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A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE ARMENIAN DIASPORA IN GERMANY

(ALMANYA'DAKİ ERMENİ DİASPORASININ
TARİHSEL BİR GENEL DEĞERLENDİRMESİ)

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Abstract: *The Armenians, one of the first nations that come to mind when the term "diaspora" is mentioned, have made this situation a part of their political, social, and cultural identities. On the other hand, Germany is one of the countries with the highest number of immigrants in the world. In this context, the intersection of Armenians and Germany constitutes an interesting experience in the field of migration and diaspora studies. Although it has remained in the background in comparison to the examples where the Armenian Diaspora is highly influential, Germany is one of the prominent countries in which this community has started to grow and become visible. The presence of Turks in Germany, a country where Armenians have begun to be influential not only socially and economically, but also politically, makes it interesting to examine the Armenian Diaspora in Germany from several dimensions. The historical interactions between Germany and Armenians and their relations being shaped by the presence of third parties make the research on Armenians who migrated here significant also for diaspora and migration studies. This study aims to present a brief history of this thriving community and a summary of its political and social activities in Germany.*

Keywords: *Armenians, Germany, Diaspora, Migration*

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Öz: “Diaspora” denilince akla gelen ilk uluslardan biri olan Ermeniler; bu durumu siyasi, sosyal ve kültürel kimliklerinin bir parçası haline getirmişlerdir. Öte yandan Almanya dünyada en çok göçmen barındıran ülkelerden biridir. Bu bağlamda Ermeniler ile Almanya'nın kesişmesi göç ve diaspora çalışmaları alanında ilginç bir deneyim oluşturmaktadır. Ermeni Diasporasının etkisinin yüksek olduğu örneklerle geri planda kalsa da Almanya bu topluluğun gelişmeye ve görünür hale gelmeye başladığı önde gelen ülkelerden biridir. Ermenilerin sosyal ve ekonomik olduğu kadar siyasi olarak da etkili olmaya başladıkları bir ülke olan Almanya'da Türklerin varlığı, Almanya'daki Ermeni Diasporasını çeşitli boyutlarıyla incelemeyi ilginç kılmaktadır. Almanya ve Ermeniler arasındaki tarihsel etkileşimleri ve üçüncü tarafların varlığıyla şekillenen ilişkileri, buraya göç eden Ermeniler üzerine yapılan araştırmaları diaspora ve göç çalışmaları için de önemli kılmaktadır. Bu çalışma, bu gelişen topluluğun kısa bir tarihini ve Almanya'daki siyasi ve sosyal faaliyetlerinin bir özetini sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ermeniler, Almanya, Diaspora, Göç

Introduction

Germany, one of the most prominent countries receiving immigrants in Europe, has made multiculturalism a part of its social and political identity. Germany had been a homeland for people of many ethnic origins under the roof of its statehood throughout history. Unlike the early modern period, however, German society tried to be homogenized by Nazi Regime, especially with their unprecedented atrocities committed during the Second World War. After the war, Germany had become a country of migration in a strict sense as a result of the country's need for labor force. Although Germany's migration experience goes as far back as can be imagined, the scope and the narratives of the migration stories differ from each other: the migrations during the rule of the Holy Roman Empire, the Germans' migration to North America in the 18th century, and the gradual increase in migration to Germany after the 1950s. These eras compose a general view of Germany's migration experience.

The migration experience of Armenians, which is the focus of this study, is quite different from the ones of Germans and Germany. The Events of 1915 (or "the Armenian genocide" as Armenians claim) continued to be intensely discussed today, and the relocation and the displacement of Armenians from their lands, constitute one of the most controversial and tragic parts of migration history. Apart from what had really happened in 1915, many Armenians also migrated to the United States of America (USA), and Europe before and after that date. The Armenians living abroad, now also known as the Armenian Diaspora, constitute a greater number than the Armenians living in Armenia. Therefore, it would not be that wrong to claim that Armenians have lived with the very concept of migration since at least the 17th century. The migration of Armenians to the USA and France in 1915 has been studied many times and is yet to be thoroughly studied. However, relations between Germany, as one of the largest migrant-receiving countries, and the Armenians, a nation whose history mostly resonated with migration, have not come to the fore very often in academic research.

This study aims to discuss a brief history of Armenian migration to Germany, the institutionalization efforts of the Armenian Diaspora in that country, and the associations and communities that are still actively working today. The political activities of the Armenian Diaspora in Germany, especially regarding the recognition of the Events of 1915 as genocide, and the interactions of the Armenians with German society, will also be addressed.

The Migration of Armenians to Germany

The migration of Armenians to Germany dates back to the times when there was not even a German and an Armenian “nation” in terms of their modern definitions. In the beginning, the most important factor in the relationship between the two folks was religion, namely Christianity. The relations, which started based on religious affinity, increased through the arrivals of Armenian merchants and students to Germany in the 18th and 19th centuries.¹ If a date is required to emphasize the case, it might be said that the first relations between Germans and Armenians began in 1097 during the First Crusade. The Christianity identity of both sides enabled these relations to start on a religious basis, and these relations took on a commercial status in time.² In 1505, Armenian merchants had special commercial privileges in German lands, and Israel Ori, one of the most prominent leaders of the Armenian independence movement, settled in Germany in 1695. Armenians that migrated to Germany in the 17th and 18th centuries established intense relations with the local merchants in the region. The “Armenian Trade Organization” was established in Germany in 1863, since it was already evident that trade constituted a milestone for relations and sympathy towards Armenians. The relations, initially based on religion and trade, started to ramify into other areas such as politics and education. The notable figures of the Armenian families in Germany assumed governmental positions and became commissioners or representatives in the parliaments in various German states. When Berlin became the capital in the 1870s, the first foreign students attending Berlin University were Armenians, and the student organizations founded by Armenians came into view in the 1880s.³ In conjunction with the foundation of the first Armenian student association in Leipzig in 1885, the relations began to gain momentum.⁴

Relations based on religious interactions, which started very early with the First Crusade, then with organizations founded by Armenian students who arrived in Germany, were quite strong between both sides by the end of the 19th century and continued until the end of the First World War. The fact that the organizations established in Germany with missionary purposes were particularly aimed at Armenians indicates how important religion was in the relations of both sides. The relations established with Armenians living in the

1 Aydan İyigüngör, “The Profile of the Armenian Diaspora in Germany”, *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, 3 (2001): 258.

2 David Zenian, “The Growing Pains of a New Community”, *AGBU Magazine*, November 1, 2001, <https://agbu.org/growing-pains-new-community>, accessed January 3, 2023.

3 Zenian, D. “The Growing Pains of a New Community”.

4 Mihran Dabag, “Die armenische Minderheit”, *Ethnische Minderheiten in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Ein Lexikon*, hrsg. von Cornelia Schmalz-Jacobsen und Georg Hansen (München: Beck Verlag, 1995), 61.

lands of the Ottoman Empire, before the First World War, also stood out with its religious dimension. Since Armenians did not have a state of their own in the 19th century and these relations had to be carried out through the Ottoman Empire, the Germans tried to make contact with Armenians in Anatolia mainly through missionary organizations. During this period, missionaries from many countries were founded in the Ottoman Empire (especially American, British, and French missionaries), and the Germans intensified these attempts during the end of the 19th century. For example, after the incidents involving the Armenians occurred in the Ottoman Empire between 1894-1896, a German Protestant pastor by the name of Johannes Lepsius founded one of the first relief organizations called *Deutsche Hilfsbund für Armenien* (German Aid Association for Armenians) to aid the “persecuted” Armenians.⁵ Some institutions were also established in Germany to aid Armenians. These institutions started to operate in Anatolia within a short time. *Deutsche Orient-Mission* (German Eastern Mission) took first place among the German missionary organizations in the Ottoman lands, and this institution was followed by the *Deutsch-Armenische Gesellschaft* (German-Armenian Association), which was established specifically for Armenians shortly after.⁶ These organizations tried to provide German aid and support for the Armenian people as part of their main purpose. After the emergence of these two missionary institutions, the others which were initially religious and seemed to be based on social aid, but also had a political purpose, began to spread rapidly within the Ottoman lands. Other institutions that were established in Germany and engaged in missionary activities for various purposes in the Ottoman Empire were as follows⁷: *Deutscher Hilfsbund für Christliches Liebeswerk im Orient e.V.* (German Association of Aid for Christians in the East), which was established in the Rhein-Main region including Frankfurt and Mainz; *Deutsche Evangelische Missions-Hilfe D.A.W.W.* (German Evangelical Relief Delegation), founded in Berlin and *Orient-und Islam-Mission des Deutschen Evangelischen Missions-Ausschusses* (Delegation Committee of German Evangelical Missions to the East and Islam).

In addition to medical and social aid, German organizations also published books in the German language about the Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire. For example, a journal called *Der Christliche Orient* (The Christian East) was published in 1897 and aimed to inform the Germans about the Christians living in the East and mostly in the Ottoman Empire.⁸ Another

5 Zenian, “The Growing Pains of a New Community”.

6 Selami Kılıç, “Ermeni Propagandaları ve Alman İmparatorluğu’nun Ermeni Politikası: Alman Arşiv Belgeleri Açısından 1917-1918”, *Atatürk Yolu*, 19 (1997): 268.

7 Wolfdieter Bihl, *Die Kaukasus-Politik der Mittelmächte Teil 2: Die Zeit der Versuchten Kaukasischen Staatlichkeit (1917-1918)* (Wien: Böhlau, 1992), 66.

8 Füsün Alver, “Ulus Ötesi Tasarlanmış Cemaat Olarak Ermeni Diasporasının Almanya’da Politik Halkla İlişkiler Çalışmaları ve Geleneksel ve Yeni Medyayı Politik Mücadelede Araçsallaştırması”, *Ermeni Araştırmaları*. 44 (2013): 99.

example was *Die Allgemeine Evangelische-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* (The General Evangelical-Lutheran Church Newspaper) which also included news about Armenians.⁹

Although the German and Armenian contacts in this period were maintained with various associations and organizations established mainly in Germany; since Germany was an ally of the Ottoman Empire at that time, it strived not to develop close relationships with the Armenians due to its official policy. In this period, Armenians deliberately avoided going to Germany, but instead migrated to countries such as France and Switzerland where they carried out several political and social activities. It should be noted that the migration of Armenians to France, wherein the Armenian population is quite dense even at present, took place at the beginning of the 20th century, especially after the Events of 1915 and the First World War. However, only a very small number of Armenians migrated to Germany between 1915 and 1916.¹⁰ Leipzig, Dresden, Hamburg, and Berlin were the major cities that the Armenians settled in during that period.¹¹ Between 1939 and 1950, Armenians who were taken prisoner by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) during the Second World War, were brought to the regions under the US occupation in Germany. Some of these Armenians migrated to the USA after the war, and some settled in Germany.¹² In the 1930s, there were, at most, two hundred Armenians living in Germany. However, it is estimated that the number of Armenian prisoners of war brought to Germany and settled after the Second World War was around five thousand.¹³

The large-scale Armenian migration to Germany started in the 1960s. As a result of Germany's urgent need for an immigrant labor force after the 1950s, many guest workers began to migrate to that country. Economic and political reasons as the pull factors for immigrants created the largest migration of Armenians to Germany, which continued from the 1960s to the end of the 1990s. During the 1960s, Armenian guest workers along with their Turkish

9 Uwe Feigel, *Das evangelische Deutschland und Armenien: Die Armenierhilfe deutscher evangelischer Christen seit dem Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts im Kontext der deutsch-türkischen Beziehungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1989), 120. (Quoted by Alver, "Ulus Ötesi Tasarlanmış Cemaat", 99.)

10 It should be noted that among the factors that prevented the Armenians from migrating to Germany at that time were Germany's alliance with the Ottoman Empire, Germany's avoidance of any discourse on the Events of 1915, and its disregard for the issue. However, the assassination of Talat Pasha and the release of the assassin Soghomon Tehlirian after his trial that took place in the Weimar Republic after the Empire gives the impression that there was at least some sympathy towards the Armenians among the new government and the state elites, and a critical view of the German Empire's policies against the Armenians. It can also be said that the German reactions to the court verdict were generally favorable among those who were sympathetic to the Armenians.

11 Alver, "Ulus Ötesi Tasarlanmış Cemaat", 99.

12 Alver, "Ulus Ötesi Tasarlanmış Cemaat", 99.

13 Zenian, "The Growing Pains of a New Community".

counterparts, came to Germany. Most of them were from the Anatolian part of Turkey and had economic reasons, same as the Turks or Italians who came to Germany to work, rather than to pursue political ambitions. In a similar vein to any first wave of the migration, Armenian guest workers lacked political awareness and priority on getting involved in an Armenian community in the country they arrived. They did not even know the Armenian language, and acted together with Turkish guest workers in their social lives.¹⁴ While the first reasons for the migration of Armenians to Germany were economic, political conflicts in Middle Eastern countries such as Syria, Iran, and Lebanon led to another migration wave.¹⁵ After the Lebanese Civil War waged between 1975 and 1991, and the Iranian Revolution in 1979, many Armenians living in the region migrated to Germany as asylum seekers. Armenians who came to Germany for political reasons after the 1970s embraced Armenian culture more than the first-wave immigrants whose priorities were mostly economic. These newly arrived immigrants had enjoyed a community life in their previous countries, “had spoken the Armenian language, and had been deeply involved in community affairs” in an organized manner.¹⁶ Most of the Armenians who migrated from the Middle East studied in Germany and continued their professional activities by staying in this country.¹⁷ Those who came after the 1970s set up cultural organizations, and opened Armenian language courses, but were still confined to their social lives within their communities.¹⁸ As a result of the earthquake that hit Armenia in 1988, the war that started with Azerbaijan in the same year due to the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, many Armenians living in Armenia, Russia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia migrated to Germany.¹⁹

Germany was the fourth country that the immigrants preferred to seek asylum after the first three; respectively Russia, the USA, and France.²⁰ The Armenians who migrated to Germany did not only settle in big cities as the others did in France, Russia, the USA, Canada, Iran, or Lebanon, but also to the little towns of Germany.²¹ The majority of the Armenians who came to Germany settled in Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, Stuttgart, München, and

14 Zenian, “The Growing Pains of a New Community”.

15 Azat Ordukhanyan, *Armenier in Deutschland: Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Erfurt: Der Ausländerbeauftragte beim Thüringer Ministerium für Soziales, Familie und Gesundheit, 2009), 30.

16 Zenian, “The Growing Pains of a New Community”.

17 Alver, “Ulus Ötesi Tasarlanmış Cemaat”, 102.

18 Zenian, “The Growing Pains of a New Community”.

19 Alver, “Ulus Ötesi Tasarlanmış Cemaat”, 99.

20 Astghik Chaloyan, “Studying Transnational Lifestyles: Transnational Social Fields of Second Generation Armenians in Germany”, *Armenians Around the World: Migration and Transnationality*, ed. Artur Mkrtychyan (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015), 114.

21 Ordukhanyan, *Armenier in Deutschland*, 26.

Frankfurt, the cities in which the Turkish population is also quite dense. The largest Armenian population settled in North Rhine-Westphalia, in which the very first German-Armenian associations had started to emerge in the 19th century.²²

The Armenian Diaspora and Its Institutions in Germany

It is estimated that the population of Armenia is about three million²³, and it can easily be said that the population of the Armenian Diaspora is much larger than this. The Armenian Diaspora is mostly concentrated in Russia with a population that is estimated at two and a half million.²⁴ The countries in which the Armenian Diaspora is politically more powerful than the others are France and the USA. The diaspora in these countries has a great political and cultural influence on the Armenians and also in the policy-making processes of France and the USA. The influence of the Armenian Diaspora in the foreign policy of France and the USA has manifested itself in various ways, and continues to do so. In Germany, on the other hand, although there is an Armenian community that does work actively, it is not as effective as it is in France and the USA.²⁵ Daily cultural activities and the recognition of the Events of 1915 as genocide are the main activities of the diaspora in Germany.

It is estimated that the population of Armenians living in Germany is around fifty or sixty thousand.²⁶ Not all Armenians living in Germany want to live there only with their Armenian identity. For example, it is known that approximately fifteen thousand Armenians wanted to acquire German citizenship in the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania in the north of Germany.²⁷ Those who are German citizens of Armenian origin, Armenians

22 İyigüngör, "The Profile of the Armenian Diaspora", 258-259.

23 "People and Society", *The World Factbook of the USA Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)*, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/armenia/#people-and-society>, accessed February 8, 2023.

24 Mokhmad Akhiyadov, "Rusya'daki Ermeni Lobisi ve Medya Gücü", *İNSAMER*, 2019, 1.

25 The Germans' reluctance to acknowledge the Armenians' allegations could also be seen as the reason for the Armenians' ineffectiveness in Germany in comparison to France or the USA. One explanation for the Germans' reluctance towards the Armenians' cause is that the Germans wanted to maintain the uniqueness of the Holocaust in comparison to the Events of 1915. Another explanation is the refrainment of the Germans from engaging in any accusation about Germany's role in 1915. The last explanation could be that, due to the Turks vastly outnumbering the Armenians living in Germany, German politicians could have refrained from causing a breach of faith in their relations with the Turks. As a consequence, the Germans have not traditionally paid any specific attention to the Armenians or their allegations, and the Armenians were thus deprived of any tools to promote their claims until recently. See also: Armenuhi Nikoghosyan and Sezer İdil Göğüş, "Is the Work Done? Views from Armenians in Germany on the Recognition of the Armenian Genocide", *Prifblog*, April 30, 2020, <https://blog.prif.org/2020/04/30/is-the-work-done-views-from-armenians-in-germany-on-the-recognition-of-the-armenian-genocide/>, accessed June 6, 2023.

26 "Germany", *Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs (Armenia)*, <http://diaspora.gov.am/en/pages/61/germany>, accessed February 20, 2023.

27 İyigüngör, "The Profile of the Armenian Diaspora", 259.

waiting to acquire citizenship, and Turkish citizens of Armenian origin who have migrated to Germany along with the Turks constitute the general profile of Armenians in Germany. Even though there are Armenians among the Turks in Germany, it is difficult to give a clear answer due to the lack of specific statistics for Turkish citizens of different origins. The Armenians, who wanted to acquire German citizenship and whose number reached fifteen thousand, migrated to Germany from Armenia, Iran, and Lebanon, but not from Turkey.²⁸

As mentioned above, the Armenians in Germany make a different impression than those who migrated to other countries. While the Armenian Diaspora has a significant political influence in countries such as France, the USA, and Russia, they were unable to make inroads in politics in Germany until recently. The Armenians there acted mostly on the basis of culture and especially religion in their personal or social relations with the German society and the state. In Germany, Armenian history and culture are largely unknown to the general public, and to the ecclesiastical, academic, and higher political circles.²⁹ This situation continued until the further establishment of associations and institutes related to Armenians. Armenian activities, which gained momentum since the 1970s, were not limited to religion and culture. They began to gain intensity in the field of history and politics. However, the Federal Republic of Germany had not done any serious attempt at the development or institutionalization of the Armenian community, so there was not eagerness on part of the German government to specifically engage with the Armenians.³⁰ The organizational efficiency of the Armenian communities and institutions in Germany that started in 1965 and accelerated in the 1970s depended mainly on the willingness of the Armenians to integrate themselves into German society.

Although the institutionalization of the Armenians in Germany started mainly after 1960, these organizations have a historical background related to the various institutions founded at the beginning of the 20th century. Relations that started with German missionary organizations gained a different dimension with the establishment of *Deutsch-Armenische Gesellschaft*

28 İyigüngör, "The Profile of the Armenian Diaspora", 260.

29 Ordukhanyan, *Armenier in Deutschland*, 27.

30 It is crucial to state that the German Democratic Republic (GDR) experience in German history has often been overlooked by historians. It is known, however, that discussions on genocides were considered taboo subjects both in the USSR and the GDR. GDR's official treatment of the Armenians' allegation of genocide thus reflected this dismissive mindset. According to Sandy Zurikyan, "the genocide" was seen as a crime carried out by the "monopoly capitalists" and the "imperialists": "The Turkish people were portrayed as victims who had been misled rather than being perpetrators in narrative history of East Germany. The Ottomans and Turks were never called 'exploiters' or 'imperialists,' and instead, the incidents were blamed on the ruling party of the Young Turks". Regarding the political stance of the GDR, see also: Sandy Zurikyan, "Armenian Genocide and East Germany", *Keghart*, March 2, 2016, <https://keghart.org/armenian-genocide-and-east-germany/>, accessed June 5, 2023.

(German-Armenian Association-DAG). DAG, of which Johannes Lepsius is one of the founders, is one of the most prominent and active diaspora organizations that maintains its activities today.³¹ As its founder was Lepsius and its history is quite old, this organization was of great importance for the Armenians living in Germany.³² This association, initially founded for aiding the Armenians in social and religious issues, started to follow a policy that defended the Armenian theses regarding the Events of 1915, and came to the fore in German public opinion with this aspect. Since the day it was founded, DAG has aimed to introduce and promote Armenian culture in Germany and to improve Armenian-German relations. For this purpose, DAG has held conferences on historical, cultural, and literary topics; made translations, and published many publications; for example, the journal *Mesrop* that it has been publishing since 1918.³³

One of the earlier examples of the institutions of the Armenians in Germany was the *Verein der Armenischen Kolonie* (Association of the Armenian Colony), which was founded in Berlin in 1923. After the Second World War, this association was closed due to the immigration of many Armenians from Germany to the USA. Afterward, there has been an effort to revive this association since 1966 with the efforts of Armenian guest workers from Turkey and Armenian students from Iran.³⁴ The Armenian Church helped the integration of these two groups (guest workers and students) into Germany and in a short time, Armenian physicians, scientists, artisans, and small traders were admitted to the membership of the association. The association was renamed as *Armenisch Apostolische Kirchengemeinde Berlin* (Berlin Armenian Apostolic Church Community) in 1980 and has been called *Armenische Gemeinde zu Berlin* (*Armenian Community in Berlin*) since 1998.³⁵

The *Armenische Gemeinde zu Hamburg von 1965 e.V.* (Armenian Community of Hamburg) was established in 1965³⁶, and *Armenischer Kulturverein Hessen e.V.* (Armenian Cultural Association of Hessen), which is another diaspora organization and supporter of the Hunchaks and Soviet Armenia, was established in 1968 in Frankfurt.³⁷ These organizations aimed to protect the

31 For more detailed information about *Deutsch-Armenische Gesellschaft*, see: <https://www.deutscharmenischegesellschaft.de/eine-seite/>, accessed February 20, 2023.

32 Johannes Lepsius, as a German Protestant missionary and Orientalist, had a special interest in Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and tried to influence the German public opinion with his alleged documentation of the genocide.

33 Alver, "Ulus Ötesi Tasarlanmış Cemaat", 100.

34 Alver, "Ulus Ötesi Tasarlanmış Cemaat", 100.

35 For more detailed information about *Armenische Gemeinde zu Berlin*, see: <https://www.armenische-gemeinde-zu-berlin.de/seite/168197/armenische-gemeinde-zu-berlin.html>, accessed February 20, 2023.

36 Alver, "Ulus Ötesi Tasarlanmış Cemaat", 100.

37 Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1987), LXXXVII-LXXXVIII.

Armenians in Germany under a union, and to organize them in a sense of solidarity. Until the 1970s, the Armenian community established small churches and associations, and as of 1975, Armenian associations that launched large-scale activities were established in Cologne, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, and München. In the early 1980s, many associations were established in Bonn, Braunschweig, Bremen, Bielefeld, Duisburg, Eppingen, Hanau, Kehl, Neuwied, and Nuremberg.³⁸

Since the 1980s, the agenda of the Armenians in Germany took on a political aim and the Events of 1915 began to be handled more often by the Diaspora. As mentioned above, after 1980s, the newly-arrived-immigrants prioritized political issues more than their predecessors and their actions took a political dimension also with the help of globalizing world at that time. As of this date, the Armenian institutions have started to work more actively to convince the German public opinion to accept the Events of 1915 as genocide. One of these institutions is the *Informations-und Dokumentationszentrum Armenien* (Information and Documentation Center of Armenia), which was founded in 1985 by Tessa Hofmann and Gerayer Koutcharyan. The aim of this institution, as the name suggests, is to prove that the Events of 1915 were a genocide based on documents and to share this information with the Germans. Hofmann, who was in charge of the directorate of the *Armenien-Koordinationsgruppe* (Coordination Group of Armenia), is also a member of the *Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker* (Society for Threatened Peoples).³⁹ She is the prominent supporter and, in a sense, the spokesperson for the Armenian's allegation of genocide in Germany. The other institution based on research on genocide is the *Institut für Genozid- und Diasporaforschung* (Genocide and Diaspora Research Center), which was founded by Mihran Dabag in 1989 as an affiliate of Ruhr University.⁴⁰ The *Institut für Armenische Fragen* (Institute for Armenian Studies) is another institute established in Berlin for “studying Armenia's problems and future through publications”.⁴¹

The efforts of the Armenians in Germany on institutionalization produced results during the 1990s. In conjunction with the changing international agenda, many Armenian institutions and organizations have started to accelerate their political activities since 1990. One of the most important results of these attempts is the *Zentralrat der Armenier in Deutschland* (Central Council of Armenians in Germany), which was established in 1993. This institution is an umbrella organization to which all Armenian associations

38 Alver, “Ulus Ötesi Tasarlanmış Cemaat”, 100.

39 Selami Kılıç, *Ermeni Sorunu ve Almanya: Türk-Alman Arşiv Belgeleriyle* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2007), 230.

40 Alver, “Ulus Ötesi Tasarlanmış Cemaat”, 101.

41 For more detailed information about Institute for Armenian Studies, see: <http://armstudies.com/en/index.php>, accessed February 22, 2023.

and organizations in Germany are affiliated, and almost all Armenian activities are carried out under the supervision of this institution.⁴² The main aims of the Central Council of Armenians in Germany are;

“to promote and coordinate the cultural and charitable activities of members, to support the efforts that serve the cooperation with German organizations, and to promote the coexistence between Germans and Armenians, to foster cooperation with the other Armenian organizations in Armenia, in the European Union and in the other countries, and to expand and promote the communication between the Armenians and all their organizations in Germany.”⁴³

The Central Council of Armenians in Germany also established a working group called the *Arbeitsgruppe Anerkennung* (Recognition Working Group) in 1998 and has carried out many activities for the recognition of the Events of 1915 as genocide by Germany.⁴⁴

In addition to the Armenian organizations that were established in Germany recently to mold the public opinion regarding the recognition of the Events of 1915 as genocide, other Armenian organizations also have this aim, but their main founding purposes are to operate in numerous fields. Some of the organizations which undertake activities in order to facilitate the daily lives of Armenians living in Germany, apart from influencing the public opinion about genocide are as follows⁴⁵:

“*Die Diözese der Armenischen Kirche in Deutschland* (Diocese of the Armenian Church in Germany), *Verein Armenischer Mediziner in Deutschland e.V.* (Association of Armenian Doctors in Germany), *Armenischer Unternehmer Verein e.V.* (Armenian Entrepreneurs Association), *Der Armenisch-Akademische Verein 1860 e.V.* (Armenian Academic Association 1860), *Verein armenischer Frauen in Deutschland e.V.* “*Silva Kaputikian*” (Association of Armenian Women in Germany “Silva Kaputikian”), Research on Armenian Architecture Organization, *Studentenklub HAIK* (HAIK Student Club), *Stiftung für Armenische Studien* (Foundation for Armenian Studies), *MESROP-Zentrum für armenische Studien an der Stiftung Leucoria* (MESROP-Center for Armenian Studies at the Leucoria Foundation), Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, *Armenische Hilfswerk H.O.M.*

42 İyigüngör, “The Profile of the Armenian Diaspora”, 260.

43 For more detailed information about *Zentralrat der Armenier in Deutschland e.V.*, see: <http://www.zentralrat.org/de/zentralrat>, accessed February 22, 2023.

44 İyigüngör, “The Profile of the Armenian Diaspora”, 260.

45 Ordukhanyan, *Armenier in Deutschland*, 49-64.

(Armenian Relief Organization), *Verein der Freunde von Artsakh-Karabach* (Association of Friends of Artsakh-Karabach)”.⁴⁶

It could be claimed that all these institutions are working actively in the socialization and integration process of the Armenians in Germany. The recognition of the claimed genocide by other countries, which constitutes the main goal of the Armenian Diaspora, has also been the main goal of the diaspora in Germany. Institutions and organizations that support the Armenian claims have held conferences on this issue, published brochures and books, and endeavored to raise awareness of their allegation of genocide in the German society. As there is no political party in which Armenians are represented in Germany⁴⁷, these institutions have been the main instrument to influence the German Government and German public opinion politically in the background. The last part of this study will briefly touch on the social and political activities of the diaspora in this country.

The Social and Political Activities of the Armenian Diaspora in Germany

As stated above, the Armenian Diaspora in Germany has a very different presence than the other Armenian communities. Armenians from Turkey are mostly composed of workers who came for economic reasons, while those from the Middle East are mostly composed of students and those who migrated for political reasons. Most Armenian students from the Middle East preferred to stay in Germany and are represented in academic professions.⁴⁸ The Armenians living in Germany are quite willing to adapt to German society, and therefore they put a premium on learning the German language. In addition, obtaining German citizenship to benefit from social rights and services in Germany is among the important issues for Armenians. Owing to the constitutional amendment made by Armenia in 2007, the Armenians in Germany began to exercise their right to have dual citizenship.⁴⁹ As can be seen from the efforts on acquiring citizenship, a large part of Armenians living in Germany aim to settle in Germany rather than return to Armenia.⁵⁰ Besides that, the Armenians in Germany maintain their cultural, political, and

46 For a detailed list of these associations, see: Armenische Gemeinde Baden-Württemberg, <https://agbw.org/wichtige-links/>, accessed February 22, 2023.

47 Alver, “Ulus Ötesi Tasarlanmış Cemaat”, 101.

48 Mareike Dreusse, “Zwischen Deutschland und Armenien: Die transnationale Diaspora als Akteur sozialen Wandels / Ergebnisse einer empirischen Untersuchung zu herkunftslandbezogenen Transferleistungen der armenischen Diaspora in Deutschland”, Abschlussarbeit im Master of Social Sciences and Economics, Universität Wien, 2008, 59.

49 Tessa Hofmann, “Die Laender. Armenien- Überleben am Fusse erloschener Vulkane”, *Der Kaukasus: Geschichte-Kultur-Politik*, hrsg.. Marie-Carin von Gumpfenberg und Udo Steinbach (München: Verlag C.H.Beck, 2008) 32. (Quoted by Alver, “Ulus Ötesi Tasarlanmış Cemaat”, 102.)

50 Dreusse, “Zwischen Deutschland und Armenien”, 67.

economic relations with Armenia. The relations between Armenians living in Germany with Armenia vary depending on which country they migrated from. The Armenians from Armenia have the most intensive contact with Armenia due to their relatives in Armenia, as most of them go to Armenia regularly to visit their families and friends. The Armenians who migrated from Iran also maintain their relations with Armenia, and they visit that country more or less regularly. The Armenians who migrated from Turkey, on the other hand, have fewer direct contacts with their country of origin; nevertheless, they also feel a strong emotional connection to Armenia.⁵¹ The relations between the Armenian Diaspora in Germany and Armenia became more intense with the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 and the establishment of the Republic of Armenia.⁵²

After the disintegration of the USSR and the increasing effect of globalization, the Armenian Diaspora in Germany started to intensify its relations with Armenia. These relations developed in both material and moral ways. For example, the Armenian Diaspora developed very close relations with Armenia on the transfer of know-how. Since 1990, The *Verein Armenischer Mediziner in Deutschland e.V.* (Association of Armenian Doctors in Germany) has been transferring technological knowledge to Armenia in the field of health and especially in microbiology. The *Studentenklub Hayk* (Hayk Student Club) carries out activities and projects on supporting Armenian students in Germany, establishing a network of representatives of Armenian students and young academics in Germany, and promoting Armenian culture.⁵³ In addition, the knowledge acquired in the academic field is being transferred to Armenia by the *Der Armenisch-Akademische Verein 1860 e.V.* (Armenian Academic Association 1860). This association aims to establish a cultural tie between Germany and Armenia and that scientific studies would be beneficial for Germany as well as Armenia. German literary works are translated into Armenian, or translations are made for some journals within the scope of these cultural studies.⁵⁴ Another example is the found in the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund (with headquarters in Armenia) used by the Armenian Diaspora in Germany. This fund is represented in Germany by a local committee and the Armenian Diaspora community contributes to the development of Armenia with donations. It was founded in 1992 and financed by immigrant Armenians trying to help Armenia with short-term humanitarian aid, as well as long-term infrastructure development.⁵⁵

51 Dreusse, "Zwischen Deutschland und Armenien", 67.

52 Alver, "Ulus Ötesi Tasarlanmış Cemaat", 102.

53 Ordukhanyan, *Armenier in Deutschland*, 55.

54 Dreusse, "Zwischen Deutschland und Armenien", 72-73.

55 Ordukhanyan, *Armenier in Deutschland*, 62-63.

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Apart from the activities that aim to facilitate the daily lives of the Armenian community in Germany, the transfer of the knowledge, information, and money gained in Germany to Armenia, and projects are developed mostly on issues such as health and education. In this way, the Armenian Diaspora strengthens its ties with its homeland by striving to promote Armenia in fields such as history, culture, tourism, science, and politics. Considering that Germany's volume of trade with Armenia amounted to over \$530 million (3.8% of the country's overall trade turnover), the extent of the efforts of the Armenian Diaspora in Germany towards its own country can be seen more clearly.⁵⁶

The mystical longing for the homeland and the cultural code it brings out are the most important factors in the transformation of immigrants into a diaspora in the countries they migrate. With their religion, culture and longing for Armenia, the Armenians are among the first communities that come to mind when the diaspora is mentioned. The Armenian Diaspora, which is scattered geographically in various parts of Germany, is making great efforts to keep their own culture, traditions and religion intact. The most crucial issue that politically binds the Armenians in Germany, as it is in other parts of the Armenian Diaspora, is the Events of 1915 and the related genocide allegation. This essential part of the existence of the Armenian Diaspora is also significantly necessary for the diaspora in Germany. Considering that the 1915 Events and the trauma of claimed genocide are the most important elements that ensure the unity of the Armenian Diaspora, it is quite natural that all cultural and religious codes are used through revoking that issue. Therefore, the Armenian Diaspora in Germany has also been engaged with these historical and cultural codes based on the longing for Armenia and the claimed genocide that caused them to leave their homelands. Having been integrated around these themes, the Diaspora shapes its political and social goals accordingly. Especially with the independence of Armenia, the Armenians in Germany have made it their main aim to engage in German society, not only socially, but also politically. As of this date, the activities have been carried out mostly on the claimed genocide and its connotations with Holocaust to influence public opinion due to the sensitivity of the Germans on the issue.

As the recognition of the Events of 1915 as genocide by states is one of the most basic aims of the Armenian Diaspora around the world, the Armenian community in Germany has also been working towards the same goal. The Diaspora, seeking to increase its political activities in Germany, brought the Events of 1915 onto the agenda of the German public opinion through photography and painting exhibitions, concerts, and conferences held on April 24 every year. All these events have been carried out through the

56 “Armenia and Germany attach importance to maintaining positive dynamics of trade turnover growth–Pashinyan”, *Arka News Agency*, March 3, 2023, https://arka.am/en/news/economy/armenia_and_germany_attach_importance_to_maintaining_positive_dynamics_of_trade_turnover_growth_pash/, accessed February 27, 2023.

abovementioned Recognition Working Group. A petition regarding the issue was submitted to the German parliament by the Recognition Working Group in April 2000. It was demanded that Germany should recognize the Armenian's allegation of genocide and "additionally that Germany should invite Turkey to recognize the Armenian genocide claim".⁵⁷ This petition led the way to the recognition of the Events of 1915 as genocide by a resolution of the German Parliament. In 2005, due to Germany's historic role in Turkish-Armenian relations (as the German Empire was an ally of the Ottoman Empire by the time the Events of 1915 occurred), it was requested that the Federal Government must assume a special responsibility on the issue and take steps to normalize and to improve the relations between Armenia and Turkey.⁵⁸ The responsibility of the German Empire for incidents was also stated in the resolution, and it was mentioned that Germany should not turn a blind eye to its predecessor's contribution to the alleged crimes committed against the Armenian people. In 2015, Joachim Gauck, President of Germany, "acknowledged Germany's 'co-responsibility' for the genocide"⁵⁹, and eventually in 2016, the German Parliament passed "the Armenian genocide" resolution.⁶⁰ Even though the German Government abstained from acknowledging that resolution, and considered it not legal but political⁶¹, this political move proves beyond a doubt that this resolution has been taken by the concerted efforts of a well-organized Armenian community.⁶²

57 İyigüngör, "The Profile of the Armenian Diaspora", 266.

58 For this resolution, see: Deutscher Bundestag, *Erinnerung und Gedenken an die Vertreibungen und Massaker an den Armeniern 1915 – Deutschland muss zur Versöhnung zwischen Türken und Armeniern beitragen (Drucksache 15/5689)* (Berlin: H. Heenemann GmbH & Co., 2005).

59 Ben Knight, "Germany's role in the Armenian genocide", *Deutsche Welle*, April 5, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/new-report-details-germanys-role-in-armenian-genocide/a-43268266>, accessed February 28, 2023.

60 For this resolution, see: Deutscher Bundestag, *Erinnerung und Gedenken an den Völkermord an den Armeniern und anderen christlichen Minderheiten in den Jahren 1915 und 1916 (Drucksache 18/8613)* (2016).

61 "Alman hükümeti "soykırım" demekten kaçındı", *Deutsche Welle*, 17 Mayıs 2019, <https://www.dvw.com/tr/alman-h%C3%BCk%C3%BCmeti-soyk%C4%B1r%C4%B1m-demekten-ka%C3%A7%C4%B1nd%C4%B1/a-48778251>, accessed March 5, 2023.

62 It should be noted that the resolution was passed at a time when Germany-Turkey relations, and the EU-Turkey relations in general, were rather poor. So, this resolution cannot only be attributed to the efforts of the Armenian Diaspora, but also to the attempts of German politicians who wanted to "punish" or "blackmail" Turkey through complicating the accession of Turkey to the EU or ongoing negotiations over the visa-free travel. See also: Ahmet Alioglu-al-Burai, "Did Germany use the Armenian genocide vote to blackmail Turkey?", *Middle East Eye*, June 16, 2016, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/did-germany-use-armenian-genocide-vote-blackmail-turkey>, accessed June 7, 2023. Despite the fact that German-Turkish relations have deteriorated for multiple reasons since the resolution, an official German recognition of "the Armenian genocide" seems improbable in the near future due to internal concerns (i.e. the Turks of Germany) and external geopolitical considerations. See more: Lily Gardner Feldman, "President Biden's Recognition of the 1915 Armenian Genocide: Will the German Government Follow?", *American-German Institute*, May 12, 2021, <https://americangerman.institute/2021/05/president-bidens-recognition-of-the-1915-armenian-genocide/>, accessed June 8, 2023.

After the resolution, some expectations emerged among the Armenians in Germany. One of them is to incorporate the educational materials on “the Armenian genocide” in textbooks in Germany. The Armenians in Germany refers to the resolution whose one of its clauses is as follows⁶³:

“In order to deal with the history of ethnic conflicts in the 20th century, school, university, and political education in Germany need to re-analyze ‘the expulsion and extermination of Armenians’ by including the issue in curricula and teaching materials and by passing it on to future generations. The federal states play a particularly important role in this process.”

Although several federal states such as Brandenburg, Hamburg, Lower Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Baden-Württemberg, Hesse and Berlin have included “the Armenian genocide” in the curriculum, it is stated that some teachers face resistance from Turkish families.⁶⁴ This resistance from Turks is also a sign for future conflicts between two communities. Besides, the Armenians in Germany ask to erect memorials devoted to “the Armenian genocide victims”⁶⁵ and to organize protests against Turkey’s stance on issue. According to Armenians, these protests will aim at “raising awareness among the public in Germany” since “most people here do not know about Armenia, let alone about Genocide”.⁶⁶

The resolutions regarding the recognition of genocide have been passed by various parliaments around the world. However, it is quite remarkable that such a situation occurs in Germany, in which the number of Armenians is low compared to other European countries, the Diaspora is relatively newly organized, and the highest immigrant population consists of Turks. It can be said that the interests of the Armenian Diaspora in Germany and German politicians converged on an issue that was of interest to both parties. The political and legal actions of Armenians was also facilitated by the fact that the Turks of Germany are poorly organized. As mentioned above, since the

63 Nikoghosyan and Göğüş, “Is the Work Done? Views from Armenians in Germany on the Recognition of the Armenian Genocide”.

64 Nikoghosyan and Göğüş, “Is the Work Done? Views from Armenians in Germany on the Recognition of the Armenian Genocide”.

65 There has been some practice in Cologne, when a cross-stone (*khachkar*) monument dedicated to “the Armenian genocide victims” was erected in 2017. See also: “Armenian Genocide monument raises Turks’ anger in Cologne”, *Tert.am*, November 20, 2017, <https://www.tert.am/en/news/2017/11/20/armenian-genocide/2543696>, accessed June 7, 2023. Another monument was erected in Cologne on 15 April 2018, but due to the absence of an official installation permit, the monument was dismantled four days after its installation. See also: Siranush Ghazanchyan, “The Embassy on dismantling of Armenian Genocide Memorial in Cologne”, *Public Radio of Armenia*, May 7, 2022, <https://en.armradio.am/2022/05/07/the-embassy-on-dismantling-of-armenian-genocide-memorial-in-cologne/>, accessed June 7, 2023.

66 Nikoghosyan and Göğüş, “Is the Work Done? Views from Armenians in Germany on the Recognition of the Armenian Genocide”.

Armenian community has been integrated into Germany, not only in a social and cultural sense, but also in political, it can be asserted that the Armenians (unlike the Turks) have become a community that transformed themselves from “dispersed immigrants into a diaspora” in Germany.⁶⁷

Conclusion

Although the Events of 1915, and the fact that Germany was an ally of the Ottoman Empire at that time created a negative image of Germany in historical memory of the Armenians, it can be said that the main impetus for Armenians to migrate to Germany was economic. The fact that Armenians began to come to Germany intensively, not after 1915 or the First World War, but after the 1960s, and that the reasons for their migration were mainly based on economic factors, put Germany in a different context from other Armenian Diaspora countries. In Germany, where the economy is the most important pull factor for migration, the other factors that encouraged Armenian immigrants were the cultural and scientific advantages that Germany offers. In other words, the economic potential of Germany and the prosperity, social, and cultural opportunities, as opposed to the political and cultural restrictions of the USSR, were the main factors that “pulled” Armenians to that country.

The fact that the population of the Armenian Diaspora in Germany is few in number or less visible than the diaspora communities in countries such as France or the USA does not make the Armenians living here less important or ineffective. Although the Armenian community in Germany is few in number, they are in a very active position in the political and social sense. As a result of the integration of Armenians into German society, the Diaspora here strives to influence the policies of the German Government and defends the rights of Armenians, not only in social life, but also in the political arena. As a consequence of the social, economic, and political activities of the Diaspora, Armenians have been integrated into Germany and continue to improve their status. It can be asserted that the Armenian Diaspora in Germany managed to engage in the German society to which they came as immigrants, by preserving their ethnic, religious, and cultural traits. Especially the presence of the Turkish community in Germany since 1960 makes this country more important for Armenians. Because the Events of 1915, which Armenians consider as the most important factor for the existence and integrity of the Diaspora, and the recognition of the claimed genocide in Germany, where

⁶⁷ We have limited knowledge on how the political activities of the Armenians in Germany are being handled by the Turks in Germany. It is known, however, that the Turks living in Germany are not indifferent to the issue. In this respect, further research is needed to analyze the Turkish-Armenian confrontation in Germany. Regarding the issue, see also: Burak Gümüş, “Almanya Türkleri ve Ermeni Olayları”, *Tesam Akademi Dergisi*, 2/1 (2015): 157-194.

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millions of citizens of Turkish origin live, are both politically important and have a considerably symbolic meaning. In this context, the large Turkish population living in Germany, and the political visibility of the Armenian Diaspora face off both sides in various ways. In this respect, the Armenian Diaspora in Germany differs from the Armenians in other countries. For this reason, the Armenian community in Germany becomes significant for the Armenian Diaspora as a whole, and the Diaspora attaches particular importance to Germany and the German society regarding the Events of 1915, and the allegation of genocide, with the concern of the Turkish population living in Germany, and the probable activities undertaken by this community.

To conclude, the Armenians in Germany have similar characteristics with other diaspora communities in terms of both integrating into the receiving country, and being economically, socially, and emotionally attached to the homeland. Despite the relatively few numbers of the Armenians in Germany, they maintain the image of the Diaspora politically and socially, and the developing relations in every sense, denoting that the Diaspora continues to increase its effectiveness in Germany.

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