

A PROBLEM IN TURKEY-US RELATIONS IN THE 1980'S: ARMENIAN DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

Dr. Sibel KAVUNCU

Trakya University
sibelkav@yahoo.com

Abstract: *In the 1980s there were many problems between Turkey and the US and some of these problems didn't stem directly from their bilateral relations. One of the problems was Armenian resolutions, which were brought forward in the US Congress by the Armenian Diaspora to officialise the date April 24 as the commemoration day of the so-called Armenian genocide. This issue has always been considered as a sensitive matter in Turkey-US relations. Turkey's reaction on the matter was sharp. In view of Turkey's reaction, the US administration sought to prevent the Armenian resolutions from becoming law, because the American strategic interests may have been affected badly and the bilateral relations with Turkey, which was an ally of the US, may have fallen out of track.*

The US administration communicated the concerns of the US to the Congressmen and also explicated that the strategic interests of the US may have been affected badly if the resolutions had become law. As a result of the US Administration's efforts, Armenian resolutions failed to become law. The Armenian terror, which had been seen as an important method in service of the Armenian radical group's interests, was replaced by civil activism in the second half of the 1980's. The US Congress became a platform on which this civil activism supported by the Armenian Diaspora sought to be effective. In this study, Turkey-US relations under the influence of the Armenian resolutions are examined.

Key Words: *Turkey, US, 1980's, Armenian Diaspora, Armenian Resolutions.*

With the outbreak of the First World War, Armenians freed from the Turkish, Russian, and Persian supremacy had sought to find independent Armenia and following the declaration of mobilization on August 3, the Armenian soldiers, grouped in guerrilla bands, fled from the Turkish army, attacked towns, and slaughtered civilians.¹ The Ottoman Empire had to fight at the World-War fronts and with the Armenian uprisings concurrently. Against this background, the

1 İlhan Akbulut, "Türk Tarihinde Ermeniler", *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, Volume:50, No:1-2, January-June 1995, p.35.

Patriarchate was warned repeatedly; it was notified that tougher measures would be taken in the name of securing stability. However, not only the warnings remained unresponded, but also the Patriarchate continued fuelling the uprisings even further.²

In the face of the bloody acts of the Armenian committees and uprisings that had reached an intolerable level, the Ottoman Ministry of the Interior ordered the closure of the Armenian-committee centres, arrest of the protagonists and the confiscation of all sorts of documents on April 24, 1915. This order has later constituted the ground for the draft decision of the “Genocide Memorial Day” that the Armenians seek to impose on the US Senate and European Parliaments. The 24 April decision did not end the upheavals –on the contrary, Armenians’ violent acts of resistance intensified. At the point of being unbearable, as the last resort, the Ottoman Government issued the Deportation Law on May 27, 1915 and ordered the population transfer of Armenians and their supporters within the Ottoman borders. The Deportation Law is not a genocide law. It aimed to conduct the domestic immigration of the rioters to the outside of the warzone and extend protection to life and property.²

The Armenian Patriarchate, churches and educational institutions on the 50th anniversary of the 24 April decision in 1965, imposed the date on the world public as Genocide Memorial Day. Later in 1973, Armenians asked the United Nations, European Community, and European parliaments to declare 24 April as Genocide Day and recognize the Armenian genocide of 1915 as the first genocide of the 20th century. Upon the opposition of Turkey and other states with commonsense, the motion was denied. Frustrated with the failure of their diplomacy, Armenians such as ASALA’s leader Agopyan and institutions such as the Armenian Studies Institute at Massachusetts suggested the imperativeness of terror. Throughout the 1970s, radical Armenian groups viewed terror as their way of struggle with Turkey. The Armenian terror lasted until the second half of the 1980s.⁴

A chronological survey of the Armenian terrorist acts display that between 1973 and 1985, 193 terrorist acts took place. From the second half of the 1980s, the terrorist acts grew into civilian initiatives.⁵ With its terrorist acts, ASALA sought to raise awareness for the Armenian genocide and draw the attention of the world public and media to this question. The civilian initiatives tried to build on this so-

2 İlhan Akbulut, “Türk Tarihinde Ermeniler” (Armenians in Turkish History), *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, Volume:50, No:1–2, Ocak-June 1995, p.35.

3 Refet Yinaç, “Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi”, p.50.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

5 Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi (Armenians in History and the Armenian Question)*, 2.bs., İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1987, p.CCXIII-CCXLVI.

called awareness and carried out a public-opinion strategy for the official and de facto recognition of the Armenian claims of genocide. This strategy aimed to influence as many parliaments as possible, especially the US Congress, to support the genocide cause and thus, to put Turkey under pressure to recognize the alleged genocide.

The American Armenians, who attained economic power and managed high level of organisation in the 20th century, have become the Diaspora leaders of Armenians. Armenian political parties, groups, religious and social organisations have accordingly moved their headquarters to the US or their US branches have assumed a leading role.⁶

In the bipolar international structure of the 1980s, Turkey saw the US as a balancing element in its relations with the Soviet Union, within the framework of Russian demands. Thus, the relations with the US bore particular importance. At the same time, the military aid and technology transfer by the hands of the US was critical for Turkey and its defence system. Given this strategic partnership between Turkey and the US, the radical Armenian nationalists focused on the US; one of the two superpowers of the 80s, to impose upon and maybe subdue Turkey.⁷

One may suggest that three factors played an essentially important role in the Armenian method of alienating the US from Turkey. The first factor was the American Armenians' economic power, which gave them an upper hand when compared to the Armenians in other countries and which enabled them to influence the American public opinion, media and political actors; in other words, which empowered them to lobby. The second factor was the Armenian conviction that the recognition of the genocide by the Armenian legislative body would be emulative for other states' parliaments, especially those of the US allies. The third factor was the expectation that Turkey would remain vulnerable subsequent to the dissolution of the good US-Turkey relations, which was a basic tenet of Turkey's Cold-War foreign diplomacy.

In the 1980s, American Armenians pursued ways to put pressure on the American public on the grounds that the Republic of Turkey was the descendent of the Ottoman Empire, which induced genocide at the beginning of the 20th century, and for Genocide Memorial Day to be recognized by the American Congress to remind this "man's inhumanity to man." The American Congress was thus seen instrumental for the recognition of the Armenian genocide. The fact that the American Armenians' initiatives had found support in the US Congress had caused tension in US-Turkey relations.

6 Sedat Laçiner, *Türk Ermeni İlişkileri (Turkish-Armenian Relations)*, İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2004, p.79.

7 *Ibid.*

Genocide Allegations – Developments in 1984

The Armenian community and lobby in the US have been intensively active in the recognition of the Armenian genocide since the early 1980s.⁸ As a result of their actions, two draft decisions were brought forward immediately in 1984.⁹

On September 10, the draft decision stipulating April 24 as the Memorial Day for “man’s inhumanity to man” was accepted unanimously in the House of Representatives.¹⁰

With reference to this decision of the House of Representatives, another draft decision requiring the acknowledgment of the Armenian genocide in US foreign policy-making and implementation in the name of preventing possible future genocide acts was accepted unanimously at the Senate’s Committee on Foreign Relations. The full text of the draft decision of the Senate’s Committee is as follows:

“Calling upon the President to ensure that the foreign policy of the United States reflects appropriate understanding and sensitivity concerning issues related to human rights, ethnic cleansing, and genocide documented in the United States record relating to the Armenian genocide, and for other purposes.

The Armenian genocide was conceived and carried out by the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1923, resulting in the deportation of nearly 2,000,000 Armenians, of whom 1,500,000 men, women, and children were killed, 500,000 survivors were expelled from their homes, and which succeeded in the elimination of the over 2,500-year presence of Armenians in their historic homeland. The Armenian genocide and these domestic judicial failures are documented with overwhelming evidence in the national archives of Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain, Russia, the United States, the Vatican and many other countries, and this vast body of evidence attests to the same facts, the same events, and the same consequences. The Honorable Henry Morgenthau, United States Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1913 to 1916, organized and led protests by officials of many countries, among them the allies of the Ottoman Empire, against the Armenian Genocide.

8 For detailed information on the Armenian Diaspora and lobbying please see: Şenol Kantarcı, *Amerika Birleşik Devletleri’nde Ermeniler ve Ermeni Lobisi*, İstanbul: Aktüel Yayınları, 2004.

9 İlhan Uzgel, “ABD ve NATO’yla İlişkiler” (Relations with the US and NATO), *Türk Dış Politikası (Turkish Foreign Policy)*, Vol:2, Ed. Baskın Oran, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001, p.62.

10 *Dışişleri Bakanlığı Belleteni (The Bulletin of the Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry)*, No:9, Ankara: Dışişleri Bakanlığı Basımevi, September 1984, p.7.

House Joint Resolution 148, adopted on April 8, 1975, resolved: '[t]hat April 24, 1975, is hereby designated as 'National Day of Remembrance of Man's Inhumanity to Man', and the President of the United States is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe such day as a day of remembrance for all the victims of genocide, especially those of Armenian ancestry ...'

In his speech dated May 16, 1978 President Jimmy Carter stated that the Armenian Genocide was "probably one of the greatest tragedies that ever befell any group"

President Ronald Reagan in proclamation number 4838, dated April 22, 1981, stated in part 'like the genocide of the Armenians before it, and the genocide of the Cambodians, which followed it—and like too many other persecutions of too many other people—the lessons of the Holocaust must never be forgotten'.

The House of Representatives calls upon the President to ensure that the foreign policy of the United States reflects appropriate understanding and sensitivity concerning issues related to human rights, ethnic cleansing, and genocide documented in the United States record relating to the Armenian Genocide and the consequences of the failure to realize a just resolution.

The Senate also asks the President and the US Representatives to the United Nations to bring this issue forward at international platforms and to express their sadness towards all genocides, including the Armenian Genocide."¹¹

The decision issued by the US House of Representative and the US Senate's Committee on Foreign Affairs was regarded with fury in Turkey. The declaration by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on September 11 and public speeches by Prime Minister Turgut Özal and President of the Turkish Grand National Assembly Necmettin Karaduman on September 13 reproached the decisions in question. Similarly, the Turkish political parties denounced them.

On the US House of Representatives' decision of September 10, which declared April 24 as the day commemorating "man's inhumanity to man," Yalım Eralp, Head of the Information Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said: "*The decision in question, even though it has passed due to some technicality issues, will help an undesirable environment flourish to constitute ground for terror and new*

¹¹ "ABD Senatosu Dış İlişkiler Komitesi Kararından: Türkiye, 2500 Yıllık Ermeni Yurdu..." (From the Decision of the US Senate's Committee on Foreign Affairs: Turkey has been the Armenian homeland for 2500 years), *Cumhuriyet*, 14 September 1984, p.8

violent attacks, despite the decisive stand of the US against international terror. Those, who has taken decisions to encourage the international terror for election concerns and petty domestic political calculations, instead of fulfilling their actual mission in the fight against terrorism will carry the heavy burden of the lives to be lost because of the international terror.”¹²

On September 13, 1984, on the same decision Prime Minister Turgut Özal said:

“With regret and indignation we witness that the US House of Representatives and Senate have tended to issue some purposeful draft decisions on matters related with our country. We assess those decisions taken on the eve of elections aiming short-term profit with surprise and concern.

We hereby submit to the world public opinion that the US extends its support to the terrorist acts of ASALA and similar terrorist organizations, hence to international terror, which has targeted the US citizens. It is a fact that such actions based on short-term political profits damage the good relations between states beyond repair –the relations established over the long run and with much hardship. Recent history clearly shows us how greatly such attitudes harm states’ long-term objectives.”¹³

In a similar light, President of the Turkish National Assembly, Necmettin Karaduman said on September 13, 1984: *“The arbitrariness of this decision is not understandable, since this is a decision which will provide legal support to new acts of international terror targeting multitudes including American citizens themselves. Those who offend their own allies for the sake of petty political calculations and extend their support to terrorism for a couple of months or so should remember that terror has harmed and will harm people of their own. On one hand, all civilized countries agree upon the necessity of international cooperation in the fight against international terror. On the other hand, at the national parliaments, which are supposed to urge the governments to further cooperate against terrorism, some interest groups seeking votes alone create atmospheres on the contrary. Such groups should be held responsible in the eyes of humanity. I hereby call upon the US House of Representatives and Senate to reconsider their decisions, which will result in damages and outcomes jeopardizing friendly international relations.”¹⁴*

12 *Dışişleri Bakanlığı Belleteni (The Bulletin of the Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry)*, No:9, Ankara: Dışişleri Bakanlığı Basımevi, September 1984, pp. 18–19.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.

14 *Foreign Ministry...*, pp.22–23.

Thus, he responded in parallel with Yalın Eralp and Prime Minister Turgut Özal.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vahit Halefoğlu, having summoned Robert Strausz Hupe, the US Ambassador in Ankara, conveyed the Turkish governments' concern and displeasure about the decision taken in the US.¹⁵ In his statement to the Turkish News Agency (TNA), he also underlined that "Turkey has, as always, taken the necessary measures immediately. I am not sure how they will respond. Nonetheless, they should be aware that Turkey will, from now on, stand firmer." Thus he drew attention to the fact that Turkey had always responded timely within the framework of international law, the US and other states remained arbitrary. As he also said "Turkey needs to be more careful and resourceful, because it can not afford compromising on this issue,"¹⁶ he emphasized that Turkish reaction against the US would be much firmer.

In return, the US Embassy in Turkey promised that the Reagan government would prevent the decisions' approval by the Congress,¹⁷ whereas the US Department of State assured the Turkish government that the decision did not have any significant meaning beyond reflecting the sentiments at the Senate.¹⁸

As the process progressed, the firm language of Turgut Özal was replaced by a more cautious tone. In his press statement dated September 17, 1984, he reminded the upcoming elections in the US and expressed that it would be wiser to wait until the end of the elections. In case the attitude that had greatly offended Turkey continued, the relations with the US should have reassessed.¹⁹

In the meantime, the US government expressed to Şükrü Elekdağ, Turkey's Ambassador in Washington, that Turkey should be more understanding in the face of the upcoming elections. Also, how the US government's attempts to prevent the decisions had failed because of the election atmosphere was recounted. The US and Turkey were expected to be on board again on the genocide debates only after the elections. Any decision until then should not have offended Turkey.²⁰

On the grounds that such decision could harm the friendly relations with Turkey, the Reagan government sought to influence the Republican Senators and emphasized the strategic importance of Turkey. As a result, some Republican senators tried to withdraw the recommendation decision on the "Armenian

15 "Türkiye ABD'ye Kaygı Bildirdi" (Turkey Communicated Her Concerns to the US), *Cumhuriyet*, 13 September 1984, p.1.8

16 "Ankara ABD'yi Yine Uyardı" (Ankara Warned the US. Again.), *Cumhuriyet*, 14 September 1984, p.1.8.

17 "Özal'dan ABD'ye Sert Tepki" (Özal's Harsh Reaction to the US), *Cumhuriyet*, 15 September 1984, p.8.

18 Ufuk Güldemir, "ABD Cephesi", *Cumhuriyet*, 15 Eylül 1984, s.1.8.

19 "Özal'dan ABD'ye Sert Tepki" (Özal's Harsh Reaction to the US), *Cumhuriyet*, 15 September 1984, p.8.

20 Ufuk Güldemir, "ABD Anlayış Bekliyor", (US Wants Sympathy) *Cumhuriyet*, 20 September 1984, p.1.8

Genocide” from the Senate’s Committee on Foreign Affairs. In this way, the voting of the resolution at the Congress could have been delayed until September 4 and the intermission and the decision would not have become a Congress act.²¹

Nevertheless, despite the Reagan governments attempt to stall the resolution at the Congress, controversial moves were also made as three members of the Congress submitted an “additional petition” in favor of the “Armenian Genocide.” On the grounds that they had been absent on September 10 when the decision on “man’s inhumanity to man” had been taken and that they had not been able to speak at the session, they presented additional petitions to the House of Representatives General Council. Nancy Johnson from Connecticut (Republican), in her petition, stated that “Turkey’s denial does not change the reality of genocide,” whereas Edward Feighan from Ohio (Democrat) stated that “the US has offended the Armenians for not having recognized that Turkey did systematically massacre the Armenians” and stressed that a Congress act would soothe the pain of the Armenians. He also called upon the Americans to be sensitive to the “Armenian Genocide” and stressed his total agreement with the recommendation decision. Richard Lehman from California (Democrat), where the American Armenians constitute a large portion of the voters, extended his full support to the decision and wrote in his petition that “the fact that this decision has passed at the House of Representatives General Council without displaying any sign of partisanship is the proof that we will not allow the past and future mass murders by the barbarians.”²²

Meanwhile, at the US Embassy in Ankara, Ambassador Strausz Hupe met up with the journalists on September 27, 1984 and about the recommendation decision said: “The government policy is certain. It doesn’t foresee such decisions on Armenians and this policy won’t change.”²³ This message was received as a guarantee in Turkey and the US Government’s attempt to stall the resolution at the Congress became effective.

Turgut Özal, who had called the resolution “cheap and dirty politics,” in his written statement dated September 13 and warned about the worsening of the relations, said to the journalists on September 27, 1984: “We act restrainedly, because being the government comes with certain responsibilities...We are the ones with responsibility. We need to calculate our every move. We need to be careful about the next step. I was frustrated at the beginning as well. My first statement was quite firm in that matter. Nevertheless, it is important to keep things at a certain level.

21 Ufuk Güldemir, “Kongre’de Kararı Erteleme Eğilimi” (Congress Tends to Postpone the Resolution), *Cumhuriyet*, 21 September 1984, p.1,6.

22 Ufuk Güldemir, “ABD Kongresi’nde Ermeni Baskısı” (Armenian Pressure on the US Congress), *Cumhuriyet*, 28 September 1984, p. 1,8.

23 “Bilmeden Konuşmayın” (Don’t Speak without Knowing), *Cumhuriyet*, 28 September 1984, p.1,8.

You may not attain desirable outcomes in foreign affairs by yelling too much. Some issues may result in unwanted consequences, if fuelled up. We experienced similar outcomes in the past. We need to learn from our mistakes. We know our public. The Turkish public would not prefer agitation while handling its issues.”²⁴

Those words above demonstrated the softening of the relations. In his interview with Dr Joyce Stan, Director of the Near East Department at the International Strategic Researches, Özal repeated his words, “cheap politics,” on September 3, 1984.²⁵

Richard Perle, Deputy Secretary of Defense, having participated in the conference “Turkish-American Views on the Middle East” organized together by the Heritage Foundation and the Turkish Foreign Policy Institute, emphasized that the recent decisions of the House of Representatives and Senate did not represent the official views of the US government and were received with regret.”²⁶ Having recommended restraint to Ankara, Perle said:

“Turkey overreacts even to the most ineffective decisions of the Congress. What is striking here, the Turkish press does not distinguish between the US Congress and the US administration. This is not responsible action and does not serve the good relations between two countries.”²⁷

While the US Deputy Secretary of Defense Richard Perle recommended restraint to Turkey, the US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Burt, on the subject of the recommendation decisions of the House of Representatives and the Senate’s Council on Foreign Affairs, pointed out that such draft decisions caused concerns over the US attitude towards the Turkish- American relations and assured that the domestic politics calculations would not be allowed to shape the US foreign policy.²⁸

Turkey’s Ambassador in Washington Şükrü Elekdağ stressed at the same conference that the “hostile attitude” of the US Congress had damaged the good relations between the two ally states and harmed the Turkish public.²⁹

24 “Özal’ın Geri Adımı: Başta Heyecanlandım” (Özal Tunes Down: Was Furious at First), *Cumhuriyet*, 28 September 1984, p.1.

25 *Dışişleri Bakanlığı Belleteni*, (*The Bulletin of the Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry*) No:10, Ankara: Dışişleri Bakanlığı Basımevi, September 1984, p.51.

26 *Ibid.*, 19.

27 ABD Savunma Bakan Yardımcısı Perle: Doğusundaki Boşluğu Türkiye Doldurmalı” (US Deputy Secretary of Defense: Turkey Must Fill the Gap in the East), *Cumhuriyet*, 4 October 1984, p.1,11.

28 *Dışişleri Bakanlığı...*, s.19..

29 *Ibid.*

The recommendation decision that had passed at the House of Representatives, but required the ratification of the Senate General Council and the approval of President Reagan at the final stage, and the recommendation decision that had passed at the Senate's General Council, but required the approval of the House of Representatives General Council and the President, were both stalled on September 4 as a result of the Reagan Government's efforts. Thus, the recommendation decisions failed to become Congress acts.

The re-election of Reagan in November meant the re-election of a government that would not support the alleged Armenian genocide cause. This was a relief for Turkey.³⁰

Genocide Allegations – Developments in 1985

In 1985, the Armenian National Committee summoned extraordinarily in Munich of West Germany declared that on the grounds of commemorating the 70th anniversary of the “Armenian Genocide,” they would launch an intensified campaign against Turkey on every possible platform including the American Congress.³¹

Subsequent to this declaration, the supporters of the Armenian lobby were involved in the preparation of new draft decisions to be submitted to the American Congress and came up with draft decisions. Those were draft No. H.J.R. 37 dated January 3, 1985 by Robert A. Joe (Democrat) from New Jersey asking for April 24, 1985 to be declared as the “Man's Inhumanity to Man and Armenian Genocide Day,” draft No. H.J.R. 192 dated March 19, 1985 by Anthony Lee Coelho from California asking for April 24, to be declared as the “Armenian Genocide,” draft No. S.J.R. 101 dated March 28, 1985 by Carl Levin from Michigan and, finally, draft No. H.R. 142 dated April 24, 1985 by Charles Jr. Pashayan (Republican), asking for the recognition of the Armenian genocide of 1915-1923 in the conduct of the Reagan Government's foreign policy.³²

On the US Government's attitude towards those proposals, the US Secretary of State Shultz said: “The US government stands absolutely against the draft decisions submitted to the Congress. We do our best to convey to the Congress our opinion on the matter and concerns about the Armenian terror. However, as is known, in our

30 Sedat Laçiner, *Türk Ermeni...*, p.88.

31 “Ermeniler, 1985 Saldırı Planını Açıkladı” (Armenians Unveil their 1985 Plan of Attack), *Milliyet*, 1 January 1985, p.3.

32 “Tasarı Nısı Dörde Çıktı; ABD Kongresi'nde Ermeni Furyası” (The Number of Resolutions is Four Now: The US Congress is Flooded with Armenian Resolutions), *Milliyet*, 3 May 1985, p.5.

constitutional system the executive body has the power only to recommend and convince. Such drafts are to be finalized and acted upon by the Congress alone. Nevertheless, the Congress acts reflect a point of view. Whatever the result is, it won't change the US Government's Turkey policy. It won't hinder our opposition to such drafts either."³³

Among the proposals pending at the Congress, draft No. H.J.R. 37 by Robert Roe lost its chance of being discussed at the session because of the inadequate number of supports that it had received.³⁴ Other proposals with the exception of draft No. 192 couldn't find their way to the Congress General Council either. Only draft No. 192 was submitted to the Congress.³⁵

The draft prepared by Anthony Lee Coelho from California to declare April 24 as the "Man's Inhumanity to Man" day was brought to the House of Representatives on May 21, 1985. Upon this development, the staff of the Secretary of State informed Turkey that all necessary warnings had been conveyed both by Ankara and Washington to prevent the approval of the draft decision in question. The US Embassy also assured the Turkish Government about the Reagan Government's stance against the proposal.³⁶

Reagan, having stated that he did not approve the draft decision No. 192 pending at the Congress, said: "I acknowledge that this is a sensitive issue and share the pain of those who had suffered during the incidents of 1915. By the way, I am also saddened by the fact that Turks and Armenians have not reconciled for so many years. I am nevertheless against terror." "...We are concerned that such proposals could encourage the Armenian terrorists to intensify their attacks against Turks and Armenian Turkish citizens. They could also harm our relations with an important ally. This is another reason why we are against this proposal. We hope that the Turkish public is now aware that in our government system, the executive body has the power only to convince and supervise the Congress. For that reason, when such proposals become Congress acts, they only reflect the viewpoint of the Congress. They cannot change my decisive stance in favor of Turkey and fight against international terrorism."³⁷

A statement by the Secretary of State expressed deep sorrow about the lives lost during the incidents that had taken place in East Anatolia during the decline of the

33 "Türkiye, ABD İçin Büyük Kazanç" (Turkey is a Gain for the US), *Milliyet*, 30 March 1985, p.9

34 Ermeni Tasarısı Kongre'de" (Armenian Resolution at the Congress), *Milliyet*, 26 April 1985, p.12.

35 Bill Summary & Status 99th Congress (1985-1986)" , <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/d098query.html>, 15 December 2005.

36 "Soykırım Tasarısı ABD'de Oylanıyor" (Genocide Resolution will be voted in the US), *Cumhuriyet*, 21 May 1985, p.1,6.

37 "Tuna Köprülü'nün Reagan'la Söyleşisi" (Tuna Köprülü's Interview with Reagan), *Hürriyet*, 31 March 1985, p. 1,5

Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 19th century. It also underlined that the US was in no position to pass judgment on the incidents.³⁸

As the campaign for the draft decision on the alleged Armenian genocide was intensified, 69 professors from various universities in 25 states and Washington issued a common declaration against the draft decision and warned the members of Congress not to commit an historical mistake.³⁹

As a matter of fact, the draft decision, which had been expected to be discussed at the House of Representatives General Council, was postponed in the last minute to an unspecified date in June and the owners of the proposal gave up on submitting it to the General Council. The Congress authorities later explicated that the House of Representatives Committee for Armed Services had been influential in the postponement of the proposal.⁴⁰

The members of the US House of Representatives Committee for Armed Services paid a visit to Turkey on May 27-31, 1985 and met with the Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of National Defense and Acting President of the Turkish National Assembly.⁴¹ They left the country with their promise of not allowing the draft decision on the “Armenian Genocide” to become a Congress act. Especially the promise of Melvin Price, Albert Bustamente and Marvin Leath who had signed the resolution prior to their visit of Turkey, was significant in the eyes of the Turkish authorities. Melvin Price, having expressed their sympathy with the Turkish public’s sensitivity on the draft decision No. 192, said: “I condemn all genocides. It is not possible to claim otherwise. Nevertheless, I am against this draft decision targeting Turkey, which has nothing to do with the Ottoman Empire of 1915. On this account, I have sent a message to the presidency of the House of Representatives and suggested the postponement of the draft-decision debates until our return. On our return, I will explain the meaning of this draft decision for Turkey to the Congress and ask them to vote against it. Even if the resolution has been approved, our opposition will prevent it from becoming a Congress act.”⁴²

The draft decision No. 192 was put to general vote on June 4, 1985 at the House of Representatives and as a result of the efforts by Turkish authorities and certain steps taken by the US government, the draft suggesting April 24 to be declared as

38 “Ermeni Tasarısı Haftaya Kaldı” (Armenian Resolution Due to Next Week), *Milliyet*, 27 April 1985, p.7

39 *Dışişleri Bakanlığı Belleteni (The Bulletin of the Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry)*, No:17, Ankara: Dışişleri Bakanlığı Basımevi, May 1985, p.25

40 “ABD Kongresi Soykırım Tasarısını Erteleđi” (The US Congress postponed the Armenian Resolution) , *Cumhuriyet*, 22 May 1985, p.8.

41 *Dışişleri Bakanlığı Belleteni (The Bulletin of the Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry)*, No:17, Ankara: Dışişleri Bakanlığı Basımevi, June 1985, p. 29

42 “ABD Temsilciler Meclisi Üyeleri: Ermeni Karar Tasarısını Meclisten Geçirtmeyeceğiz” (Members of the House of Representatives: We won’t Pass the Armenian Resolution), *Cumhuriyet*, 1 June 1985, p.3.

“Man’s Inhumanity against Man and Armenian Genocide Memorial Day” fell short of the minimum 274-vote and was not accepted.⁴³

Turkey’s Attitude to the Rejection of the Draft Decision

The rejection of draft decision No. 192 on the alleged “Armenian Genocide” at the House of Representatives General Council was received with contentment by the Turkish public and the US Government’s persistent attitude against the draft decision was appreciated by the Turkish Government.

The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which saw the rejection of the draft decision as a positive development, acknowledged the contribution of the sensible, realistic and reasonable members of the House of Representatives. Nevertheless, “it is apprehensive that this draft decision prepared within the framework of accusations and inconsistent claims based on fake documents and lies in contradiction with historical facts has been repeatedly submitted to the Congress and that it finds supporters at the national assembly of an ally country. This situation has been under our assessment.”⁴⁴

Vahit Halefođlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs also expressed his contentment with the rejection of the alleged Armenian genocide draft decision at the House of Representatives, but he also underlined that the number of votes casted in favor of the draft decision was “concerning.” On this issue, he said: “It is contending that the resolution on the alleged Armenian Genocide was not accepted at the House of Representatives. Nevertheless, it is also concerning to see that such a proposal distorting historical facts have received so many votes.

Recently, the members of the Armed Service Commission have paid a visit to Turkey and witnessed the Turkish public’s sensitivity in person. Their efforts on their return to convince the rest of the House of Representatives have been apparently influential. This fact demonstrates that those who come and visit Turkey act more aptly than those who haven’t.”⁴⁵

Genocide Allegations – Developments in 1986 and 1987

After the failure of the draft decision in 1985, the Armenian lobby continued with

43 “Ermeni Karar Tasarısı Temsilciler Meclisi’nde Reddedildi” (Armenian Resolution is Rejected at the House of Representatives), *Cumhuriyet*, 5 June 1985, p.1,11

44 “Ankara: İlk Bakışta Olumlu Sonuç” (Ankara: A Positive Result at the First Glance), *Hürriyet*, 6 June 1985, p.3.

45 *Dışişleri Bakanlığı Belleteni (The Bulletin of the Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry)*, No:18, Ankara: Dışişleri Bakanlığı Basımevi, June 1985, p.13–14

its efforts of achieving recognition for the Armenian genocide. The members of the Congress, who had supported the previous draft decisions, delivered speeches on the alleged Armenian genocide in 1986.

On April 8, 1986, a speech delivered at the Senate proposed to declare April 3 as the day to honor the Armenians who had been freedom fighters and deported in 1915 from Anatolia to Syrian deserts and killed systematically between 1915 and 1923 in a number of around 1.500.000.⁴⁶

Similar speeches took place on April 22, 1986 at the Senate and the House of Representatives to commemorate the Armenian victims.⁴⁷ In the speeches at the Senate, the previous statements of Reagan and other American Presidents in support of the Armenian cause were cited, whereas the House of Representatives newspapers from the period 1915-1923 were read to support the cause for the Armenian genocide. Also, having referred to the Senate decision on the Genocide Convention approved in February, some members said that such decisions were symbolic only and would not prevent the future genocides from happening. The world needed to send the message that no genocide would go unpunished.⁴⁸

In the speech delivered by Joseph D. Early from Massachusetts on April 30 at the House of Representatives, April 24 was discussed as a dark day in history just as September 12, 1985, when draft decision No.192 failed to become a Congress act.⁴⁹

The efforts of the Armenian lobby began to bear consequences as they succeeded in bringing the “Armenian Memorial Day” forward at the House of Representatives Commission of Postal and Civil Services on April 23, 1987. The proposal carrying 138 signatures suggested to recognize April 24 as the Armenian Genocide Day from 1988 onwards on the grounds that 1,5 million Armenians killed between 1915 and 1923 in the Ottoman Empire were victims of a genocide, and emphasized that the genocide had taken place before the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. The proposal was accepted at the US House of Representatives Commission of Postal and Civil Services on April 22, 1987 by 18 votes to 4.⁵⁰

On the acceptance of the proposal at the House of Representatives Commission of Postal and Civil Services, İnal Batu, Deputy Undersecretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, “we wish we had more proof that the US Government had

46 *US Congressional Record*, April 8, 1986, s.S3901.

47 *US Congressional Record*, April 22, 1986, p.S4628

48 *US Congressional Record*, April 22, 1986, p.H2101

49 *US Congressional Record*, April 30, 1986, p.E1470.

50 “Ermeni Tasarısı Komisyonundan Geçti” (Armenian Resolution Passes at the Commission), *Cumhuriyet*, 23 April 1987, p.1.12.

done all they could have done.”⁵¹ Batu also stated, “Those who prefer to humor Turkey by saying “the Congress issues numerous decisions on various topics” are in serious error.”⁵² In doing that, he responded to Richard Perle, the US Deputy Secretary of Defense, who said and insinuated that the proposal should not have been given more importance than it normally had. “If the proposal passes as a Congress act, Turkey should not make a big deal out of it. This will not be the end of the world. The act will not extent support to the terrorist acts.”⁵³

In the statement by the US Secretary of State, the US Government repeated its stance against the proposal on the Armenian genocide accepted at the House of Representatives Commission on Postal and Civil Services. It was also stressed that the US Government would do everything in their power to prevent the proposal from gaining further recognition. It was communicated that the US Secretary of General Shultz had arranged meetings with the members of the Commission to prevent the proposal’s acceptance and that it was possible to stall the proposal at the bylaw commission, which had the authority to decide on the proposals to be sent in to the General Council. In the same light, the President of the Congress Jim Wright had the power to postpone the proposal’s voting at the General Council.⁵⁴

The staff of the US Secretary of the State, thus, emphasized once again that they were sympathetic with Turkey’s reaction against the proposal, not only because it damaged the friendly relations with an ally country like Turkey, but also because they took into consideration the Armenian terrorist acts that had targeted Turkish diplomats as well as 4 American citizens.

President Özal also stated that the decision at the House of Representatives Commission on Postal and Civil Service didn’t have a significant meaning, the decision had to go through other stages before it had been finalized, and that the US President had the power to veto the draft and whether he would have used his veto power or not would have been decisive.⁵⁵ At the same time, he sent a message to Ronald Reagan and drew his attention to draft decision No. 132 pending at the US Congress.⁵⁶

Özal’s message was followed by the recall of Şükrü Elekdağ, the Turkish

51 “Dışişleri: Yönetim Gerekeni Yaptı mı?” (Foreign Affairs: Has the Government Done What was Required?), *Cumhuriyet*, 24 April 1987, p.1,13.

52 “ABD ile Ermeni Krizi” (Armenian Crisis with the US), *Cumhuriyet*, 5 April1987, p.1.

53 *Ibid.*

54 “ABD Yönetimi: Ermeni Tasarısına Karşımız” (The US Government: We are opposed to the Armenian Resolution), *Cumhuriyet*, 24 April 1987, p.13.

55 Özal: Reagan Veto Kullanacak mı Ona Bakmalı” (Özal: We Need to Look at whether Reagan will veto or not), *Cumhuriyet*, 24 April 1987, p.1,13.

56 Sedat Ergin, “ABD’ye Uyarı” (Warning to the US), *Cumhuriyet*, 26 April 1987, p.1.

Ambassador in Washington to Ankara and the cancellation of Turkey's President, Kenan Evren's visit to the US. In his assessment of these developments, Richard Perle, the US Deputy Minister of Defense expressed the displeasure caused by the "Armenian Genocide" draft decision – displeasures shared by many American citizens.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, he believed that reflecting the Armenian genocide question on US-Turkey relations would be a big mistake. The only way to put the problem behind seemed to be to solve the problem. Subsequent to the decision taken at the US House of Representatives Committee of Postal and Civil Services on June 18, 1987 the European Parliament voted in favor of a decision declaring that "the tragic actions that took place from 1915-17 was genocide as defined by the UN's General Council dated December 9, 1948.⁵⁸ Having thus recognized the Armenian deportation of 1915 as genocide, the European Parliament called upon the Turkish Government to recognize this genocide. Following the acceptance of the draft decision "Armenian Genocide" at the US House of Representatives Commission of Postal and Civil Services increased Turkey's discomfort. With the decision of the European Parliament, the arguments of the Turkish state had been thus denied completely on an international platform for the first time. Also, the term "genocide" had gained legitimacy on an international platform, which was preoccupied with the Armenian question. The European Parliament's decision would provide legal precedence for any future decision, which would beg for support at the UN or US Congress.

The European Parliament's decision evoked the severe reactions of the Turkish Government. In the statement handed out by Turkey's EU Representative in Strasbourg, these were explained as:

"The European Parliament's decision on the alleged Armenian question is racist in content and partial in character.

Given that the Political Commission has previously acknowledged its lack of jurisdiction on the matter, the decision, therefore, is received with indignation. With this decision, the European Parliament pretends to be a court of history and prefers to act on vindictiveness and partiality. In appreciation of the fact that the European Parliament was neither a court nor an history academy, many political groups with the European Parliament have refused to participate in the voting. We have received with indignation that this respectful institution, which has come forth as the

57 "Ufuk Güldemir'in Richard Perle İle Söyleşi" (Ufuk Güldemir's Interview with Richard Perle), *Cumhuriyet*, 3 May 1987, p.8.

58 "Ağır Tepki" (Severe Reaction), *Cumhuriyet*, 19 June 1987, p. 1, 15.

champion of human rights, has subdued its principles to the irrational demands of some militants. While thus justifying the past cruelty by the Armenians, the European Parliament has already extended its support to future tragedies of similar sort.

This decision taken by the votes of a minor group will serve nothing but the enhancement of the Turkish people's stance against the Armenian claims about the incidents that took place during the First World War in the East Anatolia.

The Turkish government denies these accusations with indignation."⁵⁹

Prime Minister Turgut Özal condemned the decision as well. Özal, who called the decision racist, one-sided and hostile, issued a statement:

*"It is not possible for us to take seriously this decision, which is clearly in defiance with the historical facts and based on unfair, ungrounded and ill-meant accusations against our country. This decision, which has been evidently taken under the pressure of the militant Armenian organizations and their accomplices, has compromised the prestige of the European Parliament."*⁶⁰ In this way, he communicated his reaction.

Subsequent to the decision of the European Parliament, the Özal Government launched an intensified diplomacy campaign to put more pressure on the US Government and to prevent the acceptance of the draft decision sent to the US House of Representatives General Council by the US House of Representatives Postal and Civil Services Commission.

During his visit to Turkey at the end of July 1987 to establish a closer cooperation between two countries, the US Deputy Secretary of State Michael Armacost, in the press meeting following his encounter with Özal, said that "the draft decision on the Armenian genocide does not involve Turkey directly. It is an affair related to the domestic politics and the draft decision does not have a binding character. Last year, the Turkish government reflected the Turkish public's sensitivity on the Congress through a very dangerous campaign. Then we have stopped the draft decision at the Commission. We will continue our efforts to prevent the draft decision from becoming a Congress act."⁶¹ With these words, he sought to mitigate the public's reaction.

59 "İrkçî ve Yanlı Tasarı" (A Racial and Partial Resolution), *Cumhuriyet*, 19 June 1987, p.1,15.

60 "Ağır Tepki" (Severe Reaction), *Cumhuriyet*, 20 June 1987, p.1,13

61 "Askeri Kredi Pazarlığı" (Negotiations for Military Aid), *Milliyet*, 29 July 1987, p.13.

Nevertheless, Armacost's words were not received with enthusiasm in Turkey. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press statement where the language was firm. The statement warned the US Government and the members of the Congress about the Turkish sensitivity on the issue and the undesired consequences that the draft decision may have born:

“As we have repeatedly explicated before, this draft decision is grounded in a distorted approach to history. Even historians cannot reach a consensus on events that had taken place 70 years before. If the Congress carries on with putting the draft decision on vote despite these facts, it will encourage terrorism and award the terrorists who pursued the “Armenian Genocide” claims to justify their terrorist acts. The fact that subsequent to the irresponsible decision of the European Parliament, the terrorist acts taking place in the East and Southeast Anatolia have been intensified should demonstrate this parallel between the resolutions and terror. The aforementioned decision has been included in the agenda of August 4 of the House of Representatives’ General Council, but we still would like to hope that petty political calculations would not take over the common sense. Depending on their previous promises, we must trust, the US will not allow such external factors to damage our relations based on mutual trust. Neither will it allow the finalization of the draft decision.”⁶²

When the resolution began to be discussed on August 3, 1987 at the House of Representatives, the US Secretary of State issued a statement repeating the Reagan Government's opposition to the draft decision. Turkey was an important ally of the US, a strategic member of NATO, given that in US-Turkey relations important national interest were at stake. Armenian terrorists had killed 45 Turkish diplomats since 1975 and the draft decision could be used to vindicate those terrorist acts. Leaders and electors in Turkey would perceive the decision as an ungrounded insult; hence the decision would eventually jeopardize the American strategic interest. Therefore, as the statement concluded, the members of the House of Representatives should reject draft decision No. 132.⁶³

Meanwhile, the US Secretary of State, George Schultz followed the same method that he had used in 1985 for the draft decision No. 192 and contacted every single member at the House of Representatives to communicate to them that Turkey was a friend of the US and a strategic member of NATO.⁶⁴

62 Ankara'dan Washington'a Çağrı: Tasarıya Engel Olun” (Ankara calls upon Washington: Stop the Resolution), *Milliyet*, 2 August 1987, p.8

63 *American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1987*, Washington: Department of State, 1988, pp.373–374

64 *US Congressional Record*, August 7, 1987, p.H7315.

Draft Decision No. 132 on “Armenian Genocide,” the Voting Process

On August 3, the draft decision No. 132 submitted to the House of Representatives Procedures Committee by Richard Lehman from California to declare April 24, the “Armenian Genocide Memorial Day” was agreed to pass on to the House of Representatives General Council by 8 votes to 5. It was also agreed that the draft decision would require simple majority rather than two-thirds majority, which was actually the more common requirement.⁶⁵

Prior to the session at the Procedures Committee, having believed that the relations would receive an irreparable blow, the Reagan Government had increased its pressure on the Congress. On one hand, they started phoning the members of the Congress; on the other hand, Şükrü Elekdag, Turkey’s Ambassador in Washington contacted numerous members of the Congress and sought to explain the damages that the draft decision could cause.⁶⁶

There were strong reactions in Turkey against the acceptance of the draft decision at the Procedures Committee and its transfer to the House of Representatives General Council. The General President of the SHP (Social Democratic People’s Party) said:

“This attitude would revive old, forgotten hostilities and provoke invasionist tendencies, new fights –maybe new wars. What we need is to heal the past wounds. This draft decision demonstrates how inaccurate some politicians are in their fight for human rights and peace. If this draft-decision becomes a Congress act, no matter how trivial it has been presented, it will have negative effects on Turkey-US relations. Preventing this should be the US’s first priority. The Turkish governing party ANAP (Motherland Party) needs to assess all these developments from a realistic perspective.”⁶⁷ Similarly Hasan Esat Işık, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defense said “Turkey can not see itself in alliance with those who accuse her of genocide.”⁶⁸

In face of the upcoming voting at the House of Representatives General Council, Ankara resorted to another diplomatic initiative. Acting Undersecretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mustafa Aşula summoned the US Ambassador in Ankara Robert Strausz Hupe at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and told

65 Ermeni Tasarısı İçin Karar Günü” (Decision Day for the Armenian Resolution), *Cumhuriyet*, 4 August 1987, p.1,8

66 Ermeni Tasarısında Karar Günü (Decision Day for the Armenian Resolution), *Milliyet*, 3 August 1987, p.8.

67 İnönü: ABD ile İlişkiler Altüst Olur” (İnönü: The Relations with the US could be Disrupted), *Cumhuriyet*, 5 August 1987, p.8.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

him that Turkey was expecting much more serious efforts from the US government.⁶⁹

The draft decision put on the House of Representatives agenda of August 4 could not have been discussed because of the priority given to another draft decision. The discussions over the National Nuclear Regulatory Commission's draft decision were given priority.⁷⁰ The resolution on the alleged Armenian Genocide was put into discussion in a way which would not exceed 2 hours on August 6 and in the voting, simple majority was required. The discussions over the draft decision were procedural and not substantive.⁷¹

The debate over the draft decision on the alleged Armenian genocide at the House of Representatives was very similar to the draft decision No. 192, which had been debated at the House of Representatives General Council and denied in 1985. The speeches delivered before the voting displayed that there were 14 representatives in favor of the draft and 16 representatives against it. The main argument of the supporters of the Armenian genocide decision suggested that any future genocide in other parts of the world would be thus prevented.

The main argument of the opponents of the draft decision, on the other hand, stressed that the decision would harm relations with Turkey, a significant ally; hence the national interests of the US. The voting ended with 201 "No" votes, 189 "Yes" votes and 1 "Abstain" vote. For procedural reasons, the draft decision was thus rejected.⁷²

Turkey's Attitude in Face of the Rejection of the Draft Decision

The rejection of the draft decision was received as a positive step from the aspect of the future relations between Turkey and the US. In the written statement by the Information Department of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the voting and rejection of the draft decision for procedural reasons were assessed as such:

"Turkey has for long expressed the inaptness of the political institutions' (such as the US Congress') voting on historical events from an ambiguous

69 Nur Batur, "ABD'ye Son Uyarı" (Last Warning to the US), *Milliyet*, 5 August 1987, p. 7.

70 ABD ile Kritik Günler (Critical Days with the US), *Cumhuriyet*, 5 August 1987, p.1

71 Ufuk Güldemir, "ABD ile Yumuşama Günleri" (Days of Reconciliation with the US), *Cumhuriyet*, 9 August 1987, p.1,8

72 Ufuk Güldemir, "ABD ile Yumuşama Günleri" (Days of Reconciliation with the US), *Cumhuriyet*, 9 August 1987, p.1,8

past. Only historians are qualified enough to judge such events and the historians have not reached a consensus on the "Armenian Genocide" discussions. The Armenians, by presenting their viewpoint as the only viewpoint, attempts to distort the historical facts and deceive the world public.

The rejection of the draft decision by the House of Representatives demonstrates the common acceptance of these facts and the triumph of common sense over ill-intentions. The result of the voting is a positive development in the future of the US-Turkey relations."⁷³

To Turkey's contentment, the draft decision was rejected on procedural grounds and it wasn't voted on substantive grounds. Thus, the House of Representatives showed that it didn't want to distort the debate over the Armenian genocide and the supporters of the draft decision had failed to manipulate the Congress as a propaganda platform.⁷⁴

The rejection of the draft decision was received well by Turkey, which had repeatedly stressed that such decision would have worsened the relations with the US. The firm stance of the Reagan Government played a decisive role in the rejection. The US Government's support extending to Turkey should be seen as proof of Turkey's strategic importance.

Genocide Allegations and 1988 and 1989 Developments

In 1988, because of the presidential elections, no draft decision on the "Armenian Genocide" was submitted. The question of Mountainous Karabagh and the Armenian-Azeri conflict diverted the Armenian Diaspora's attention to the Caucasus. Nonetheless, subsequent to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1989, the Armenian Diaspora reinvigorated their strategy on the genocide allegations. In September 1989, a new draft decision prepared by Robert Dole, the US Senate Minority Leader, evoked a new crisis in US-Turkey relations to have lasted till the end of year.⁷⁵

Immediately after the submission of the draft decision prepared by Robert Dole (Republican) from Kansas, Turkey launched a counter-campaign. Nüzhet Kandemir, Turkey's Ambassador in Washington, arranged meetings with the staff

73 Ufuk Güldemir, "ABD ile...", p.1,8.

74 Sami Kohen, "İstenince Oluyor" (It Happens When Wanted), *Milliyet*, 9 August 1987, p.8

75 Refet Yinanç, "1965'ten Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu" (The Armenian Question. From 1965 to Today), *Yeni Türkiye (New Turkey), Ermeni Sorunu Özel Nosu I (Special Issue on the Armenian Question)*, No:37, Yıl:7, Ocak-Şubat 2001, s. 268.

of the Secretary of State and some senators and explicated the undesired consequences that the decision would have caused.⁷⁶

The Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mesut Yılmaz sent a letter to the US Secretary of State James Baker asked for his support on the matter.⁷⁷

When the US Senate's Justice Commission postponed the debate on the draft decision on the Armenian Genocide for two weeks, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a written statement to re-emphasize that the decision would have an "extremely negative and irreversibly destructive impact" on the US-Turkey relations.⁷⁸

Following the steps taken by Nüzhet Kandemir, Turkey's Ambassador in Washington and Mesut Yılmaz, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Federation of Turkish American Associations in New York and its members all around the US launched a letter and telegraph campaign to the Senators for the withdrawal of the draft decision. In his letter, the President of the Federation asked for the withdrawal of the draft decision and warned that the decision would have jeopardized the American interest in the region. The letter sent by 27 members of the Federation to the Senate reminded that the Ottoman archives provided the best sources on the 1915 incidents and based on that information, the senators should not have backed up this draft decision. The letter also emphasized that in case of the continuation with the voting process, Turkey, as a NATO member and US ally, would have been extremely offended.⁷⁹

The political parties at the Turkish Grand National Assembly wrote a letter to call the US Congress to reject the resolution. The letter expressed their discomfort with the fact that those genocide allegations were kept alive for political purposes. In their statement, the Turkish members of parliament invited the US Senate "to act on commonsense and to reject the draft decision seeking to declare April 24 as the Armenian Genocide Day."⁸⁰

Mesut Yılmaz, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his speech at the Turkish Parliament's General Council, said, "the decision would award the terrorist acts that have killed 72 people." He also stated that "...a serious situation. The Turkish public has doubts over how the cooperation between two countries will continue in

76 *Ayn Tarihi (History of the Month)*, Ankara: Başbakanlık Basın Yayın ve Enformasyon Genel Müdürlüğü, October-November-December 1989, p. 5.

77 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

79 Kongre'ye Mektup" (Letter to the Congress), *Milliyet*, 8 October 1989, p.1,12.

80 ABD ile Tamiri İmkânsız Yara" (Irreparable Damage in the Relations with the US), *Milliyet*, 12 October 1989, p.1,15.

the light of the attitude of the American Congress. The alliance with the US is significant in Turkey's defense policy. Nevertheless, as in every democratic country, our government cannot ignore the Turkish people's justified reaction and indignation. A decision accusing Turkey of a genocide will, within this framework, result in irreparable damage in Turkey-US relations, as well as in development whose outcomes cannot be predicted."⁸¹

In parallel with Mesut Yılmaz who delivered the firm speech at the Turkish Grand National Assembly condemning the attempts at declaring April 24 as genocide day, the opposition parties too criticized the draft decision harshly. The leader of the Social Democratic People's Party Erdal İnönü said: "The US Congress should be aware that US-Turkey relations are at crossroads. They should vote accordingly."⁸²

The leader of the True Path Party Süleyman Demirel stated that although he didn't think the draft decision would be accepted, "President George Bush needs to clarify what his stance is on the issue."

On the draft decision, President Kenan Evren and Prime Minister Turgut Özal also sent letters to the US President George Bush. In his letter President Evren wrote that the 1915 incidents were exploited by the Armenians for political purposes, research at the Ottoman archives should clarify the unclear points, the Turkish government rendered the documents accessible to the researchers and the draft decisions on the Armenian genocide submitted annually to the US Congress crippled Turkey-US relations. Before this "foreign and arbitrary element has been removed from our relations, a satisfactory cooperation between two countries would not be possible."

Prime Minister Turgut Özal stressed in his letter that the genocide allegations stemmed from events of the previous century and the distorted facts spread because the Ottoman archives had not been accessible. Recently, however, the archives were opened to the use of historians and the researches should unveil the truth. He also emphasized that mutual relations had been enhanced with the Bush presidency, but the Armenian genocide allegations was an issue to which the Turkish public was very sensitive and therefore, it still had the potential to damage these good relations.⁸³

Despite Turkey's efforts, the draft decision on the so-called Armenian genocide was accepted by 8 votes to 6 votes at the US Senate's Justice Commission and passed on to the General Council.⁸⁴

81 ABD ile...", p.1,15.

82 "Muhalefet ABD'den Açık Tavır İstedi" (Opposition Wants Clarity), *Milliyet*, 13 October 1989, p.15

83 Bush'tan Kesin Tutum İstendi" (Bush is Asked for a Certain Attitude), *Milliyet*, 14 October 1989, p.9

84 ABD'den Ermeni'ye Yeşil Işık" (Green Light from the US to the Armenians), *Milliyet*, 18 October 1989, p.1,15

Subsequent to the pass of the draft decision No. 212 prepared by the US Senator Robert Dole, the White House and US Secretary of State issued oral and written statements. In the statements they underlined:

“The US government opposes the draft decision. The US government sympathizes with the tragic pain of the Armenian people and their cause for the commemoration of the victims of the 1915-23 incidents. Nevertheless, to the same extent, we believe in the importance of strong and close relations with Turkey.

The US government is aware of the varying opinions on how those horrible events should be named. We hope that the Congress will reach a decision that will not hurt the Armenian people and the Republic of Turkey, the crucial friend and ally of the US.”⁸⁵

As the statement must display, the US Government thus began to pursue a policy to keep both Turkey and the Armenians content at the same time. On one hand, the Bush Government, having responded to Turkey’s reaction, expressed their opposition to the draft decision of Senator Robert Dole. On the other hand, by having asked not to offend Turkey, they insinuated that a softened draft-decision might not have been opposed to.

US Deputy Press Secretary for Foreign Affairs Roman Papaduk, in his briefing at the foreign press center, re-emphasized the US Government’s opposition to the draft decision, but also stressed that “the US Government is extremely sensitive to the Armenians’ concern about the incidents that had taken place between 1915 and 1923.”⁸⁶

The acceptance of the draft decision at the US Senate’s Justice Commission was received in Turkey with severe reactions. In his statement, the President of the Turkish Grand National Assembly Yıldırım Akbulut expressed his discomfort on the issue and expectation that the US Senate would not have granted the Justice Commission’s decision. Thus, the Turkish Grand National Assembly conveyed its stance on the issue to the US and reminded that an undesired decision would have crippled Turkey-US relations.⁸⁷

In a similar light, Mesut Yılmaz the Minister of Foreign Affairs spoke out on behalf of the Turkish Government and drew attention to the fact that the US’s attitude was

85 ABD Kaş Yapayım Derken Göz Çıkardı” (The US Makes Matters Worse while Trying to Help), *Milliyet*, 19 September 1989, p.14

86 “Beyaz Saray’da Ermeni Pazarlığı” (Armenian Negotiation at the White House), *Milliyet*, 20 September 1989, p. 10.

87 “Yılmaz’dan ABD’ye Uyarı” (Yılmaz: A Serious Development), *Milliyet*, 19 October 1989, p. 14.

in offence of the Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement. This attitude was unacceptable and incomprehensible to Turkey. “We expect from the US Government to deny this draft decision together with the pretexts that it is grounded in. We expect to see the active attitude required by our alliance engagements. Otherwise, it will be inevitable for Turkey to draw the necessary consequences and make the required adjustments.”⁸⁸

The Turkish Foreign Minister, Mesut Yılmaz, prior to the voting at the Senate’s Justice Commission had met with the US Secretary of State James Baker in the US and informed him that the Armenian lobby would have sought to influence the US Congress once again to revive the debate on the alleged Armenian genocide. The Turkish Government was expecting from the Bush Government the same effort that the Reagan Government had made. Baker gave his word.⁸⁹

In his speech at the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Mesut Yılmaz reminded the US Government of Baker’s promise and asked them to honor this promise.

In the same speech, Yılmaz also informed the Turkish public that the Turkish Government had in fact taken some precautions and in case of accepting the draft decision at the US Senate “those precautions will be permanent policies.”⁹⁰

Upon the speech by Mesut Yılmaz, the Acting Undersecretary for the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hüseyin Çelem invited US Deputy Ambassador in Ankara, Grossman and communicated to him the message that the draft decision would cause severe problems. The message was conveyed to President Bush:

*“The Turkish Government and public consider the Bush Government’s opposition and influence on this decision-making process vital for the future of US-Turkey relations. Before the inaction of the Bush Government has led to a more serious situation, we expect the US Government to take a more active stance.”*⁹¹

The inaction of the Bush Government in face of this draft decision aiming to make the US Congress recognize the Armenian genocide allegations, and despite the official opposition to the draft decision, the Government’s discourse confirming the “sympathy with the tragic pain of the Armenian people and the necessity of commemorating the victims of the events 1915-1923,” showed that the Bush Government had to take a more active and efficient stance and that Turkey needed

88 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

89 Yılmaz’dan ABD’ye Uyarı” (Yılmaz Warns the US), *Milliyet*, 28 September 1989, p.14

90 *Ayn Tarihi (History of the Month)*, Ankara: Başbakanlık Basın Yayın ve Enformasyon Genel Müdürlüğü, October-November-December 1989, p.40

91 “Yılmaz: Serious...”, p. 14.

to take new measures to prove how serious it was. Accordingly, Mesut Yılmaz, Minister of Foreign Affairs, put the first part of the Turkish Grand National Assembly's measures into force. About the content of the measures, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Defense acted in strict co-ordination and secrecy. These measures did not mean to create tension. They sought "as stressed" to prevent the developments that could bring along tension. The measures were taken simply to clarify Turkey's approach to the allegations and how severe damage that the decision could have caused. About the measures, Minister of National Defense, Safa Giray said:

"These measures are set in accordance with the level that the Armenian slanders and allegations have reached. The draft decision accepted at the Senate's Commission. Now it is at the General Council. If the draft decision is accepted at the General Council as well, then we are obliged to put the second part of the measures into action. We hope that we will not have to resort to any further action on the matter."⁹² Thus, he stressed that the revocation of the measures were up to the Congress' attitude to the Armenian allegations."

About the draft decision No.212 aiming to declare the date April 24, 1990 as the 75th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, Turkey displayed its discomfort through written and oral statements as well as tangible measures. Senator Robert Dole, who had prepared the draft decision No.212, delivered a speech at the Senate's General Council to state that the draft decision should have never had an effect on US-Turkey relations, because it didn't target the contemporary Republic of Turkey and the Turkish Government and it covered the incidents taken place prior to the foundation of modern Turkey. Also, having presented himself as ready to listen to all senators and other Americans concerned with the issue, Dole said:

"I have talked to some of the senators. The US Government has been lobbying against the draft decision. Meanwhile, the Turkish Embassy has contacted many senators. They give the impression that with the acceptance of the draft decision, Turkey-US relations would suffer a huge blow."

With the draft decision, this is not what I aim. I am aware how important Turkey is to NATO. I appreciate Turkey much. For that reason, in the preparation of the draft decision, no phrase had been used that could be offensive to Turkey."⁹³ He stated that the draft decision was prepared to show the effects of genocide on the humanity and how terrifying it was.

92 ABD'ye Askeri Kısıtlama" (Military Restraints for the US), *Milliyet*, 20 October 1989, p.10.

93 Ermeni Tasarısının Sahibi Günah Çıkartıyor" (Confessions from the owner of the Armenian Resolution), *Milliyet*, 21 October 1989, p. 14.

Following this statement by Dole, who underlined that his draft decision did not intend to offend Turkey, the US Government expressed their unease about the military measures taken by Turkey and asked for the revocation of those measures. Despite the mutually agreed secrecy of the measures taken, the US Government gave some specifics about the matter. Within the framework of the measures taken, the US Government unveiled that the US navy's use of Turkish ports were restricted, the US F16 jets' bombardment training was temporarily suspended along with the ongoing modernization of some US bases in Turkey. Again, according to this statement, the periodic meetings on military issues between the Turkish Government and the US Embassy in Turkey were also frozen. The staff of the US Defense Secretary emphasized that Turkey's measures would have damaged the military cooperation programs and that they were trying to convince the Turkish Government. The spokesperson for the US Secretary of State Margaret Tutweiler confirmed that those military measures were taken by Turkey and they had called upon Turkey to revoke them.⁹⁴

In reply to the US Government, the Spokesperson for the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Murat Sungar stressed that the Turkish Government was "cautious optimist" in face of recent developments.

The cautionary measures taken "within the framework of SECA have inclined the US Government to be more efficient. I would like to express this point in a cautious optimism. Nevertheless, we have difficulties in understanding why the US spokesperson has revealed the specifics of the measures that Turkey has taken. We will remain in cooperation with the US Government."⁹⁵

Meanwhile, the Turkish Government, having refused to revoke the measures to enable the Bush Government to stop the draft decision, communicated to the US Government through Turkey's Ambassador in Washington Nüzhet Kandemir that in case of the acceptance of the draft decision at the Senate's General Council, Turkey would have put another package of cautionary measures into action.⁹⁶

In this way, Ankara sent the message that in case of the acceptance of the draft decision at the Senate's General Council, a second party of cautionary measures, this time more serious and tougher, would have kicked in. As long as the draft decision remained on the agenda of the Senate, the first group of measures would not have been revoked.

94 "Washington'da Alarm Zilleri" (Washington is Alarmed), *Milliyet*, 27 October 1989, p.13

95 ABD'ye Ödün Yok" (No Compromise to US), *Milliyet*, 28 October 1989, p.8.

96 *Ayın Tarihi (History of the Month)*, Ankara: Başbakanlık Basın Yayın ve Enformasyon Genel Müdürlüğü, October-November-December 1989, p. 63.

In face of the measures taken by Turkey to prevent the acceptance of the draft decision at the US Senate, the US Government underlined the tension that the draft decision had created in Turkey-US relations and expressed their discomfort repeatedly.

The US Assistant Secretary of State for Europe Raymon Seitz, in a speech delivered at the session “Latest developments in Europe” of the House of Representatives’ Sub-committee on Europe and Middle East, drew attention to the draft decision pending at the Senate and to the problems it had caused. He repeated the opposition of the US Government to the draft decision.⁹⁷

At the bilateral meeting between the US Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and the Turkish Minister of National Defense Safa Giray at the NATO’s Defense Planning Group meeting, Cheney conveyed Washington’s discomfort with Turkey’s military measures against the US because of the draft decision on the “Armenian Genocide.”⁹⁸

In the meantime, Senator Robert Dole who prepared the draft decision No.212 said that he would bring the draft decision forward at the Senate’s General Council in the coming legislative term.⁹⁹

The draft decision No.212, which had coincided with the last days of Özal’s prime ministry, continued to become a problem in US-Turkey relations during the first months of his fresh presidency.

During a NATO meeting in Brussels, the new prime minister of Turkey Yıldırım Akbulut urged the US President George Bush to take a more active role in preventing the draft decision.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, in his visit to Washington in January, President Turgut Özal warned the US once again about the draft decision on the “Armenian Genocide.”¹⁰¹

As messages between the US and Turkey on the matter continued back and forth both ways, on February 20, 1990 the US Senate began to debate the draft decision No.212. On February 22, the draft failed to achieve the 60% vote, which was required be incorporated to the agenda. There were 49 “Yes” and 49 “No” votes. Two senators were absent.¹⁰² At the second voting of the draft decision on February

97 “Ermeni Tasarısında Geri Adım” (One Step Back in the Armenian Resolution), *Milliyet*, 2 November 1989, p.16.

98 <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/AyinTarihi/1989/kasim1989.htm>, 2 August 2006.

99 *Ibid.*, 2 August 2006.

100 <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/AyinTarihi/1989/aralik1989.htm>, 2 August 2006.

101 <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/AyinTarihi/1990/ocak1990.htm>, 2 August 2006

102 http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=101&session=2&vote=00016, 3 August 2006.

27, 1990 at the US Senate, there were 48 'Yes,' 51 'No' votes and one senator was absent. Thus, draft decision No. 212 was rejected.¹⁰³

In the aftermath of the voting at the Senate's General Council, Morton Abromowitz, the US Ambassador in Ankara was summoned at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 1, 1990 and communicated that Turkey had revoked the military measures against the US.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

The draft decision on the "Armenian Genocide," thus, left an important impact on US-Turkey relations during the last days of Turgut Özal's prime ministry. The draft decisions concerning the incidents of 1915-1923 had, in fact, dominated the course of US-Turkey relations throughout Özal's prime ministry. Özal, while having responded with caution to other problematic issues such as the Aegean Sea, Cyprus, SECA and the American aid; hence having avoided sudden and firm reactions, adopted an uncompromising stance against the Armenian allegations and insisted on a solution. There is no doubt that the Turkish public's intensive concern and pressure had been effective. The Özal Government's initiatives had been well received by the Reagan Government and they, in return, had stopped the draft decisions on the genocide allegations at the Congress more swiftly. Nevertheless, following the change of government in the US, the US stance against those allegations also changed. The Bush Government, in the beginning, at least attempted to be responsive to both sides. Because the Bush Government gave some credit to the distorted historical facts, the Özal Government resorted to some measures against the US mostly concerning the military. Also, certain privileges and facilities granted to the US were limited. Those measures resulted in serious tensions between Turkey and the US. As a result, the last days of Özal's prime ministry were preoccupied by a series of meetings and statements between the two parties.

103 http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=101&session=2&vote=00017. 3 August 2006.

104 <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/AyinTarihi/1990/mart1990.htm>, 2 August 2006.

