

THE
ARMENIAN
QUESTION
TODAY

INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTS
1983-1987

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The Armenian Question Today

Over the past five years, the international community has demonstrated growing support for official recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey. These actions have come at a time when renewed campaigns of revisionism and distortion of history have been launched by the Turkish government.

In recent years, the issue of the Armenian Genocide has become an important agenda item in major governmental and non-governmental international organizations.

These are the most significant decisions adopted:

—On August 12, 1983, the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches recognized the contemporary implications of the Armenian Genocide and adopted a resolution on the subject.

—Less than a year later, on April 16, 1984, the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal, after three days of testimony and deliberation in Paris, found Turkey guilty of genocide. This independent forum of distinguished jurists and Nobel Prize laureates called upon the United Nations to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

—On September 10, 1984, the US House of Representatives passed House Joint Resolution 247 calling on the President to designate April 24, 1985 as a "National Day of Remembrance of Man's Inhumanity to Man," with special reference to the Armenian Genocide.

—On August 29, 1985, the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, a panel of UN experts on genocide and human rights, adopted a report which cited the Turkish extermination of the Armenians in 1915 as an example of genocide.

—On June 18, 1987, the European Parliament called on the Turkish government to recognize the Armenian Genocide. Furthermore, in its capacity as the legislative body of the European Economic Community, it stated that such a recognition will be a precondition to Turkey's entry into the Community.

These resolutions are supported and reinforced by historical documentation from the archives of the United States, Canada, France, Great Britain, West Germany, the Soviet Union, Australia and other countries. A selected bibliography of recent publications relating to the Armenian Genocide is included at the end of this compendium.

Clearly, the genocide of the Armenians has begun to generate greater international attention because of its contemporary significance and on-going human rights application. ■

Text of the European Parliament's Resolution

In a historic vote taken on June 18, 1987 in Strasbourg, France, the European Parliament condemned the genocide perpetrated against the Armenian people.

Furthermore, the European Parliament in its capacity as the legislative assembly of the European Economic Community, composed of elected representatives from the 12 Member States, called on Turkey to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide and to establish political dialogue with representatives of the Armenian people.

The 15-point resolution states that the "tragic events which took place in 1915-1917 against the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire constituted a Genocide."

The text below contains excerpts from the European Parliament's resolution:

The European Parliament

Convinced that recognition of the identity of the Armenian people in Turkey as an ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious minority follows on from recognition of its own history,

Whereas the Armenian side regards these events as planned Genocide within the meaning of the 1948 UN Charter,

Whereas the Turkish State rejects the charge of Genocide as unfounded,

Whereas, to date, the Turkish Government, by refusing to recognize the Genocide of 1915, continues to deprive the Armenian people of the right to their own history,

Whereas the historically proven Armenian Genocide has so far neither been the object of political condemnation nor received due compensation,

Whereas the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey must therefore be viewed as a profoundly humane act of moral rehabilitation towards the Armenians, which can only bring honor to the Turkish Government;

Profoundly regretting and condemning the mindless terrorism by groups of Armenians who were responsible between 1973 and 1986 for several attacks causing death or injury to innocent victims and deplored by an overwhelming majority of the Armenian people,

Whereas the obdurate stance of every Turkish Government towards the Armenian Question has in no way helped to reduce the tension,

1. Believes that the Armenian Question and the question of minorities in Turkey must be resituated within the framework of relations between Turkey and the Community; points out that democracy cannot be solidly implanted in a country unless the latter recognizes and enriches its history with its ethnic and cultural diversity;

2. Believes that the tragic events in 1915-1917 involving the Armenians living in the territory of the Ottoman Empire constitute Genocide within the meaning of the convention on the prevention and the punishment of the crime of Genocide adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1948; Recognizes however, that the present Turkey cannot be held responsible for the tragedy experienced by the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire and stresses that neither political nor legal or material claims against present-day Turkey can be derived from the recognition of this historical event as an act of Genocide;

3. Calls on the Council to obtain from the present Turkish Government an acknowledgement of the Genocide perpetrated against the Armenians in 1915-1917 and promote the establishment of a political dialogue between Turkey and the representatives of the Armenians;

4. Believes that the refusal by the present Turkish Government to acknowledge the Genocide against the Armenian people committed by the Young Turk government, its reluctance to apply the principles of international law to its differences of opinion with Greece, the maintenance of Turkish occupation forces in Cyprus and the denial of the existence of the Kurdish question, together with the lack of true parliamentary democracy and the failure to respect individual and collective freedoms, in particular freedom of religion, in that country are insurmountable obstacles to consideration of the possibility of Turkey's accession to the Community;

5. Conscious of those past misfortunes, supports its desire for the development of a specific identity, the securing of its minority rights and the unrestricted exercise of its people's human and civil rights as defined in the European Convention on Human Rights and its five protocols;

6. Calls for fair treatment of the Armenian minority in Turkey as regards their identity, language, religion, culture and school system, and makes an emphatic plea for improvements in the care of monuments and for the maintenance and conservation of the Armenian religious architectural heritage in Turkey and invites the Community to examine how it could make an appropriate contribution;

7. Calls on Turkey in this connection to abide faithfully by the provisions for the protection of the non-Muslim minorities as stipulated in Articles 37 to 45 of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne which, moreover, was signed by most Member States of the Community;

8. Considers that the protection of monuments and the maintenance and conservation of the Armenian religious architectural heritage in Turkey must be regarded as part of a wider policy designed to preserve the cultural heritage of all civilizations which have developed over the centuries on present-day Turkish territory and, in particular, that of the Christian minorities that formed part of the Ottoman Empire;

9. Calls therefore on the Community to extend the Association Agreement with Turkey to the cultural field so that the remains of Christian or other civilizations such as the ancient classical, Hittite, Ottoman, etc., in that country are preserved and made generally accessible;

10. Expresses its concern at the difficulties currently being experienced by the Armenian community in Iran with respect to the Armenian language and their own education in accordance with the rules of their own religion;

11. Condemns the violations of individual freedoms committed in the Soviet Union against the Armenian population;

12. Condemns strongly any violence and any form of terrorism carried out by isolated groupings unrepresentative of the Armenian people, and calls for reconciliation between Armenians and Turks;

13. Calls on the Community Member States to dedicate a day to the memory of the genocide and crimes against humanity perpetrated in the 20th century, specifically against the Armenians and Jews;

14. Commits itself to making substantial contribution to initiatives to encourage negotiations between the Armenian and Turkish peoples;

15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the European Council, the Foreign Ministers meeting in political cooperation, the EEC/Turkey Association Council and the Turkish, Iranian and Soviet Governments and the UN Secretary General. ■

Text of the 24th Paragraph of the Report to the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities

On August 29, 1985 in Geneva, Switzerland, the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities adopted a report on genocide, which declared that the extermination of Armenians in 1915 is an example of genocide.

The report commissioned by the United Nations proposed reforms to the 1948 Convention on Genocide. The author of the report, Mr. Benjamin Whitaker, offered nine examples of genocide in this century, including the "Ottoman massacres" of the Armenians.

The text of paragraph 24 is included in the following passage:

24. Toynbee stated that the distinguishing characteristics of the twentieth century in evolving the development of genocide "are that it is committed in cold blood by the deliberate *fiat* of holders of despotic political power, and that the perpetrators of genocide employ all the resources of present-day technology and organization to make their planned massacres systematic and complete" (11). The Nazi aberration has unfortunately not been the only case of genocide in the twentieth century. Among other examples which can be cited as qualifying are the German massacre of Hereros in 1904 (12), the Ottoman massacre of Armenians in 1915-1916 (13), the Ukranian pogrom of Jews in 1919 (14), the Tutsi massacre of Hutu in Burundi in 1965 and 1972 (15), the Paraguayan massacre of the Ache Indians prior to 1974 (16), the Khmer Rouge massacre in Kampuchea between 1975 and 1978 (18), and the contemporary Iranian killings of Baha'is (18). Apartheid is considered separately in paragraphs 43-46 below. A number of other cases may be suggested. It could seem pedantic to argue that some terrible mass-killings are legalistically not genocide, but on the other hand it could be counter-productive to devalue genocide through over-diluting its definition. ■

(13) At least 1 million, and possibly well over half of the Armenian population, are reliably estimated to have been killed or death-marched by independent authorities and eye-witnesses. This is corroborated by reports in the United States, German and British archives and of contemporary diplomats in the Ottoman Empire, including those of its ally Germany. The German Ambassador, Wangenheim, for example, on 7 July 1915 wrote "the government is indeed pursuing its goal of exterminating the Armenian race in the Ottoman Empire" (Wilhelmstrasse archives). Though the successor Turkish Government helped to institute trials of a few of those responsible for

the massacres at which they were found guilty, the present official Turkish contention is that genocide did not take place although there were many casualties and dispersals in the fighting, and that all the evidence to the contrary is forged. See, inter alia, Viscount Bryce and A. Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915-16* (London, HMSO, 1916); G. Chaliand and Y. Ternon, *Genocide des Armeniens* (Brussels, Complexe, 1980); H. Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (New York, Doubleday, 1918); J. Lepsius, *Deutschland und Armenien* (Potsdam, 1921; shortly to be published in French by Fayard, Paris); R.G. Hovanissian, *Armenia on the road to independence* (Berkeley, University of California, 1967); Permanent Peoples' Tribunal, *A Crime of Silence* (London, Zed Press, 1985); K. Gurun, *Le Dossier Armenien* (Ankara, Turkish Historical Society, 1983); B. Simsir and others, *Armenians in the Ottoman Empire* (Istanbul, Bogazici University Press, 1984); T. Ataov, *A Brief Glance at the "Armenian Question"* (Ankara University Press, 1984); B. Goekjiam, *The Turks before the Court of History* (New Jersey, Rosekeer Press, 1984); Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, *Armenia, the Continuing Tragedy* (Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1984); Foreign Policy Institute, *The Armenian Issue* (Ankara, F.P.I., 1982). ■

Text of the House Joint Resolution 247

The United States House of Representatives on September 10, 1984, approved House Joint Resolution 247, calling on the President of the United States to proclaim April 24, 1985 as a "National Day of Remembrance of Man's Inhumanity to Man."

The joint resolution made specific reference to the observance of this day as a memorial to "the one and one-half million people of the Armenian ancestry who were victims of the genocide perpetrated in Turkey between 1915 and 1923 . . ."

The text of the resolution is as follows:

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled, That April 24, 1985, is hereby designated as "National Day of Remembrance of Man's Inhumanity to Man," and the President of the United States is authorized and required to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe such day as a day of remembrance for all victims of genocide, especially the one and one-half million people of Armenian ancestry who were victims of the genocide in Turkey between 1915 and 1923, and in whose memory this day is commemorated by all Armenians and their friends throughout the world.

Passed the House of Representatives September 10, 1984.

ATTEST

BENJAMIN J. GUTHRIE,
Clerk.

The Verdict of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal on the Genocide of the Armenians

On April 16, 1984 in Paris, France, after three days of testimony and deliberation, the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal found Turkey guilty of committing the crime of genocide and called upon the United Nations and its member states to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

The 13 representatives of the Tribunal, comprising a jury of distinguished international scholars and Nobel Prize laureates, heard reports from various historians, legal experts, and genocide survivors, and examined archival documentation to arrive at their verdict.

This independent panel of jurists concluded that "the extermination of the Armenian populations through a deportation and massacre constitutes a crime of genocide . . . (and) the Young Turk government is guilty of this genocide . . ."

The verdict of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal is as follows:

—The Armenian population did and do constitute a people whose fundamental rights, both individual and collective, should have been and shall be respected in accordance with international law;

—the extermination of the Armenian population groups through deportation and massacre constitutes a crime of genocide not subject to statutory limitations within the definition of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of December 9, 1948. With respect to the condemnation of this crime, the aforesaid Convention is declaratory of existing law in that it takes note of rules which were already in force at the time of the incriminated acts;

—the Young Turk government is guilty of this genocide, with regard to the acts perpetrated between 1915-1917;

—the Armenian genocide is also an "international crime" for which the Turkish state must assume responsibility, without using the pretext of any discontinuity in the existence of the state to elude that responsibility;

—this responsibility implies first and foremost the obligation to recognize officially the reality of this genocide and the consequent damages suffered by the Armenian people;

—the United Nations Organization and each of its members have the right to demand this recognition and to assist the Armenian people to that end. ■

Members of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal comprising the jury for the session on the genocide of the Armenians, April 13-16, 1984, Paris:

Madjid BENCHIKH (Algeria), Professor of International Law at the University of Algiers

Georges CASALIS (France), theologian, Honorary Professor of the Institut Protestant de Theologie, Paris

Harald EDELSTAM (Sweden), former Ambassador to Chile and to Algeria

Richard FALK (USA), Professor of International Law, Princeton University

Ken FRY (Australia), member of Parliament

Andrea GIARDINA (Italy), Professor of International Law at the University of Rome

Sean McBRIDE (Ireland), jurist, President of the International Peace Office, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Lenin Peace Prize winner, American Medal for Justice

Leo MATARASSO (France), lawyer at the Paris bar

Adolfo PEREZ ESQUIVEL (Argentina), Nobel Peace Prize laureate, general coordinator of "Servicio Paz y Justicia en America Latina" (Service for Peace and Justice in Latin America)

James PETRAS (USA), Professor of Sociology, State University of New York

Francois RIGAUX (Belgium), Professor of the Faculty of Law of the Catholic University in Louvain

Ajit ROY (India), economist and journalist

George WALD (USA), Professor Emeritus of Biology, Harvard University, Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine, 1967

Text of the Motion Adopted by the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches

The Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches met in Vancouver, Canada, from July 23 to August 12. During its last session held on August 12, 1983, and in the context of discussions on human rights, the issue of genocide and of the Armenian Genocide in particular was raised.

The World Council of Churches recognized the current implications of the Armenian Genocide for the Armenian people and pointed out that continuous and deliberate efforts at denial have caused genuine anguish and despair among the Armenians. Thereafter, the Assembly adopted a resolution calling for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Moreover, the Commission on the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches called on the General Secretary of the United Nations to pursue the issue of recognition of the Armenian Genocide. The World Council of Churches maintained that public recognition is essential for the prevention of future acts of genocide.

The motion adopted by the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches is reproduced below:

During this Assembly's discussion of violations of human rights our attention has been drawn to the historical reality and present threat of genocide to some peoples. Far too often these occurrences are passed over in silence. In certain instances this is being used by groups to justify wholly unacceptable acts of violence.

In this context we have been reminded once again of the tragic massacre of one-and-a-half million Armenians in Turkey and the deportation of another half-million from this historic homeland at the beginning of this century. The silence of the world community and deliberate efforts to deny even historical facts have been consistent sources of anguish and growing despair to the Armenian people, the Armenian churches and many others.

The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches has raised this concern in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights with reference to the latter's study of the Question of Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The Assembly requests the General Secretary to provide information to the churches on this and to continue to pursue the matter in appropriate contexts. Public recognition of those events is essential in order that they do not continue to engender violent acts of retribution, and that through remembering this history of the Armenian people other peoples might be spared a similar fate. ■

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