. We simply want things to be called by their names, as it will allow two neighboring peoples to move forward towards genuine reconciliation, and a shared prosperous future by recognizing the past and embracing forgiveness and a clean conscience.”⁶⁶

In his speech in response to President Sargsyan,⁶⁷ Pope Francis, deviating from the prepared text for his speech, said:

*...that tragedy, that genocide, was the first of the deplorable series of catastrophes of the past century, made possible by twisted racial, ideological or religious aims that darkened the minds of the tormentors even to the point of planning the annihilation of entire peoples.”*⁶⁸

With these words, the Pope did not act in accordance with above-mentioned statement issued by the Vatican on February 3, 2016. He also made a mistake by claiming that this “genocide” was the first catastrophe of the past century. In fact, as regards mass killings, the first mass killing in the 20th century was committed by the German colonial administration in the territories of today’s Namibia. Subsequently, large numbers of Muslims were killed during the Balkan Wars with the aim of ethnic cleansing.

Thus, he used the term “genocide”.

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⁶⁶ “Pope Francis, International Powers ‘Looked the Other Way’ During the Armenian Genocide”, *American Magazine*, 24.06.2016.

⁶⁷ “Armenia, Pope Speaks of Armenian Massacres and Christian Persecution”, *Independent Catholic News*, 25.06.2016.

⁶⁸ “A Reception in Honor of His Holiness Pope Francis Took Place at the Presidential Palace”, *President of the Republic of Armenia*, Press Release, 24.06.2016, <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2016/06/24/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-reception-in-honor-Rome-Pope/>

In fact, as regards mass killings, the first mass killing in the 20th century was committed by the German colonial administration in the territories of today's Namibia. Subsequently, large numbers of Muslims were killed during the Balkan Wars with the aim of ethnic cleansing.

Turkey's strong reaction came shortly after the Pope's words: Deputy Prime Minister Nurettin Canikli called Pope's Francis' statements "greatly unfortunate", and stated that it was possible to see the all hallmarks and reflections of crusader mentality in the papacy's activities. He also said: *"Whatever is the reason for Turkey's exclusion from the European Union, the Pope makes such statements for that same reason. Of course, we do not take these statements seriously."*⁶⁹

In response to the Deputy Prime Minister's statements, Vatican Spokesman Federico Lombardi said: *"if you listen to the Pope, there is nothing that evokes a spirit of the Crusades. The Pope's real intention is to build peace and reconciliation between both peoples."* He added that the Pope's use of the term "genocide" was only to help lay the grounds for mutual understanding, dialogue and reconciliation.⁷⁰ He also said that they did not receive an official complaint from Turkey for the Pope's statements.⁷¹

The term "genocide" was also found in the joint declaration issued by Karekin II and the Pope. Statements made by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Armenia on September 21, 2001, was reiterated in this joint declaration: *"the extermination of a million and a half Armenian Christians, in what is generally referred to as the first genocide of the twentieth century."*

During his visit, Pope Francis also touched upon Turkey in different occasions and talked about the resumption of reconciliation between the Armenian and Turkish peoples, as well as peace in Nagorno-Karabakh.⁷² During their speeches on June 25 at the Republic Square in Yerevan, while Catholicos Karekin II vilified Turkey and Azerbaijan, and accused the latter of violating a cease-fire in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Pope urged the crowd to resist "the illusory power of vengeance" and strive for reconciliation with Turkey, and called for peace in Nagorno-Karabakh.⁷³

⁶⁹ "Canikli'den Papa'ya 'soykırım' tepkisi", *Yeni Şafak*, 25.06.2016.

⁷⁰ "Vatikan'dan yanıt: Papa Türk halkı aleyhine bir şey söylemedi", *Mynet.com*, 26.06.2016.

⁷¹ "Pope Compares Armenian Genocide to Current Plight of Christian in Middle East", *NBCnews.com*, 26.06.2016.

⁷² "Pope Francis I Wishes Normalization of Relations to Armenia, Turkey", *Tass*, 25.06.2016.

⁷³ "Pope Pays Tribute to Armenian Massacre Victims", *Wall Street Journal*, 25.06.2016.

On the last day of his visit, June 26, the Pope and Karekin II went to the Khor Virap monastery near the Turkish border, and together they released doves toward Mount Ağrı.⁷⁴ This symbolic gesture stood for an invitation to Turkey for peace. Considering the fact that it is Turkey that wants peace and reconciliation, there is not much point in making such a gesture. On this occasion, the Pope said that he would love to see the border reopened, given his longstanding call for countries to build bridges, not walls, at their frontiers.⁷⁵

During his flight from Armenia to Rome, Pope Francis gave a press conference to the assembled journalists aboard the papal plane, and put particular emphasis on the “genocide” issue.⁷⁶

Stating that he never said this word with an offensive intention, Pope Francis said, “*in Argentina, when you spoke of the Armenian extermination, they always used the word genocide.*” He said that, after he became the Pope, he was told that the term “genocide” was offensive. However, he indicated that he always spoke of three genocides in the last century: “*The first was Armenian, then that of Hitler and the last is that of Stalin.*”

Answering a question on why he used the word “genocide” in his speech in Yerevan although it was not included in the original text, Pope Francis said: “*having heard the tone of the speech of the president and also with my past with this word [in Argentina], and having said this word last year in St. Peter’s publicly, it would have sounded strange not to say at least the same thing.*” He also stated that the Great Powers did not pay attention to the genocide issue.

In short, Pope Francis indicated that, although the Vatican Secretariat of State had warned him about not using the word “genocide” and the word was not included in the prepared text of his speech, he had used the word “genocide” in his speech in Yerevan due to President Sargsyan’s reference to the subject, his past with the word in Argentina, and his use of the word during the mass in St. Peter’s Basilica in April last year. Of course, the Pope is free to use any word he wants to. However, he could have not used the word, considering the indignation felt towards the use of this word in a country such as Turkey. If he had not used the word “genocide” at the mass last year, he would have had an enough reason to not utter the word every year. However, due to religious reasons, the Pope did not pay attention to Turkey, and gave heed to and tried to satisfy Armenia.

⁷⁴ “Le Pape Termine Sa Visite En Arménie Par Un Lâcher De Colombe”, *Armenews.com*, 27.06.2016.

⁷⁵ “Pope Francis Wraps Up 3-Day Visit to Armenia”, *WGN-TV*, 26.06.2016.

⁷⁶ “Full Text: Pope Francis’ in-Flight Press Conference From Armenia”, *Catholic News Agency*, 26.06.2016.

Following Pope Francis's visit to Armenia, the Turkish Foreign Ministry issued the following statement:

No: 145, 27 June 2016, Press Release Regarding the Statements of Pope Francis and the Common Declaration Signed During his Trip to Armenia on 24-26 June 2016

During his trip to Armenia on 24-26 June 2016, Pope Francis visited the so-called genocide memorial, made unfortunate statements regarding the 1915 events, signed together with the Armenian Apostolic Church a Common Declaration which makes unacceptable references to the events of 1915 and on his way back alluded to statements proved to be fictitious and defamatory. Such acts revealed once again his unconditional commitment to the Armenian narrative on the events of 1915 which is incompatible with historical facts and law.

Indeed, the statements made before the visit, as well as the preparations of the visit had established the fact that this visit was already exploited. Pope Francis, unfortunately, just as he did last year, left Turkey and the Turkish people frustrated. Thus, discrimination on the basis of religion was once again made between sufferings and losses in the course of the First World War.

Pope Francis' partiality towards historical events, as well as his alienation of the Other, correspond neither with his efforts towards settlement of peace and friendship among different groups as he constantly emphasizes, nor with the Press Release issued on 3 February 2016 by the Press Office of the Holy See as regard to the events of 1915 which highlights our proposal of a Joint Historical Commission and condemns terrorism with reference to the memory of Taha Carım, the late Turkish Ambassador to Holy See who was martyred in 1977 by ASALA-affiliated terrorism.

Thus, we regrettably note that Pope Francis's trip to Armenia did not make any contribution to peace and stability in Southern Caucasus, especially in this critical period which has been demonstrated also by the clashes last April along the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh and at some sections of the Azerbaijani-Armenian border.

In fact, it is expected from those who occupy a sublime position such as the Pontificate to leave a legacy of amity and peace, as well as to take a conciliatory attitude, respectful of law.

Foreign Ministry's statement includes several important points. First of all, it states that unacceptable references to the events of 1915 were made during the Pope's visit to Armenia. Furthermore, it indicates that the Pope's unconditional commitment to the Armenian narrative on the 1915 events was incompatible with historical facts and law. Lastly, it emphasizes that Pope Francis' trip to Armenian did not make any contribution to peace and stability in Southern Caucasus.

In short, Pope Francis, who tries to appeal to Armenia for religious reasons, caused relations with Turkey, which had entered a process of recovery after the statement by the Vatican on February 3, to regress.

3.5 - The United States

We had previously mentioned that last year, on the occasion of the centennial of the 1915 events, numerous commemoration ceremonies and other events were held in the US, especially in states in which the Armenians are densely populated, and many publications were made, although they did not include any new opinions or information.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, it was observed that, in the federal level, there was not much activity at the Congress other than those of the members of Congress who are known to support Armenian views, and except for President Obama's April 24 message, there was an effort to not touch upon the subject.

This year, "101st anniversary" commemorations took place among Armenians and those who support their views, and did not reach a level that would draw the attention of the masses. It is possible to explain this situation with the psychological fatigue caused by the rowdiness in the previous year.

Turkish associations in America, on the other hand, are seen to be more lively and active compared to the previous years. For some time, these associations have been trying to oppose the Armenian propaganda by advertising in various newspapers and billboards. Although these activities have always been met with the objections of Armenians, the full-page ad placed on the prestigious Wall Street Journal this year on April 21 led to a lot of anger in the Armenian side and as a result, adverse articles were written in most-selling journals such as Newsweek.⁷⁸ Paul Krekorian, a member of the Los Angeles City Council, introduced a motion to the Council ordering Los Angeles offices to cancel

⁷⁷ *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 32, p. 67-69.

⁷⁸ "Full-Page WSJ Denying Armenian Genocide Spurs Anger", *Newsweek Magazine*, 21.04.2016.

subscriptions to the Wall Street Journal and other newspapers that published “denialist” ads.⁷⁹

What is striking is the fact that Armenians, although they have always been and still are making the most of every opportunity, including placing ads on newspapers, to present the 1915 events as genocide, heavily oppose and try to censor Turkish associations when they try to use the same opportunities.

As in previous years, the message to be issued by President Obama was also matter of curiosity this year. The President, who did not use the word “genocide” for the past seven years, was not expected to use the word “genocide” this year as it would not have been a consistent move, and sure enough, in this year’s message, he did not use the word “genocide” to describe the events of 1915. However, he continued to use a method that he has been using for the past couple of years and could be considered as being crafty: by using the term “Metz Yeghern” (Great Calamity), which is seen as the equivalent of “genocide” by Armenians, he sort of said “genocide” in Armenian, but not in English.

Although this year’s message was not so different from those in previous years, it drew the official criticism of Turkey. The full text of the Turkish Foreign Ministry’s statement is below:

No: 98, 22 April 2016, Press Release Regarding the Statement by the U.S. President Obama on the 1915 Events

U.S. President Obama’s statement on 22 April 2016 is yet another example of the assessments on the sufferings endured under the circumstances of the First World War on the basis of a one-sided narrative.

Turkey demonstrates a sincere desire to establish a common future in peace between the Turkish and Armenian people based on their centuries-long experience of co-existence. It is saddening that friendly and allied countries, rather than supporting this call, prefer to encourage those who advocate the deepening of the confrontation.

It is a fact that efforts to exploit the sufferings of the past for political manipulation have not brought any benefit to any one so far.

⁷⁹ “Krekorian Calls on L.A. to Cancel Wall Street Journal Subscriptions for Printing ads Denying Armenian Genocide”, *Asbarez*, 22.04.2016.

This being the case, those who seek to draw advantage from the political stances taken by third countries every year at certain dates, not only harm the prospects of peace and friendship but also show disrespect to the common pain of that period.

In this context, we call upon the U.S. Administration to adopt an objective, prudent and constructive approach, which takes the sufferings of all sides into consideration, by evaluating the historical realities on the basis of a just memory.

While being penned using a restrained language, the Ministry's statement reveals major mistakes in President Obama's message. These could be briefed as follows: There is a one-sided narrative of history (Armenians' version of history). Instead of supporting Turkey's call for peace, it encourages those who want to deepen the current conflict. Furthermore, sufferings of the past are exploited for political maneuverings. The US, like many other countries, does not act unbiased and fair with regard to the Armenian issue and actually acknowledges Armenians to be right. Therefore, it does not sufficiently contribute to the resolution of the problem.

While being penned using a restrained language, the Ministry's statement reveals major mistakes in President Obama's message. These could be briefed as follows: There is a one-sided narrative of history (Armenians' version of history). Instead of supporting Turkey's call for peace, it encourages those who want to deepen the current conflict. Furthermore, sufferings of the past are exploited for political maneuverings.

The US President's message was not appreciated by Armenian circles as well. As might be expected, the most prominent criticism was the fact that the President did not use the word "genocide". The Armenian National Committee of America, which is the most powerful Armenian association in America and is controlled by the Dashnaks, stated that President Obama's legacy was silence on the "Armenian genocide", complicity on Turkish "denials" and encouragement of Azerbaijani aggression.⁸⁰ Bryan Ardouny, the executive director of the Armenian Assembly of America, which is another powerful Armenian association in America, stating that last month the US officially recognized acts committed by the so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq as genocide atrocities, criticized that the same description was not done with regard to acts committed against Armenians.⁸¹

⁸⁰ "Obama Again Avoids 'G-Word'", *RFE/RL*, 22.04.2016.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Ultimately, it is seen that President Obama, while satisfying neither Turkey nor Armenia, is trying to complete his presidency without disrupting relations with both sides.

3.6 - Canada

Canada is at the top of countries interested in the Armenian genocide allegations. In fact, Armenian genocide allegations were recognized by the Senate of Canada in 2002 and by the House of Commons in 2014. However, what distinguishes Canada from other countries is the fact that these allegations were also recognized by the Canadian government in 2006. As it is known, in order to maintain normal relations with Turkey, governments of numerous countries have declared that “Armenian genocide” resolutions adopted in their parliaments have no binding effects on them. Canada, on the other hand, did the opposite. However, it seems that bilateral relations have not been affected by this.

The champion of Armenian genocide allegations in Canada is Stephen Harper, who served as Prime Minister between 2006 and 2015. Stephen Harper, for unknown reason, has embraced Armenian views and disregarded the opinions of Canadian Turks, despite the fact that the population of both communities in Canada are very close.⁸²

Many events were held in Canada to commemorate the “centennial”. The most important among these was the adoption of a motion by the Canadian Parliament to declare April of each year as “Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month” with the aim of honoring the victims of genocides.⁸³ It is understood that what is meant by genocide is the Jewish Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide, “Holodomor” (famine) in Ukraine and of course, the Armenian genocide allegations.

Canada sent Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular) Lynne Yelich to attend commemoration ceremonies for the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli Battles. On the other hand, Canadian Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Chris Alexander attended the “centennial” ceremony in Yerevan.

⁸² According to the 2011 census, the population of Armenian Canadians is 55.740 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_Canadians). According to the same census, the population of Turkish Canadians is 55.430 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_Canadians)

⁸³ “Canada Designates April 24 as Armenian Genocide Memorial Day”, *Armradio.am*, 25.04.2015.

While being invited to both Turkey and Armenia, Governor General David Johnston, who fulfills the duty of head of state, perhaps with the worry of making a choice, decided to stay in Canada on April 24 and instead attended a ceremony at the Canadian War Museum held in Ottawa on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli Battles.⁸⁴

On May 13, 2015, the Canadian Senate reaffirmed its recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations by reiterating support for the motion adopted in 2002. Commenting on the issue, Senator Thanh Hai Ngo stated that the “Armenian genocide” remained unanswered due to Turkey’s refusal to recognize it.⁸⁵

As for declarations made with regard to the “centennial”, then Prime Minister Stephen Harper, touching upon the loss of life and the horrific suffering endured by the Armenians, stated that it was necessary to look to the future. He indicated that Canadians of Armenian and Turkish origin were living together, sharing the values of tolerance and openness, and in this spirit, Canada was encouraging Armenia and Turkey to normalize their relations, resume discussion of protocols, and to seek a path towards reconciliation including an open border, the establishment of diplomatic relations and the implementation of a dialogue on the events of 1915.⁸⁶

Tom Mulcair, who is the leader of the opposition New Democratic Party, in a statement he issued on the occasion of the “centennial”, seeming closer to the Armenian vies, stated that his party was standing with the Armenian community to remember this dark period of history. Claiming that Hitler said “after all who remembers the annihilation of the Armenians”, he stated that it was their duty to remember.⁸⁷

Justin P.J. Trudeau, who is leader of the Liberal Party, which was then in opposition, issuing a statement that embraced Armenian genocide allegations, stated that they will never again “be indifferent to hate and genocide, or silent to those who discriminate against others based on characteristics such as race, gender, or sexual orientation.”

⁸⁴ “Canada’s Defense Minister affirms Armenian genocide on Hill lawn, as Turkish Canadians watch”, *Public Radio of Armenia*, 24.04.2015, <http://www.armradio.am/en/2015/04/24/canadas-defense-minister-affirms-armenian-genocide-on-hill-lawn-as-turkish-canadians-watch/>

⁸⁵ “Canadian Senate Reaffirms Recognition of Armenian Genocide”, *HorizonWeekly.ca*, 13.05.2015.

⁸⁶ “Canada PM issues message to Armenian community”, *News.am*, 23.04.2015, <http://news.am/eng/news/263618.html>

⁸⁷ “Statement by the Leader of the Official Opposition New Democratic Party of Canada on the Occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide”, *HorizonWeekly.ca*, 23.04.2015.

Following the elections held in November 2015, Justin P.J. Trudeau became the new Prime Minister of Canada. In a statement he issued in April 24, 2016, Trudeau reminded that both the House of Commons and the Senate have adopted resolutions referring to the 1915 events as “genocide”, and stated that they were paying respect to those who lost during the “genocide” and that it was necessary to further reinforce the resolve to prevent such acts to take place again. He expressed his wish that past injustice do not serve the division of the communities in Canada, and called on Canadians to respect pluralism and human rights.⁸⁸

What is important in this statement is that the Prime Minister (or his Government) was recognizing the genocide allegations due to recognition by the House of Commons and the Senate. Furthermore, it was indicated that these allegations should not lead to divisions in Canada. These words were probably intended for Armenian Canadians who have an aggressive attitude.

4 - DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING THE KARABAKH CONFLICT

We had previously mentioned that the Political Affairs and Democracy Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), upon the escalation of clashes in Karabakh, approved a draft resolution titled “Escalation of Violence in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Other Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan.”⁸⁹ The draft resolution included points that was contrary to the Armenian views on Karabakh. As expressed in PACE’s Resolution 1416 adopted in 2005, it stated that the large-scale ethnic expulsion and the creation of mono-ethnic areas (i.e. areas populated by only Armenians) resembled the terrible concept of ethnic cleansing.⁹⁰

In brief, the draft resolution called for: the withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from Nagorno-Karabakh and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan, the establishment of full sovereignty of Azerbaijan in these territories, the establishment of an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh, the establishment of an international peacekeeping force to maintain security and safe return and resettlement of displaced persons.

Since these points go against views advocated by Armenia, the adoption of this draft resolution by the Parliamentary Assembly would have meant a total defeat

⁸⁸ “La Déclaration du Premier Ministre Canadien Justin Trudeau à l’Occasion de la Commémoration du Génocide Arménien”, *Armenews*, 24.04.2016.

⁸⁹ *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 32, p. 98-100.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

for Armenia in the international arena and would have laid the groundwork for Karabakh's return to Azerbaijan.

Armenia's Karabakh position had already taken a major blow not only in the Parliamentary Assembly, but also in international legal arena. ECtHR's judgment on the case originated in an application by six Azerbaijani nationals against Armenia on the grounds that they were forced to leave the district of Lachin as a result of Armenia's occupation of Karabakh indicated that Karabakh was under the control of Armenia and thus, rejected Armenia's claim that Karabakh was an independent state or political entity.⁹¹

Following this, it is seen that Armenia put a lot of effort for the rejection of the draft resolution at the Plenary Session of PACE. Prior to the Assembly meeting, OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, on January 22, 2016, issuing a statement, stated that the Minsk Group was the only accepted format for negotiations, and urged that steps not be taken by PACE members which could undermine the Minsk Group mandate.⁹² However, the draft resolution was not proposing the abolition of the Minsk Group; what was asked from the Minsk Group in the draft resolution was *"to consider reviewing its approach to the resolution of the conflict in the light of the lack of progress [...] which undermines the credibility of international institutions."* However, a small majority of the Assembly members, surmising that there would be no mechanism left to find a peaceful resolution to the Karabakh conflict due to no other organization being proposed in the draft resolution to replace Minsk Group, chose to reject the draft resolution on January 26, 2016, with a close vote of 70 to 66 and 45 abstentions,⁹³ and thus, saved Armenia from a major trouble.

On the other hand, adopting a resolution titled "Inhabitants of Frontiers Regions of Azerbaijan are Deliberately Deprived of Water", PACE criticized Armenia's efforts to deprive a region of Azerbaijan of water. Thus, it appears that the Assembly was trying to strike a balance between Azerbaijan and Armenia. However, since the Karabakh conflict and efforts to deprive a region of water are not of the same importance, this policy of "balance" did not succeed.

Azerbaijan, on the other hand, continued to criticize the Minsk Group. Azerbaijani President Aliyev, in a statement, said that the Minsk Group Co-

⁹¹ *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 32, p. 96-97.

⁹² "OSCE Minsk Group issues statement before PACE key debate of anti-Armenian resolutions", *A1plus.am*, 22.01.2016.

⁹³ "Battle at Pace: One Anti-Armenian Resolution Rejected Another Passed", *Armenianow.com*, 26.01.2016.

Chairs were seeking to cement the status quo. Indicating that the reason for the conflict to remain unresolved was Armenia being not alone, Aliyev stated that the big states, for various reasons, were effectively ensuring the Armenian occupation.⁹⁴ Aliyev also criticized PACE and stated that among PACE members were those who have an anti-Azerbaijani stance as well as those who are Islamophobes. Indicating that double standards were being applied, he stated that religious factors were playing a role in this.⁹⁵ Aliyev continued its

Azerbaijan, on the other hand, continued to criticize the Minsk Group. Azerbaijani President Aliyev, in a statement, said that the Minsk Group Co-Chairs were seeking to cement the status quo. Indicating that the reason for the conflict to remain unresolved was Armenia being not alone, Aliyev stated that the big states, for various reasons, were effectively ensuring the Armenian occupation.

criticisms against the Minsk Group afterwards.⁹⁶ Calling for a meeting of all members of the Minsk Group to be convened to ensure full use of this format in resolving the conflict,⁹⁷ Azerbaijan also attempted to influence the Co-Chairs' pro-Armenian position. However, no result was achieved from this attempt.

Although seemingly not affected by criticisms, OSCE Minsk Group's waning position actually manifested itself with several suggestions for Russia's mediation.⁹⁸

In the meantime, Armenia, through the statements of President Sargsyan himself, continued to defend its known opinions, that Karabakh did not belong to Azerbaijan, that

the region had nothing to do with Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, and that the resolution of the Karabakh conflict was possible with the right to self-determination.⁹⁹

What should be kept in mind with regard to the Karabakh conflict is that there is a ceasefire between both sides that was signed in 1993; in other words, both countries are still in war. On the other hand, what is certain is that Azerbaijan has the right to take all kinds of measures, including use of force, in order to put an end to the occupation of its territories, since Karabakh and the surrounding districts undoubtedly belong to Azerbaijan with regard to

⁹⁴ "Aliyev Blames Mediators for Karabakh Impasse", *RFE/RL*, 29.01.2016.

⁹⁵ "Aliyev Accuses OSCE Minsk Group of Religious Discrimination", *News.am*, 30.02.2016.

⁹⁶ "Aliyev Again Lambastes OSCE Minsk Group", *RFE/RL*, 21.03.2016.

⁹⁷ "Azerbaijan Calls for Meeting of All Minsk Group Members", *APA*, 11.02.2016.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ "Karabakh's Nothing To Do With Azerbaijan's Territorial Integrity: Serzh Sargsyan", *Lragir.am*, 31.03.2016.

international law. In fact, in the recent years, especially after Azerbaijan's higher armament levels compared to Armenia, many small and medium scale clashes took place in Karabakh and its surroundings, and Azerbaijan was never internationally criticized for these.

Another important point with regard to Karabakh is that the 23-year old ceasefire led to a public belief that Karabakh and the surrounding districts belonged to Armenia. In other words, the temporary state in the region that was created as a result of the ceasefire, in time, began to be perceived as a permanent state. The above-mentioned clashes reminded the public opinion that the Karabakh conflict is still current, and more importantly, these clashes lead to the increase of international initiatives for the resolution of the conflict.

The largest of these clashes began on April 2, 2016, and continued four days, until the Russia-brokered ceasefire signed on April 5 in Moscow between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

It is understood that Azerbaijan gained the upper hand in clashes and captured some small territories. Furthermore, it appears that Armenians suffered more losses than Azerbaijanis. Thus, for the first time in more than 25 years, Azerbaijan became successful in a clash with regard to Karabakh.

This incident had several consequences.

First of all, it must be mentioned that neither the US nor the EU played a significant role during this incident. This is because of their lack of presence in the region both politically and economically.

On the other hand, Russia is present in the region in nearly all areas. Russia is Armenia's primary energy supplier. Furthermore, Russian companies dominate many economic sectors in Armenia, including pipelines and railways. Armenia also obtains its arms from Russia. There is also a deep-seated belief in the Armenian public opinion that Russia provides security to Armenia.

Other than purchasing arms from Russia, Azerbaijan dependence on Russia is minor. However, when it comes to Karabakh, supply of arms becomes one of the most important issues and therefore, the importance attached to Russia increases.

Due to its close relations with both Armenia and Azerbaijan and due to it being the major weapons supplier to both countries, Russia, ultimately, became the main "arbitrator" in the Karabakh conflict.

As for Turkey's stance with regard to the clashes, as expected, Turkey is seen to have taken Azerbaijan's side. The Turkish Foreign Ministry issued the below statement on the first day of the clashes:¹⁰⁰

No: 82, 2 April 2016, Press Release Regarding the Clashes on the Line of Contact and on Azerbaijan-Armenia borderline

We condemn the artillery fire launched against Azerbaijan on the line of contact and the attacks by Armenia affecting also the civilian population on the night of April 1 to 2. We wish God's mercy on our fallen Azerbaijani brothers, patience to their relatives and a speedy recovery to the injured. We invite Armenia to observe the ceasefire and immediately put an end to the clashes.

For about a quarter century, Armenia has been occupying one-fifth of Azerbaijan's territory. Unless this occupation comes to an end and Armenia abandons its aggressive stance, unfortunately, the risk of experiencing similar clashes will continue. In this regard, we reiterate our call on Armenia to put an end the occupation in peaceful means in line with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

As a member of the OSCE Minsk Group, established for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Turkey will continue to support the efforts for reaching a just and lasting solution within the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan.

Moreover, in respect thereof, H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey, H.E. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey and H.E. İsmet Yılmaz, Minister of the National Defence of the Republic of Turkey had phone conversations with their Azerbaijani counterparts regarding the situation and extended their condolences for our fallen Azerbaijani brothers.

President Erdoğan, making a statement on the same day, attributed the beginning of clashes to Minsk Group's underestimation of the conflict, and said that the issue would not have come to this if the Group had acted in a just and decisive manner.¹⁰¹ On April 4, stating that Turkey was and would continue to be at Azerbaijan's side, Erdoğan said:

¹⁰⁰ "Press Release Regarding the Clashes on the Line of Contact and Azerbaijan-Armenia borderline", Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No:82, April 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-82_-2-april-2016_-press-release-regarding-the-clashes-on-the-line-of-contact-and-on-azerbaijan_armenia-borderline.en.mfa

¹⁰¹ "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan Azeri televizyonuna konuştu", *NTV*, 02.04.2016.

*I believe that Karabakh will surely be returned to its rightful owner. Our brothers and sisters from Karabakh, who have been living away from their homeland for almost quarter of a century, will surely reclaim their homes one day.*¹⁰²

The fact that the Minsk Group was not able to prevent the clashes is a clear failure of the Group. Probably to hide this failure, on April 4, 2016, representatives of 11 Minsk Group countries came together and issued a statement, urging the sides to immediately cease using force and stating that there was no military solution to the conflict. The Minsk Group also affirmed their support for the Co-Chairs, and called for an immediate resolution under the auspices of the Co-Chairs.¹⁰³

As it is seen, there is nothing new in the Minsk Group's statement; the Group's known position was reiterated.

Many countries and international organizations also issued statements, calling the sides to cease fighting. We will not touch upon these statements as they do not include any opinion.

However, we have to mention the strong support for Azerbaijan in the Final Communiqué of the 13th Islamic Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation which was convened in Istanbul on April 14-15. Referring to the United Nations Charter, the Final Communiqué indicated that the acquisition of territory by use of force was inadmissible, and called for Armenia's withdrawal from the territories it occupies. The Communiqué also emphasized resolution of the conflict should be on the basis of the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally-recognized borders. Furthermore, without mentioning Russia, it also called for the cessation of arms sales to Armenia.¹⁰⁴

As it is seen, the Communiqué of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation regards Armenia as the responsible for the clashes and openly supports Azerbaijan.

Another organization that must be mentioned is the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), of which Armenia is a member. On the first day of the clashed, the CSTO issued a statement blaming Azerbaijan. However, Belarus,

¹⁰² "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'dan Güvenlik Güçlerine 'Devlet Yanınızda Çağrısı', *Milliyet*, 04.04.2016.

¹⁰³ *OSCE*, 05.04.2016, www.osce.org/mg/23386.

¹⁰⁴ "Final Communiqué of the 13th Islamic Summit of the Heads of States/Governments of OIC Members", *OIC*, http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv3/upload/conferenves/is/13/en/13_15_final-com-en.pdf

a member of the organization, adopted an attitude supporting Azerbaijan, while Kazakhstan requested moving the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) Summit meeting to be held in Yerevan on April 8 to Moscow, and despite Armenia's objection, the meeting was rescheduled to Moscow. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the other members of the organization, did not also adopt an attitude supporting Armenia. Russia, on the other hand, maintained its neutral stance. The above developments revealed that several members of the CSTO, which Armenia sees as the guarantor of its security, were not standing by Armenia's side, and some were even supporting Azerbaijan, despite CSTO member Armenia's involvement in an open armed conflict.

Ultimately, Armenia did not get any support by other countries and international organizations with regard to the clashes.

The clashes also had several consequences within Armenia. First of all, this incident led to a purge in the army, and Deputy Defense Minister Alik Mirzabekian, General Arshak Karapetian, the military intelligence chief, and General Komitas Muradian, the commander of the Armenian army's communication units, were relieved of their duties.¹⁰⁵ The sacking of these military officials might be due to their inadequacies in their assigned positions. However, there is no doubt that another aim of these sackings was to appease the public opinion.

As seen in all defeats, the tendency to put the blame on others was also seen in Armenia. A survey conducted in Armenia ten days after the clashes came up with some odd results.¹⁰⁶ According to the survey:

- 81% of the respondents said that Turkey instigated the clashes,
- 33% of the respondents said Azerbaijan started the war on its own initiative,
- 17% of the respondents said that Russia instigated the clashes,
- 86.4% of the respondents said that the purchase of new military equipment can eliminate the recurrence of hostilities.

The fact that the majority of the Armenian public opinion believe that Turkey instigated the clashes, although it is clear that Turkey has no connection

¹⁰⁵ "Senior Armenian Military Official Sacked", *RFE/RL*, 26.04.2016.

¹⁰⁶ "Poll: 17% of Armenians Think Russia Provoked 4 days war in Karabakh", *PanArmenian.net*, 14.06.2016.

whatsoever with the clashes, shows that there is an actual Turkophobia in the country. This reality is such that it could at least complicate a reconciliation between the two countries.

Another odd outcome of the survey is that the percentage of those who believe that Russia, which is commonly believed to ensure Armenia's security, instigated the clashes is 17%, which is no small amount. This is most likely a result of the critical approach against Russia by some Armenians due to its arms sales to Azerbaijan. Russia has defended its arms sales to Azerbaijan by claiming that a war would not erupt as long as there is a balance between the arms of both countries. However, recent clashes, as if proving Russia is wrong, resulted in Armenia's defeat. Meanwhile, it must be mentioned that Russia granted \$200 million dollar loan to Armenia for arms purchases, but this loan was well below the value of the Russia's arms sales to Azerbaijan.¹⁰⁷

After the defeat of the Armenian forces, most probably to appease the public opinion, several press reports came out in Armenia regarding Armenia's capability to produce nuclear weapons, leading to strong reactions from Azerbaijan. Since turning towards nuclear weapons production is still highly disapproved, Deputy Foreign Minister Ashot Hovakimyan, who attended the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul at the end of May, stated that his country joined the UN Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1991 and was fulfilling its obligations under the Treaty.¹⁰⁸

One of the most-talked about topics during and after the clashes was that the oil and gas pipelines going from Azerbaijan to Turkey were at some point passing 40 kilometers away from the Armenian border. Armenia has the potential to seriously harm these pipelines. In such a case, it is estimated that Georgia would suffer an energy loss by 90%, and Turkey by 10%.¹⁰⁹ However, this possibility does not seem likely: it is most likely that Georgia, which will lose 90% of its energy needs, would respond to such an act by closing its roads and seaports to Armenia, leading to Armenia's full isolation.

Following the ceasefire on April 5, Armenia put forward three conditions for resuming peace talks with Azerbaijan: a guarantee that Azerbaijan will not attempt to resolve the Karabakh conflict by military means, the introduction of a mechanism for investigating armed incidents on the line of contact, and

¹⁰⁷ "Russia Defense Chief Urges Close Ties with Azerbaijan", *RFE/RL*, 15.06.2016.

¹⁰⁸ "Armenia duly fulfills its obligations under UN Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons", *Armradio*, 25.05.2016.

¹⁰⁹ "Nagorno-Karabakh and The Fate Of Azerbaijan's Hydrocarbon Transport Pipelines", *Eurasia Review*, 19.05.2016.

finally, international mediators to publicly hold Baku responsible for ceasefire violations in the conflict zone.¹¹⁰

In short, Armenia attempted to compensate for its losses in the battlefield with a diplomatic victory. It must be mentioned that, since the Minsk Group has long been in favor of confidence building measures, Armenia's first two conditions suits the Minsk Group.

Azerbaijan, on the other hand, has a different approach. President Aliyev has stipulated the restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity for a possible reconciliation.¹¹¹ Foreign Minister Elmar

The fact that other countries, apart from their statements calling for the cessation of clashes and the resolution of the conflict through negotiations, did not take any steps, as we have mentioned above, had made Russia the "arbitrator" in the Karabakh conflict. Within this context, Russia adopted a neutral attitude, and made statements that both countries were its strategic partner.

Memmedyarov also said that Azerbaijan will not make concessions on its territorial integrity and Armenia should withdraw from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.¹¹² The Defense Ministry of Azerbaijan also warned that hostilities may resume anytime if Armenian forces did not withdraw from occupied territories of Azerbaijan.¹¹³

The fact that other countries, apart from their statements calling for the cessation of clashes and the resolution of the conflict through negotiations, did not take any steps, as we have mentioned above, had made Russia the "arbitrator" in the Karabakh

conflict. Within this context, Russia adopted a neutral attitude, and made statements that both countries were its strategic partner. It also declared that it will continue selling weapons to both sides.¹¹⁴

On the other hand, Russia tried to bring both sides together. Foreign Minister Lavrov made visits to both countries to realize such a meeting. However, Armenian President Sargsyan stated that Lavrov did not bring any new proposals and reiterated the above-mentioned three conditions for negotiations. However, Sargsyan also didn't in a manner suggesting that there will be no negotiations if these three conditions are not met.

¹¹⁰ "Armenia's Reiterates Terms for Renewed Talks on Karabakh", *RFE/RL*, 29.04.2016.

¹¹¹ "Le Président Aliiev s'engage à exercer des pressions sur l'Arménie pour prendre contrôle du Karabakh", *Armenews*, 03.05.2016.

¹¹² "Ermenistan İşgal Ettiği Bölgelerden Kayıtsız Şartsız Çekilmelidir", *TRT*, 04.05.2016.

¹¹³ "Hostilities May Resume Anytime", *APA*, 26.05.2016.

¹¹⁴ "Russia Will Continue Selling Weapons to Azerbaijan and Armenia", *The Moscow Times*, 12.04.2016.

As a result of Russia's efforts, top officials from OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries (US Foreign Minister John Kerry, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, French Secretary of State Harlem Desir) met with President Aliyev and President Sargsyan in Vienna on May 16, 2016. According to their joint statement,¹¹⁵ the Co-Chairs reiterated the importance of respecting the 1994 and 1995 ceasefire agreements, and that there can be no military solution to the conflict. The Presidents expressed their commitment to the ceasefire and the peaceful settlement of the conflict. To reduce the risk of further violence, they agreed to finalize in the shortest possible time an OSCE investigative mechanism. They also agreed to continue the exchange of data on missing persons.

President Aliyev and President Sargsyan did not comment to the press after the meetings.

The above agreement is the agreement of the Co-Chairs and it is not clear whether President Aliyev and President Sargsyan agree with the above points. Normally, Sargsyan should support this since it includes some of his demands. However, as Azerbaijan's territorial integrity is not mentioned, it is hard to say that Aliyev is content with this.

Due to high-level participation, it is seen that this meeting ensured the continuation of the Minsk Group meetings with the Co-Chairs.

It should be noted that this meeting did not bring anything new to the table and didn't provide any solution. Its only virtue was the strong support shown to the cessation of the fighting.

At the meeting, the sides also agreed on a next round of talks, to be held in June at a place to be mutually agreed, with an aim to resuming negotiations on a comprehensive settlement.¹¹⁶

Following the meeting in Vienna, it is seen that Russia has taken active steps for the resumption of negotiation on Karabakh. For this purpose, Russian officials has visited both countries, and as a matter of fact, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev visited Yerevan and Baku at the start of April. As a result of these efforts, it was announced that Putin will host talks in St. Petersburg on June 20 between the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ "Joint Statement of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Secretary of State of the United States of America and State Secretary for the European Affairs of France", Vienna, 16.05.2016.

¹¹⁶ "Armenia, Azerbaijan Agree on June Talks: Lavrov, Kerry, Desir Statement", *Armradio*, 17.05.2016.

¹¹⁷ "President of Armenia, Azerbaijan to Meet in Russia on June 20", *Armradio*, 14.06.2016.

Normally, such a meeting should have been organized by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs. However, the invitation was made by Putin, and it seemed like the Minsk Group was being excluded. In fact, the OSCE spokesperson stated that OSCE was not involved in preparations for this meeting.¹¹⁸

Following the meeting on June 20, the sides issued a joint statement.¹¹⁹ According to this statement, Aliyev and Sargsyan reiterated agreements reached at the May 16 meeting in Vienna, which are aimed at the stabilization of the situation in the conflict area and creation of an atmosphere conducive for moving the peace process forward. Towards that end, the sides agreed to increase the number of international observers. They also expressed satisfaction with the recent the ceasefire (the ceasefire on April 5). Furthermore, the Presidents mentioned the importance to continue regular meetings in the same format (in other words, meetings that include Putin) in addition to the activities carried out by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group.

Ultimately, it was decided to uphold the ceasefire on April 5, to increase the number of international observers in order to monitor the ceasefire, and to organize regular meetings with the participation of Putin, Aliyev, and Sargsyan in addition to the meetings held by OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

However, in the statement, there is no mention of securing Azerbaijan's territorial integrity or the return of refugees to their homes. There is also no mention of the principle of self-determination, which is constantly put forward by Armenia. In brief, no decision was taken in the meeting on issues that form the basis of the Karabakh conflict. It was only an effort to ensure no new clashes takes place.

On this occasion, let us indicate that Russia now has the initiative with regard to the resolution of the Karabakh conflict; Russia, using its influence, stopped the clashes in April 5, and thus became the arbitrator of the peace talks.

¹¹⁸ "Spokeperson: OSCE Not Involved in Preparations for Summit on Karabakh", *TASS*, June 2016.

¹¹⁹ "In Saint Petersburg President of Armenia, Russia and Azerbaijan Made a Joint Statement", *President of Republic of Armenia*, Press Release, 20.06.2016, <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2016/06/20/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-meeting-with-Presidents-o-Russia-Azerbaijan/>

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