

# FACTS AND COMMENTS

**Ömer Engin LÜTEM**

Ambassador (Ret.)  
Director, Center for Eurasian Studies  
oelutem@avim.org.tr

**Abstract:** *This article is composed of four chapters. The first one covers relations between Turkey and Armenia, and the initiative that President Sargsyan has made to open a new phase of dialogue to normalize relations. The second chapter concerns the latest development in Turkey concerning the ‘apology campaign’ launched by a group of Turkish intellectuals in mid December. The third chapter analyzes the latest developments in the United States after President Obama’s election. The fourth and final chapter is related to developments regarding the genocide allegations in several countries and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly resolution concerning the archives and historical researches.*

**Key Words:** *Turkish-Armenian relations, Serzh Sargsyan, apology campaign, Obama, genocide allegations.*

## I. RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND ARMENIA

Since the foundation of the Republic of Armenia, high level diplomats and the ministers of foreign affairs of Turkey and Armenia have come together on numerous occasions. However, disagreement persists with respect to the recognition of existing borders, the political usage of genocide allegations, and the Karabakh issue.

After the presidential elections in Armenia; President Gül, Prime Minister Erdoğan and Minister of Foreign Affairs Babacan issued congratulatory messages to their Armenian counterparts- Serzh Sargsyan, Tigran Sarkisyan and Edward Nalbandian- and made a call to resolve the outstanding issues between the two countries. In a statement made on this matter, Nalbandian expressed how these congratulatory messages were well received, that they were responded to favorably and that they are ready to talk frankly and openly to discuss all outstanding issues.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, Nalbandian voiced the hope that a new phase of relations between the two countries will begin.

Meanwhile high level authorities of the US Department of State have been suggesting certain principles and guidelines for finding solutions to the problems between the two countries. In a speech that Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried delivered in the House of Representatives, he supported the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border, called for Turkey to “come to terms with a dark chapter in its history” and stated that Armenia must

<sup>1</sup> “Yerevan Sees ‘Positive’ Signals from Ankara”, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, May 1, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/>.

acknowledge the existing border and disavow any claim on the territory of Turkey.<sup>1</sup> Voicing the same ideas, albeit in a slightly different manner, Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Bryza expressed that he hopes Turkey and Armenia will soon normalize their relations and voiced that this will involve not only a decision by Turkey to restore diplomatic relations and reopen its border with Armenia, but also the Armenian recognition of its existing border with Turkey. Bryza added that he hopes these steps will also lead to a heartfelt discussion of the shared and tragic past of these two friends of the US.<sup>3</sup>

In a speech delivered to the Armenian ethnic community in Moscow, President Serzh Sargsyan stated that he will take further steps to stimulate Armenian-Turkish relations and that he will most likely invite President Abdullah Gül to Yerevan to watch a football match between the Armenian and Turkish national teams. He added that “borders must not be sealed in the 21st century. Regional cooperation would be a better way of asserting stability”. Furthermore, Sargsyan was quoted as stating that “a recommendation is made by Turkey to form an expertise committee which would examine the historic facts of the genocide. We are not against any examination, as examination does not mean to doubt the real facts. But the establishment of such committee would be quite logic if we have set diplomatic relations and have open borders. Otherwise the problem will be prolonged.”<sup>4</sup>

Sargsyan’s recommendations are different than those proposed by US Secretary of State officials. Sargsyan suggests that a joint commission for historical research is formed only after Turkey establishes diplomatic relations and opens its borders with Armenia. However, by stating that they do not question the truth, Sargsyan has in effect made this commission redundant because if the “genocide” is taken to be a fact, what is there for the commission to discuss? In addition to this, Sargsyan did not make mention of the recognition of Turkey’s borders.

Even these cautious words of Sargsyan have led to objections within Armenia. The Dashnaks are against the idea of a commission, because its formation would mean questioning the truth of the genocide, which in turn would lead to a delay in Turkey resolving the ‘genocide’ issue.<sup>5</sup> It is of no surprise that the Popular Movement, supporter of former President Levon Ter-Petrossian, has condemned these words of Sargsyan because of this same reason.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, Minister of Foreign Affairs Nalbandian has expressed that Armenia will continue to seek international recognition of the 1915 Armenian genocide

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2 Testimony of Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, “The Caucasus; Frozen Conflicts and Closed Borders,” July 18, 2008

3 “USA Department of State Hopes For Soonest Normalization of Armenia-Turkey Relations”, *Panorama Armenian Information Portal*, June 25, 2008, <http://www.panorama.am/en/>.

4 “Armenian President Plans to Invite Turkish-Leader to Yerevan”, Interfax News Agency, June 24, 2006; “President Remained Stable to Armenian-Turkish Relationship” *Panorama Armenian Information Portal*, June 26, 2006, <http://www.panorama.am/en/>.

5 Noyan Tapan, “Serzh Sargsyan Given Bad Advice on Issue Connected with Armenian-Turkish Commission, ‘Kiro Manoyan Considers’”, July 1, 2008.

6 “Sarkisian Signals Support For Turkish Genocide Proposal”, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 26, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/>.

despite its readiness to agree to the creation of a Turkish-Armenian commission of historians.<sup>7</sup> These words have rendered the recommendations of Sargsyan meaningless. In this situation, Armenia will establish diplomatic relations with Turkey without recognizing Turkey's borders (territorial integrity), the joint border will open, and only after this will a joint commission of historical research be established. Furthermore, during this time Armenia will be able to continue its campaign of genocide propaganda and strive for other countries to adopt resolutions recognizing the genocide allegations.

In order to justify his invitation made to Turkey, Sargsyan published an article in the American Wall Street Journal- a strategy that Armenian politicians have not resorted to till this date.<sup>8</sup> After expressing his complaints about the border being closed and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline as well as the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway by-passing Armenia, he stated that the existent deadlock needs to be overcome. Within this frame, Sargsyan expressed that he wanted to propose a new phase of dialogue with the government and people of Turkey with the goal of normalizing relations and opening the common border. He added that establishing normal political relations would enable the establishment of a commission to comprehensively discuss all of the complex issues affecting Armenia and Turkey. Furthermore, Sargsyan stated that he invited President Gül to the Turkey-Armenia football match and that this represents a new symbolic start in relations between the two countries. He added that whatever the differences, there are certain cultural, humanitarian and sports links that the people of both countries share, even with a closed border. He continued by expressing that Armenia and Turkey need not and should not be permanent rivals and added that a more prosperous, mutually beneficial future for Armenia and Turkey as well as the opening up of a historic East-West corridor for Europe, the Caspian region and the rest of the world, are goals that can and must be achieved.

The essence of this article provides a discussion of Sargsyan's proposal to establish a new phase of dialogue with Turkey in order to normalize relations and open the joint border. Latterly it appears that Sargsyan has altered his June 21 Moscow speech on one issue: instead of making mention of a joint commission of historians Sargsyan proposes the establishment of a single commission for all outstanding issues between the two countries. President Sargsyan has decided to support this latter idea due to reactions directed against the idea of establishing a joint commission of historical research.

However, should one take Minister of Foreign Affairs Edward Nalbandian's statements into consideration, it appears that there is not a change in Armenia's stance concerning relations with Turkey. Nalbandian expressed that all Armenia wants is the normalization of relations with Turkey without preconditions and stated that President Sargsyan's invitation, which is merely a good will gesture, does not translate into questioning the fact of genocide. In addition he stated that

7 "Genocide Recognition Still On Armenia Foreign Policy Agenda", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 26, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/>.

8 "We are Ready to Talk to Turkey by Serzh Sargsyan", *Wall Street Journal*, July 9, 2008.

Armenia will not make concessions neither with respect to the recognition of Turkey's borders nor with respect to the Nagorno Karabakh issue.<sup>9</sup>

Coming to the issue of the Turkey-Armenia national football match, the Dashnaks not only strongly opposed the Turkish President being invited to Armenia to watch the game, but expressed that in the event that this actualizes they would organize a demonstration of protest against the visit.<sup>10</sup> The opposition Republican Party was disgruntled by this course of conduct and Suren Surenyants, a prominent member of the said party, expressed that if the Turkish President's visit to Yerevan is of such importance to the Dashnaks they should first withdraw from the government and then criticize the President.<sup>11</sup> The day before the match certain Turkish television stations had interviewed the people of Yerevan which set forth that for the most part they were pleased with and supported the Turkish President's visit to Yerevan. Meanwhile, it appears that Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisyan indirectly criticized not only the Dashnaks but also other opponents of Turkey by stating the following: "we should develop a pro-Armenian understanding rather than an anti-Turkish one."<sup>12</sup>

On another note, President Gül's visit to Ani in Kars was interpreted as a gesture towards Armenia. During the groundbreaking ceremony of the Baku-Tibilisi-Kars railway to which Aliiev and Saakashvili also attended, Gül said "this project is open to all countries in the Caucasus. It is open to all that are willing to contribute to stability, peace and good neighborly relations in the region."<sup>13</sup> He brought clarity to his remarks through the following response to a question posed by an Armenian newspaper: "If countries want to be a part of this project, they have to recognize each other's territorial integrity."<sup>14</sup>

Upon President Gül's visit to Armenia becoming probable, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran Manuşehr Mottaki, who wants to lead an active policy in the region, proposed to his Armenian counterpart Nalbandian to be the mediator between the two countries. However, the Turkish Foreign Affairs spokesman specified that they met directly with Armenian officials and that a mediator was not needed.<sup>15</sup>

Prior to President Gül arriving at a conclusive decision regarding his visit to Armenia, both sides made gestures showing their good will towards each other. In this context it was set forth that a visa was not required from Turkish spectators who were going to watch the match.<sup>16</sup> Turkey, on the other hand, increased the number of flights from Armenia to aid those escaping the clashes in South Ossetia and arriving at Armenia.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, mutual expressions of

9 "Armenia Will Never Stop Pressing for Armenian Genocide International Recognition", *PanArmenian Network*, July 30, 2008, <http://www.panarmenian.net/>.

10 "Dashnaks Worried About Sarkissian Support for Turkish- Armenian Panel", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 30, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/>.

11 "Armenian Opposition Party Critical of Dashnaks' anti-Turkish Plans", *Arminfo Independent News Agency*, August 29, 2008, <http://www.arminfo.info/>

12 "Le Premier Ministre Demande de mettre fin aux Sentiments Anti-Turcs," *Armenpress Armenian News Agency*, July 23, 2008, <http://www.armenpress.am/arm/news/news.htm>.

13 See. : [http://www.tccb.gov.tr/sayfa/konusma\\_aciklama\\_mesajlar/](http://www.tccb.gov.tr/sayfa/konusma_aciklama_mesajlar/)

14 "Gül'den Kapalı Sınırın Sırı Noktasından Ermenistan'a Toprak Bütünlüğü Mesajı", *Zaman*, July 24, 2008.

15 PanArmenian.Net, August 2 2008, "Turkey Doesn't Need Iran's Mediation for Normalization Ties With Armenia"

16 "Armenia Scraps Visas for Turkish Soccer Fans," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 14, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/>.

17 "Erivan'a Havada Kota Esnekliği" (Flight Quota Flexibility Granted to Armenia), *Haberler Haber Portalı*, August 14, 2008, <http://haberler.com/>.

goodwill have also continued. The statements of Abdullah Gül expressed at Nevşehir with respect to the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform initiative (made in the aftermath of the conflict in South Ossetia) to the effect that Turkey is not an enemy of anyone in the region,<sup>18</sup> was well received by Sargsyan who expressed that these statements of Gül would engender tangible steps vis-à-vis the relations of the concerned parties. Furthermore, Sargsyan added that there is no sense and necessity for being constant adversaries.<sup>19</sup>

That Armenia has not changed its stance with regard to the outstanding issues with Turkey, could also be surmised from the long interview that Serzh Sargsyan gave to *Radikal* columnist Murat Yetkin.<sup>20</sup>

In this interview, concerning the recognition of Turkey's borders (or territorial integrity), Sargsyan stated that no Armenian official is demanding territory from Turkey, that Armenia respects its international obligations, and that the 1921 Kars Treaty which determines the borders is still in force.

On the issue of genocide allegations, Sargsyan expressed that there is not a single Armenian in the world that does not believe genocide took place. But the question is not who believes in what, it is the fact that, just like Armenia, the Diaspora via its diplomatic representatives is waging campaigns directed against Turkey. Such a course of conduct is difficult to reconcile with normal diplomatic relations.

By stating that a solution to the Karabakh issue would soon be found, Sargsyan hinted at the imminent Azerbaijani presidential elections. However, the statements of Azerbaijani officials, with İlham Aliyev taking the lead, are not very optimistic which point to the continuation of the disaccord concerning the status of Karabakh.

A day later, Murat Yetkin interviewed President Gül.<sup>21</sup> Therein, Gül specified that he read the interview with President Sargsyan very carefully and expressed that he found it to be important. In response to a question concerning diplomatic relations with Armenia and opening the borders, Gül stated that he sincerely supported the recent efforts made in order to maintain peace in the region, stressed the importance of taking advantage of present opportunities, voiced that Turkey wants to solve all issues with its neighbors, attributes importance to solving problems through dialogue, and is in a situation to resolve problems in the region. In addition, Gül expressed his belief that resolving frozen conflicts, and in particular the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, would engender peace and prosperity among the people of the region. Gül voiced his hope that one day every country in the region will take part in the present projects of cooperation. Finally, Gül expressed that the people of the region who exhibit very similar cultures and customs, even though they do not share the same religion and

18 "Turkey No Enemy to Armenia: Gül", *Agence France Presse*, August 16, 2008, <http://www.afp.com/afpcom/en/>.

19 Noyan Tapan, "Serzh Sargsyan: Attempts To Resist With Armed Forces In A Struggle For Right Of Self-Determination Are Fraught With Serious Military And Geopolitical Consequences", August 25, 2008.

20 Murat Yetkin, "Gül'ün Ziyaretine Çok Önem Veriyoruz", *Radikal*, August 28, 2008.

21 Murat Yetkin, "Hepimiz Aynı Toprağın Çocuklarıyız", *Radikal*, August 29, 2008.

ethnic roots, would attain a level of stability and prosperity beyond their expectations once an atmosphere of security is established.

The President's date of visit to Armenia was announced two days before the match. The main reason for this delay was ongoing talks with Armenia in order to ascertain the issues that would be discussed as well as necessary security measures and probable demonstrations. After the report of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ünal Çeviköz was evaluated this visit became certain.

One day prior to announcing his forthcoming visit to Armenia, President Gül discussed the Cyprus issue as well as questions related to Georgia and Iran with US President George W. Bush.<sup>22</sup>

The President's visit to Yerevan lasted less than a day. After meeting with Sargsyan in the Presidential Palace and watching the match Gül returned to Turkey.

Honoring Gül, Sargsyan said: 'You accepted our invitation. The hand extended was not left hanging. You made us happy. I thank you in the name of all the Armenian people'.<sup>23</sup> On the way to the city from the airport, the Dashnaks organized demonstrations against Gül and his delegation, held up disapproving banners, and some vigorously hissed the Turkish national anthem during the match. But these demonstrations did not cause any serious discomfort for Gül and his delegation.<sup>24</sup>

On his return to Turkey, in a statement made at the airport, the President expressed that he had very positive feelings and thoughts about the visit and expressed that during this occasion constructive and sincere talks were made especially with respect to bilateral relations and developments in Georgia. Furthermore, he voiced his pleasure concerning Armenia's support of the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform Initiative. Gül also stated that Turkey-Armenia relations, the Northern Karabakh issue, and Azerbaijan-Armenia relations were discussed and that a consensus was attained with respect to lifting, by way of mutual dialogue, all obstacles that stood in the way of bilateral relations. In brief, he expressed that the visit was productive and that it carries with it a promise of hope for the future.<sup>25</sup>

On the flight back to Turkey, the President, during a conversation he had with some journalists mentioned that neither the 'genocide' nor the land border issue was discussed. He stated that Sargsyan introduced the topic of Karabakh, that it was discussed in detail and expressed that the visit may contribute to this issue being resolved. The President added that the psychological barrier in the Caucasus was surmounted.<sup>26</sup>

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22 *Zaman*, September 3, 2008.

23 *Hürriyet*, September 7, 2008.

24 *Hürriyet*, September 7, 2008.

25 [http://www.tccb.gov.tr/sayfa/konusma\\_aciklama\\_mesajlar/aciklama\\_mesajlar/](http://www.tccb.gov.tr/sayfa/konusma_aciklama_mesajlar/aciklama_mesajlar/)

26 "Gül'den soykırım açıklaması", *Hürriyet*, September 7, 2008.

In response to a question posed by a journalist about a week after the said visit, Serzh Sargsyan stated that Gül expressed his readiness to help resolve the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Sargsyan voiced his pleasure in the face of this proposal as “only an abnormal man can turn down an offer of help.” However, Sargsyan added, “there should be made a distinction between assistance and a mediation... any step designed to contribute to the OSCE Mink Group co-chairs' activities in the resolution of this issue should be assessed positively.”<sup>27</sup>

After the Yerevan visit, President Gül sent a letter thanking Serzh Sargsyan for the hospitality shown to him and his delegation. Also, having expressed that the discussions during the visit were fruitful, Gül invited Sargsyan to Turkey for the return leg to be held between the national teams in 2009.<sup>28</sup>

The President's visit to Yerevan was criticized by the main opposition parties in Parliament, namely The Republican Peoples Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP).

CHP Party Chairman Deniz Baykal stated that there are three main reasons why normal relations cannot be established with Armenia. The first reason is Armenia not recognizing Turkey's national borders and territorial integrity; the second is Armenia using every possible means at its disposal to support the allegation of genocide directed against Turkey; and the third is the occupation of Azerbaijani territory and Northern Karabakh by Armenia. After stating these reasons, Baykal said: “You are asking me if I would go to Yerevan; I would rather go to Baku to watch a match.”<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, MHP Chairman Devlet Bahçeli in a written statement expressed that Armenian policies revolving around a hatred of Turkey is the biggest obstacle in the way of establishing normal relations between the two countries. In this context he mentioned Armenia not recognizing Turkey's territorial integrity and borders, Armenia not relinquishing territorial claims as stated in its Constitution, and the Armenian occupation of one fourth of Azerbaijan's territories. Additionally he mentioned that there are no political, moral or legitimate grounds for placing Turkey in a pleading position to repair relations between the two countries and further expressed that should Armenia professedly accept the Joint Commission for Historical Research, this will not accord any prestige to Turkey. Moreover, Bahçeli expressed that Gül has sworn to protect the glory and honor of the Republic of Turkey, that under these circumstances going to Yerevan is not compatible with his office and voiced his hope that the President would not engage in a course of conduct that would dent the honor of Turkey.<sup>30</sup>

As for Armenia, the visit of president Gül was welcomed by Levon Ter Petrossian,

27 “Armenian Leader Set to Improve Relations with Turkey, Azerbaijan”, *Armenian Public TV*, September 13, 2008.

28 [http://www.tccb.gov.tr/sayfa/konusma\\_aciklama\\_mesajlar/aciklama\\_mesajlar/?id=4571](http://www.tccb.gov.tr/sayfa/konusma_aciklama_mesajlar/aciklama_mesajlar/?id=4571)

29 “Baykal'dan Gül'e Ermeni Taşı!” *Hyetert*, September 1, 2008.

30 “Tarihi Gaflet”, *Akşam*, September 2, 2008.

former Head of State and Chairman of the Armenian National Congress-the main opposition party. Petrossian expressed that the match offered a good opportunity for thawing bilateral relations.<sup>31</sup>

In brief, on September 10, 2008, the Dashnaks, also known as the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Party, published a proclamation concerning relations between Turkey and Armenia.<sup>32</sup> To summarize, this proclamation specifies that Armenia and Turkey, as neighboring states, must work toward the normalization of bilateral relations. However, good neighborly relations can only be established after the recognition by Turkey of the Armenian genocide and the restoration of the rights of the Armenian people. The lifting of the blockade and the establishment of diplomatic relations can only serve as first steps on this path. Turkey must not be party in the Artsakh conflict; it should not talk to Armenia with preconditions, and must relinquish its policy of blockading and isolating Armenia. Since 1998 Armenia is pursuing a foreign policy based on universal recognition and condemnation, including by Turkey, of the Armenian genocide. Armenia views this not only as a restoration of historical justice, but also as a way to improve the overall situation and mutual trust in the region, thus preventing similar crimes in the future.

Ken Hachikian; Chairman of the main Dashnak organization in the United States, the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), sent a letter setting forth similar views and requests to U.S. Senators and members of the House of Representatives prior to Gül's Yerevan visit. The said letter requested lifting domestic restrictions on the study, discussion, and recognition of the Armenian genocide, as well as abandoning opposition to the international recognition and commemoration of this crime, removing restrictions on Armenian stewardship of cultural and religious heritage sites within Turkey, ending military support for Azerbaijan's armed forces, and lifting all restrictions on the collective rights of the Armenian community in Turkey.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to this, Ken Hachikian also called for the President to visit the genocide memorial in Yerevan.<sup>34</sup>

In the light of the foregoing, it can be gathered that the Armenian Dashnaks, despite being a part of the coalition government, have adopted a different stance than that of the Head of State concerning the policy to be exercised against Turkey. Should Turkey and Armenia engage in cooperative efforts at a future date, it would be reasonable to expect the Dashnaks to withdraw from the coalition government.

The strongest reaction to Abdullah Gül's visit to Yerevan came from the Azerbaijani media and some Azerbaijani politicians. For the most part a lot of material of a speculative nature was published that argued the visit did not

31 "Gül's Yerevan Visit Welcomed by All But Extremist Opposition", *Today's Zaman*, September 4, 2008.

32 ARF-Dashnaktsutyun Press Office, September 10, 2008.

33 "ANCA Outlines Concerns About Gül Visit to Armenia", *Armenian National Committee of America*, Press Release, September 4, 2008.

34 "ANCA: Gül Should Attend Armenian Genocide Memorial In Yerevan", *PanArmenian Network*, September 5, 2008, <http://www.panarmenian.net/>.



materialize on Turkey's initiative but as a result of EU and US pressures, that the border could be opened without consideration of its implications vis-à-vis Azerbaijan and that Turkey could forgo its stance of supporting Azerbaijan in return for Armenia's recognition of Turkey's territorial integrity.<sup>35</sup>

This negative atmosphere was not present within the Azerbaijani government. The main reason accounting for this situation is that high level information concerning the visit was given to Azerbaijani officials. For example, information in this regard was relayed in advance to Elmar Mammadyarov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, on the occasion of his trip to Turkey to discuss the events unfolding in Georgia.<sup>36</sup> Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, having gone to Baku on August 21 to discuss the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform Initiative, obtained the opportunity to explain to İlham Aliyev the reasons behind the President's prospective visit to Armenia. Despite these explanations, Azerbaijani officials did not adopt a stance empathizing with and/or supporting President Gül's visit. A more neutral tone was espoused and in line with this, statements to the effect that the visit is a domestic affair Turkey and that Azerbaijan can not interfere in it<sup>37</sup> or that the Turkish State has the right to pass a decision on all issues so they cannot state an opinion on this issue<sup>38</sup> were voiced. Such statements, without protesting Turkey's decision, indirectly expressed unease and disappointment.

This situation in Azerbaijan made it necessary for President Gül to visit Baku. Four days after the Yerevan visit, Gül went to Baku and discussed with İlham Aliyev the details of his meetings in Armenia, the latest situation in the region, Turkey's Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform Initiative and certain other topics concerning both countries.<sup>39</sup> After a joint press conference, Gül returned to Turkey.

On his flight to Baku, the President expressed that Azerbaijan should not feel any discomfort about his visit to Armenia; and that if there are those who continue to do so this is unfair to Turkey as Turkey has sacrificed its interests from time to time as the greatest supporter of Azerbaijan.<sup>40</sup> No doubt, Turkish-Armenian relations were discussed during the visit İlham Aliyev paid to Turkey in November following his election as President for the second time. Turkey has regularly informed Azerbaijani high level officials concerning its relations with Armenia. To this end, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey Ali Babacan paid Azerbaijan a visit on two separate occasions; the first materialized in December 2008, and the second in February 2009.

With respect to bilateral relations, the first was held in Yerevan the night of September 6 when a meeting bringing together the presidents was followed by

35 Ramin Abdullayev, "Azeriler Türk-Ermeni Diyalogundan Tedirgin", *NTV-MSNBC*, July 21, 2008.

36 *Today's Zaman*, July 30, 2008

37 Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmar Mammadyarov, "Azerbaijan Cannot Interfere in Turkish President's Visit to Armenia", *Azerbaijani Press Agency*, September 4, 2008.

38 "Participation of Azerbaijan and Armenia in any Platform is Impossible Unless Nagorno Karabakh Conflict is Solved", *Azerbaijani Press Agency*, September 8, 2008.

39 Cumhurbaşkanı'nın Azerbaycan'a Hareketinden önce Havaalanında yaptığı açıklama, September 10, 2008. [http://www.tccb.gov.tr/sayfa/konusma\\_aciklama\\_mesajlar/aciklama\\_mesajlar/](http://www.tccb.gov.tr/sayfa/konusma_aciklama_mesajlar/aciklama_mesajlar/)

40 "Gül: Azerlerin Rahatsız Olması Haksızlık Olur", *ntvmsnbc*, September 10, 2008, <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/>.

a meeting between Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan and his Armenian counterpart Edward Nalbandian. In a statement issued by the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,<sup>41</sup> Nalbandian reaffirmed the principal position of the Armenian side to establish relations without preconditions. He also stressed, that Armenia considers President Gül's visit as a serious stimulus in that direction and that Armenian and Turkish Foreign Ministers expressed their determination on the comprehensive normalization of bilateral relations. The two mentioned that consistent steps in that direction will be taken and that they examined the Karabakh peace process, and agreed to gather in New York at the United Nations General Assembly meetings. Furthermore, the statement highlighted that Armenia welcomed Turkey's Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform Initiative.

From this statement one makes note of Armenia's insistence to establish diplomatic relations without any preconditions, that is, opening Turkish borders and establishing diplomatic relations. Also one may surmise that the issues of recognizing Turkey's territorial integrity (or borders) and that of the genocide allegations were not brought to the agenda. However, from subsequent statements made by Minister of Foreign Affairs Babacan, one can deduce that these issues were indeed addressed. Babacan, during a television interview, stated that it is important to bring the events of 1915 to light and that the proposal of the Joint Commission for Historical Research is still on the table. Expressing his desire that Armenia opens its archives he stated that "regarding this issue a step forward appears to have been taken."<sup>42</sup> Babacan further expressed that Turkey is ready to face its past and whatever this proposed commission comes up with at the end of its studies.<sup>43</sup> That there exists a strong desire on the part of Armenia to resolve the territorial claim advanced against Turkey and that Armenia understands Turkey's sensitivities with respect to this issue and vice versa was also touched upon in the said interview.<sup>44</sup>

In conclusion, from President Gül's Yerevan visit and the subsequent meetings held between the ministers of foreign affairs of both countries, it is possible to deduce the following:

- Armenia has accepted Turkey's Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform Initiative.
- Armenia has agreed to Turkey contributing to the resolution of the Karabakh issue. However, the Minsk Group's mediation task will continue.
- At present a decision has not yet been arrived at concerning the proposal of a joint commission of historical research to analyze the events of 1915 (namely, the genocide allegations); however, talks on this issue are continuing. Alongside the establishment of this commission, it appears

41 [http://www.armeniaforeignministry.com/news/frameset\\_arch.html](http://www.armeniaforeignministry.com/news/frameset_arch.html)

42 "Ermenistan ile Diyalog Sıklaşacak", *CNNTurk*, September 10, 2008.

43 "Babacan Presses Armenia For Joint Studies of Genocide Claims", *Today's Zaman*, September 13, 2008.

44 "Babacan Presses Armenia..."

probable that Armenia will request the establishment of other commissions to enhance economical, cultural, and diplomatic relations.<sup>45</sup>

According to the press, talks are taking place in Bern between high-level officials who are working on a goodwill declaration.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, Ali Babacan and Edward Nalbandian have been engaging in bilateral talks at every international meeting they have jointly taken part in (foremost that of the United Nations).

It should be stated that President Gül's visit to Armenia has left a positive impression on the Western public. Albeit to varying degrees, the great majority of the news covered by the media in these nations viewed the said visit in a favorable light. The press of the Armenian diaspora resorted to a fairly moderate language. The main reason accounting for this situation is the pleasure engendered by the prospect of resolving ingrained problems between Turkey and Armenia. Furthermore, receiving good news regarding the Caucasus at a time of great concern due to the conflicts between Georgia and Russia, has most likely led to a sense of relief.

Official circles within the US and the EU, alongside the general public, have also voiced their positive opinions on this issue. For example, French President Nicolas Sarkozy (who usually displays an adverse stance against Turkey), commended the political courage of Gül and Sargsyan and noted that both countries showed the world that reconciliation is possible through openness, dialogue and respect of others.<sup>47</sup> Also, in a statement of the Presidency of the Council of EU, the visit was made mention of as being historic and highly symbolic, and the hope that that this visit constitutes a first step in the normalization of tense relations between the two countries was voiced.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the European Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn referred to the trip as an important first step and hoped it would soon be followed by others that lead to a full normalization of relations between these two countries.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, in a speech delivered before the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs, the US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Daniel Fried expressed that they are delighted the president of Armenia invited President Gül and that he accepted this invitation. Fried added that the US had been encouraging Armenia, Turkey and Azerbaijan to work toward settling their differences and voiced that they want Armenia's border open.<sup>50</sup>

In the aftermath of President Gül's Yerevan visit, certain positive developments have taken place concerning the relations between the two countries. To cite an example, Turkey abandoned the prior notification protocol previously required for Armenian passing transit through Turkish airspace.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, in contrast to previous years, representatives of the official Turkish offices abroad are allowed to participate to the invitations of official Armenian offices.<sup>52</sup>

45 "Ermeni Tarihi Adıma Yaklaşıyor. Ortak Tarih Komisyonu Yolda", *Zaman*, September 15, 2008.

46 "Ermenistan' la Bern 'de 2. Tur Gizli Görüşme", *Hürriyet*, September 19, 2008.

47 "President Gul's Yerevan Visit boost Turkey's credentials in Europe", *Today's Zaman*, September 8, 2008.

48 "EU Hails Turkey 's 'historic' Armenia visit", *EU Observer*, September 5, 2008, <http://euobserver.com/>.

49 "EU Hails Turkey 's 'historic' Armenia..."

50 Ümit Enginsoy, "US Urges Turkey To Open Border", *Turkish Daily News*, September 11, 2008.

51 "Ermenistan'a Hava Ulaşımında Sınırlamalar Kalktı", *CNN Türk*, September 26, 2008.

52 "Türk Büyükelçiliklerine Ermenistan Resepsiyonlarına Katılma İzni", *Zaman*, September 27, 2008.

However, this positive atmosphere between offices has not been paralleled by the sentiment of the general Armenian public. In a public opinion poll conducted in the beginning of October, %11 of the people were against any form of cooperation with Turkey; for %33 reconciliation with Turkey was impossible, for %76 the establishment of relations with Turkey would be possible if the Armenian side observes Turkey's preconditions and for %64 the establishment of relations with Turkey was possible but Armenia must be careful and not forget that Turkey is an enemy.<sup>53</sup>

Approximately two months later, in another poll conducted by the Gallup Institute,<sup>54</sup> although the same questions were not asked, a slight change in public opinion in Turkey's favor was witnessed. According to the said poll, only %7 was against any form of cooperation with Turkey, and %18 would cooperate with Turkey only if the "genocide" is recognized. Accordingly, %25 is against establishing ties of cooperation with Turkey. Those in favor of instituting cooperative efforts with Turkey short of any preconditions amount to %26. Of those who took part in the poll %47 is of the view that a degree of caution should be exercised concerning relations with Turkey. Finally, %50 views Turkey as an economic partner. In conclusion, it would not be wrong to say that there is a degree of indecisiveness in Armenia with respect to engaging in political cooperation with Turkey; however there appears not to be such a problem concerning economic cooperation.

Armenian people have a generally negative, or undefined, perception of Turkey. No doubt, Kocharyan's anti-Turkish rhetoric during his ten year term of office as President played an important role in this respect. This situation has made Sarkisyan, who is bent on normalizing relations with Turkey, display a hesitant and susceptible stance vis-à-vis Turkey. For instance, President Gül in his speech on September 23, 2008 at the United Nation General Assembly used the terms 'Karabakh under occupation' and Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisyan, who usually does not talk about foreign affairs, expressed that these words had a cold shower effect and contained some hazards.<sup>55</sup>

President Serzh Sargsyan, unlike his predecessor Kocharyan, is determined to resolve the outstanding issues with Turkey. In a speech he delivered at the United Nations General Assembly, Sargsyan stated that the most important decision he took together with President Gül was not to leave the current problems to future generations. In tandem with this, Sargsyan expressed his belief that it is necessity to move fast and resolutely in this direction.<sup>56</sup>

In the face of Sargsyan's approach, for the most part the diaspora pursues a 'wait and see' policy. However, the discomfort of the Dashnak Party concerning this matter continues. The bureau of this party, meeting in Beirut between the dates

53 "Thirty-Three percent of Armenian Citizens Believe Reconciliation With Turkey Impossible", *Armenian Center for National and International Studies Public Opinion Polls*, October 1, 2008, <http://www.arminfo.info/>.

54 "La Population de l'Arménie Estime qu'Erevan Doit Être Prudent Dan Ses Relations Avec La Turquie", *Nouvelles Armenie Magazine*, December 5, 2008, <http://www.armenews.com/>

55 "Cold Shower", *Hayots Ashkhar Daily*, October 17, 2008

56 "RA President: During Talks With Gül We Decided Not to Leave Current Problems to Future Generations", *PanArmenian Network*, September 26, 2008, <http://panarmenian.net/>.

of November 29- December 1, expressed their views concerning the relations between the two countries. Accordingly, Armenia and Turkey should continue their efforts toward normalizing relations. However, according to the Dashnak Party, Turkey has not taken any positive steps and to the contrary has used ongoing meetings as a hindrance to the genocide recognition process and has made the relationship of the two states conditional upon Armenia's relations with a third state, namely Azerbaijan. With this last point, the Dashnak Party implied that during negotiations conducted with Armenia, Turkey also endeavors to protect the interests of Azerbaijan.

Furthermore, the Dashnak Party stated that it was appreciated that the highest authorities of Armenia are in accord and that the recognition and condemnation of the Armenian genocide in general and by Turkey in particular is one of the strategic directions of Armenia foreign policy. Upon the insistence of the Dashnak Party, efforts were exerted for the international recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations by the governments during Kocharyan's term of office and also subsequently by the Sargsyan government. However, as will be touched upon below, neither during Kocharyan's term nor Sargsyan's term was a request made that Turkey recognizes the genocide allegations. In fact that such a request was not advanced within the frame of normalizing relations was clearly expressed. Against this background, the Dashnak Party making remarks to the contrary is somewhat of a criticism directed against Sargsyan.

Another issue of concern to the Dashnak Party is that the present importance of resolving Armenia-Turkey relations should not be valued more than the rights of generations to come. At first glance, these words might not appear to have a profound meaning; however, this statement essentially expresses that Armenia should not recognize Turkey's borders. According to the Dashnaks, Armenia as it stands at present, can not effectuate its territorial claims over Western Armenia (Eastern Anatolia). But in the future this situation could change. In other words, Armenia could grow strong enough to acquire these territories. As such, Turkey's present borders should not be recognized. If not, the rights of future Armenian generations would be relinquished. This negative stance of the Dashnaks, is not completely shared by the diaspora. As mentioned above, the diaspora has a tendency to wait and see how events unfold.

In conclusion, President Gül's Yerevan visit has started a new era in the relations between these countries. Although the negotiations that took place between high level officials have not born fruit within a short span of time, both sides still look ahead at the year 2009 with hope. As a matter of fact, Minister of Foreign Affairs Babacan has expressed that the two countries have never come this close to finding a solution to the problem present since the First World War, and stated that even if they have not yet reached the stage of resolving this issue, great progress has been made in this regard.<sup>57</sup> Nalbandian stated that he shared Babacan's views, and expressed that they truly were very close to resolving this problem.<sup>58</sup>

57 "Ermenistan ile Çözümüne Hiç Bu Kadar Yakın Olmadık", *Hürriyet*, December 22, 2008.

58 *Asbarez Armenian Daily Newspaper*, January 21, 2009, <http://www.asbarez.com/>.

## II. DEVELOPMENTS IN TURKEY

During the period reviewed, the most important development for the Turkish general public has been the initiation of “the apology to the Armenians campaign” by a group of Turkish intellectuals in mid December.

On the website, [www.ozurdiliyoruz.com](http://www.ozurdiliyoruz.com) (we are apologizing.com), the following text has been opened for signature:

My conscience does not accept the insensitivity showed to and the denial at the Great Catastrophe that the Ottoman Armenians were subjected to in 1915. I reject this injustice and in my share I empathize with the feelings and pain of my Armenian brothers and sisters. I apologize to them.

The words “great catastrophe” in this text are the translation of what is used in the Armenian language to denote the Armenian genocide: Metz Yegern. It is highly probable that this term was intentionally used in the text, bearing in mind the negative reactions the word genocide elicits in Turkey. As such, those who drafted the text and the individuals who signed it thereafter have indirectly adopted a stance accepting that the Armenians were subjected to genocide.

To justify or necessitate an apology being made, in the first instance there needs to be a concrete act that harmed or at least hurt the individuals or communities in question. Since about a century has elapsed since the events of 1915, the people of today can not be held responsible for them. This could only be possible if one’s grandfather bore responsibility in connection with the relocation of that time-cases of which are very few and far between. Even if such a case were at hand, it should be noted that no form of responsibility for a crime is hereditary. No one can be held accountable for crimes committed by their ancestors; therefore, in such an event they are not required to apologize and even if they are to do so, it would not have any legal consequences.

Announced as constituting a personal venture, the said campaign in reality possesses the attributes of a political initiative as efforts have been exerted to have it supported by as great a number of people as possible. In fact, if at the end of this campaign, planned to last at least for a year, a great number of people embrace the text of apology, then it may have some political consequences.

The most significant of these is that it would be more difficult to defend the view that the Armenians had not experienced genocide, and consequently, to prevent resolutions from being passed by various nations’ parliaments starting mainly with the U.S. Congress.

Secondly, should a large number of Turks subscribe to the genocide thesis; there would be no need to establish a joint commission of historical research which constitutes an important component in the ongoing negotiations with Armenia.

Thirdly, if the number of those siding with the idea of apologizing to Armenians are high, then this would soon bring the issue of acknowledging the Armenian

“genocide” to the agenda and it would be easier for those who have apologized to acknowledge and speak of the events of 1915 as such. After a while, this would be followed by a claim for paying compensation to Armenians, and if this also is accomplished, then will come the stage whereby the demand to cede some East Anatolian territory to Armenia will be voiced. In short, the apology campaign is not at all an innocent initiative and it constitutes the first step of a process which may have very serious drawbacks.

In our opinion, the most negative aspect of this campaign is that it has regard solely for the feelings and sorrows of Armenians and pays no attention to the great disasters the Turks have experienced in the near past and makes no mention of those who have been expelled from the territories lost by the Ottoman Empire starting as of the 19th century, most of them brutally killed or who took refuge in Thrace and Anatolia under very miserable conditions. However, the atrocities the Turks and other Muslims faced during and following the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, the Balkan Wars, World War II and the Turkish War of Independence have been well documented. Furthermore, the murder of Turkish diplomats by Armenians about 20 years ago, solely because they represented Turkey, should also be considered within this context. Making no mention of these disasters represents a course of conduct acknowledging the suffering of the Armenians to those of the Turks and hence fundamentally represents an unjust attitude against Turkey and the Turks.

The number of those who apologized on this site that opened for signing on December 15 2008 reached 26,000 on December 31, 2008 and progressed very slowly afterwards.<sup>59</sup> As of March 15, 2009 the figure is 29,408.

About two days after the apology campaign was launched, presumably December 17, another site named [www.ozurbekliyorum.com](http://www.ozurbekliyorum.com) (I expect an apology.com ) was opened on the internet. According to this site, those who are supposed to apologize are not the Turks, but the Armenians for the various massacres they have perpetrated against the Turks and the other Muslims.<sup>60</sup> By December 31, 2008, the number of those who expressed they are expecting an apology was 112,300- subsequently the headway made in this respect slowed down. As of March 15, 2009 the figure is at 116,750. Accordingly, the figure for those who expect apology is more than four times that of those who offer it.

However, other internet sites and “facebook” groups have also opposed the “We Apologize” campaign apart from the above mentioned “I Expect an Apology” campaign. As of December 30, 2008 the number of those who

59 As per March 15, 2009, this figure has reached 29,408.

60 This text was put on the web site:

I believe that all Armenians and their supporters should apologize for the atrocities that the Armenians had exposed to the Ottoman people in the past.

I declare that I can not tolerate these; and on behalf of the Turkish world and Ottoman Descendants, I expect apology! Mustafa Kemal Atatürk; “They had killed thousands of blameless and aidless mothers and children with torture. It was the Armenians who had done this atrocity that has no equal in the history”, p.260-261.

assumed an opposing stance against the “We Apologize” campaign is over 665,000.<sup>61</sup> This figure is 25 times that of those who have apologized.<sup>62</sup>

The “We Apologize” campaign has been severely criticized in Turkey. The first body that stood up against it is the Retired Ambassadors Group in Ankara. In its declaration, published in the “Current Documents” of our periodical, the Group qualified the campaign as unjust, erroneous and as standing in conflict with national interests. Furthermore, it underlined that the campaign constitutes an act of disrespect to our history, and betrayal to those who lost their lives as a consequence of Armenian terror, stated that the sufferings and losses of the Turkish folk due to Armenian uprisings and terror acts are no less than those of the Armenians, and placed special emphasis on the Armenian terror activities of the 70’s and 80’s that targeted the Turkish diplomats. The Group expressed that against this background the Armenians should apologize from the Turkish nation. It was noted that in our day Armenian terror completed its function and that the next scheme is apologizing which will be followed by designs to obtain financial compensation and territorial claims. The declaration concluded with the Group’s wish that utmost care is paid to not becoming an instrument of such a plan, and that if deemed absolutely necessary the two sides may mutually share the sorrows they both experienced throughout history.

The retired ambassadors’ initiative was covered by the foreign press<sup>63</sup> and in this manner the acts of terrorism directed against Turkish diplomats (which have been forgotten or that have been purposefully erased from collective memories) were remembered.

Many politicians in Turkey have strongly criticized this campaign. Prime Minister Erdoğan, referring to those who initiated the campaign stated that “they are apologizing because they probably committed such genocide. The Republic of Turkey does not have such a problem. In the event of a crime, the ones who have committed it should apologize. However, neither my country, nor my nation, nor I have such an issue. In its contacts with other countries Turkey has displayed its stance on this issue very openly and clearly... I personally do not support and accept this campaign. And I will not take part in it.. It is not possible to

61	ozurdiliyoruz.com	26,086
	ozurbekliyorum.com	12,419
	ozurdilemiyorum.net	60,950
	ozurdileme.com	29,261
	ozurdilemiyoruz.biz	74,370
	<a href="http://anket.milletmeclisi.com/blog/ermenilere-ozur-kampanyasi/">http://anket.milletmeclisi.com /blog/ermenilere-ozur-kampanyasi/</a>	3,578
	Facebook - Ermenilerden "Özür" Falan Dilemiyorum! (I don't apologize to Armenians or what)	282,208
	Facebook - Ermenilerden Özür Dilemiyoruz! (We don't apologize to Armenians)	36,582
	Facebook - Özür Dileyenlere Karşı Tarihin Işığında Türkçe Duruş (Turkish stance against the apologizers under the light of history)	1,365
	Facebook - Ben Özür Dilemiyorum (I do not apologize)	36,752
	Facebook - sözde ermeni soykırımı için özür dileyen Sözde Aydınları Protesto Ediyoruz! (We protest the so called intellectuals who apologize for the so called Armenian genocide)	5,566
	Facebook - Ermeniler'den Özür Dilemiyorum, Özür Bekliyorum! (I do not apologize to Armenians, I expect an apology)	22,005

62 As per March 15 2009, this number has reached 116.750.

63 Nicolas Cheviron, “Une Pétition demandant pardon aux Arméniens crée la polémique en Turquie”, *AFP*, December 19 2008; Nukte V. Ortaç, “Turquie, Arméniens la fin d'un tabou”, *L'Express*, January 22, 2008; Guillaume Perrier, “Des milliers de Turcs demandent ‘pardon’ aux Arméniens”, *Le Monde*, December 20, 2008; “Les Excuses aux Arméniens pour 1915 divisent la Turquie”, *RF1*, December 28, 2008.



understand this course of conduct... This only reverses every step forward taken.”<sup>64</sup>

President Gül, in response to a question, stated that “Turkey is a country where views are freely expressed. The stance of the Turkish state is known. We are determined to resolve our problems with our neighbors via dialogue, this is possible. It is not useful for outstanding issues to persist.<sup>65</sup> These words have been interpreted in the Armenian press as if the President supported the apology campaign and that he does not share the Prime Minister’s point of view.<sup>66</sup> Having later enounced that this campaign will affect relations between Armenia and Turkey negatively, the President has prevented any further misunderstandings to emerge on this issue.

Chairman of the Turkish Grand National Assembly Köksal Toptan,<sup>67</sup> Republican People's Party Chairman Deniz Baykal,<sup>68</sup> Nationalist Movement Party Chairman Devlet Bahçeli,<sup>69</sup> the General Staff,<sup>70</sup> The Turkish Historical Society,<sup>71</sup> and many universities have also criticized this campaign.

On the other hand, the separatist Kurdish movements’ representative Chairman of the Democratic Community Party Ahmet Türk has supported the apology to Armenians.<sup>72</sup>

For the most part the Turkish press has criticized the ‘I apologize’ campaign which has received wide coverage. Only a few liberal left wing newspapers like ‘Taraf’ have supported the campaign.

The reaction of the Armenian press concerning this issue was of a limited nature. The fact that the word ‘genocide’ was not used was criticized; also, this campaign was seen as a start of Turkey expressing remorse for the events of 1915.<sup>73</sup> The diaspora press also did not attribute much interest to this issue as well; criticisms mainly addressed the belief that this declaration was not sufficient and the fact that the word ‘genocide’ was not used. According to this standpoint, it was unsatisfactory that the apology text made mention solely of the phrase ‘1915 events’; furthermore, the actual period should be stated as encompassing the years from 1915 to 1923.<sup>74</sup> It was also noted that the apology should come from the state of Turkey and not actual people and that the apology can not take the place of reparations.

64 “Soykırımı İşlemişler ki Özür Diliyorlar”, *Milliyet*, December 18, 2008.

65 “Görüşler açıkca ifade ediliyor”, *Hürriyet*, December 17, 2008.

66 “Turkey’s President Defends Armenia Apology Campaign”, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, December 18, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/>; “Le Président Gul prend ses distances avec son premier Ministre”, *Armenews*, December 19, 2008.

67 “Özür Vahim Kampanya”, *Radikal*, January 18, 2009.

68 [www.chp.org.tr/index.php?module=news&page=readmore&news\\_id=5](http://www.chp.org.tr/index.php?module=news&page=readmore&news_id=5) December 17, 2008.

69 “Bahçeli’den çok sert Açıklamalar”, *Sonsayfa Haber Sitesi*, December 7, 2008, <http://sonsayfa.com/>.

70 “Genelkurmay ‘Ermeni Kardeşlerimden Özür Diliyorum’ Kampanyasını Eleştirdi”, *Milliyet*, December 20, 2008.

71 “Arabozucu Kampanya’ya tepkiler”, *Anadolu Ajansı*, January 6, 2008.

72 “DPT Lideri Ahmet Türk Süryanilerden Özür Diledi”, *Hürriyet*, December 30, 2008.

73 Golos Armenii and Zerkalo, *Nouvelles d’Armenie Magazine*, December 30, 2008, <http://www.armenews.com/>.

74 “Turkish Apology for Armenian Genocide: Good First Step, But Not Good Enough”, *California Courier Online*, December 18, 2008.

As for the major organizations of the diaspora, in a declaration<sup>75</sup> the pro-Dashnak Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) stated that the efforts of those courageous parliamentarians and historians in Turkey who have placed the Armenian genocide at the center-stage must be commented on. The declaration continued by expressing that “the campaign by Prime Minister Erdoğan and other Turkish leaders to quash honest discussion of the murder of 1.5 million Armenians from 1915-1923 must not be rewarded. Silence by the international community will be misinterpreted by Turkey’s leadership as support for their genocide denial agenda. Only by formally recognizing the Armenian Genocide can the U.S. and democratic countries around the world send a clear message that they stand with the voices of truth in Turkey”. As for the apology campaign, the text was criticized because “the centrally planned and systematically executed campaign of deportations, starvation and murder of 1.5 million Armenians was not characterized as ‘genocide.’”

Bryan Ardouny, Executive Director of the second biggest Armenian organization, the Armenian Assembly of America’s (AAA), was in a more favorable approach towards the ‘We Apologize’ campaign. Ardouny expressed that an irreversible trend has commenced in Turkey and that this public apology is a first step in that direction which will inevitably lead to Turkey coming to grips with its genocidal past.<sup>76</sup>

The European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy, which claims to represent all Armenian organizations in Europe, published a press statement<sup>77</sup> commending the organizers of the ‘We Apologize’ campaign and declaring that the Armenian Question should be solved without causing too much damage to Turkey; mass crime cannot be “apologized” away by populist initiatives and deliberately avoiding usage of the term genocide intends to de-criminalize the destruction by the Ottoman Turkish government of 1,5 million Armenians. The statement also voiced the view that the present Turkish Government, the successor of the Ottoman Empire, must formally recognize this genocide and take full responsibility of all its legal consequences. Furthermore the statement expressed the opinion that there is no alternative for Turkey other than recognition and reparation of the Armenian genocide.

On the other hand, very few organizations or people from the diaspora have reacted positively to the campaign. Meanwhile, on January 19, 2009, individuals in France of Armenian origin published a statement thanking those who organized and endorsed the ‘We Apologize’ campaign, and stated that they not only support it, but also accept this as a historical development.<sup>78</sup>

Faculty member at the Macquarie University in Australia and co-chairman of the Turkish-Armenian Dialogue Group has mentioned opening an apology text

75 “ANCA Statement on Recent Efforts in Turkey to Confront the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923”, *Armenian National Committee of America*, Press Release, December 22, 2008.

76 “An Irreversible Trend Has Commenced in Turkey”, *Armenian Assembly of America*, Press Release, December 17, 2008.

77 “Armenians Still Demand Recognition and Reparation of Their Genocide by Turkey”, *European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy*, Press Release, February 2, 2009.

78 Collective Van, January 19, 2008, “Des Arméniens disent merci aux Citoyens de Turquie”.

for signature<sup>79</sup> but had to call off his attempt after being subjected to various threats.<sup>80</sup>

### III. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

During the period under review, some developments have taken place in the U.S. Of particular significance was Adam Schiff (a leading pro-Armenian member of the House of Representatives) having submitted a bill proposing that Turkey should open its borders with Armenia. Another development has been the problem concerning the assignment of the US ambassador to Armenia. Pending for almost two years, this issue has been resolved by Senate's approval of Ms. Jovanovich's candidacy. Meanwhile, the appointment of the US Ambassador to Turkey has materialized despite certain impediments brought about by pro-Armenians. Other significant developments include the frequently voiced statements by Democrat Party Presidential Candidate Senator Barack Obama supporting the Armenian allegations of genocide and his assigning the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations President Joe Biden, known for his pro-Armenian stance, as his vice-presidential candidate. Pro-Armenians taking part in the government formed by Obama following his election, has also caused some concern in Turkey.

#### ***A. The Bill Concerning Turkey Opening its Borders with Armenia***

On March 15, 2008, Mr.Schiff submitted a bill to the US Congress calling for Turkey to lift its blockade on Armenia. In the findings section of the bill, after a repetition of the known allegations regarding the closure of the joint border between the two countries and stating that it inflated Armenia's transportation costs by 30 to 35 percent, it was mentioned that the closure prevented US and international humanitarian assistance and constituted a violation of international law. Thereafter the bill states the following:<sup>81</sup>

- i)In order to restore economic, political and cultural links with Armenia, the President and the Secretary of State shall call upon Turkey to immediately lift its ongoing blockade on Armenia;
- ii)The Secretary of State shall submit to Congress a report that outlines the steps taken by the United States to end Turkey's blockade on Armenia.

Adam Schiff had submitted prior bills on this particular issue but they were not brought to the floor. However, submitting such a bill at a time when everyone is preoccupied with the presidential, House of Representatives and Senate elections, and when a Congressional recess is near, makes it appear that this is

79 *Radikal*, February 21, 2008. Baskin Oran, "Ceza Değil, Madalya Verelim".

80 Dr. Armen Kakavyan, Arminfo, February 10, 2009, "ASALA and Ukht Ararati Union of Former Political Prisoners and Freedom Fighters Against Initiative".

81 "Rep. Schiff Introduces Bill Calling for the End of Turkey's Blockade of Armenia", *Armenian National Committee of America*, Press Release, May 15, 2008.

connected with a motive to get re-elected by attracting the votes of the rather sizable Armenian community residing in his electorate region in California. As a matter of fact, no debate has taken place regarding this bill. Furthermore it has become null and void due to the renewal of the House of Representatives following the elections.

### ***B. Appointment of the US Ambassador to Armenia***

For approximately 2 years, there has not been a US ambassador in Yerevan. As mentioned above,<sup>82</sup> Ambassador John M. Evans was removed from office in September 2006. It was understood that Evan's recognition of the 1915 events as genocide, contrary to the stance of the Bush administration, played a role in his removal. Bush nominated Richard Hoagland to be the US Ambassador to Armenia to replace John Evans. In line with formal procedures in the US, this nomination should have been approved by the Senate. Although Hoagland was placed under pressure at the Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations, he remained loyal to the stance of his government by refraining from using the word 'genocide'. The Commission approved his appointment with 11 votes against 8 and sent it to the Senate's General Assembly for endorsement. Yet, due to Senator Robert Mendez's strong opposition, Hoagland's actual appointment has not materialized.

Three points regarding this event should be taken into account. The first one is that certain Armenian Diaspora organizations wanted, with the support of like-minded senators, to force ambassadorial candidates to define the events of 1915 as genocide and therefore push the Bush administration into a difficult position. Secondly, some senators yearned, beyond the bounds of Armenians' demands, to use this endorsement process against the Bush administration. And the third one is that the Armenian Government desired to appoint a US ambassador to Armenia in order to establish high level contacts with the United States. From this perspective, it can be seen that the Diaspora and the Armenian Government have differing approaches regarding this issue; with the Diaspora organizations holding their obsession with genocide above the interests of the Armenian Government.

In March 2008, Ms. Marie L. Yovanovitch, who is the present US ambassador to Kirghizistan, was nominated as a candidate for the post of ambassador to Armenia. She answered the questions posed by senators at the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on the 19th of June. Despite Robert Mendez's efforts to pressure her to define the events of 1915 as genocide, she refrained from using this word. Instead, Ms. Yovanovitch stated that, she, like the US Government, acknowledged and mourned the mass killings, ethnic cleansing and forced deportation that devastated over one and a half million Armenians during the final days of the Ottoman Empire; and that the US views these events, which are defined as "Medz Yegern" or Great Calamity by the Armenians, as one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century. In response to a question why she

82 See: Ömer Engin Lütem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar", *Ermeni Araştırmaları Dergisi*, No 25 ( 2007): p. 26, 27.

did not use the term genocide, she stated that “President Bush pursued, like the previous presidents, the policy of not using that term and stated that the President encourages Turkish citizens to reconcile with their past and with the Armenians.”<sup>83</sup> After the oral questioning was concluded, some of the Senators addressed written questions to Ms. Yovanovitch. From among these, we will refer solely to the most significant of those posed by Barack Obama and will highlight Ms. Yovanovitch’s replies.

In response to Obama’s question, “how do you define the events surrounding the Armenian ‘genocide’, Yovanovitch reiterated that the US acknowledges “the mass killings, ethnic cleansing and forced deportation at the final stages of the Ottoman Empire.”

Responding to Obama’s question “how will you commemorate the victims of genocide if appointed”, Yovanovitch said in brief that if confirmed, she pledges to continue the tradition of attending the official memorial event held in Yerevan every April and will make it a priority to promote understanding and reconciliation between the peoples and governments of Armenia and Turkey.

In response to Barack Obama’s question “What are the actions taken by the US Secretary of State to promote more substantial investigation of the ‘genocide’ and its recognition in Turkey?”, Yovanovitch stated that they have been working on a program which envisages to invite Turkish archivists to observe how historical research is carried out in the US, that they have been in contact with Armenian archivists, and that they hope the archivists from both countries will ultimately work on a joint program.

To Obama’s final question on “whether the amendment made to Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code satisfied the US Secretary of State”, Yovanovitch responded that the US administration prefers the removal of Article 301 and said that the current arrangement lowered the maximum imprisonment sentence to two years from three and that the sole authorization to allow the opening of a case in this context was given to the Minister of Justice. She mentioned that a fall in the number of cases is anticipated due to this role bestowed upon the Minister of Justice.<sup>84</sup>

On July 29, the day when the voting for the endorsement of Yovanovitch’s appointment would take place, head of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Mr. Matthew A. Reynolds sent a letter to Mr. Joseph R. Biden to give complementary information on some of the questions directed at Ms. Yovanovitch.

In the letter it was noted that the US was investigating a project which would invite some archivists from Turkey and Armenia with a view to provide them with

83 “Pennington Hopes for Confirmation of Marie Yovanovitch as U.S. Envoy in Yerevan”, *PanArmenian Network*, June 23, 2008, <http://panarmenian.net/>.

84 “Armenian genocide pressure on Obama and ARMRAPID”, *Haberaktuel*, July 12, 2008, <http://haberaktuel.com/>; “U.S. Ambassadorial Nominee Responds to Obama Inquires on Armenian Genocide Policy”, *ARMRADIP*, July 11, 2008.

advanced professional training. The aim of the project was stated in the letter as to help archivists protect, for the investigations of the future generations, the evidential documents on the mass killings and forced deportations of the Armenians committed by Ottoman soldiers and other Ottoman officials. Secondly Reynolds has also mentioned in his letter that the US Government recognizes that the mass killings, ethnic cleansing and forced deportation which devastated over one and a half million Armenians during the last days of the Ottoman Empire, and, that the US Government holds the Ottoman officials responsible for those crimes.<sup>85</sup>

The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, with the exception of Ms Marbara Boxer, endorsed Yavonavitch's appointment on July 29, 2008 and the Senate General Assembly approved this decision on the 1st of August. The new US Ambassador arrived at Yerevan in mid September.

If Yovanovitch's appointment process is assessed with a closer look, it is seen that the US Government had its ambassadorial candidate use the terms mass killings and ethnic cleansing which are close to yet not same as the term genocide. On the other hand, by using for the first time the words "Medz Yegern" which is the word for genocide in the Armenian language and also means 'great disaster', it was aimed to satisfy the Armenian Diaspora and certain senators acting on their behalf. Moreover, that 1,5 million Armenians died is mentioned as an unquestionable fact, yet it is possible to disprove this with scientific evidence.

### ***C. Appointment of the US Ambassador to Turkey***

As was the case of Ms. Maria Yovanovitch who was appointed as the ambassador to Armenia, Mr. James F. Jeffrey who was appointed as ambassador to Ankara, had to answer many questions during the sessions convened on September 24, 2008 to endorse his appointment. These questions were posed by pro-Armenian senators, especially by Mr. Bob Menendez of New Jersey alongside the then head of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and current Vice President of the USA, Mr. Joe Biden. Mr. James Jeffrey also did not use the word "genocide".

Mr. Joe Biden addressed the following question to him "Do you dispute that US diplomats serving in the Ottoman Empire during the "Armenian Genocide" documented a systematic, government-sponsored campaign "with intent to destroy in whole or in part the Armenian population?". Mr. Jeffrey indirectly expressed<sup>86</sup> that he viewed the events of 1915 as constituting genocide by responding to this question with the following statement: "I do not dispute Ambassador Morgenthau,<sup>87</sup> Ambassador Elkus, and other diplomats that

85 *PanArmenian Network*, July 30, 2008, <http://www.panarmenian.net>.

86 The reports of Henry Morgenthau, US Ambassador to Istanbul between 1913-1916, on Armenian Relocation and his book *The Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* written in 1918 are presented by Armenian circles as proof of genocide. For the scientific critique of this book please see: *The Story Behind Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, (Istanbul: 1990). For the Turkish and English texts of this book, please see the "books out of print" section of the following website [www.eraren.org](http://www.eraren.org).

87 *Armenian National Committee of America*, Press Release, September 26, 2008.

reported during the time period on what they described as an attempt to exterminate the Armenian population”.

The Senate approved Mr. Jeffrey’s appointment without further impediments and Mr. Jeffrey started his mission in Ankara on December 3.

#### ***D. Mr. Obama’s Stance as a Presidential Candidate***

As a Democratic Candidate for the US Presidential elections held in November 2008, Senator Barack Obama has kept on all through his election campaign with his declarations that he would recognize the “Armenian genocide” and end the “blockade” imposed on Armenia by Turkey and Azerbaijan.<sup>88</sup>

In an explanation he made in April 2008 on the occasion of the Armenian “genocide” commemoration, he stated that 2 million Armenians were deported and approximately 1,5 million of those deported were killed during the Armenian genocide which was carried out by the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1923 and said “it is imperative that we recognize the horrific acts carried out against the Armenian people as genocide”. He added that he would stand with the Armenian American Community in calling for the government of Turkey to acknowledge it as such.<sup>89</sup>

It is understood that Mr. Obama and his aides have converted a text prepared by the Armenians into a declaration without examining it much. Although it is often alleged without any proof that 1,5 million Armenians have been killed by certain sources, it is difficult to encounter a source (even those of pro-Armenian historians) that make mention of 2 million Armenians relocated. On the other hand, the fact that the Ottoman Empire was defunct in the year 1923 was overlooked. Yet the most worrying aspect about Obama’s declaration, besides classifying the events of 1915 as genocide, was his words to the effect that he would demand Turkey to categorize the events in the same manner.

In a letter he sent to the Chairman of ANCA on the occasion of Ms. Marie Yovanavitch’s appointment as the ambassador to Armenia, Mr. Obama has repeated the above mentioned points and referring to the Armenian relocation, stated that the Bush administration’s refusal to recognize this event as genocide is inexcusable and added that he would continue to speak out in an effort to move the Administration to change its position.<sup>90</sup>

Furthermore, as discussed above, Mr. Obama has addressed a few written questions regarding the “genocide” issue to Ms. Maire Yovanovitch.

Finally, it should be underlined that Barack Obama selected Senator Joe Biden as his candidate for the post of Vice Presidency. Mr. Biden, who has worked in

88 See: Ömer Engin Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar”, *Ermeni Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Number 27-28 (2008):p. 47

89 “Statement from Senator Barack Obama in Remembrance of Armenian Genocide”, *State News Service*, April 29, 2008.

90 “Obama Reaffirms Commitment to US Genocide Recognition”, *Asbarez*, June 17, 2008.

Congress since 1967 and latterly served as the Chairman of Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, is a person known for his as anti-Turkey stance and who has endeavored for the approval of various texts pertaining to the genocide allegations for years.<sup>91</sup> His selection as candidate for Vice Presidency was welcomed with great joy by Armenian circles in the US and leading organizations like ANCA and the Armenian Assembly of America. The latter has published a declaration praising Mr. Biden and commenting on his pro-Armenian endeavors.<sup>92</sup>

### ***E. The New US Government and the Armenian Question***

Obama who won the Presidential elections without difficulty, formed a government with many people who have granted support to the Armenian views. First and foremost on this list is the Secretary of State Ms. Hillary Clinton who has expressed, while she was still a presidential candidate, that she would acknowledge the Armenian genocide once elected.<sup>93</sup> Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar, Secretary for Labor Hilda Solis and Secretary for Transport Ray LaHood have been the joint presenters of draft resolution Nr. 106 submitted to the House of Representatives for the recognition of the genocide allegations. The new CIA Director Leon Panetta also supports the Armenian views.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, Ms. Samantha Power, who widely covered the Armenian genocide allegations in her book *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, has been appointed to an important position in the Security Council at the White House.<sup>95</sup>

When it comes to the US Parliament, Chairperson of the House of Representatives Ms. Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Speaker Mr. Harry Reid, Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman of the House of Representatives Mr. Howard Berman and Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Chairman Mr. John Kerry are all known for their pro-Armenian views.<sup>96</sup>

Under these circumstances, it seems that the possibility of the US government to issue a decision for the recognition of genocide allegations has remarkably increased- a situation that has been anticipated by the Diaspora Armenians for many years now.

Nevertheless, there is a difference between the requirements of the election campaign and the responsibilities of a government. In fact, during the interviews in the Senate convened to endorse her appointment to the Office of the Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton responded to a question by Senator Robert Mendez (champion of Armenian views) regarding whether the new government

91 "Kandemir: Biden Çıbanbaşı Olur". *Milliyet*, August 24, 2008.

92 "Obama/Biden Democratic Presidential Ticket Strong on Genocide Recognition; US-Armenia Relations", ANCA, Press Release, August 23, 2008;"Obama Taps Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Biden as his Vice-Presidential Running Mate", *Armenian Assembly of America Press Release*, August 23, 2008.

93 See: Ömer Engin Lütem, *Olaylar ve Yorumlar, Ermeni Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Number 27-28 (2008): p. 47

94 "New U.S. Administration Majority Stands For Armenian Genocide Recognition", *PanArmenian Network*, January 14, 2009.

95 "Ekip Tamam", *Hürriyet*, January 31, 2009.

96 "Ekip Tamam..."



will recognize the Armenian genocide allegations and where the Cyprus policy will lead to with the following vague answer: “we will be looking very closely at those and other challenging issues with the eye of moving forward and being effective in responding to these very legitimate concerns.”<sup>97</sup>

Only a few days before Barack Obama began working in the presidential office, about twenty Armenian organizations located in the US sent Barack Obama a lengthy letter<sup>98</sup> on behalf of the 2 (?) million Armenians living in America. After congratulating him for his election as the president, the letter states that the Armenian Genocide is not an allegation but rather a widely documented mass crime supported by an overwhelming body of evidence; that the US Government must clearly and unequivocally condemn the 1915 crime of race extermination; that under Turkey’s pressure the American Presidents used evasive and euphemistic terminology in the past rather than directly acknowledging the Armenian Genocide, and, that the term, Armenian Genocide, is the only one that can meaningfully be used to characterize the crime committed by Ottoman Turkey.

In the same letter where it is alleged that Turkey (rather than being a factor for peace) has actively contributed to increased tension in South Caucasus, it is noted that Turkey applies pressure on other governments to underwrite its guilt and that the US should not be hostage to Turkey’s fears.

The letter also invites Obama to contribute to the growth of US-Armenia relations, Armenia’s economic development, security of Armenia and the Nagorno Karabakh region, to lifting the Turkish and Azerbaijani economic blockade of Armenia and ending the exclusion of Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh from regional commercial and infrastructure projects.

In short, the letter was drafted to ask for support as regards acknowledgement of Armenian allegations, aid and assistance to Armenia and Karabakh, opening of the Turkey and Azerbaijani borders, and inclusion of Armenia in Nabucco and similar regional projects.

The Armenian National Committee of America, which is understood to have initiated the process regarding this letter has started a campaign directed at the White House on the internet.<sup>99</sup>

The second largest Armenian organization in the US, the Armenian Assembly of America has not participated in this process presumably due to its rivalry and disaccord with ANCA. Yet this organization has congratulated Obama after starting office by having a full page advertisement published in Roll Call, a journal familiar to Congressional circles. Furthermore, the Director of the Assembly, Ms. Ardouny, demanded the strengthening of relations between the US, Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh as well as the termination of genocide denial.<sup>100</sup>

97 *Turkish Daily News*, January 15, 2009.

98 Yerkir, “Armenian Americans Congratulate Obama on Inauguration”, January 20, 2008.

99 “ABD’li Ermeniler’den Soykırım Girişimi”, NTV, January 21, 2009.

100 “Armenian Assembly of America Salutes President Obama on His Historic Inauguration”, *Armenian Assembly of America*, Press Release, January 21, 2008.

Adam Schiff, Frank Pallone, George Radanovich and Mark Kirk, who have since long been supporters of Armenians in the Congress, have already started preparing a draft resolution aimed at the acknowledgement of Armenian allegations and began the process of negotiating it with various circles with a view to getting it submitted to Congress towards the end of February.<sup>101</sup> On February 13 2009, they sent a letter to members of the House of Representatives asking them to be the joint supporters for this draft.<sup>102</sup> It is understood that in principle this draft will contain the same arguments voiced in the preceding drafts.<sup>103</sup>

#### IV. DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING THE GENOCIDE ALLEGATIONS

Developments regarding the genocide allegations that have occurred in some countries and in the OSCE are summarized below.

##### A. Canada

Canada's Armenian community is well organized though not large in number. As a result of the pressures exerted by this community, in 2002 the Senate of Canada, and in 2004 the Parliament of Canada passed a resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations; but Canadian governments, taking into consideration relations with Turkey, have not adopted it. After the elections, the new Prime Minister Stephen Harper, has clearly adopted a pro-Armenian approach. Moreover, in a letter that Harper sent to the Armenian National Committee it was stated that the 'recognition of the Armenian genocide represents the official position of the Government of Canada.'<sup>104</sup> Although it may be possible to explain this unconventional approach of the Prime Minister on the basis of certain political considerations, being a country of immigration, for Canada to prefer the Armenians to the Turks will engender hardships for the Prime Minister and his Party in the long term because the Turkish community is dense and is getting better organized day after day.

As a result of to the Turks becoming better organized, they have concertedly opposed courses on genocide being taught in the state of Toronto and have struggled against this for a long time. Meanwhile, Turkish associations have protested the reference book used in these courses, Extraordinary Evil by a Catholic nun Barbara Coloroso. After collecting 1,200 signatures in a petition, the book was taken out of the curriculum.<sup>106</sup>

This issue was undertaken by the Toronto District School Board on June 12 2008

101 "Une Résolution Sur le Génocide Arménien Présentée Fin Février au Congès", Armenews, February 7, 2009.

102 "New Drive for Armenian Genocide Resolution Launched", *Arminfo*, February 13, 2009.

103 "Ermeni Lobisi Tasarısını Sundu", *Habergazete Sitesi*, February 13, 2009, <http://www.habergazete.com>.

104 "Nearly All Canadian Political Forces Stand for International Recognition of Armenian Genocide", *PanArmenian Network*, April 29, 2008.

105 "Le débat du genocide", *Toronto Star*, May 21, 2008. A Turkish source claims that the number of petitions is 11, 000 ("Canadian Turks have cut out the genocide from the curriculum", *Star*, May 17, 2008).

106 "Genocide Course Sparks Controversy in Toronto", *National Post*, June 13, 2008.

under the title 'Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity', and starting from September, this has become a selective course where the Jewish Holocaust, the Armenian genocide and the Rwanda genocide were taught as part of the curriculum.<sup>107</sup>

There is no doubt that this decision does not reflect a scholarly outlook; it is the result of Armenian propaganda in Canada. While the Bosnian case which was ascertained as constituting genocide by a decision of a competent court is not covered by the course, the Armenian "genocide" is despite the fact that there is no such competent court decision to the effect that it constitutes genocide.

### **B. Sweden**

The Swedish Parliament from time to time is faced with demands regarding the recognition of the Armenian genocide. In a report prepared by the Parliament Foreign Affairs Commission in 2000, the 1915 events were mentioned. However, since a resolution directly concerning the 'genocide' has not been passed, it would be wrong to say that Sweden recognized the 'genocide'. In 2002 the Foreign Affairs Commission acknowledged that the UN did not accept the Armenian genocide, that there are no such UN resolutions concerning the Armenians, Assyrians nor Chaldeans. The disclosure of the Armenian organizations in the country having misled the Commission of Foreign Affairs, for a certain period served to thwart attempts directed at Sweden's recognition of the genocide.

In May this year, some members of the Parliament have taken the initiative for the recognition of these allegations, and this matter was discussed in the Foreign Affairs Commission. The report adopted by the Commission contained four main points.

First, mention was made of how there are no UN resolutions involving the Armenian genocide adopted in 1985 or any year thereafter.

Second, it was expressed that the 1915 Assyrian and Chaldean events which occurred in the Ottoman Empire would have qualified as genocide if the 1948 UN Convention was in force at the time. These statements point out how the UN Genocide Convention is only applicable to events which occurred after 1951 (the date of entry into force) and hence, is not applicable to the events of 1915. The assertion that the events of 1915 would classify as genocide, were the Genocide Convention in force at the time, is merely an assumption and as such carries no legal significance. Against this background it becomes clear that the aim of this initiative was simply to satisfy the Armenians and Assyrians.

Third, it was stated that there is no consensus between the views of experts studying the events that occurred during the fall of the Ottoman Empire. With this statement it was implied that there are certain experts that do not describe the

107 "Sweden's Refusal to Recognize Armenian Genocide to Harm Turkey", *PanArmenian Network*, June 12, 2008.

events of 1915 as “genocide”. Those submitting this report strongly opposed this statement. A text alleging that the Armenians were subjected to genocide that was signed by 64 scholars from different countries was circulated among parliaments but had no effect.

The fourth and last point raised pertains to abstaining from negatively affecting the ‘critical national process’ that Turkey is currently undergoing. This means that if the Swedish Parliament adopts such a resolution, it might serve to fuel fanatic movements in Turkey. Up until now, it is hard to say that fanatic movements have been affected by resolutions adopted by Parliaments. However, it is true that Turkey’s relations with countries that have adopted such resolutions have been adversely affected.

On June 11, the Foreign Affairs Commission’s report was discussed for three hours, with 37 favorable and 245 unfavorable votes; the recognition of the Armenia ‘genocide’ was refused. There was only one abstaining vote, and 66 people did not take part in the voting. The total number of unfavorable votes totaled %70 of the total.

There is no doubt that this vote was a defeat to the Union of Armenian Associations and the Union of Assyrian Associations. It will be hard to bring this matter back onto the agenda of the Swedish Parliament.

### **C. Slovakia**

On November 30, 2004, the Slovakian Parliament passed a resolution recognizing the Armenian “genocide” as a crime against humanity.<sup>108</sup>

In the end of May, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Harabin visited Armenia and laid a wreath beneath the genocide memorial. In the speeches made on this occasion he stated that there is a law penalizing people for denying the Jewish Holocaust, and that a resolution penalizing any kind of denial concerning genocides, including the Armenian genocide, was proposed to the Parliament, that this resolution will probably be adopted by the Parliament in January or February 2009, that even though the freedom of speech is the most important human right it has a limit; and referring to the Armenians said that there are some expressing unacceptable remarks towards genocide-stricken nations.<sup>109</sup> If this resolution becomes law, saying that there was no Armenian genocide might lead to prison sentence of five years.<sup>110</sup>

A day after this event, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan visited Slovakia. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia Jan Kurbis, in a statement he made to the Anatolian Agency stated that the Slovakian parliament's decision in 2004 does not represent the official stance of the government and that he would take

108 Ömer Engin Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar”, *Ermeni Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Number 16-17, ss.37-39.

109 “Slovakian Justice Minister: Armenian Genocide Can’t Go Unpunished”, *ARKA*, May 26, 2008; “Slovak Minister on Armenian Genocide on the Eve Turk’s Visit”, *Czech News Agency*, May 27, 2008.

110 “Slovakya’da ‘Soykırım İnkârı’ Suç Oluyor”, *Milliyet*, May 28, 2008.

up the matter with Justice Minister Stefan Harabin, adding history should be treated by historians, not politicians. He will discuss this matter with the Slovakian justice minister and members of the government. He knows the sensitivity of the Turkish public opinion on this matter and will not permit this topic to place a shadow on good relations between Turkey and Slovakia.<sup>111</sup>

The talks that the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Kurbis said he was going to have with the Minister of Justice Harabin produced no results because at the end of August in a meeting that he had with Chairman of the Union of Assemblies of Armenians in Europe, he mentioned that he sees no problem "in the issue of approval of the law on the Armenian Genocide within the planned period, especially as the resolution confirming and condemning the Armenian Genocide, which was adopted by the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2004, has the status of an imperative necessity for the country's government". He added that regarding the Minister of Foreign Affairs Babacan's proposal to open the archives, every person who visits the Genocide Museum in Yerevan becomes acquainted with the Armenian archives, besides, "no one doubts that after committing the genocide the Turks also organized a 'genocide of archives'".<sup>112</sup> As seen, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice of Slovakia besides embracing the genocide allegations, are both acting and speaking like an Armenian militant.

#### ***D. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Resolution Regarding the Archives and Historical Research***

Prime Minister Erdogan's proposal to President Kocharyan in the beginning of April 2005 for the events of 1915 to be studied by historians from both countries (and from other countries if necessary) and other experts was objected to by nationalist circles of Armenia and the diaspora. For these people who recognize Armenian genocide allegations, analyzing the 1915 events will damage this truth. As mentioned above, President Sargsyan's words regarding the acceptance of this commission have led to many reactions. However, many countries are in favor of and support the establishment of such a commission.

The declaration that was adopted at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly's meeting (that ended on July 3 in Astana) supported the Turkish view.

The Astana Declaration's main theme is transparency in the OSCE member states. In the chapter regarding democracy, human rights and humanitarian questions the importance of fully opening all archives to improve the transparency and accuracy of historical studies is pointed out (article 62). Furthermore, the declaration calls upon all OSCE state bodies working with historical and political archives to grant as full access as possible to all archives to researchers and interested individuals (article 66).

111 "History must be Left to Historians", *Turkish Press*, May 29, 2008.

112 Noyan Tapan, "Deputy Prime Minister of Slovak Republic: Nobody Doubts That After Committing Genocide Turks Also Organized 'Genocide of Archives'", August 29, 2008..

We should specify that Turkey has finished classifying all archives regarding the Armenian genocide, and these archives are open to the public. As for the Armenian side, it is known that the archives are closed to some, even though statements to the contrary are pronounced.<sup>113</sup> Regarding the diaspora archives; the Dashnak archives in Boston, the Nubar Pasha archives in Paris and the Zoryan Institute archives are all special archives. In other words, permission is required to access these archives, so there are not in line with the ‘fully opening of all archives’ principle of the Astana Declaration.

Article 68 of the Astana Declaration regarding the mixed commission “encourages the establishment of joint history commissions between participating States, composed of their historians and experts, including where necessary those of third countries, to conduct research in the relevant historical, political and military archives in order to shed objective and scientific light on contentious episodes in the history of participating States, with a view to further contributing to transparency and mutual understanding’. As seen, this article supports Turkey’s proposal to Armenia and encourages the foundation of a joint commission of historians.

Aside from Armenia, other countries have voted favorably on OSCE’s Declaration mentioned above. Armenia with this conduct found itself in a difficult situation; Armenia puts forth allegations, but does not want them to be studied or analyzed, placing itself in an unconvincing situation.

Meanwhile, this declaration might set an example to others; aside from a few exceptions, members of the European Council Parliamentary Assembly and the Assembly of NATO are almost the same as OSCE members, so they also might adopt a similar declaration. Under a proper article, the UN General Assembly will easily adopt a resolution concerning the transparency of archives and for controversial issues, the founding a common commission of historians

## V. VISITS TO THE GENOCIDE MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM IN YEREVAN

Foreigners that pay an official visit to Armenia are usually encouraged to visit the Genocide Memorial and Museum in Yerevan and leave a garland; this might be interpreted as if the country they represent recognizes the ‘genocide’. For this reason, visits made to the Memorial and Museum are important.

The foremost visits of a political significance during the year 2008 are enlisted below.<sup>114</sup>

March 2 2008: His Eminence Tarcisio Cardinal Bertone, secretary of the state of Benedict XVI Pope of Rome has recognized the Armenian genocide allegations

113 See: Ömer Engin Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar”, *Ermeni Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Volume 3 Number 9, p.20-21.

114 This information was obtained from the web site of the Armenian Genocide Museum  
<http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/delegation.php>

in 2000. Cardinal Bertone left a note in the Commemoration Book stating: 'I wish that this will never take place. Long life to the Armenian heroic nation!'

April 25, 2008: The vice Minister of Defense of Hungary Mrs. Agnesh Vadda has not recognized the Armenian genocide allegations.

May 21, 2008: The Cultural Minister of Belarus Vladimir Feodorovich Matvichuk has not recognized the Armenian genocide allegations

May 25, 2008: The delegation of the U.S. House of Representatives headed by Congressman Adam Schiff. Adam Schiff is the one of the main protectors of Armenian interests.

May 26, 2008: The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice of Slovakia Stefan Harabin. We have mentioned his views above.

June 27, 2008: The Minister of Education and Science of Georgia Mr. Giorgi Nodia. The Georgian Parliament has not recognized the Armenian genocide allegations.

July 6, 2008: The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic Karel Schwarzenberg. The Czech Republic Parliament has not recognized the Armenian genocide allegations.

September 13, 2008: The Czech Senate Prshemisl Sobotka. As mentioned above, The Czech Republic Parliament has not recognized the Armenian genocide allegations.

September 26, 2008: The minister of culture of Slovakia Marek Madyarich. The Slovakian Parliament has adopted a resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations.

October 2, 2008: The president of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Latvia Gunars Kutris. This country's parliament has not passed a resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations.

October 21, 2008: The president of the Russian Federation Dmitri Medvedev. Medvedev left a note in the Commemoration Book: "Armenian Genocide Museum and memorial are the evidences of awful tragedy of 20th century. In the same time it reminds that life is the most important value that given for safe to civilized nations".

November 12, 2008: Chairman of the Cyprian House of Representatives Marios Garoyan. The Parliament of Cyprus has passed a resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations. As we can infer from his name, Garoyan is from Armenian origin.

November 17, 2008: Hungarian Foreign Minister Mrs. Kinga Goncz. As mentioned above, the Hungarian Parliament has not passed any resolutions concerning the Armenian genocide allegations.