

FACTS AND COMMENTS

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Abstract: *This article summarize the developments occurred in Turkey-Armenia relations between March to July 2011. French Senate refusing a draft law penalizing those who didn't accept the Armenian Genocide allegations as well as some draft resolutions submitted to U.S. Congress and dealing with or mostly with Armenian matters are also addressed. Finally, commemorations of 24 of April in Armenia and Turkey are studied.*

Key Words: *Turkey, Armenia, France, U.S., Russia, Armenian genocide allegations, U.S. Draft resolutions, French draft law on panelizing those who not accept genocide allegations, 24th of April commemorations, A. Gül, R.T. Erdoğan, B. Arınç, A. Davutoğlu, S. Sarkisian, E. Nalbandian, H. Clinton, D. Medvedev*

I- TURKEY-ARMENIA RELATIONS

Within the period under examination (February-July 2011), no positive development has taken place within Turkey-Armenia relations and it has been seen that in response to the favorable approaches of Turkey, the Armenian side has constantly criticized and held it responsible for the protocols reaching a deadlock and last of all, President Sarkisian wanting Turkey to recognize the “genocide” has constituted a new obstacle for normalization efforts.

Turkey's conciliatory policy towards Armenia, with the exception of the Karabakh Conflict, has caused some speculations. A Turkish newspaper¹ had written that after the Jewish opening, an Armenian opening would also take place, that active participation in Armenian commemoration activities would

1 *Sabah*, 7 February 2011. “Yahudi Açılımdan Sonra Ermeni Açılımı” (An Armenian Opening Following a Jewish Opening)

be achieved on April 24, contacts with the Diaspora would be intensified, contacts would be made with the Armenian lobby in the US in particular, dialogue would develop, and receptions held by the Diaspora would be attended. The same newspaper has also indicated that a “political boycott” to countries recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations would be suspended.

This news had a repercussion within the Armenian and Diaspora press. Articles were written which indicated that there were doubts that the Turkish Government would lay wreaths at Armenian Genocide Memorials² and that this was an intentional leakage whose objective was to check the reaction of the Turkish society and to send a message to Armenia.³ Another newspaper suggested that “Armenia should immediately invite the Turkish President Gül, Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Davutoğlu to attend the April 24 genocide commemorations in Armenia.”⁴

Naturally, no Turkish authority attended the 24 April commemorative ceremonies. Also, the Diaspora did not invite any Turkish representative. Argentinean President Cristiana Fernandez and the Canadian Minister of Commerce visited Ankara, but these visits were normal since no “political boycott” was applied to countries recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations. On that subject we should note that Turkey maintains normal relations with 20 countries whose parliaments have recognized the genocide allegations and that among them it particularly has close relations with Germany, Italy and France in all fields.

1. Turkish Statements

During the period under examination, Turkish statesmen had made some comments concerning Turkey-Armenia relations.

In an interview given to Hacop Avedikian, the reporter of the Armenian AZG Newspaper,⁵ Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu provided important explanations regarding the two countries relations.

2 *The Armenian Weekly*, 8 February 2011. “Turkish Official Attend Genocide Commemoration?”

3 *Rodiolur*, 11 February 2011. “The Information of Sabah is an Intentional Leakage” and *The Armenian Weekly*, 4 March 2011. “The Second Move in the 2011 Genocide, Obfuscation Gambit”

4 *Noyan Tapan*, 3 March 2011. “The Second Move in the Genocide Obfuscation”

5 *News.az*, 31 March 2011. “We cannot Permit Ourselves to Lose Azerbaijan For Sake of Relations With Armenia”

Concerning Azerbaijan, he stated “We cannot afford to lose Azerbaijan for the sake of relations with Armenia. We asked the Armenian President and I have repeatedly offered my Armenian counterpart Nalbandian to return one or two regions of Nagorno-Karabakh, for example, Fizuli or Aghdam to Baku as a face saving gesture to Azerbaijan. In this case, Azerbaijan also would be ready to open its border, but Armenia refused”.

Davutoğlu also said that talks between Armenia and Turkey began in 2005, when Turkey put forth its policy of “zero problems with its neighbors”, The Turkish Foreign Minister continued that “Our discussions with the Armenian side pursued three goals: to open the border, establish diplomatic relations and establish direct and indirect relations between Turkey and Armenia. The third goal is establishing relations with the Armenians of Diaspora, which we consider our Diaspora, as they have emigrated from Turkey to America, France and elsewhere.”

According to Davutoğlu, for the Armenian side, the protocols process was about opening the border and establishing diplomatic relations, whereas for Turkey the process involved issues of “reconciling” historical issues. The two sides had discussed this matter and came to certain understanding before signing of the documents in October 2009.

Davutoğlu repeated these points in its general lines in an interview provided to CNN/Turkish Television,⁶ but also clarified some issues. He expressed that all the Armenians should not be regarded in the same category concerning their contact with the Armenian Diaspora, that they want to make relations with the “reasonable” Armenians within the Armenian Diaspora, and that it is difficult to make peace with those profiting from the status quo and the Turkey-Armenia relations being frozen.⁷ Davutoğlu who stated that “We must empathize with the Armenians in order to understand what they have experienced and what they feel, but they must also show respect to our memory”, indicated that a single-sided memory cannot exist and called on the Armenians to approach the issue in a “just” manner. Expressing that the issue has psychological, legal, political, historical, and

6 *Hye-Tert*, 3 April 2011. “Ermeni Diasporası ile Temasa Geçmek İstiyoruz”

7 In an interview given to *Hürriyet* newspaper, Richard Giragosian, an American Armenian examining relations between Turkey and the Diaspora and chairing a think-tank group, stated that in March 2010 a meeting was organized in New York to make contacts with representatives of the Diaspora, but the representatives of the Diaspora did not attend. (*Hürriyet*, 11 July 2011. “Türkiye Çağırıldı, Diaspora Gelmedi” (Turkey Invited, but Diaspora Didn’t Come)

international law dimensions, he has stated that what is important is to overcome the psychological barriers and that he reminded also that for nearly ten centuries there has been cooperation between the Turks and Armenians and relations have deteriorated in the last quarter century of this period.

Moreover, he indicated that while 1915 means relocation for the Armenians, it means the wars of Gallipoli and Sarıkamış (on Turkish eastern front) for the Turks and that traumas have been experienced in all fronts during the fall of the Empire and not only the Armenians, but all peoples of the Empire have suffered pains.

As the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Davutoğlu presented the report of the Committee of Ministers to the Parliamentary Assembly and then answered the questions. Zaruhi Postanjian, deputy of the extreme right wing Heritage Party of Armenia which always draws attention with its provocative conducts and questions, after saying that Turkey occupied Western Armenia (Eastern Anatolia) and Cyprus, that the Ottoman Empire committed the crime of genocide against the Armenians and that article 301 of the Penal Code is used to deny and distort the historical record, asked Davutoğlu “what are you doing to make Turkey come to grips with its past, the first step of which is to recognize the 1915 Armenian genocide and to lift article 315 of the Turkish Penal Code?”.

Davutoğlu indicated that this is an accusation rather than a question and that “it would be better to learn the norms of international law to understand the difference between the accusations and evidence”,⁸ he said that “I underlined that what we needed was a just memory. If everybody judges on his or her own memory, there will be no mutual respect and understanding. It is better for Turkish and Armenian people to come together and establish a historical commission to discuss this. We offered that in 2005, and from 2005 until now we have been expecting a positive reply to our call to research all the historical events together, or with third parties, based on the historical archives rather than one-sided memories. One day I am sure that a new generation from both nations - and we hope it will be our generation - will come together to share and discuss all the historical texts rather than accusing each other and using the matter for political objectives. This is our

8 *Armenianow*. 13 April 2011. “Armenian Lawmaker Poses Sharp Questions to Turkish Minister

call as Turkey: please come and accept our offer to establish a commission to study all the events.”⁹

Few days later in a long interview to the Arminfo News Agency,¹⁰ Foreign Minister Davutoğlu repeated his views mentioned above in detail. We are providing below some of the points which particularly drew attention.

Davutoğlu considered the normalization of relations with Armenia within a broader framework of peace and stability in the Caucasus and stated regarding this issue that “If properly harnessed, the countries in the region have a promising potential between them to create a better environment to stimulate regional partnership and to transform the southern Caucasus into an area of common welfare. This is what Turkey wants to instigate. Peace, security, stability and welfare are indivisible assets and he added that “I hope Armenia will also recognize this fully and become a partner not only for Turkey but for its other neighbors as well, rather than remaining as the missing link”. “There is a bigger and brighter picture in which Armenia can find a place for itself. The starting point for Armenia should be to demonstrate that it does seek constructive relations with all its neighbors”.

During this interview, by referring to the decision of the Armenian Constitutional Court which is not much mentioned in Turkey, but is a negative factor in the issue of the protocols, Davutoğlu has said that “Turkey has expressed its desire to take the Protocols forward despite the problematic content of the Armenian Constitutional Court’s decision and the consequent suspension of the ratification process in Armenia”. After stressing that there is now an opportunity to normalize relations Davutoğlu added that “Armenia can be more positive and conciliatory. To seize this historic opportunity, we need to show courage and statesmanship”.

In response to the question of “Armenia’s stance in the issue of possible continuation of the normalization process is unconditional ratification of the Protocols in the Turkish Parliament. Is it possible to continue the process or is it already dead?” the Foreign Minister has indicated that “I suspect that there are parties which take comfort in declaring or wishing the process dead. This is not the state of mind of real peacemakers. The process is not

9 *Asbarez*, 13 April 2011.

10 *Arminfo*, 19 April 2011. “ We Need To Continue The Promising Start With Armenia And We Want To Rebuild The Friendship Between Turks And Armenians”

dead for those who want to move forward; and Turkey wants to move forward. We hope that Armenia will resist drifting away from the ratification process as well as the original letter and spirit of the protocols.”

Moreover, in response to the question of “The Armenian President threatened to withdraw the signature from the Protocols. What will the feedback of Turkey be, if the threat is put in the effect?” he said “I do not wish to comment on negative hypothetical scenarios. At this stage we need to facilitate the process, not complicate it... We want to rebuild the friendship between Turks and Armenians. This requires farsighted statesmanship.”

In response to questions posed to him concerning Karabakh, the Foreign Minister has indicated that although at first glance it might seem as if Turkey-Armenia relations and the Karabakh conflict are independent of each other, there is an undeniable interaction between the two tracks and that we should ensure that these two tracks remain mutually reinforcing, a positive move in one track could facilitate progress in the other. Furthermore, responding to the question of “What stance will Turkey take in case of a military scenario”, he has said that “we should focus more on peaceful scenarios than military ones”.

Prime Minister Erdoğan also delivered a speech in the meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly and answered the questions. His words “we will not allow Armenia to usuro Azerbaijani people rights” especially drew attention. By expressing that first (positive) steps must be taken in the Karabakh issue and then the border will be opened, the Prime Minister requested the Minsk co-presidents to fulfill their tasks and that the process has become more difficult since this task has not been fulfilled. Furthermore, he indicated that the Armenian Government is in fear towards the Diaspora and the settlement of the issue will become easier if they could free themselves of this fear. By expressing that the doors (i.e. borders) will also open, he emphasized that Turkey does not possess any grudge or hatred towards Armenia.¹¹

The Prime Minister conveyed his determination on this issue in a statement provided at the end of April in Iğdır, (in eastern Turkey, few miles away from Armenia) in the following way: “It is not possible for our relations

11 *Cihan*, 14 April 2011. “Erdoğan: “Azerbaycan’ın Hakkını Yedirmeyiz”

with Armenia to improve without the Karabakh conflict being resolved. We have stood by Azerbaijan and Karabakh (its policy regarding Karabakh) ever since their state was founded, we will always continue to do so. No one should expect anything else from us concerning this issue. Karabakh is our problem.”¹² Then, in a statement delivered in Kars (in the same region), he said the following: “We have always been brothers with Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan. As for peace we have lent our hand to Armenia for reconciliation. And now it is that country’s turn to take action.”¹³

Vice Prime Minister Bülent Arınç has been very sensitive towards the Armenian genocide allegations ever since and has openly conveyed his reactions. In response to a question posed to him by an Armenian participant during a conference held by the German Marshall Fund of the US in April, he first expressed that they wish for the relations between Turkey and Armenia to normalize and then indicated that the government of that time (Ottoman Government) had applied forcible relocation in 1915 as a security measure as a result of Armenian rebellions and the security of the country being threatened. He furthermore stated that painful events could have been experienced during this relocation and that those dying and suffering have also been the Turks as much as the Armenians.

By emphasizing that forcible relocation and genocide are not the same, Arınç said that it is known how genocide is defined in the UN Convention and he fully rejected the allegations that genocide has been committed in Turkey against the Armenian race. Then, he has stated that “we have confronted all painful events and we find confrontation as a requirement of democracy. We were not able to find any “genocide” in our confrontation neither regarding the past, nor the present.”¹⁴

2. Armenian Statements

During the period under observation, Armenian President Serge Sarkisian made many statements concerning relations with Turkey. Among these, his

12 *Turkishny.com*, 1 May 2011. “ Erdoğan’dan Ermenistan’a Net Mesaj” ” (A Clear Message from Erdoğan to Armenia)

13 *Tert.am*, 21 May 2011. “ It’s Armenia’s Turn to Take Action- Erdoğan”

14 *Haber X*, 7 April 2011. “ Arınç: ‘Soykırım’ Diye Bir Şey Bulamadık” (Arınç: We Could Not Find Anything as ‘Genocide’)

interview given to *Moskovskie Novosti* and his speech delivered in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly are especially important. We will address these below.

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the disintegration of the Soviet Union President Sarkisian gave an interview to Russian *Moskovskie Novosti* on 16 May 2011¹⁵ proving explanations regarding many issues concerning Armenia and also concerning the Karabakh conflict. Moreover, he also addressed relations with Turkey.

Without openly saying it, Sarkisian complained about the Soviets not embracing Greater Armenia that the Treaty of Sèvres wanted to be established.

First, he expressed that during the period of the Soviet Union, “the national problem” was in existence but in Soviet foreign policy Armenia interests had not been always taken into consideration especially in USSR-Turkey relations. Here, what is meant by “national problem” is the dream of a Great Armenia. Without openly saying it, Sarkisian complained about the Soviets not embracing Greater Armenia that the Treaty of Sèvres wanted to be established. It is true that during

the period until the Second World War, the Soviets had opposed Sèvres which they regarded as an imperialist initiative. After the Second World War, by claiming Kars and Ardahan from Turkey and asking the control of the Turkish Straits, they have come very close to the mentality of the Sèvres and furthermore, by allowing for the construction of a large Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan, have caused the genocide allegations, which were formed by the Diaspora, to be embraced in Armenia.

In this interview, in response to the question of “is it possible to have economic growth without solving apparent geopolitical problems, without normalizing relations with Turkey?” after expressing that “we will not starve if relations with Turkey are not normalized”, the Armenian President said that “we do not consider the economic aspect of the issue to be the moving force behind the normalization of the relations with Turkey.” This way, he has tried to underestimate the economic benefits the normalization of relations will bring. Concerning the genocide allegations, he has said that

15 “Interview of President Serzh Sargsyan *Moskovskie Novosti* May, 16th 2011
<http://www.president.am/events/press/eng/?id=69>

“the fact of genocide is undeniable and we will make every effort so that Turkey ultimately recognizes the genocide. This is a struggle for justice, for security.” Answering the question of “is it possible that after the hundredth anniversary of the tragic events of 1915 they cease to play such an important role in the bilateral relations?” he expressed that “reconciliation will start when Turkey recognizes the Armenian Genocide. There can be no reconciliation without recognition. Some are trying to present efforts to normalize relations with Turkey as an attempt for reconciliation. True reconciliation will come only after repentance.”

One can see that the Armenian President differentiates between the normalization of relations with Turkey and reconciliation with Turkey. Normalization stands for the establishment of diplomatic relations and the opening of the Turkish border. In their mind reconciliation with Turkey means Turkey’s recognition of the “genocide” and repents. However, Armenia has other requests from Turkey also. At the forefront of these comes the returning of properties of the displaced persons and the payment of compensation to their inheritors. Despite not being expressed by officials of the Armenian Governments, it is known that extreme nationalist circles in Armenia and especially in the Diaspora, with the Dashnaks being at the forefront, have insistently claimed territory from Turkey to be annexed by Armenia.

In summary it appears that after the establishment of diplomatic relations and the opening of the borders, in order to reconcile with Turkey, Armenia will also claim from Turkey to recognize the genocide allegations, to repent, to return Armenian properties and moreover, to pay compensation and perhaps to give some territory to Armenia. This is an important shift in the Armenian stand. As to how realistic the Armenian President’s aspirations are needless they are not nor realistic at all but have enough potential to damage further the relations.

On 22 June 2011, President Sarkisian delivered a speech at the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. We are quoting same the President’s statements in this speech regarding relations with Turkey:

“Two years ago, we initiated a process of normalization between Armenia and Turkey, which would have allowed, through the establishment of diplomatic relations and opening of the border, to

gradually overcome the divide that had existed for almost a century... Unfortunately Armenia-Turkey normalization process ended up in a deadlock. The sole reason was that Turkey reverted to its practice of setting preconditions, and failing to honor its commitments, which rendered the ratification of the signed protocols impossible... I cannot predict when the window of opportunity will reopen. I regret to say so, but it is the reality... true to the 21st-century imperative of peaceful coexistence of nations and peoples, all on the backdrop of Turkey still not only failing to recognize, but also engaging in a policy of blunt denial of the Genocide of Armenians committed in the Ottoman Empire in 1915. Meanwhile, Armenians worldwide are expecting an adequate response. Our tireless efforts... will henceforth remain focused on the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide. However, we are determined not to leave this problem unsolved for generations to come. The normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey is important not only for Armenians and Turks, but also for the whole region, I believe even for the whole of Europe in terms of creating an atmosphere of peace, stability, and cooperation. The unlawful blockade of Armenia must come to an end.”¹⁶

Some of the Armenian President’s statements mentioned above require further explanation. By stating “to gradually overcome the divide that existed for almost a century”, he regards the implementation of the protocols not as the normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations, but as the beginning of the normalization process. More openly, this statement means that the problems will not end even after the protocols are implemented and that Armenia will have other claims from Turkey. As mentioned above, giving compensation to the inheritors of the relocated Armenians, returning of properties and the repairing of Armenian churches in Turkey could be considered among these claims.

As presumed, President Sarkisian asserts that the sole reason for the normalization process of Turkey-Armenia relations reaching a deadlock was that Turkey reverted to its practice of setting preconditions and failing to honor its commitments and by saying that he cannot predict when the

16 “President Serzh Sarkisian participated at the plenary meeting of the PACE” June 22nd, 2001
<http://www.president.am/events/news/eng/?pn=11&id=1662>

window of opportunity will reopen for the normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations, he implies that it is necessary to normalize relations soon. Moreover, by indicating that the 21st century imperative of peaceful coexistence of nations and peoples, he puts forth that Turkey still not only fails to recognize, but also engages in a policy of blunt denial of the genocide of Armenians and that meanwhile, Armenians worldwide are expecting an adequate response. We are unable to understand how there is a relationship between nations and peoples peacefully coexisting and the Armenian genocide allegations being recognized. Perhaps with this statement, he has wanted to say that “unless Turkey recognizes the Armenian genocide, it cannot live in peaceful coexistence with Armenia”. It is clear that these statements are very assertive and that rather than Turkey, it is necessary for Armenia to live in peace with Turkey. By also conveying that their tireless efforts will henceforth remain focused on the international recognition of the Armenian genocide and that they are determined not to leave this problem unsolved for generations to come, the Armenian President has pointed out that the genocide must be urgently recognized both internationally and by Turkey. However, when recalling that during the 45 years from 1965 when the first recognition (Uruguay) took place until now, only 20 countries’ parliaments recognized the Armenian genocide allegations and that they adopted resolutions which were not even binding for their own governments, it is clear that it has to be waited longer for these allegations to be “internationally” recognized. Regarding Turkey’s recognition, besides a small group of intellectuals, no one in Turkey not only refuses Armenian genocide allegations, but shows great reactions to it.

We are unable to understand how there is a relationship between nations and peoples peacefully coexisting and the Armenian genocide allegations being recognized.

We believe that the most significant aspect of President Sarkisian’s speech delivered at the Parliamentary Assembly is, just as he mentioned during his interview to Moskovskie Novosti, that for the first time an Armenian President has requested from Turkey, although through indirect statements, to recognize the genocide allegations. Armenia’s former presidents Ter Petrossian and Kocharian had carefully refrained from this with the idea that it would affect relations with Turkey negatively. Taking this into

consideration, it could be said that President Sarkisian has “crossed the Rubicon” on this issue.

President Sarkisian again “crossed the Rubicon” when at the end of July, while speaking to participants of the fifth All Armenian Olympiad of Armenian language and literature, answered to a student who asked him whether Western Armenia, with Mount Ararat, will ever be united with Armenia, by saying that “Everything depends on the young generation. Every generation has some goal to achieve. The current generation defended and liberated a part of Armenian land. If the future generation makes much effort then Armenia will be one of the best states in the world.”¹⁷

With this statement, President Sarkisian has indicated that the current generation of Armenia had liberated Karabakh, while the young generation must show efforts for Western Armenia (including Mount Ararat, Eastern Anatolia) to join with Armenia. Although this has been expressed implicitly, the President’s statements has put forth that Armenia has territorial claims on Turkey.

Reactions from Turkey have come quite fast. The Foreign Ministry has issued the following declaration on 26 July:

“We strongly condemn the reply given by President Sarkisian to a question from a student during the Armenian language and literature competition held in Armenia on 25 July 2011.

Preparing his society, in particular the youth, for a peaceful, serene and prosperous future should be the primary duty of statesmen. Giving advice to the youth and the next generations with a quite opposite approach and in a way that will provoke an ideology of hostility and hatred among societies is an extremely irresponsible behavior.

At a time when the quest of establishing peace has accelerated in the region, the statements Mr. Sarkisian has given without finding them harmful indicate that he does not intend to work for peace.

17 Asbarez, July 25, 2011. “Sarkisian Tackles Western Armenia Question”

We believe that everyone who has exerted effort to ensure peace and stability in the region will deduce the right conclusions from Mr. Sarkisian's unfortunate statements that we find regrettable.”¹⁸

Regarding this issue, during his official visit to Azerbaijan, Prime Minister Erdoğan has said that equipping the future generations with hostility and hatred does not suit statesmen, what Sarkisian has done is provocation, therefore the future of Armenian youth will be dark, and that they will always regard these events through dark lenses. Noting that what Sarkisian has meant to say to the youth is that “you have right now Karabakh, we will one day die. Now, it’s up to you to have Ararat”, and that with this he has implied “from now on, Armenia, could enter a war with Turkey in any way they want”, Erdoğan has also expressed that such a diplomacy cannot exist, that Sarkisian has made a serious mistake and must apologize for it.¹⁹

As can be seen, in his statements regarding Turkey, President Sarkisian has given rather harsh and uncompromising messages. What is the reason for acting this way? It is clear that harsh messages will not affect Turkey and cause it to change its stance. It is likely that he has acted in such a way due to his belief that normal relations with Turkey will not be able to be established in the near and even medium term. On the other hand, both presidential elections and parliamentary elections will be held in Armenia in the upcoming year. Accusing Turkey with a strong language and especially calling on it to recognize the genocide allegations should be, from the electoral point of view, beneficial.

Could Turkey-Armenia relations be improved after the elections take place in Armenia? According to Turkey’s current policy, this depends on significant developments taking place in relation to the settlement of the Karabakh conflict. However, even if this takes place, the protocols get implemented and the Turkish border is opened, considering the 100th anniversary of Armenian relocation, in addition to claims for compensation to be given to the inheritors of those being relocated, the returning of properties and the repairing of Armenian churches, Armenia could request

18 “Statement of the Spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Response to a Question” http://www.mfa.gov.tr/qa_-23_-26-july-2011_-statement-of-the-spokesman-of-the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-in-response-to-a-question.en.mfa

19 *Hürriyet*, 27 July 2011. “Başbakan’dan Sarkisyan’a Çok Ağır Sözler” (Very Harsh Statements from the Prime Minister to Sarkisian)

also for the genocide allegations to be recognized by Turkey. In this situation, the normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations would continue to be in a deadlock for longtime.

Based on a practice left over from the period of the Soviet Union, prime ministers in Armenia do not interfere much in foreign affairs and instead concern themselves more with economic issues. Therefore, Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisian talking about relations with Turkey is rare. However in an interview given to CNN, to the question “You have Turkey with a large economy of 80 million consumers. Did you feel that it is difficult for Armenia to negotiate this dispute with the Turkey’s role in the region, even as a G20 member?” Armenian Prime Minister answered “It is not just an issue for Armenia. Turkey’s political clout and weight will only grow if Turkey follows the international rules of the game. Its clout is undermined by the problems that Turkey is continuing to have with its neighbors. Turkey should continue to carry out democratic reforms on the path towards EU accession in which case we are easily able to build sustainable relations with our neighboring country”.²⁰

The point drawing attention in this response is Tigran Sarkisian expressing that Armenia is not alone against Turkey. Then, he has criticized Turkey for not following the international rules of the game and having problems with its neighbors and finally, has indicated that if Turkey carries out democratic reforms and joins the EU, then Armenia could build sustainable relations with it. The Prime Minister of a country criticized for not possessing sufficient democratic conditions requesting from Turkey to carry out democratic reforms is like black humor. On the other hand, if it is not a slip of the tongue, linking the establishment of relations with Turkey to EU accession shows that Armenia believes relations could not be established with Turkey in the short or medium term as Turkey EU accession is not for tomorrow.

Armenian Foreign Minister Nalbandian has also addressed relations with Turkey many times. His statements are similar to those of President Sarkisian. On the other hand, Nalbandian has repeated on every occasion that Turkey must ratify the protocols without preconditions.

²⁰ *Hetq*, 16 June 2011. “CNN Airt Interview With Armenia’s Prime Minister”

Meanwhile, his response to a journalist's question concerning the relationship between the Karabakh conflict and the protocols is quite interesting. The journalist question was "recently Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, stated that the normalization of the Armenian-Turkish relations is linked to the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and supposedly there was a an oral agreement between Turkey and Armenia on it, which was also approved by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs France, Switzerland, Russia and the U.S. Secretary of State. What can you say in that respect?" Nalbandian has given the following answer:

"It is of course a simplistic distortion. The process of normalization of the Armenian-Turkish relations started and was conducted by a mutual understanding and perception that this normalization should be without any preconditions and that is why there is no precondition in the signed Protocols. All the Ministers of Foreign Affairs present during the ceremony of signature of the Protocols, repeatedly urged to ratify and implement the agreements without preconditions. Let me also recall the statement of the Secretary of State Clinton that Armenia has passed its way and the ball is in the Turkish court, which should fulfill the undertaken commitments. So, I do not think that it is appropriate to make futile attempts to put the responsibility on the other side."

Nalbandian denies that the normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations has been linked to the settlement of the Karabakh conflict and that an oral agreement exists between Turkey and Armenia concerning this issue.

In short, Nalbandian denies that the normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations has been linked to the settlement of the Karabakh conflict and that an oral agreement exists between Turkey and Armenia concerning this issue. If it's true an illogical situation appears as if Turkey first signs the protocols and immediately after refuses the ratification by putting forward the Karabakh issue. When examining the period before the signing of the protocols, it could be seen that Prime Minister Erdoğan had said many times that Turkey will not take any initiative which is unfavorable to Azerbaijan and had repeated this statement also in the National Assembly of Azerbaijan on 13 May 2009, approximately five months before the signing of the protocols.²¹

21 *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 32, p.18

3. Armenia and the 90th Anniversary of the Moscow Treaty

Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to the Russian Federation in March coincided with the 90th anniversary of the Treaty of Friendship and Brotherhood signed between the USSR and the Ankara Government on 16 March 1921. For this occasion, Prime Minister Erdoğan had given as a gift a copy of the original text of the Treaty to President Medvedev, while President Medvedev gave him a photograph taken during the signing of the Treaty.²²

This event created many reactions within Armenian nationalist circles. The reason for this was that the Treaty of Moscow delimited the border between the Soviet Union and Turkey and this border confirmed that Eastern Anatolia, regarded as "Western Armenia" by Armenian nationalists, belonged to Turkey and therefore, crushed the hopes for a "Great Armenia".

By issuing a declaration on this issue,²³ the Dashnak Party had alleged that the Treaty of Moscow was invalid and linked this to the following points: This Treaty has been concluded without the participation and consent of the Armenia and that treaties can only pertain to the parties to the treaty and cannot create obligations or rights for a third party (like Armenia). On the date the Treaty of Moscow was signed, the USSR was not a recognized state and therefore not a subject of international law, naturally its government had no authority to enter into international treaties.

The point which the Dashnak Party has been mistaken on or has ignored is that the Republic of Armenia was abolished in 1920 and its territories were annexed to the USSR. Therefore, the Treaty of Moscow being concluded without the participation or consent of Armenia or objections that a treaty could not pertain to those not being a party to it is not valid since an Armenian state did not exist on that date. The idea that the USSR could not conclude an international treaty for not being recognized internationally is also incorrect. The Treaty of Moscow is bilateral and its provisions do not concern other countries. Moreover, the USSR and the Ankara Government signing this treaty have recognized each other.

22 *Armenia now*, 17 March 2011. "Salt in the Wound Erdoğan Thanks Russia for Historic Treaty Armenians Consider Illegal"

23 *Asbarez*, 15 March 2011. "ARF Calls Kars Treaty Invalid, Urges End To Protocols"

Based on the above-mentioned facts, the Dashnak Declaration has put forth that the Moscow Treaty is illegal and according to international law invalid. Moreover, it has expressed that Armenia should declare that it does not recognize the treaty signed in Moscow and the 13 October 1921 Treaty of Kars addressing the same issues. At the same time, the declaration requests that Armenia must immediately withdraw from the Armenian-Turkish Protocols.

In this framework, this declaration referring to Mustafa Kemal as “a criminal on the run, sentenced to death by the Turkish Military Court” also draws attention.

Moreover, the Dashnaks have also organized a protest in front of the Russian Federation Embassy in Yerevan.²⁴

With the concern that it could harm their relations with Russia, the Armenian Government has not reacted to the commemoration by Turkey and by Russia the Moscow’s Treaty signature. However, Edward Sharmazanov, Secretary of the Parliamentary Group of the Republican Party, being the great partner of Government coalition, talked within the same lines of the Dashnak declaration and stated that the Treaty has no legal force as it was signed without Armenian participation. However, by indicating that Armenia and Russia are in good terms, he has tried to differentiate between this event and present condition of Armenia-Russia relations.

4. Russia’s Stance

Just as all problems in the Caucasus, Russia’s stance towards Turkey-Armenia relations carries primary significance.

After gaining independence, Armenia started following an aggressive policy towards Azerbaijan on the Karabakh conflict and by taking advantage of Azerbaijan’s instability in that time, occupied Karabakh and the seven rayons encircling this region. However, it has failed in legalizing this occupation. Presently, there is no country which accepts that Karabakh belongs to Armenia or this region is an independent state as Armenia pretends. On the other hand, Turkey’s support for Azerbaijan without

24 *Yerkir.am*, 15 March 2011. “90 Years of Bigotry”

reservation and the probability of taking Azerbaijan's side during a time of war is regarded as a threat to Armenia's survival. In order to either maintain the status quo (the occupation of Karabakh and the seven rayons) or to defend their selves against Turkey, Armenia has become dependent on Russia and Russia has taken Armenia under their protection in exchange of a large military base in Gyumri and obtaining a position of primacy in Armenian economy. Russia, on the other hand, seek that their protection of Armenia does not create any problems with other countries in the region; in other words, that "gaining" Armenia will not cause it to "lose" the other countries. Since it has been able to establish rather good relations with Azerbaijan, Russia has achieved success in this direction to a certain extent.

In regards to Turkey, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey-Russia relations have rapidly improved on an economic basis and have not encountered serious problems within the area of international politics.

Turkey desires to improve its relations with Russia as much as possible. Within this framework, during Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to Russia in March, he has proposed for Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia to establish a "Caucasus Cooperation Council." Meanwhile, he has stated that the settlement of the Azerbaijan-Armenia problem will also play a role in the solution of issues between Turkey and Armenia.²⁵ On the other hand, as mentioned above, Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit has coincided with the 90th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Moscow which had determined the border between Turkey and Armenia as well. This rapprochement between Turkey and Russia has been regarded with concern in Armenia. Galust Sahakyan, the Parliamentary Group Leader of the Republicans, which is the greatest party of the Government coalition, has expressed that "the common approaches of Russia and Turkey are undesirable for Armenia, certainly Russia rapprochement with Turkey is hard for us. It does not meet our national interest as Russia is our strategic partner."²⁶ Concerning this issue, Foreign Minister Nalbandian has said that "Armenia-Russian relations are on such solid basis that a visit of a foreign country leader to Moscow cannot negatively impact on our relations."²⁷

25 *Anadolu Ajansı*, 16 March 2011. "Russia, Turkey Working Together to Solve Caucasus Issues, Turkish Premier"

26 *News.am*, March 17, 2011. "Russia-Turkey Rapprochement Hard for Armenia"

27 *Panorama*, 18 March 2011. E. Nalbandian: Improving Russian-Turkish Relations Cannot Impact on Armenian- Russian Relations"

Perhaps upon the request of Armenia, the Russian Foreign Ministry has felt obliged to make a declaration concerning relations with Turkey. Regarding this issue, Spokesman of the Foreign Ministry Alexander Lukashevich has expressed that “Russia is not going to interfere in the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement but would welcome normalization of relations between the two states, First and foremost the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement is a bilateral affair... and we wish this process to bring good results for the bilateral relations and cooperation and interaction mechanism in the Caucasus region.”²⁸

In conclusion, Russia, being pleased with the present situation in the Caucasus, has preferred to refrain from any action which would harm this situation. In this context, although Russia is not against the normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia, it does not want to interfere or to help in the process of the establishment of these relations.

5. US and Turkey-Armenia Relations

Opposite to Russia’s stance of not wanting to interfere in Turkey-Armenia relations, the US wants the disagreements between the two countries to be settled as soon as possible and strives in this direction. Concerning this issue, Assistant Secretary of State Philipp Gordon has said that “the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations will facilitate the strengthening of stability and security in the South Caucasus” and has pointed out that the US backed up this process from the very beginning that US Secretary of State personally exerted every effort in that direction.²⁹ At every given opportunity, Mrs. Clinton has indeed emphasized US readiness to support rapprochement between the two countries. However, regarding the normalization of relations it could be seen that the US supports Armenian views more. Concerning this issue, Philipp Gordon has expressed that Turkey insists that progress can be achieved only in the case of settlement of the Karabakh conflict, but that the US does not agree with this because both sides should ratify the protocols without connecting it to other problems.”³⁰

28 *Interfax*, 17 March 2011. “ Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement is bilateral Affair, Russian Foreign Minister”

29 *Medimax*, 4 March 2011. “USA Disagree With Ankara Over Armenian-Turkish Relations”

30 *Largir*, 3 March 2011. “ Gordon: The Problem Is Not in Minsk Group”

In short, the US favors the settlement of problems between Turkey and Armenia and opposite to Russia, desires to play a role in this settlement if possible. However, Armenia suspending the process of normalizing relations with Turkey and on the other hand, US Armenians supporting Armenia without any reservations limits the range of movement for the US.

II-FRANCE SENATE FIND THE ARMENIAN DRAFT LAW UNCONSTITUTIONAL

France and the Armenian genocide allegations have a long history. The influential Armenians in France, or at least a part of them, have tried since many years for France to recognize their genocide allegations and for those who “denies” the genocide to be penalized. Eventually, France has recognized the genocide allegations in 2001, but has refused to punish those who do not believe that an Armenian genocide took place. Below, we will summarize the main developments on that subject during the last ten years.

1. French Law of 2001 Recognizing the Armenian Genocide Allegations

On 18 January 2001, the French National Assembly adopted the following law comprised of a very short sentence: “France publicly recognizes the Armenian genocide of 1915.”

As mentioned above, the Armenians of France tried very hard for such a law to be adopted, but it is the intervention of the Armenian Government that played the major role on that subject. Recognition of the Armenian genocide is, according to the Armenian Declaration of Independence of 23 August 1990, a task that the Republic of Armenia should support. However, during the President Ter Petrossian Government, this task was not very much enforced due, most probably, to ensure good relations with Turkey when the Karabakh conflict was soaring. Even after the 1994 ceasefire, the Ter Petrossian Government has continued this policy. After Robert Kocharian being elected as President for Armenia in April 1998 with the support of ultra-nationalist Dashnaks, the international recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations has been included among the priorities of the Armenian foreign policy and initiatives have been taken in numerous countries in order to achieve this recognition. These initiatives have also

taken place in France where the French Armenians were very active on this subject. Turkey has opposed these and has been successful for approximately three and a half years in preventing the adoption of a draft law concerning this issue. However, with the elections of 2001 drawing near, the French National Assembly has adopted the above-mentioned law.

Many reactions have taken place in Turkey towards this law.³¹ About ten days before its adoption, the Turkish Grand National Assembly had issued a declaration, stating that the draft was based on distorting history and on prejudices and that freedom of thought and expression, along with the freedom of scholarly research in France, will be damaged if the law is adopted. Moreover, it has stated that since its adoption will mean that France has not complied with the principle of to stay neutral, its initiatives in the Caucasus and other regions will be regarded with suspicion. On the other hand national parliaments should not take part in historical research and should not incite hatred and racism. The declaration underlined also that eventually, the French Parliament has not accepted to asses the Algerian events.

Following the adoption of the law, the Turkish Government has declared that the law is “a tragic mistake in the face of history and humanity” and has rejected the law with all its consequences by condemning it. Moreover, it has stated that this law will cause serious and lasting harm on Turkey-France relations, would create serious crises, and would bring negative consequences for peace and stability in the region. Prime Minister Ecevit has said that this event could harm Turkey-France relations. On the other hand, it has also been declared that they have started working towards identifying what kinds of sanctions could be imposed on France. Many non-governmental institutions have also made condemning statements and have called for measures to be taken against France. Among these, there are very extreme ones like boycotting of French goods, closing down of all facilities of France in Turkey, including its Embassy, cutting down all cultural and scientific relations with this country, and abolishing French language classes.

Despite these harsh reactions, no “official” measures have been taken against France. However, several press news have come across from time to

31 On the 2001 law and the reactions in Turkey see “Facts and Comments”, *Ermeni Araştırmaları* No. 1, pp 10-22

time related to the suspension or cutting down of buying of arms and military equipment from France.

The French law has triggered some EU countries to adopt similar resolutions. It has been put forth that the resolutions of the parliaments of Slovakia and the Netherlands in 2004 and Poland, Germany and Lithuania in 2005 have been inspired by France and the resolution of 2003 of the Swiss Parliament has been adopted by taking France as a precedent. As no action has been taken against France despite Turkey's harsh criticism, the

Without any doubt, the 2001 law has pleased very much the Armenian community in France.

Armenians were induced in using this to prove that one should not have to be concerned with Turkey's reactions for the adoption of parliament resolutions mentioned above and also for similar draft resolutions being submitted to the US House of Representatives once every two years.

Without any doubt, the 2001 law has pleased very much the Armenian community in France. However, within a short time, the law has been found to be insufficient and requests for the adoption of a new law which foresees the punishment of individuals denying the Armenian genocide allegations has been brought forward. French Armenians have expressed that a law exists which punishes those denying the Jewish Holocaust and the same provisions should be applicable to the Armenian "genocide".

The French Governments has not favored the adoption of such a law considering their relations with Turkey, which have been harmed also because France no longer supported Turkey's full membership into the European Union, but proposed instead a privileged partnership. But the French National Assembly's stance on this draft was different. A significant group within the UMP, the ruling party, has supported the draft. Meanwhile, it is noteworthy to indicate that the Socialists, which is the key opposition party and which has assured the adoption of the law in 2001, is the main advocate of this new draft law aiming to "punish denial." In conclusion, despite the government's opposition, there has been a majority within the French National Assembly ensuring the adoption of this law.

2. National Assembly Adopts a Draft Law Penalizing Those Denying Armenian Genocide Allegations

On 27 April 2006, approximately five years after the adoption of the law in 2001, the Socialist Party has submitted a motion to the National Assembly which foresees imprisonment up to five years and 45,000 Euros fine for those denying the Armenian genocide allegations. The draft law has been discussed for the first time on May 18 and Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy, speaking on behalf of the Government, was against the draft, stating that if it is adopted, it would be seen as an unfriendly gesture by the great majority of the Turkish people and France's position will not only weaken in Turkey, but across the entire region. Moreover, he has requested for the rejection of the draft by expressing that Turkey is a leading country for France, that many French companies do business in Turkey, and that there exists cultural, scientific and artistic relations between the two countries. Some deputies have spoken in favor of the draft, but the time allocated for its discussion has run out before a voting could take place.³²

Around six months later on 12 October 2006, the draft law has started being discussed again and this time, Minister for European Affairs Cathérine Colonna has spoken against it by expressing that since the law of 2001 already exists, there is no need for a new one. Moreover, she has stated that a short while ago, some intellectuals in Turkey have carried out a "memory exercise" concerning their past and that the adoption of the draft could harm these exercises, and that last of all, it is first and foremost for historians and not legislators to judge history.

The speech of the Minister of European Affairs has failed in creating effects, just as the Foreign Minister's speech has. 18 of the 21 speaking deputies have talked in favor of the draft and it has been adopted with 106 votes in favor and 19 votes against.

Meanwhile, we should note that in Turkey, beginning with the government and including many non-governmental organizations, a kind of mobilization has been declared for the prevention of the draft and great efforts has been deployed for this purpose. Moreover, the Turkish Ambassador to Paris has been recalled to Ankara and there have been some

32 On 2006 Law deliberation and its voting in French National Assembly see "Facts and Comments" *Review of Armenian Studies*, Number 10, pp. 24-29 and Number 11, pp 29-44

demonstrations in Turkey and France. It is interesting that a group calling themselves “liberal intellectuals” and supporting always Armenians’ allegations without any reservations has also opposed the draft. The reason for this could be that once the draft becomes a law in France; in other words, when the freedom of expression in that country regarding the Armenian genocide allegations is restricted, there could be a possibility that a restriction could be applied to the same matter in Turkey.

3. Deliberation in the French Senate and the Refusal of the Draft Law

For the Draft Bill to become a law it must be ratified by the Senate. Although four and a half years since the voting of the Draft by the National assembly has passed, the Senate has not put it on its agenda while the French Government has not asked for it either. There are mainly three reasons for this.

The first is that France’s relations with Turkey had become complicated after France had opposed Turkey’s membership into the European Union. Many senators did not like aggravating an already tense situation between the two countries, because of the genocide allegations which concern an event that happened almost a century ago, therefore having little impact for today.

The second reason is that France, being a country where freedom of expression is mostly observed, although the French public opinion believes that due to the incessant Armenian propaganda, an Armenian “genocide” took place and many would have difficulty to accept that people be imprisoned solely by saying that “I don’t believe in an Armenian genocide.”

The third and perhaps the most important reason is that in recent years, laws concerning historical events like colonialism and slave trade have been adopted in France. Apart from the “declarative” nature of these laws, some well-known French historians have opposed them on the grounds that they prevented scholarly freedoms. These historians have been supported by the majority of the public opinion.

33 *Armenews*, 9 February 2011. “Le PS Repousse l’Utilisation de sa Niche Parlementaire”

Under these circumstances, the French Senate was not in favor of the draft law. Even the socialists, who are the main supporters of the Armenians and their genocide allegations, had begun to have some doubts. As a matter of fact, the Socialists group in the Senate was not able to take a common decision for including this item in the agenda of the Senate.³³

However, the Armenians insisted and tried very hard to secure that the Senate adopts the draft law. The main reason for this insistence is rather “sentimental”, as a statement of the General Council of the Armenian organization in France indicated that since 2011 is the year of the 20th anniversary of Armenia’s independence and the 10th anniversary of the 2001’s law, it would be appropriate that the draft law penalizing the denials of the Armenian “genocide” be adopted during that year.³⁴

Despite an unfavorable conjuncture Armenian started a campaign aiming the voting of the draft law by the Senate.

One of the most important factors of this campaign has been to remind President Nicolas Sarkozy of his promise made to the Armenians before being elected as president. According to this, with a letter sent to Armenian organizations during his presidential candidacy period on April 24 (2007), which is a significant date for the Armenians, Sarkozy had expressed that he would support the adoption of the draft law.³⁵ However, after becoming president, Sarkozy has not supported this draft. According to a WikiLeaks file, right after being elected, by sending his diplomatic advisor Jean-David Levitte to Ankara on 29 May 2007, he had declared that he would make sure the draft law would “die” in the Senate.³⁶ Following this, the Armenians have increased their criticisms towards the President.

In the meanwhile, well-known singer Charles Aznavour has come to the forefront. On 23 January 2011, *Le Dauphiné Libre* newspaper had written that Aznavour had said that if President Sarkozy does not change his mind, he will be concerned with the votes he receives when the time comes, that

34 *Armenews*, 5 January, 2011 “Communiqué”. Voeux de CCAF pour 2011. Paix, justice, modernité, Sécurité

35 *Armenews*, 30 December 2010. “Sarkozy: Offense aux Électeurs d’Origine Arménienne”

36 *Collectif VAN*, 11 March 2011. “France: Faire Obstacle Au Négationnisme de l’Etat Turc”

the Armenians in France are numbered 400-500 thousand and those of Armenian origin will watch him, although he does not make politics, he holds a very important political power.³⁷ Then, also by taking the floor during the demonstration held in front of the Senate on 12 March 2011, Aznavour had expressed that the Armenians was on France's side during the First and Second World Wars and furthermore, had participated in the French Resistance during the Second World War and that in the meantime, no Turk had worn the French uniform and always chose Germany over France.³⁸ On this point, it is noteworthy to recall that despite it being correct that the Armenians were on the side of the Allies during the First World War, during the Second World War, the Armenians of Dashnak tendency had entered into war together with Nazi Germany, by forming a military unit under the command of Drastamat Kanayan and named Armenische Legion. On the other hand, it is clear that there was no reason for the Turks, who had their own states and armies, to join the French army.

Aznavour's statements regarding the events of the French of Armenian origin have caused some views to be conveyed in the press concerning the political power of the Armenian community in this country.³⁹

According to a weekly newspaper, if 70% of the Armenian community follows Aznavour and only half of them votes no more for the Right, this will mean a loss of 175.000 votes for Sarkozy. This number could seem small for France where 40 million individuals have the right to vote. However, in 2002, the presidential candidate of the Socialists, Lionel Jospin, has lost with a difference of 200.000 votes.⁴⁰ In another article concerning the same issue, a similar calculation has been made and has put forth that if there are 400.000 Armenians in France and half of them do not vote for the Right and even only if half this number votes in the same way, 100.000 votes could effect the Presidential election.

Actually, it is not clear to what degree the French Armenians have voted for the "Armenian Case" or in other words, for the genocide allegations and claims for compensation and territory. A large majority of the French

37 *Armenews*, 3 February 2011. "Charge Contre Charles Aznavour"

38 *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie Magazine*, No.173, April 2011, p. 20

39 *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie Magazine*, No. 172, March 2011, p.94

40 *Armenews*, 3 February 2011. The article published in the article entitled "Charge Contre Charles Aznavour" in the "Les 4 Vérités" *Weekly Journal*, by Baudouin Pierre.

Armenians has lived in France since four or five generations and some of them have become entirely French by losing their Armenian identity and have lost their interest in Armenian claims to a great extent. A larger part of them has become entirely French, but continues to give importance to the Armenian causes. A third group, which could be described as “militant”, is formed by those which only focuses on the Armenian claims and base their political choices on them, but their numbers is quite low. Consequently a party or a politician not supporting the Armenian claims will not necessarily lose all the Armenian votes. This situation has caused the Vice-chair of the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations in France, the editor of the monthly *Les Nouvelles d’Arménie* journal and the former spokesman of ASALA Ara Toranian, to indicate that he suspects there is an “Armenian Game” in France. According to him, although the Senate not adopting the draft could cause displeasure among the Armenian community, the government will be able to efface this over time through some good discourses and some subventions.⁴¹

The Armenians considered the Mayor of Marseille, the Vice-President of the Senate and the ruling UMP Senate Group President Jean-Claude Gaudin as the second person responsible for the draft law in the Senate failing to be taken to the agenda and have criticized him for not taking any action.⁴² Gaudin asserts that he has been the architect of the law being adopted in the French Assembly in 2001 which recognizes the Armenian genocide allegations. There is a significant number of Armenians in Marseille and Gaudin attempts to maintain friendly relations with this group. Within this framework, he has given the position of Deputy Mayor to an Armenian.⁴³ Gaudin is known for being close to President Sarkozy and holds a significant position within the ruling party. In accordance with the President’s policy, it could be seen that despite being close to the Armenians, he has not shown efforts for the draft law to be adopted in the Senate. Gaudin, having to respond to the criticisms directed towards him, has thrown the blame on the Socialists submitting the draft to the Senate and has stated that the draft has not received the full support of the Socialist Group and therefore, that 21 socialists have voted against the draft (while 49 Socialist senators have not attended the voting) and that opposite to the

41 *Armenews*, 9 May 2011. “ 4 Mai: De la Colère à la Détermination”

42 *Armenews*, 20 April 2011. “ Après le ‘Niet’ de la Commissipn des lois, le négationisme pavoisse”

43 Didier Parakian

President and the majority of the UMP Group in the Senate, he has voted in favor of the draft, so the criticisms targeting him are groundless.⁴⁴

On the other hand for the draft to be adopted in the Senate which it is pending in, the Armenians have attempted to organize demonstrations big enough as possible. For this purpose, demonstrations have been held on 12 March 2011 in Marseille and Paris.

According to Armenian sources, 500 individuals, among whom 5 of them were deputies, have participated in the demonstration in Marseille and speeches have been delivered for the draft law to be adopted. Meanwhile, a petition carrying 25.000 signatures for the draft law has been mentioned.⁴⁵

The demonstration held in Paris on the same day has been greater, but Armenian sources have provided different numbers for those participating in it. While a source has talked about 1.500 individuals,⁴⁶ another has put forth that 3.000 individuals were present.⁴⁷ On the other hand, Agence France-Presse has mentioned 2.000 individuals.⁴⁸ On the other hand it seems that a lower number of political figures have attended the demonstration. The most interesting incident of the gathering has been Charles Aznavour's statement mentioned above which emphasized that the Armenians entered the First and Second World Wars on the side of France. The most important incident has been the letter of Martine Aubry, the First Secretary of the Socialist Party, being read which expressed that he would use his "niche parlementaire"⁴⁹ right for the draft law to be taken to agenda during one of the following meetings in the Senate. Therefore, the draft law, which was not put on the agenda through normal means, was finally put into discussion in the Senate due to the Socialists. But the Socialist Party has refrained from given a compulsory instruction to the Socialist senators to vote in favor of the draft.

44 *Nouvelle d'Arménie Magazine*, No. 175, May 2011, p. 32

45 *Armenews*, 13 March 2011. "Meeting de Marseille"

46 *Armenews*, 14 March 2011. "Aznavour: "Sarkozy Doit Honorer sa Promesse"

47 *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie Magazine*, No.173, April 2011, p. 20

48 *Armenews*, 13 March 2011. "Rassemblement au Sénat Pour Interdire la Négation du Génocide Arménienne"

49 The "Niche Parlementaire" (Parliamentary nest) means that in the French National Assembly or The Senate, each party could bring any subject which it finds appropriate to the agenda without any voting. However, each party could appeal to this method only few 1 times in a year.

Another initiative regarding the draft law has been a question posed to the Government relating to why the draft has not been put on the Senate's agenda. Foreign Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie has repeated the already known stance of the Government and moreover, she has said that French laws have essentially prohibit discrimination, racial violence and provocation, that the French Parliament had embraced in 2005 the idea that no laws would be adopted regarding historical events, because these kinds of laws could hinder the works of historians and that determining past events conformity to reality and revealing a common memory only belongs to historians. On the other hand, she has expressed that discussions on the recent past have started in Turkey, that the French Government supports initiatives for dialogue between the Turkish and Armenian communities, and that only dialogue could allow for the events to be understood together and for the problems inherited from the past to be overcome.⁵⁰

The main points of this decision are that the draft is contradictory to some constitutional principles, does not possess the legal foundations of the Holocaust, and the Armenians have not been subjected to some acts similar to anti-Semitism.

This response of the government, having a majority in the Senate, clearly put forth that there was no possibility for the draft law to be adopted. Three days later, the Senate's Laws Committee had ruled unanimously on the inadmissibility of the draft.⁵¹ In summary, it was expressed in the relevant decision⁵² that the reality of the Armenian genocide cannot be denied, but penalizing those questioning the existence of such genocide will create serious legal difficulties and will be contradictory to constitutional principles on the legality of crime and punishments and freedoms of idea and expression. Moreover, opposite to the Holocaust, it has been indicated in the decision that there is no concrete definition of the Armenian genocide which has been determined by a competent court or an international agreement. On the other hand, it has been emphasized that French citizens of Armenian origin have not been the target of statements similar to anti-Semitism. As can be seen, the main points of this decision are that the draft is contradictory to

50 *Armenews*, 14 April 2011. "Patrick Labaune: Pourquoi y a-t-il eu Blocage au Sénat"

51 *Turkish Daily News*, 19 April 2011, "French Ties Stand to Gain from Bill"

52 The full text of the decision in French could be found in the French Senate's document dated 15 April 2011 and numbered 607 82009-2010.

some constitutional principles, does not possess the legal foundations of the Holocaust, and the Armenians have not been subjected to some acts similar to anti-Semitism.

Upon their requests, President Sarkozy had received the members of the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations in France on 30 April 2011. He stated that the French Government would not oppose a vote in the Senate. In other words the senators of the ruling party would vote according to their conscience⁵³ he also said that to struggle against genocide denial he will sent some instructions to the prosecutors.⁵⁴

Turkey has also made some initiatives to prevent the adoption of this draft. According to press reports,⁵⁵ The President of the Turkish Grand National Assembly Mehmet Ali Şahin, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Chairman of the Turkish-French Parliamentary Friendship Group Yaşar Yakış, and the President of the main opposition party CHP, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu have sent a letter to the French officials, expressing that the adoption of the draft law will permanently damage Turkish-French relations. Moreover, a group headed by the Chairman of the Turkish Grand National Assembly EU Harmonization Committee Yaşar Yakış and including Gülsün Bilgehan from the CHP, Tuğrul Türkeş from the MHP and Nur Suna Memecan from the AKP, along with the former Ambassador of Turkey to Paris Osman Korutürk, has gone to Paris to hold talks on the draft.⁵⁶ Based on news following the rejection of the draft, the Turkish leaders and the French President have made a deal to underline common interests rather than disagreements in bilateral relations and accordingly, the French President has given instructions to his party members to restrain bills such as the recent French initiative.⁵⁷

53 *Asbarez*, 4 May 2011. "France Senate Rejects Bill Criminalizing Genocide Denial"

54 *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, No.175, June 2011, p. 22

55 A.A. 15 April 2011. "Türkiye'den Fransa'ya 'Soykırım' mektubu" (A 'Genocide' Letter from Turkey to France)

56 *Hürriyet Daily News*, 26 April 2011. "Turkish Committee arrives in France to lobby against Armenian bill"

57 *Hürriyet Daily News*, 5 May 2011. "Sarkozy Instructed his Party to Hamper Armenian Bill, Turkish Official says"

As mentioned above, despite the adoption of the draft by the Senate seeming impossible, the Socialists have benefitted from the “niche parlementaire” rule on 4 May 2011 upon the request of the Armenians and the same text of the 2006 draft has been submitted to the Senate as a suggestion of around 30 Socialist senators. This text envisioned those denying the Armenian “genocide” to be imprisoned for a year and to pay a fine of 45.000 Euros. The negotiations have continued for approximately 3 hours.

After the Minister of Justice Michel Mercier, speaking on behalf of the Government, has said that the Armenian nation has suffered a tragic period which resulted with the death of 2/3's of the population and which only left 800.000 individuals alive⁵⁸ and that the Armenians and their children taking shelter in France in that period were distinguished within economic, social and cultural areas, as an example he has mentioned the names of Charles Aznavour, being present among the audience, and Manukyan who was executed by the Germans for participating in the French Resistance during the Second World War. Then, the Minister who has indicated, within the framework of the above-mentioned ruling of the Senate's Law Committee, why the draft law is not appropriate, has also stated that they will not remain indifferent to the attempts to deny the Armenian “genocide” and the provisions of the existing laws related to discrimination and racial hatred could be applied. Moreover, two measures are foreseen for this issue; the first is sending a directive to the prosecutors, while the second is cooperating with the jurists of the Armenian community.

The senators taking the floor have explained the views of their parties or sometimes their own views. At the end of negotiations, the report of the Laws Committee indicating that the draft law could not be adopted has been put to vote and has been accepted with 196 votes against 74. This way, since the draft law has become unacceptable, there has no longer been a necessity to discuss it separately.

During negotiations, approximately 1.200 Armenians have demonstrated outside the Senate.⁵⁹ The negotiations have been followed by a great

58 According to this calculation, 2.400.000 Armenians must exist in the Ottoman Empire and this number is greater than the one put forth by the Armenian Patriarchate in 1914 that 2.100.000 Armenians existed in the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman statistics in that period conveyed that Armenian population as 1.295.000.

59 *Armenews*, 5 May 2011. “Loi Anti-négationiste. Carton Rouge Aux sénateurs”

number of Armenians and proponents, including Charles Aznavour as mentioned above and Armenia’s Ambassador to Paris Viguen Tchitetchian, along with the famous society philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy and some other persons.

The votes of the parties in the Senate have been displayed in the table below.

Party’s Name	Number of Senators	Yes Votes	No Votes	Abstaining	Nonvoters	TOTAL
UMP ⁶⁰	148	137	9	1	1	148
Socialists	115	21	39	6	49	115
Centrist Union	29	25	3	-	1	29
Communist and Other ⁶¹	24	1	23	-	-	24
Europeans	18	6	-	12	-	18
Others	7	6	-	-	-	7
TOTAL	341	196	74	20	51	341

The noteworthy point in this table is that the “yes votes” represents those voting in favor of the report by the Senate’s Laws Committee, in other words these votes are against the Armenians. The “no votes” means the rejection of the report and are therefore in favor of the Armenians.

Upon studying the table, it could be seen that almost the whole of the Senators of the ruling party UMP have voted in favor of the draft law not being adopted; the Centrists Union have voted in the same way. The votes of the Socialists, who have always supported the Armenian genocide allegations and have even stated that Turkey cannot become a member of the European Union unless it recognizes these allegations, have been highly split. The Socialist votes against the Laws Committee’s report are only 39. On the contrary, 21 senators have voted oppositely, thus against the Armenians. On the other hand, nearly half of the Socialist senators (6 abstaining and 49 nonvoters) have refrained from being a part of this issue. While Communist and other leftist senators have voted in favor of

60 *Union Pour un Mouvement Populaire*

61 *Groupe Communiste, Républicain et les Sénateurs du Parti du Gauche*

the Armenians, the votes of those senators described as “European” have split.

Another point which should be addressed is the high number of those voting. Approximately 85% of the senators have voted and 57% have rejected the draft. The law of 2001 was adopted with only 52 votes in the National Assembly comprised of 577 members, while the 2006 draft law was adopted with 106 votes and a great majority of the deputies had not attended the debates and voting.

The result has been a fiasco for the Armenians. In fact, the yes votes coming from the rightist and centrist parties and the no votes coming from the leftist parties has added a right-left rivalry to the Armenian question and this might not bring good results for the Armenians’ initiatives in the future.

There is no need to say that the voting has been met very negatively among the French Armenian circles. By issuing a declaration, the Coordination Council of France’s Armenian Organizations, which represents the Armenian organizations in France, has argued that the voting in the Senate has deprived the Armenian community in France of legal defense instruments against the Turkish state’s denial. It has also expressed that the French Government was not able to resist the Turkish pressure, that the government and the President have taken on a great responsibility of trying to preserve their interests in Ankara in opposition to the rights of the French of Armenian origin, and has wanted the French Armenians, whom most are descendants of the Armenian genocide victims, to deduce the necessary political results from this situation.⁶² In other words, it has been implied that no votes should be given to President Sarkozy in the next year’s elections and to the UMP during the parliamentary elections.

Considering the reactions in Armenia regarding the non-adoption of the draft law, Secretary Eduard Sharmazanov of the Republican Party, which is a great partner of the Government Coalition, has indicated that he regrets that the French Senate rejected the bill. However, the day will come when all countries, not only the EU, but the former Community of Independent States will adopt similar bills. It could be understood that he has forgotten

62 *Armenews*, 5 May 2011. “Communiqué de CCAF, Les Français d’Origine Arménienne en Colère”

63 *News.am*, 5 May 2011. “Armenian Ruling MP Expresses Regret Over French Senate Decision”

that the Turkish Republics in Middle Asia also exists among the Community of Independent States.⁶³ On the other hand, Giro Manoyan from the Dashnak Party has made a more realistic statement by expressing that France, being against Turkish membership to the EU, did not want to upset Turks in other issues.⁶⁴

III- DRAFT RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TO THE US CONGRESS

The essential duty of the Parliaments is to prepare laws concerning their countries. However it is seen that in some countries and particularly in the US, the Congress adopts resolutions regarding some issues, which are not necessarily laws or compulsory. Therefore, it would be correct to consider these texts as recommendations. Despite not being compulsory and not creating any legal results, there is no doubt that these resolutions have a “moral” effect. On the other hand, ethnic minorities in the US do their utmost for these kinds of resolutions to be adopted, which are in favor of the countries or communities they come from and against those countries which have disagreements with.

A short while after the starting of the 112th US Congress encompassing years 2011-2012, some draft resolutions started being submitted against Turkey. In chronological order, these are the following:

- H.Res.180, Urging Turkey to respect the rights and religious freedoms of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, dated 3 March 2011.
- S.Res.196, a resolution calling upon the Government of Turkey to Facilitate the Reopening of the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s Theological School of Halki Without Condition or Further Delay, dated 24 May 24 2011.
- H.Res.304, Affirmation of the United States Record on the Armenian Genocide Resolution, dated 14 June 2011.
- H.Res.306, Urging the Republic of Turkey to safeguard its Christian Heritage and to Return Confiscated Church Properties, dated 15 June 2011.

64 *Panorama*, 5 May 2011. “G. Manoyan: French Authorities Didn’t Want to Upset Turkey”

First we should address the terminology used in these draft resolutions. “Ecumenical Patriarchate” means the Istanbul Greek Patriarchate; it is “ecumenical” because this patriarchate is supposed to have a “primacy” among other Orthodox patriarchates. This “inter-Orthodox” title is not interesting Turkey, having a laic constitutional system. Therefore, officially this Patriarchate is recognized in Turkey as “Istanbul Greek Patriarchate, having religious authority, for those who accept it, on Turkey Orthodox citizens. As to the “Halki” this is the name given by Greeks to an island near Istanbul of the Marmara Sea. The official and commonly used name of this island is Heybeliada.

As can be seen, all these draft resolutions concern the Greek and Armenian ethnic minorities of the Ottoman Empire. The first two is related to the Istanbul Greek Patriarchate and its theological school. The third is a repetition of a resolution regarding the Armenian genocide allegations which was submitted to the Congress numerous times during the last ten years. The fourth is related to a rather new subject, which concerns the safeguarding of the Christian heritage and their returning to its owners. We are providing brief information regarding these draft resolutions below.

1. H.RES.180 Regarding the Greek Patriarchate

In the justification of this draft, there are many points whose authenticity and meaning could be discussed. Since the main subject of our Journal does not concern the Greek minorities in Turkey, we will not focus on these. Briefly, in the draft resolution, the following points are requested from Turkey. For Turkey to eliminate all forms of discrimination, particularly those based on race or religion, for the Patriarchate to be granted appropriate international recognition and ecclesiastic succession, for this Patriarchate to be granted the right to train clergy of all nationalities and not just Turkish nationals, and for Turkey to respect human rights and property rights of the Patriarchate. Furthermore, including the modernization and democratization of its own society, the draft resolution makes some more requests and recommendations upon Turkey.

The draft resolution has been submitted by New York member of the House of Representatives Carolyn B. Maloney and 18 members of Parliament have become cosponsors. From their names, it could be understood that three of the members are of Greek origin. Moreover, five of them are Jewish.

2. S.RES.196 Greek Patriarchate Theological School

This draft resolution submitted to the Senate has been written in a more different style than the previous one. After welcoming the “historic meeting” between Prime Minister Erdoğan and the Patriarch Bartholomew, it welcomes allowing the liturgical celebration by the Patriarch at the Sumela Monastery in Trabzon and the return of a Greek orphanage on

Büyükada (Marmara Sea Island near Istanbul) to the Patriarchate. Furthermore, it urges the Government of Turkey to facilitate the reopening of the Theological School in Heybeliada without condition or further delay and urges the Government of Turkey to address other longstanding concerns relating to the Patriarchate.

Both draft resolutions mentioned above have been submitted to the House of Representatives and the Senate upon the knowledge and possibly, request of the Bartholomew, Greek Patriarchate of Istanbul. In other words, in order to resolve some of their issues, the Patriarchate has attempted to use the US Congress as an instrument of pressure.

This draft resolution has been submitted by Senator Benjamin L. Cardin. Moreover, it has five co-sponsors. Among them, Senator Robert Menendez is particularly known for being a proponent of Armenians.

It is without doubt that both draft resolutions mentioned above have been submitted to the House of Representatives and the Senate upon the knowledge and possibly, request of the Bartholomew, Greek Patriarchate of Istanbul. In other words, in order to resolve some of their issues, the Patriarchate has attempted to use the US Congress as an instrument of pressure.

3. H.RES.304 Regarding the Armenian Genocide Allegations

This draft resolution carries the heading “Affirmation of the United States Record on the Armenian Genocide” and has been introduced on 24 June 2011 by Robert J. Dold, member of the House of Representatives from Illinois, who is a relatively new figure in Armenian partisanship, and 74 other members have become cosponsors. (The House of Representatives has 435 members)

This draft resolution is the same as H.Res.252 which was submitted in the last session of the House of Representative. In the last ten years or more, this draft has been submitted in all sessions. In the footnote we are given our most recent articles which dealt in previous issues with this topic.⁶⁵

As known, none of these draft resolutions have been adopted, but the possibility that they could be has sometimes led to tensions in Turkey-US relations. In the end, with the intervention of US Governments (and sometimes of the US President himself), the draft resolutions have not been put to vote.

The purpose of these draft resolutions is to make the US Congress and Administration officially recognize the Armenian “genocide”. In the justification section of the draft whose text is quite lengthy, many explanations are given in order to prove the genocide allegations. Some of these entail errors of facts. Although for over ten years these mistakes have been raised in the House of Representatives by various Turkish institutions and individuals, they have not been taken into consideration.⁶⁶ It could be seen that rather than addressing the facts, the only purpose of this draft resolution is to please the Armenian community in the US.

There are two points in the timing of the last draft resolution which draws attention. The first is that it has been submitted right after the elections in Turkey. But it is actually quite difficult to find a connection between Turkish elections and this draft resolution. At the most, it could have been thought that if the draft was submitted before or during the elections, this could have increased American hostility which already exists in Turkey.

A more realistic prediction concerning the timing is that some ships, with the encouragement of Turkey, would carry humanitarian aid to Gaza at the end of June 2011 (later it was delayed) and there is the possibility of this turning into a second Blue Marmara crisis. With this draft, a warning could have been issued to Turkey. Among the cosponsors, there are 14 Representatives of Jewish descent more than the half of the 27 Jewish

65 “Facts and Comments”, *Review of Armenian Studies*, No 22, pp. 29, 30; No. 21 pp.34-37; No.19-20, pp. 23, 24; No.15-16, pp. 15-39 etc.

66 One of the most authoritative articles on these studies is by Prof. Dr. Kemal Çiçek, published in *Ermeni Araştırmaları* No. 23-32, under the title “Ermeni Yasa Tasarısının İçeriği ve İddialara Verilen Cevaplar (Content of the Armenian Draft Resolution and Responses Given to the Allegations)

members of the House. This is a clear indication that this draft is also related to Israel.

Regarding whether the draft resolution will be adopted or not by the House of Representatives, this does not seem quite likely considering the low number of cosponsors at the moment. However, the Armenians will attempt to increase the cosponsors. If this is achieved, the draft will have to be adopted by the Committee on Foreign Affairs and then be put to vote in the Full House. As mentioned above, by using their influence, US Governments or Presidents have prevented this until now. It is possible that this will be the case once again and that it might not even be voted in the Committee on Foreign Affairs. On the other hand, the Republicans, having the majority in the House of Representatives, generally remain distant from the “Armenian draft resolutions.” In fact, only 14 of the 74 co-sponsors are Republicans.

In conclusion, the possibility of the draft resolution being adopted is low, but if serious disagreements and tensions occur between Turkey and the US, there could be a chance for this draft to be adopted.

4. H.RES. 306 Related to Turkey Safeguarding its Christian Heritage and Returning Confiscated Church Properties

On 15 June 2011, a draft resolution entitled “Resolution Urging the Republic of Turkey to safeguard its Christian Heritage and to Return Confiscated Church Properties” was submitted to the US House of Representatives.

As a justification of the draft, it is stated that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and freedom to manifest his religion in teaching, practice, worship and that within this framework, Turkey is obliged to accord to all its citizens and its religious minorities freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Then, it is expressed that the Ottoman Empire’s oppression and intentional destruction of much of its ancient Christian populations has left only a small fraction of these populations and meanwhile, the intentional destruction of over 2.000.000 Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, Pontians and Syriacs is mentioned. Furthermore, it conveys that the Republic of Turkey has been responsible for the

destruction and theft of much of the Christian Heritage within its borders, has hindered the remaining Christians on its territory from freely practicing their faith, and that the reforms carried out over the past decade to ameliorate the situation of religious minorities have been sorely inadequate.

Last of all, it urges the Government of Turkey to honor its obligations under international treaties and human rights law to end all form of religious discrimination, without hindrance or restriction, to allow to organize prayer services, religious education, clerical training, appointments and succession, religious community gatherings and social services without any restrictions, return to their rightful owners all churches, other places of worship, monasteries, schools, hospitals, monuments and other religious properties, including movable properties and allow, without hindrance or restriction to preserve, reconstruct and repair all churches, other places of worship, monasteries, schools, hospitals, monuments and other religious properties.

If those reading the draft resolution do not know the subject well, they could reach the following conclusion: More than 2.000.000 Christians have been murdered during the period of the Ottoman Empire. Christian heritage in the country during the Turkish Republican period have been destroyed or stolen. The Turkish Republic still discriminates against Christians and restricts allowing the organization of prayer services, religious education etc.

A text submitted to the Congress entailing this much fabrication or exaggeration is surprising. Anyone may understand after a brief research that despite some problems, the Christians in Turkey essentially benefit from all kinds of religious freedom, their churches are open, no restrictions are applied on religious education and moreover, schools of religious communities exist, and that there are no problems related to religious buildings as long as it is in conformity with the Turkish Law of Foundations. There is also no obstacle to settling some issues, like the Theological School in Heybeliada as long as they are in conformity with Turkey's educational legislation.

Concerning the religious monuments left behind after the First World War and the War of Independence by non-Muslim minorities, since, except Istanbul there is no non-Muslim communities composed of a significant

number of Christians in Turkey, utilizing these buildings for non-religious purposes is quite normal. Meanwhile, it should also not be forgotten that in the recent years, buildings like the Akhdamar Church, which possesses historical value, or churches existing in places where liturgical services could be held, are open to worship by being restored by the Turkish State. We believe that the Christians in Turkey are in a period in which the Turkish Government supports them the most.

When this is the situation, why has there been a necessity to prepare such a draft resolution?

The militant Armenians in the US are disappointed with not being able to pass a resolution in the Congress in the recent months which recognizes the Armenian genocide allegations and with not being able to persuade President Obama to pronounce the term “genocide”. Furthermore, some US Jews have now an anti Turkey stance due to its relations with Israel. With the participation of some the Congress members, these two groups are in an attempt to start a propaganda campaign against Turkey. For this purpose, apart from the genocide allegations which always draws attention in the US, they also want to utilize the issue of religious freedoms and in particular, the rights of Christians which the US public opinion is highly sensitive to.

The first evidence of this is that two separate draft resolutions concerning the genocide allegations and the rights of Christians, which do not quite relate to each other, have been submitted to the House of Representatives at the same time. The second is that a majority of the cosponsors of both draft resolutions are formed by the same individuals who very often became cosponsors and eventually vote for resolutions which could be denominated as anti-Turkish or Turkey. Their number is about 30 consisting of mainly Democrats and a few Republicans and representing states where there is a sizeable Armenian population.

Upon Ilena Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman of the House Committee of Foreign Affairs, withdrawing her signature from H.Res.306, the possibility of this draft being adopted in the Committee has very much decreased. In response to this, the anti-Turkish group mentioned above has strived for the main principles of the draft to be included within the “State Department Authorization Act for fiscal year 2012”. This draft resolution

aims to provide some guidance to US State Department regarding foreign policy and to bring restrictions on expenses to be made within this area. Howard Berman, former Chairman of the Committee famous with his initiatives and activities against Turkey, and David Cicilline, have proposed to the Committee the adoption of the final section of H.Res.306 concerning churches in Turkey. This proposal has been supported by Armenians by starting a great campaign. The Armenian churches in the US, with Archbishops Moushegh Mardirossian and Oshagan Choloyan, the Prelates of the Armenian Church of Western and Eastern United States being at the forefront, have participated in this campaign.⁶⁷ Moreover, the campaign has also been supported by the Greeks and Syrians in the US.

This draft not entailing issues against Turkey, especially the genocide allegations, have been adopted in the Committee of Foreign Affairs with 43 votes against one.

The text adopted is the following:

“The Secretary of State in all official contacts with Turkish leaders and other Turkish officials to emphasize that Turkey should:

- 1. End all religious discrimination;*
- 2. Allow the rightful church and lay owners of Christian church properties to perform religious and social services;*
- 3. Return to their rightful owners all Christian churches and other places of worship, monasteries, schools, hospitals, monuments, relics, holy sites, and other religious properties, including artwork, manuscripts, vestments, vessels, and other artifacts; and*
- 4. Allow the rightful church and lay owners of Christian church properties to repair all churches and other places of worship, monasteries, schools, hospitals, monuments, relics, holy sites, and other religious properties within Turkey.”*⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Asbarez, 20 July 2011. “House Committee Passes “Return of Churches” Amendment 43-1

⁶⁸ Asbarez, 26 July 2011. “Congressional Panel Urges Turkey To Return Church Properties To Christians”

This decision of the Committee of Foreign Affairs has created great pleasure among Armenian circles in the US. However, this situation is not actually very much in favor of the Armenians. Even indirectly, the genocide allegations are not mentioned in the text adopted. On the other hand, even if this text becomes a law, it only determines the points which the US Secretary of State could address, in regards to churches, during his contacts with Turkish leaders and officials. It's a well known fact that US Secretaries of State, under the pressures of Armenians and Greeks, frequently discussing these issues with Turkish officials.

Last of all, according to the US press, it could be understood that the State Department Authorization Act, will not be easily adopted in the House of Representatives. Even if it passes the Full House, it will be very difficult to pass from the Senate where there is a Democratic majority.⁶⁹

IV – 24th OF APRIL COMMEMORATIONS IN ARMENIA AND TURKEY, US PRESIDENT STATEMENT

As each year, 24 April was commemorated this year also all over the world where Armenians were present. In countries where small Armenian communities exist, these commemorative ceremonies were generally held in churches in the form of liturgies. In countries like the US, France, Lebanon and Russia and in their cities like Los Angeles, New York, Boston, Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Beirut, Moscow and Rostov where large Armenian communities exist, great ceremonies were held apart from liturgies. In some cities, more than one activity took place. This year, 24 April falling on a Sunday of Easter caused the genocide allegations to be emphasized in a stronger way.

One of the commemorative activities of 24 April is organizing a demonstration in front of Turkish diplomatic and consular missions if there is one in of the cities. Since usually local security officers take measures, these demonstrations have so far not constituted a threat for security, but have also not prevented some excessive acts from taking place. For instance, a Turkish flag has been burnt this year during a demonstration in Paris.⁷⁰ On the other hand, sometimes Turks have also shown reactions to

⁶⁹ *Washington Post*, 21 July, 2011. "House Moves To Restrict U.S. Foreign Aid"

⁷⁰ *Yeni Çağ*, 26 April 2011. "Ermeniler Türk Bayrağını Yaktı" (The Armenians Burnt the Turkish Flag)

these demonstrations like that of Washington where, in order to balance out the Armenians, Turks have also held a demonstration in front of the Turkish Embassy.⁷¹

We do not have enough space to provide information on the demonstrations and all other activities held worldwide for 24 April. Therefore, we will shortly address the activities held in Armenia and Turkey and touch upon the 24th of April statement of President Obama.

1. 24 April in Armenia

Two of the commemorative activities held in Armenia for 24 April carry special significance. The first of these is the march with torches organized a day before to the Genocide Memorial. The second is the ceremony held a day later at this memorial. As mentioned above, since Easter falls on 24 April this year, the Easter liturgy has been transformed into a ceremony for commemorating genocide.

The evening march in which 10.000 people were said to have attended this year had started at the Opera Square in Yerevan, speeches were delivered and, by posing for the media a Turkish flag was burnt, torches were ignited from the ashes of the flag and then a march was conducted to the Genocide Memorial. This march, taking place for twelve years now, was organized by the Dashnak Party again this year.⁷² In addition this year, a poster of Hrant Dink inscribed “1.500.000 + 1” under it was carried by an elderly lady.⁷³ This way, Dink was tried to be included among the Armenians dying in 1915.

In the morning of 24 April, with President Serge Sarkisian, Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisian, Speaker of the Assembly Hovik Abrahamyan and Supreme Patriarch Karekin II being at the forefront, all statesmen have marched to the Genocide Memorial and have paid homage. There, Karekin II has said a prayer. Then, the memorial has been opened to visitors. According to the press, the Memorial has been visited by “hundred thousands of people.”⁷⁴

71 Ibid.

72 *Armenews*, 24 April 2011. “Arménie-Memorial du Génocide”

73 *Hürriyet*, 25 April 2011. “Törenle Yaktılar” (They Burned with a Ceremony)

74 *Armenews*, 24 April 2011. “Arménie-Memorial du Génocide”

It has been seen that in all these ceremonies, beyond mourning, negative feelings and ideas have been dominant towards Turkey and the Turks. This is evident in the messages delivered on this occasion. We will only examine President Sarkisian's message.

In President Sarkisian's rather long message,⁷⁵ the points especially drawing attention are the following. The President has conveyed that "in 1915-1923 a crime against the Armenian nation, against humanity and civilization was committed". However, the relocation had taken place between 1915 and 1916 and as soon as the First World War had ended, the Armenians were permitted to return and regain their properties. The Treaty of Lausanne also foresees those Ottoman citizens who left Ottoman territories during war may return and get back their properties. Based on this, the statement that a crime against the Armenian nation was committed until 1923 carries no meaning. Yet, if only 1915-1916 periods was mentioned, it would not be possible to accuse the Republic of Turkey, which was not yet established in those years, and therefore to making claims on present day Turkey. That's why some Diaspora writers have put forth years 1915-1923 as the "period of genocide". This notion, being embraced by the Armenian President not only contradicts the historical facts, but also confirms the uncompromising approach towards Turkey which has especially adopted recently.

Another point which draws attention in Sarkisian's statement is that "the Ottoman Empire implemented at state level the program of elimination and expulsion of the Armenian people." It could be understood that his expression of "state level program of elimination" was used to indicate that the 1915 relocation was a genocide conforming to the conditions of the 1948 UN Convention.

His statement that "Armenia will struggle in the international fora not only for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, but also for the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide per se" in his message is also noteworthy. Although it is normal to repeat this point that Armenia will struggle in the international sphere for the recognition of the genocide allegations since it exists in the Armenian Declaration of Independence of 1990, it is unclear which crime of genocide must be prevented or punished and how they will work in this direction.

75 "Address of President Serzh Sargsyan on the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Armenian Genocide" April 24th 2011 <http://www.president.am/events/news/eng/?id=1557>

President Sarkisian has also mentioned the expression of “restoring historical justice” which Armenian statesmen have frequently touched upon in the recent years. What this expression means is Turkey recognizing the genocide allegations, apologizing, paying compensation, returning the properties and giving an unidentified amount of territory to Armenia.

Another interesting point is the Armenian President’s statement that “Today in Turkey, more than ever, reasonable voices are being heard. We highly value the Turkish intellectuals, as well as many honest people all over the world, who have raised their voices in the name of justice.” The Turkish intellectuals mentioned here are those generally known in Turkey as “liberal intellectuals” and those we mentioned in our “24 April in Turkey” section. As much as their numbers, the influences of these individuals who are in favor of Turkey recognizing the genocide allegations, apologizing from the Armenians, paying compensation, returning the abandoned properties and perhaps giving some territory to Armenia, are quite low. If Armenia expects the views of these individuals to become dominant in order to settle issues with Turkey, they will be expecting for a much longer time.

Although it is normal to repeat this point that Armenia will struggle in the international sphere for the recognition of the genocide allegations since it exists in the Armenian Declaration of Independence of 1990, it is unclear which crime of genocide must be prevented or punished and how they will work in this direction.

Last of all, it could be seen that Sarkisian criticizes Turkey’s policy concerning “genocide.” Within this framework, President Sarkisian has said that “official policy of Turkey carries on with the course of denial. Moreover, that policy becomes more “sophisticated”, becomes more, so to speak, “flexible”, and from time to time makes singular, formal-propaganda steps. For us one thing is incontestable: the policy of denial is a direct continuation of the Armenian Genocide. Any attempt to erase the tracks of a crime is a new crime.”

Since President Sarkisian has not provided any explanation, it is unclear what he means by “singular, formal propaganda steps”. Perhaps, the reactions created in Armenia by the article of a Turkish journalist entitled

“Yahudi Açılımından Sonra Ermeni Açılımı” (Armenian Opening Following the Jewish Opening) which we mentioned in the “Turkey-Armenia Relations” section have constituted the reason for such statements.

The Armenian President’s statement that “the policy of denial is a direct continuation of the Armenian Genocide” is a thesis which has been brought forth since a long time by Armenians and those supporting them. Its purpose is to impose that the “genocide” has not ended, it still continues through a policy of denial or in other words, that it is a current problem. This way, Turkey who never accepted genocide allegations will also be able to be accused for genocide. However, this idea has no legal basis. According to the 1948 UN Convention, in short, genocide is to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. When destroying or attempting to do so comes to an end, so does genocide. In countries like Switzerland, denying genocide is considered a crime. However, the justification here is not that denial is the continuation of genocide, but more that it offends a community or brings discrimination or even racism. On this point, we should note that as we have examined separately, the French Senate rejected a draft resolution which foresaw the denial of genocide as a crime.

2. 24 April in Turkey

Since 2005, April 24 has generally been commemorated in Turkey under the leadership of the Human Rights Council but only the activities of last year had drawn some attention.⁷⁶ Since the purpose of the organizers of such activities is for the Armenian genocide allegations to be recognized in Turkey, the number and types of activities this year have been increased.

The first significant activity has been to obtain that the name of some Armenian journalists who supposedly lost their lives in 1915 be put in the list of “Slain Journalists” held separately by both the Turkish Journalists Society and Modern Journalists’ Association of Turkey.⁷⁷ It could be understood that the Modern Journalists’ Association has included nine names in their list.⁷⁸

76 *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 36, pp. 38-45

77 *Taraf*, 20 April 2011. “Ermeni Gazeteciler de Öldürüldü” (Armenian Journalists Were Also Murdered)

78 *Today’s Zaman*, 20 April 2011. “1915 Armenian Reporters Added to Slain Journalist List”

On the other hand, the “Say No to Racism and Nationalism” initiative of last year was also organized this year and a text was published on the internet website www.buacihepimiz.net in order to commemorate 24 April, requesting those willing to sign (click on) the text. The text is the following:

“24 April 1915 is the starting day of the tragedy in which the Armenian community living together with the other communities of this country for centuries, regardless of women, children, elderly and the ill, were forcefully torn from their country, homes, lands, offices, jobs by the state just for being Armenian and in which hundred thousands of them died, were killed, deported and were subjected to all kinds of atrocities.

From that date onwards, the state and governments attempted to cover up this horrible event or if not, to consider it unimportant and even - for purposes like rebellion- to make it seem legitimate. However, this deathly deportation which no reality could justify it is clearly a crime committed against humanity.

Yet it should be known that

As long as the state’s formal policy based on the denial of this crime continues, the wounds secretly bleeding since that date within the hearts of the individuals of this country gets deeper; it further paralyzes our minds, conscience, and our feeling of right-justice.

But, we must now bring an end to this. Therefore, we invite all those who sincerely want their country to be a country of people whose minds and consciences are clear to fulfill their responsibility of humanity. We are calling upon all peoples to declare that the heavy crime which 24 April represents is the common pain of everyone joining together on the grounds of the essential principles of humanity.

We commemorate our Armenian citizens which we started losing from 24 April 1915 with flowers and candles.”⁷⁹

79 “24 Nisan’da Ermeni Soykırımını Anmaları: Bu acı Hepimizin”http://www.marksist.org/haberler/3485-24-nisanda-ermeni-soykirimi-anmalari-bu-aci-hepimizin_20 April 2011. (Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide on 24 April: This Pain is Our Pain)

According to news, this text was signed by 796 people on the first day. However, later on this number has not much increased and has remained around 1000. Compared to last year, this number is slightly lower. The conclusion that can be deduced from this is that the numbers of those supporting the Armenian allegations in Turkey to the extent of signing the text is quite low. On the other hand, it could be seen that the number of those supporting these allegations could flare up all of a sudden (approximately 30.000 people had signed the “Apology to the Armenians” campaign of 2008) and then could almost burn out entirely. Meanwhile, it is interesting that only two individuals among those signing the text on the first day had Armenian names. We will address this point separately below.

Concerning the content of the text, the text of last year was more emotional,⁸⁰ but this year it could be seen that stronger expressions (killed, deported, subjected to atrocity, attempting to cover up the event, crime against humanity etc.) have been used and moreover, that while last year’s call was to “pay tribute to the victims of 1915”, this year it was to “declare that 24th of April is the common pain of everyone.”⁸¹

Just as last year, the term “genocide” was not present in the text this year either. However, in this year’s text, there have been some expressions which imply that the 1915 event was genocide: for instance, “killed just for being Armenian”, “a crime committed against humanity”, “the heavy crime which 24 April represents”. In Turkey in which expressing that genocide has been committed against the Armenians no longer leads to “de facto” prosecution, it is likely that in the future texts entailing genocide accusations and calling upon individuals to officially recognize the genocide allegations will be seen.

Since it has been declared by the Say No to Racism and Nationalism Initiative,⁸² apart from Istanbul, organizing commemorative activities for 24 April in Ankara, Izmir, Diyarbakir and Bodrum have also been foreseen. However, a majority of the press has neglected the activities outside Istanbul. We will shortly summarize activities in that city.

80 *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 36, p.41

81 *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 36, pp. 44-45

82 “24 Nisan’da Ermeni Soykırımı Anmaları: Bu acı Hepimizin” <http://www.marksist.org/haberler/3485-24-nisanda-ermeni-soykirimi-anmalari-bu-aci-hepimizin>, 20 April 2011. (Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide on 24 April: This Pain is Our Pain)

The largest demonstration has been conducted in Taksim Square. A group here has organized a sit-in strike with the slogan “This pain belongs to all of us”. Just as last year, dancer Zeynep Tanbay has delivered a speech this year by reading out the text of “Say No to Racism and Nationalism” which we provided above.

Different views were expressed regarding how many people this group at Taksim Square was comprised of. Right after the gathering, Cengiz Aktar, from Bahçeşehir University talking to NTV Television in regards to this demonstration, said that 2.500 people comprised of Armenians, Kurds, Syrians and Diaspora Armenians coming from foreign countries gathered at Taksim. However, from the televisions and newspapers, it could be seen that there was no such crowd and that may be a few hundred people had gathered.⁸³ In fact, some attending the gathering verified this conclusion. Writer and journalist Ahmet Insel said that “I was expecting more participants this year, perhaps 2 or 3 times more people. But it wasn’t and I feel sad for that”. Columnist Ali Bayramoğlu also confirming this view said that this year there was no increase in the number of participants.⁸⁴

During this gathering, a group of around 30 people under the name “Turkish Nationalists” made the sign of the Grey Wolf and shouted slogans like “Turkey is Turkish, it Will Remain Turkish” and “This is Turkey, Either Love it or Leave it”.⁸⁵ Another group comprised of approximately the same number of individuals and carrying the name People’s Liberation Party also shouted slogans of “The Genocide Lie is a US Plan” and “Damn Imperialism, Long Live the Brotherhood of Peoples.”⁸⁶

The second great demonstration in Istanbul has taken place with the participation of around sixty people,⁸⁷ organized by the Human Rights Association at Sultanahmet in front of the Turkish Islamic Artifacts Museum. Member of the Board of this Association Lawyer Eren Keskin,

83 Different numbers have been provided for those participating. While a French Armenian source has mentioned 500 people, (*Armenews*, 25 April, 2011. “500 Turcs Commémorent le Génocide Arménien”) a Turkish news agency has given the number 200. (*Cihan*, 24 April 2011)

84 *The Armenian Weekly*, 10 May 2011. “Detailed Report: How Turkey Marked the 96th Anniversary of the Genocide.

85 *Zaman*, 24 April 2011. “Taksim’de Sözde Soykırım İddialarına Tepki” (Reactions in Taksim Towards the Genocide Allegations)

86 Ibid.

87 *Armenews*, 25 April, 2011. “ 500 Turcs Commémorent le Génocide Arménien”

after saying that “1915 is genocide, genocide is a crime against humanity”, expressed that “End denial, accept the crime with all its legal consequences.”⁸⁸

Apart from these demonstrations, some closed hall conferences have also taken place. On 22 April, a forum has been organized at the Taksim Hill Hotel by the “Say No to Racism and Nationalism” initiative carrying the heading “What Happened in 1915”. Cengiz Algan, delivering the opening speech, has said in summary that a great atrocity was experienced in 1915, by taking the Nazis as an example, those committing genocide were rewarded, the victims were not commemorated for 96 years, and that due to the lies of official historical statements, they were late at learning what was experienced. On the other hand, Pakrat Estukyan from AGOS newspaper expressed that the 1915 ideology is still dominant, that tribes providing soldiers in 1895 to Ottoman Forces now assume the protection against PKK, that the mentality of the Young Turks still continues with Ergenekon (trials), that a link could not be drawn between the past and the present if these are not recognized and that none of the wounds will heal.⁸⁹ Ferdan Ergut, the Head of the Equality and Democracy Party has expressed in his 24 April statement that confronting 1915 is essential in order for Turkey to become a freer nation and then has wanted the Armenian border to be opened and for all kinds of economic embargos and restrictions to come to an end.⁹⁰

Meanwhile, Leader of the Kurdish terrorist organization the PKK, Murat Karayılan has expressed his condolences to the Armenian community for April 24 and has indicated that this date represents the day the Armenians were slaughtered and deported, that the Armenians have spread all over the world, it is not important whether the event is classified as genocide or deportation and that Turkey must accept its history.⁹¹

Another feature of the demonstrations held at Taksim and other places is that very few numbers of Armenians have attended them. This situation has also been addressed in the Diaspora press.⁹² As we said above, only two

88 AGOS, 29 April 2011. “Beş Şehir 24 Nisan’ı Andı” (Five Cities Commemorated 24 April)

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.

91 *Armenews*, 26 April 2011. “Le Leader PKK A Exprimé Ses Condoléances Au Peuple Arménien A l’Occasion du 24 Avril”

92 Ibid.

names were Armenian among the 796 individuals signing the text of “This Pain is Our Pain” on the first day.⁹³ We have not come across any scholarly research on the reasons for the disinterest of the Armenians of Turkey in participating in the 24 April commemorative activities and the genocide allegations in general. In our view, the persons putting forth the genocide allegations in Turkey and supporting Armenian claims against Turkey have not done this for the sake of the Armenians, but because they are against the established order in Turkey and for believing that these kinds of activities will disrupt the order. Feeling that they are being used, a majority of the Armenians in Turkey have preferred to refrain from these activities.

If one day Armenians and Turks establish a friendship, or if Armenia and Turkey make reconciliation, or if Turkey recognizes the Armenian Genocide, it will be obviously through these kinds of public exercises.

As could be seen, participation in the commemorative events in Turkey for April 24 has been low and these have not drawn much attention within public opinion. However, the optimism of the organizers of these activities continues. For instance, columnist Ali Bayramoğlu has said that “these events have a symbolic meaning. This means that some Turks are confronting their past and they have reached the level to make an apology. If one day Armenians and Turks establish a friendship, or if Armenia and Turkey make reconciliation, or if Turkey recognizes the Armenian Genocide, it will be obviously through these kinds of public exercises. As it is in other countries, the state is hard to convince. This could happen only if the society changes and starts to push the state for that. That would be more honest and real. I regard these commemorations as firm steps in this direction.”⁹⁴ It is difficult to believe that a few hundred of people demonstrating, among the population of 74 million in Turkey, who defend the opposite of the general belief, will be able to change society.

Not all advocates of Armenians possess the same belief. Lawyer Fethiye Çetin of Armenian origin, expressed that “we should start by confronting our past first. After that we need to apologize. And the apology must come

93 *Hye-Tert*, 25 April 2011. “ Bu Acı Hepimizin” (This Pain is Our Pain)

94 *The Armenian Weekly*, 10 May 2011. “Detailed Report: How Turkey Marked the 96th Anniversary of the Genocide.

from the leaders of this country, not from the bottom of the society,”⁹⁵ has indicated that the activities conducted on 24 April do not carry much significance.

3. The U.S. President’s 24 April Statement

As each year, whether or not US President Barack Obama will mention the word “genocide” in his statement to be delivered in April 2011 for the Armenian Remembrance Day has been awaited with great interest. During his election campaign, Obama had indicated several times, both verbally and in writing, that he would classify the 1915 events as “genocide”. However, after being elected, taking into consideration his country’s relations with Turkey and Turkey-Armenia relations, he has refrained from using this word in his 24 April statements and instead, has used “Metz Yeghern” which is understood to be the Armenian equivalent of the word genocide.⁹⁶ However, this stance of the President had caused the Armenians in his country, particularly extreme nationalists like the Dashnaks, to strongly criticize him and to accuse him of not keeping his promise.

Before his statement delivered this year, many Armenian organizations in the US, with the Dashnaks being at the forefront, have urged the President to use the word “genocide.”⁹⁷ Even the Armenian Assembly of America, which is generally careful in maintaining friendly relations with Governments, has urged the President to “unequivocally affirms the Armenian Genocide.”⁹⁸ There were those who wanted Obama not to receive votes in the forthcoming elections, they protested during his visit to California⁹⁹ and asked that Obama not to be funded for the following elections.¹⁰⁰ The President was also asked to lay a wreath at the Armenian

95 Ibid.

96 For the 2009 and 2010 statements of the US President see: “Facts and Comments”, *Review of Armenian Studies*, No.32, pp. 35-43 and No.35, pp. 50-52

97 *Armenian National Committee of America - Western Region, Press Release*, 18 April 2011. “Armenian Americans Protest To Urge President Obama to Honor His Pledge To Recognize Armenian Genocide”.

98 *Arm radio*, 16 April 2011. “Assembly Urges President Barack Obama to Unequivocally Affirm the Armenian Genocide”

99 *The California Courier*, 14 April 2011. “Les Arméniens Devraient Affronter Le Président Obama Lors De Sa Visite En Californie La Semaine Prochaine/

100 *News.am Armenia*, 14 April 2011. “Armenian-Americans to Protest Outside Obama’s Fundraising Event”

Genocide Memorial in Montebello.¹⁰¹ Indeed, the Armenians organized some demonstrations of protest during the President's visit to California,¹⁰² but it was seen that these did not draw much attention within public opinion. Some Congress members supporting Armenians issued a written request to the President to use the word "genocide."¹⁰³ On the other hand, some Turkish organizations in the US urged the President not to use the term "genocide" in his statement.¹⁰⁴ In an unusual way, Armenian President Serge Sarkisian also expressed that he asked President Obama to use the word genocide.¹⁰⁵

In response, President Obama has continued his policy of half satisfying both the Armenians and the Turks by using the expression "Metz Yeghern" in his 24 April statement just as he did in the previous year. On the other hand, in order to classify the 1915 events, he has used rather harsh expressions like "worst atrocities", "the dark moment of history", "terrible events", "a devastating chapter in the history of Armenian people", "painful history", "the inhumanity of 1915", and "horrors of 1915". Perhaps as a response to those criticizing him, the President has indicated that what occurred in 1915 and his view of that history have not changed. Furthermore, again just as in his previous statements, he has greatly praised the American Armenians and has put forth that the US has deeply benefited from the significant contributions to their nation by Armenian Americans. By referring to Turkey, but not openly mentioning its name, he has emphasized that their nations are stronger and their cause is more just when they appropriately recognize painful pasts. He has also expressed that he supports the courageous steps taken by individuals in Armenia and Turkey to foster a dialogue that acknowledges their common history. Of course, the Turks mentioned here are those thinking and working within the lines of Armenian views.

President Obama's 24 April statement did not satisfy the Armenians at all. In order to better convey the displeasure of the Armenians, it will be enough

101 *Asbarez*, Tuesday, April 19th, 2011, "Community Asks Obama to Lay Wreath at Montebello Monument"

102 *Asbarez*, 21 April 2011. "More than 1,500 Protesters Urge Obama to Keep his Campaign Promise"

103 Among the members of Congress sending a letter to the President to urge him to use the word genocide are Adam B. Schiff, Senator Robert Menendez, Frank Pallone, Edward R. Royce.

104 ATAA, 22 April 2011, Action Alert, "Call President Obama Urging Him Not to Use the Term "Genocide" in His April 24 Proclamation"

105 *Today's Zaman*. 2 April 2011. "As April 24 Looms, Sarkisian Asks Obama to Use the G-Word"

to provide the headings of articles published in some Armenian newspapers: “Obama Disgracefully Capitulated to Turkey’s Threats”¹⁰⁶; “Obama’s lack of moral clarity on Armenian genocide issue”¹⁰⁷; “Obama’s Reluctance to Recognize Genocide Not Prudence but Cowardice.”¹⁰⁸

Negative reactions have also been received from Turkey. On April 24, the Foreign Ministry issued the following statement:

“President Obama’s statement issued on April 23, 2011, takes a one sided approach reflecting Armenian views regarding the dispute between Turks and Armenians on the painful part of their common history.

This statement distorts the historical facts. Therefore, we find it very problematic and deeply regret it.

Issued by domestic political considerations, such statements serve no purpose but making it difficult for Turks and Armenians to reach a just memory. One-sided statements that interpret controversial historical events by a selective sense of justice prevent understanding of the truth.

We expect the United States not to render difficulty but to facilitate the normalization process between Turkey and Armenia, and the studies on the historical dimension. Holding a partisan view on historical pains, such statements do not serve peace or the common future of peoples.

Despite all attempts to interfere with the writing of history based on calculations of current political interests, we will maintain our determination to reach a just memory and to build our common future with Armenia on that basis.”

On the other hand, in a statement provided to CNN TURK, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has expressed that President Obama’s statement is one sided and reads history from only a single perspective and that it would

106 *Pan Armenian. Net.* 24 April, 2011

107 *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 2011

108 *PanARMENIAN.Net*, April 20, 2011

have been more beneficial if the US President was able to make a statement from a new perspective which also shares the pains of the Turk.

In short, it is possible to say that the US President has tried to satisfy both the Armenians and the Turks as much as possible, but that his attempts have not created the expected results.

