

FACTS AND COMMENTS

(OLAYLAR VE YORUMLAR)

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Abstract: *This article deals with Turkey-Armenia relations during the April-June 2017 period. The message of President Erdoğan to Turkey's Armenians and the commemorations of 24th of April in Turkey and Armenia are also studied. Lastly, the developments concerning the Armenian Question in the U.S, France, and in other countries are also addressed.*

Keywords: *Turkey, Armenia, Armenian Diaspora, U.S.A, France, Czech Republic, Lebanon, Jordan, Sweden, Canada, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Serzh Sargsyan, Donald Trump, François Hollande, Emmanuel Macron, Washington Armenian Genocide Museum*

Öz: *Bu incelemede Türkiye-Ermenistan ilişkilerinde Nisan, Mayıs ve Haziran 2017 aylarındaki gelişmeler ele alınmaktadır. Ayrıca Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'ın Türkiye Ermenilerine mesajı ile 24 Nisan 2017 tarihinin Türkiye ve Ermenistan'da anılması ve Ermeni Sorunu konusunda ABD, Fransa ve diğer bazı ülkelerdeki gelişmeler anlatılmaktadır.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Türkiye, Ermenistan, Ermeni Diasporası, A.B.D., Fransa, Çek Cumhuriyeti, Lübnan, Ürdün, İsveç, Kanada, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Mevlut Çavuşoğlu, Serj Sarkisayan, Donald Trump, François Hollande, Emmanuel Macron, Washington Ermeni Soykırım Müzesi*

ARTICLES

1) TURKEY-ARMENIA RELATIONS

During the period we analyze here (April-May-June 2017), no significant development took place with regards to Turkey-Armenia relations.

However, in the previous period, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey himself had reiterated Turkey's proposal of establishing a "Commission of Historians".¹

Furthermore, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov had made a significant statement that Russia is ready to contribute to the process of normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey when they sit at the negotiating table and that current problems between the two countries can be resolved.² However, since Turkey-Armenia relations are far from the point where both countries can begin negotiations, it was not possible to talk about Russia's contributions. If one day the two countries begin negotiations, the selection of Russia as a mediator or facilitator will certainly be a more realistic choice than the selection of Switzerland.

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It is seen that the issue of security is at the forefront in Armenia when it comes to relations with Turkey.

The most logical way for Armenia to resolve this issue is to find a way around problems with Turkey and establish close cooperation with its bigger neighbor.

However, Armenia chooses to not adopt this approach and tries to keep problems, such as genocide claims, reparations (and even territorial demands) and return of properties, alive via the diaspora, while avoiding an agreement with regards to the resolution of the Karabakh conflict, which is considered as crucial by Turkey for peace and security in the Caucasus. As a result of Armenia's approach, the issue of security grows bigger and Armenia tries to resolve this issue with "outside help".

This "outside help" is the alliance with Russia and the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

1 Ömer Engin Lütem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar," *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 56 (2017): 17-20.

2 Lütem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar," Issue 56: 15.

In a statement he made in February,³ Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, after mentioning the above two factors for Armenia's security, stated that Armenia will continue to work with NATO and its members states to further strengthen international peace and security. Sargsyan then continued by stating all these factors (alliance with Russia, Collective Security Treaty Organization and cooperation with NATO) are important to neutralize the less-than-friendly - not to call hostile- policy of neighboring Turkey.

What is interesting here is the fact that Armenia sees NATO, of which it is not a member but Turkey is, as a component of its security.

1.2) Armenia and NATO

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Western countries had proposed to post-Soviet states EU and/or NATO memberships to develop relations with them. Armenia, in consideration of its tough conditions and its problematic relations with Russia, had accepted these proposals. However, an association agreement between Armenia and the EU was called off by Armenia at the last moment due to pressures from Russia, and Armenia was forced to join the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

Maintaining its relations with NATO within the framework of "Individual Partnership Action Plan," Armenia's participation in peacekeeping missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan was seen as the success of the Armenia-NATO cooperation. In the face of Russia's expansionist policy in the recent years, NATO did its utmost to maintain close relations with Armenia which is under the thumb of Russia. Ultimately, Armenia, starting to see itself as an "honorary member" of the NATO, began to join every possible event of the organization in order to promote its policies and even vilify its opponents within NATO. The most recent example of this took place during the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Istanbul in November 2016 when an Armenian parliamentarian accused Turkey of committing genocide and aiding ISIS.⁴

This behavior which amounts to acting as a NATO member without being one did not meet with any significant reactions from NATO and its members, and NATO continued its policy of developing close relations with Armenia. The fact that an Armenian general was appointed as the Secretary General of the

3 "Union With Russia One of Vital Elements for Armenia's Security – President," *Sputnik*, February 20, 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201702201050879757-armenia-russia-president-security/>

4 "Çavuşoğlu'ndan Ermeni Vekile İŞİD Tepkisi: Önce Dürüst Olalım," *Sputnik*, November 19, 2016, <https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/201611191025886982-cavusoglu-ermeni-vekil-durust-isis-nato/>

Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which is generally considered as being established against NATO, did not also receive attention from NATO. During President Sargsyan's visit to NATO in Brussels in February, NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg expressed his pleasure at NATO's cooperation and relations with Armenia, and mentioned Armenia's important contributions to NATO missions and fighting terrorism.⁵ Lastly, NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia James Appathurai labeled Armenia as a reliable partner and participated in the now tradition of praising its contributions to the peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo.⁶

While the importance of having close relations with a country under the thumb of Russia is appreciated, there must be a limit to these relations. No matter how friendly NATO is with Armenia, even if unwilling, Armenia is obliged to follow Russia's policies, and NATO's policy of developing closer relations with Armenia will not change this reality.

On the other hand, it will be beneficial to take the other side of the coin into consideration. NATO'S excessive interest in Armenia led Armenian leaders to believe that Armenia is of critical importance for the NATO, leading to NATO being regarded, as mentioned above, as an element of Armenia's security especially against Turkey.

This interest by NATO has influenced the Karabakh conflict as well. It is clear that Armenia, believing that it has the support of NATO, in addition to the support of Russia, for the settlement of the conflict without the use of force, will show no effort to withdraw from the territories of Azerbaijan, including Karabakh, which are still occupied by Armenia despite UN Security Council resolutions. Armenia also easily continues to make aggressive demands from Turkey, such as the recognition of genocide allegations and reparations, as it does not face any objections from NATO. Furthermore, it is seen that among some Armenian intellectual circles, there is a belief that NATO, when necessary, (e.g. during a war in Karabakh) will prevent any intervention from Turkey to Armenia.⁷

5 "Jens Stoltenberg: NATO, Ermenistan'la Mesaisine Sadıktır," *News.am*, February 2, 2017, <https://news.am/tur/news/375816.html>

6 "NATO Representative Visits Yerevan, Calls Armenia a Reliable Partner," *The Armenian Weekly*, June 13, 2017, <http://armenianweekly.com/2017/06/13/nato-representative-visits-yerevan-calls-armenia-a-reliable-partner/>

7 Emma Gabrielyan, "David Shahnazaryan: Do Not Measure it by , It's Not Relevant," *Aravot*, June 15, 2017, <http://en.aravot.am/2017/06/15/195736/>

2) DEVELOPMENTS IN TURKEY

Several developments took place in Turkey with regards to Armenians and the Armenian Question during the period we are analyzing.

Foremost among these is the election of a new patriarch to replace Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul Mesrob II Mutafyan who has been unable to perform his duties due to his illness. This election, which is of great importance for the Armenian community of Turkey and is attempted to be interfered with by Armenia via the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin, will be discussed in a later issue after the election takes place.

2.1) President Erdoğan's April 24 Message

As done in recent years, President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's message to Aram Ateshian, the General Vicar (Acting Patriarch) of the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, on April 24 this year was another important development with regards to the Armenian community of Turkey.

In his message,⁸ President Erdoğan, in brief, stated that he respectfully commemorated the Ottoman Armenians who died under the difficult conditions of the First World War and offered his condolences to their grandchildren. President Erdoğan continued by stating that the Armenian society raised great people, both during Ottoman times and the Republican era, and made great contributions to the development of Turkey, and that the aim of the two peoples is to dress the wounds of the past and strengthen their relations further. Stating that many steps have been taken in the last 14 years in this regard with historic reforms, President Erdoğan indicated that efforts for protecting the Armenian cultural heritage will continue, and that the peace, safety, and happiness of the Armenian society is of particular importance. He continued by stating that the marginalization, isolation, and disparagement of citizens of Armenian origin will not be tolerated, and expressed his wish that the patriarchal election will be held as soon as possible.

This message, while resembling the message of 2016, also includes several differences. Last year's message⁹ was focused on the Armenian losses during the First World War. Within this context, last year's message offered

8 "Erdoğan'dan 24 Nisan Mesajı," *Agos*, April 24, 2017, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/18332/erdogan-dan-24-nisan-mesaji>

9 For the 2016 message, see: Ömer Engin Lütem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar," *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 53 (2016): 25-26.

condolences to the relatives of the victims, and expressed that their memories would be protected and that the pains were common to all.

This year's message, while touching upon these topics mentioned last year for the most part, is observed to also include current issues. Within this context, this year's message mentions steps taken and historic reforms by the AKP government in the last 14 years, as well as the importance of the happiness and safety of the Armenian society and that marginalization, isolation, and disparagement of citizens of Armenian origin will not be tolerated. Also touching upon the election of a new Patriarch, which is an issue of great importance for the Armenian community, the message hopes that the patriarchal election will be held as soon as possible.

General Vicar of the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, Archbishop Aram Ateshian, in his response on 27 April 2017 to the President's message,¹⁰ expressed gratitude for President Erdoğan's special message sharing the pains of Armenians, and stated that the utterance of the contributions of the Armenians to the development of the country and the particular importance given to their peace, safety, and happiness was well-received and welcomed by the Armenian community. He also stated that the Patriarchate will support steps taken by the government to protect the Armenian cultural heritage. Finally, paying his respects to the President, Ateshian expressed that they will continue to pray for an everlasting Turkish state.

It is our belief that the General Vicar's message represents the majority of the Armenian community of Turkey.

On the other hand, President Erdoğan's message was negatively received by Yetvart Danzikyan, the Chief Editor of the AGOS newspaper that is gradually acting more and more like a Diaspora newspaper.¹¹ In his article, Danzikyan, after indicating that the critical question was what happened to the Ottoman Armenians and why they were killed, reiterated the claim that the Armenians were deliberately killed within the framework of an operation planned by the Committee of Union and Progress, and that the victims of this were Armenians whose deaths were denied or those who "died under the difficult conditions of World War I". He also claimed that Armenians were unable to mourn as long as this "denial" continued. Furthermore, trying to avoid the suggestion of new demands, he mentioned the granting of the

10 "Basın Bildirisi," *Türkiye Ermenileri Patrikliği*, April 27, 2017, <http://www.turkiyeermenileripatrikligi.org/site/basin-bildirisi/>

11 Yetvart Danzikyan, "24 Nisan Hissiyati," *Agos*, April 27, 2017, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/18372/24-nisan-hissiyati>

following to Armenians with regard to April 24: a monument where Armenians can visit and leave flower on, and a holiday for Armenians on April 24 even if they work in private sector. Lastly, with a more realistic approach, Danzikyan stated that the extension of condolences was a positive step considering the history of the Republic of Turkey but there were several political organizations that avoided doing this.

Furthermore, speaking at an event of 24th April Remembrance Platform in Turkey, Murat Çelikkın said the following:

“We all have said that this is our common pain. We said that some wounds do not heal in time. We have apologized, we apologize. We are coming to terms, and we will continue to come to terms. We will not stop. It’s been 102 years; don’t wait for 103rd year. Apologize!”

In the same event, a poster of the platform also read as follows: “Armenian Genocide, recognize, apologize, compensate.”¹²

As a result, it is possible to say that while the majority of the Armenian community, via the message of the General Vicar, expressed their appreciation for President Erdoğan’s April 24 message, a small number of Armenians and Turks, in an effort to emulate the Diaspora, did not find Erdoğan’s message as being satisfactory and demanded for an apology. However, these demands did not generate much interest in the Turkish public opinion.

It is possible to say that while the majority of the Armenian community, via the message of the General Vicar, expressed their appreciation for President Erdoğan’s April 24 message, a small number of Armenians and Turks, in an effort to emulate the Diaspora, did not find Erdoğan’s message as being satisfactory and demanded for an apology.

3) COMMEMORATION OF APRIL 24 IN CERTAIN COUNTRIES

3.1) The Commemoration of April 24 in Turkey

As in previous years, this year, several far leftist groups in Turkey held events to commemorate April 24 in front of the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts on Sultanahmet Square, as well as in the Taksim and the Tunnel Square. Speaking on behalf of the 24th April Remembrance Platform, Meral Çıldır,

¹² “‘Recognize, Apologize, Compensate,’ Say Turks During Istanbul Commemoration,” *Horizon Weekly*, April 25, 2017, <https://horizonweekly.ca/en/recognize-apologize-compensate-say-turks-during-istanbul-commemoration/>

member of Human Rights Association, stated that today, in the anniversary of the “Armenian Genocide”, it was necessary to remind that Assyrian people had been subjected to genocide in Asia Minor between 1914 and 1923, and Pontus Greeks were subjected to genocide both by the Ottoman state and Kemalist movement. She criticized that Talat Pasha and Enver Pasha are buried in mausoleum (The Monument of Liberty), and invited “all people who object against genocide denial to protest the naming of schools after Talat Pasha and his grave.” She also argued that “Anatolia is a land of genocide. Turkey is a land of genocide denial. Today, the mentality of genocide and denial still prevails.”¹³ Thus, she proved that she has adopted the stance of the Diaspora as well as its expressions.

The event in Taksim was attended also by HDP deputy Garo Paylan.¹⁴ A couple of days prior to the event, Paylan had presented a research proposal to the Presidency of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey for the examination of the results of the Temporary Relocation and Resettlement Law of 1 June 1915. According to press reports,¹⁵ the proposal is as follows:

“Following the Temporary Relocation and Resettlement Law, the Armenian population living in the Ottoman Empire was subjected to relocation, leading to devastation in the Assyrian, Chaldean, Yezidi, and Greek peoples. The results of this law have not been investigated by the Turkish Grand National Assembly for more than 102 years. It has been known that a large number of casualties have been experienced due to the Law. A lot of cultural assets and property have been seized or confiscated as a result of the implementations of the Law. The exploitation of the responsibilities of the government and civil servants of the period, the effects of the consequences of the relocation, the benefits of confronting the past and the truth in ensuring social peace as a whole in our country, in order to prevent abuse of the subject, with the aim of contributing to the uncovering of ‘truth’ and providing more opportunities for future generations to live together in Turkey freely and peacefully, I would like to offer and propose to open the Parliamentary Survey in accordance with Article 98 of the Constitution, Articles 104 and 105 of the Internal Regulations.”

It should be pointed out that there was limited participation to the “April 24” events. Armenian American historian Ronal Grigor Suny, who is understood

13 “‘Recognize, Apologize, Compensate,’ Say Turks During Istanbul Commemoration.”

14 “‘Recognize, Apologize, Compensate,’ Say Turks During Istanbul Commemoration.”

15 “‘Geçici Tehcir Kanunu’ İçin Araştırma Önergesi,” *Agos*, April 21, 2017, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/18308/gecici-tehcir-kanunu-icin-arastirma-onergesi>

to be invited to these events as sort of a guest of honor, spoke of this situation by stating that “the crowd was small.”¹⁶ Khatchig Mouradian, who completed his PhD under the supervision of Taner Akçam at Clark University and is currently a freelance writer with special interest in Turkey, attributed the limited participation to this year’s April 24 events in Turkey to the 15 July 2016 coup attempt and said that the Diaspora Armenians are afraid to come to Turkey.¹⁷ However, what is important here is not the limited number of participants from abroad, but the limited number of participants from Turkey. This shows that there is a limited number of people who support the commemoration of April 24 and ask for the recognition of the genocide allegations, and that these people consist only of certain left-leaning citizens of Turkish, Kurdish, and Armenian origin and are far from comprising a ‘grassroots movement’.

3.2) The Commemoration of April 24 in Armenia

April 24 was also commemorated in 2017 in all countries with Armenian communities. Great ceremonies were held in some cities of the US and France, which are countries with high Armenian population, as well as in Beirut, Lebanon. However, there is no information on whether such events were held in Russia, which has the largest Armenian population. This may be due to the fact that the websites of the Armenian community in Russia are in Russian. On the other hand, it should be noted that the Armenians in Russia are very different from Diaspora Armenians, and that they think and react similarly to the Armenians of Armenia. While for the Diaspora Armenians it is the genocide allegations that form the foundation of the Armenian identity, for the Armenians of Russia, it is the Armenian culture, customs, and traditions.

In Yerevan, on the other hand, as in previous years, a torchlight procession toward the Genocide Memorial was organized and Turkish flags were burned as it has become a custom now. However, this year, as a novelty, Armenian children were seen to trample on the Turkish flags. In a written statement, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey said the flag “symbolizes all the fundamental values, beliefs and the freedom of a nation.” The statement further read: “The attack against our flag, which is considered to be synonymous with the existence of the Turkish nation, has given rise to a strong

16 Ronald Grigor Suny, “Suny: Zor Mesele Es Geçilmiş Oldu,” *Agos*, April 26, 2017, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/18349/suny-zor-mesele-es-gecilmis-oldu>

17 Amberin Zaman, “Erdogan Offers ‘Condolences’ During Armenian Genocide Events,” *Al Monitor*, April 24, 2017, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/04/armenian-genocide-anniversary-erdogan.html>

resentment and reaction among our people. Given the importance attributed by the Turkish nation to these values and to the Turkish flag, we strongly condemn this action and its perpetrators.”¹⁸

On the same day, Armenian President Sargsyan, along with Armenian Catholicos of Etchmiadzin Karekin II and ministers and top officials, laid a wreath and prayed at the Genocide Memorial. Making a speech at the event, President Sargsyan stated that “the Eghern, carried out under the disguise of deportations, was a state program of the Ottoman Empire, and was executed with the unprecedented cruelty and meticulousness”.¹⁹ He further stated that the Armenians suffered great material, cultural, and political losses, with the greatest loss being the people which were bearers of the ancient, rich, and unique civilization. Sargsyan said that the Armenian culture and science was survived thanks to the survivors and their children.²⁰

4) DEVELOPMENTS IN CERTAIN COUNTRIES

4.1) Developments in the US

It was a matter of concern how the US President Donald Trump, who came from the business world and not politics, and claimed that he will consider America’s interests first, would act with regard to an issue such as the recognition of the “Armenian Genocide”, which has nothing to do with US’ interests and rather stems from the desire to satisfy a minority’s emotions of vengeance and grudge about a past event, and whether he would use the word “genocide” in his April 24 message.

On the other hand, the fact that the Republicans, compared to the Democrats, attach lesser importance to minority issues, and that the Armenians, in the background, worked against the election of Trump as president²¹ were factors disadvantageous to the Armenians.

Following the presidential elections, Armenians took the first step to establish a relationship with Trump by swiftly congratulating him for his victory.

18 “Turkey Strongly Condemns Burning of its Flag in Armenia,” *Anadolu Agency*, April 24, 2017, <http://aa.com.tr/en/politics/turkey-strongly-condemns-burning-of-its-flag-in-armenia/804357>

19 “President’s Address on Armenian Genocide Commemoration Day,” *Public Radio of Armenia*, April 24, 2017, <http://www.armradio.am/en/2017/04/24/presidents-address-on-armenian-genocide-commemoration-day/>

20 “Armenians Mark Remembrance Day,” *Voice of America*, April 24, 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/a/armenians-mark-remembrance-day/3824351.html>

21 Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar,” Issue 56: 21.

Subsequently, they tried to promote the Armenian “cause” to the new government with the participation of representatives from the US Department of State and members of the US Congress.

4.1.1) The Commemoration of April 24 in the US

Another attempt by the Armenians was a letter by the Congressional Armenian Caucus (a group composed of several pro-Armenian members of Congress) to President Trump with the aim of convincing him to recognize of the 1915 events as “genocide” in his April 24 message.²² The said letter,²³ which was sent to the President on 10 April 2017 with the signature of 83 members of Congress, stated that the President Trump, in commemorating the “Armenian Genocide”, would stand with Presidents Reagan and Eisenhower. Indicating that the “Armenian Genocide” was commemorated by the US House of Representatives in 1975 and 1984, the letter tried to insinuate that the characterization of the 1915 events as genocide will not be something new. The letter also mentioned the pro-Armenian stance of Henry Morgenthau who was the United States Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, and the operations of the Near East Relief, which was founded during the war and raised 2.5 billion dollars in today’s money. Lastly, the letter asked the President to mark April 24 as a day of “American remembrance of the Armenian Genocide.”

The letter was signed by approximately one sixth of the Congress. Yet, only twelve of the signatories were members of the Republican Party, of which President Trump is also a member of. Furthermore, majority of the signatories were from states that have a large Armenian population such as California. In short, neither the number of the signatories nor their geographical distribution was not enough to deem the letter as an important document.

4.1.2) Draft Resolutions Presented to the Congress

Since the late 1990s, Armenian Americans have tried to have the US House of Representatives and/or the US Senate pass a resolution recognizing the “Armenian Genocide”, but failed due to Turkey’s objections to American

22 Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar,” Issue 56: 23-24.

23 “Congressional Leaders Call on President Trump to Properly Commemorate Armenian Genocide - Bipartisan Letter Urges President to Reject Turkey’s Gag Rule,” *Armenian National Committee of America*, April 10, 2017, <https://anca.org/press-release/congressional-leaders-call-president-trump-properly-commemorate-armenian-genocide/>

governments. Yet, they have not given up on their efforts for the introduction of their demands to the House of Representatives and sometimes the Senate. This year saw the same scenario, and similar draft resolutions were introduced to both houses of the US Congress.

The title of the draft resolution (H.Res.220) which was introduced to the House of Representatives on 23 March 2017 is “Expressing the Sense of the House of Representative Regarding Past Genocide and for Other Purposes.”²⁴ The number of co-sponsors to the draft resolution is 52 (it is remarkable that this number is below the number of signatories of the letter sent to President

Trump on 10 April). The preamble of the draft resolution mentions the ongoing conflict in Syria and Iraq and the massacres and other difficulties suffered by civilians, Christians in particular, and discusses efforts of the US in this regard with a reference to the situation of Armenians during and after the First World War.

The conclusion of the draft resolution reads as follows:

“That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States, in seeking to prevent war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide against Christians,

Yezidis, Muslims, Kurds, and other vulnerable religious and ethnic groups in the Middle East, should draw upon relevant lessons of the United States Government, civil society, and humanitarian response to the Armenian Genocide, Seyfo, and the broader genocidal campaign by the Ottoman Empire against Armenians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs, Greeks, Pontians and other Christians upon their biblical era homelands.”

The purpose behind such complex and ambiguous wording is to interject the phrase “Armenian Genocide” while talking about the past and present difficulties faced by Christian in the Middle East. Thus, in case the draft resolution is passed, the phrase “Armenian Genocide” will be adopted by the House of Representatives.

24 “Reps. Trott, Schiff Spearhead Bipartisan Genocide Prevention Resolution,” *Asbarez*, March 22, 2017, <http://asbarez.com/161540/rep-trott-schiff-spearhead-bipartisan-genocide-prevention-resolution/>

A similar draft resolution (S.Res.136) was introduced to the Senate on April 24. The draft resolution was submitted by New Jersey Senator Robert “Bob” Menendez who made a name for himself by supporting Armenian interests in all fields. The draft resolution was co-sponsored by 13 Senators.

Differently from the draft resolution introduced to the House of Representatives, this draft resolution directly refers to the “Armenian Genocide”. Making an exaggeration with the claim that 2 million Armenians were subjected to deportation,²⁵ of whom 1.5 million were killed and 500 thousand were scattered across several countries, the draft resolution claims that the more than 2,500-year presence of Armenians in their historic homeland was thus eliminated. Then, the draft resolution mentions what the US has done for the Armenians since the First World War, especially in the form of resolutions within the Congress, and touches upon developments in other countries in this regard.²⁶

The conclusion of the draft resolution reads as follows:

“That it is the sense of the Senate—

- (1) to remember and commemorate the 102th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 2017;
- (2) that the President should work toward an equitable, constructive, stable, and durable Armenian-Turkish relationship that includes the full acknowledgment by the Government of the Republic of Turkey of the facts about the Armenian Genocide; and
- (3) that the President should ensure that the foreign policy of the United States reflects appropriate understanding and sensitivity concerning issues related to human rights, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and genocide documented in the United States record relating to the Armenian Genocide.”

The purpose of this draft resolution is also force the phrase “Armenian Genocide” upon the Senate.

25 According to Raymond Kevorkian’s book *Le Génocide des Arméniens*, which is considered by Armenians to be the most competent source, the number of Armenians that lived in the Ottoman Empire on the eve of the First World War was 2 million. However, Ottoman sources give this number as 1.3 million.

26 Robert Menendez, “A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the 102nd anniversary of the Armenian Genocide,” Pub. L. No. S.Res.136 (2017).

Is there a chance that these draft resolutions could be adopted? For years, by way of persuading several Congress members, the adoption of such draft resolutions has been prevented by US governments in consideration of relations with Turkey. There is no reason for this to change this year. In fact, these draft resolutions, which have a limited number of co-sponsors, have very little chance of being adopted. Nevertheless, the Armenians insist on the introduction of such draft resolutions to the Congress and have no trouble in finding Congress members that could help them in this regard.

4.1.3) President Trumps April 24 Message

No one, including the Armenians themselves, had a clear idea what kind of a message President Trump was going to publish on April 24. The Trump administration, similarly to previous administrations, could have used the 1915 events and the presidential message in this regard as a political pressure tool against Turkey. However, no one expected the new administration to go for such venture at time when the cooperation of Turkey is much needed due to the development in the Middle East.

The President Trump's April 24 message was published on time and was similar to the messages of previous presidents. However, in form, his message was different from the previous ones. Since President Clinton, these messages, although not including the term genocide, were long texts that praised Armenian Americans. President Trump's message, on the other hand, is fairly shorter. To give an idea, while President Obama's final message was composed of 37 lines of text, Trump's was composed of 17 lines and avoided exaggerations when praising the Armenians. Thus, the message appears to be not prioritizing and or placing much importance to Armenian allegations, and gives the impression as if it was written to get it over with quickly.

As to the content of the message, it is seen that topics that were in Barack Obama's latest message were also covered in President Trump's message, but in shorter form. As expected, the message does not include the term "genocide", and uses the term "Metz Yeghern", which Armenians consider to mean "genocide" and can be translated as "The Great Calamity" to English, thus imitating Obama, who himself imitated Pope Jean-Paul II. Ultimately, like President Obama, President Trump's message tried to appease both the Turks, by avoiding the usage of the term "genocide, and the Armenians, by using a term that is synonymous with the term "genocide".

The expressions such as “mass atrocities”, that Armenians were “deported, massacred, or marched to their deaths” were taken from Obama’s message.

As mentioned above, parts of the message praising the Armenian Americans are short. However, the statement that Armenians established one of the great civilizations of antiquity in their historic homeland is new and is quiet an exaggeration since history books have no such judgment.

Points in Trump’s message such as that it is necessary to remember atrocities to prevent them from occurring again, that the efforts of Turks and Armenians to acknowledge and reckon with painful history are welcomed can also be found in previous messages.

However, references to Henry Morgenthau, who was United States Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in 1915, and Rafael Lemkin, who coined the term “genocide”, and other points, such as the appreciation towards Armenia for hosting 17 thousand Syrians, that could be found in Obama’s message was not mentioned in Trump’s message.

Trump’s April 24 message was met with criticism by Armenians and their supporters for not describing the events of 1915 as genocide.²⁷

4.1.4) Turkey’s Reaction to President Trump’s Message

Turkey reacted to President Trump’s message with following statement of the Turkish Foreign Ministry dated 24 April 2017:

No: 127, 24 April 2017, Press Release Regarding the Statement by the U.S. President Trump on the 1915 events

We consider that the misinformation and false definitions contained in U.S. President Trump’s written statement of April 24, 2017 regarding the 1915 events are derived from the information pollution created over

²⁷ For such criticisms, see: Harout Sassounian, “Pres. Trump Succumbs to Turkish Pressures By not Recognizing the Armenian Genocide,” *The California Courier*, April 25, 2017, <http://www.thecaliforniacourier.com/pres-trump-succumbs-to-turkish-pressures-by-not-recognizing-the-armenian-genocide/>; “Trump Fails to Properly Characterize Armenian Genocide,” *Asbarez*, April 24, 2017, <http://asbarez.com/162519/trump-fails-to-properly-characterize-armenian-genocide/>; Robert Fisk, “Will Donald Trump Have the Guts to Call the Armenian Genocide What it Was?,” *Independent*, April 24, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/armenian-genocide-donald-trump-babies-ottoman-empire-turkey-a7698941.html>; Jordan Fabian, “Trump Declines to Call Mass Killings of Armenian Genocide,” *The Hill*, April 24, 2017, <http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/330215-trump-declines-to-call-mass-killings-of-armenians-a-genocide>

the years by some Armenian circles in the U.S. by means of propaganda methods.

We expect from the new U.S. Administration not to accredit the one-sided historical narrative of these circles which are known for their tendency to violence and hate speech and to adopt an approach which will take into consideration the sufferings of all sides.

We would like to remind the U.S. Administration that the Ottoman Armenians who lost their lives during the First World War, were commemorated again this year on April 24 at a ceremony held by the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, with the respect they deserve.

The main reason why it is easy to have a resolution adopted in state legislatures is that they are sensitive to demands from the public. Furthermore, the fact that they bear no international responsibility makes their decision-making process easier. However, these resolutions have no validity even in the relevant state, let alone in the US; they only reflect the opinion of the relevant legislature on the Armenian allegations.

The statement conveyed to this ceremony by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reflects the approach of Turkey on this issue.

As seen above, the Turkish Foreign Ministry's reaction is quiet moderate. The statement attributes the misinformation in Trump's message to the information pollution created by Armenian circles in the US, and states the sufferings of not only Armenians but of all sides should be

taken into consideration. Furthermore, referring to President Erdoğan's message to the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul on 24 April 24, it reminds the US of Turkey's humanistic approach towards the issue.

4.1.5) US States and Genocide Allegations

As it is known, the US is a federal state consisting of 50 states. The individual states generally have bicameral legislatures composed of a Senate and House of Representatives. Resolutions with regard to the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations have been adopted, sometimes more than once, in almost all of these legislative houses in each state.

The main reason why it is easy to have a resolution adopted in state legislatures is that they are sensitive to demands from the public. Furthermore, the fact that they bear no international responsibility makes their decision-

making process easier. However, these resolutions have no validity even in the relevant state, let alone in the US; they only reflect the opinion of the relevant legislature on the Armenian allegations. Therefore, such resolutions of state legislatures do not draw the criticism of Turkish governments; even if Turkey criticizes, there is slim to none chance to directly make a difference. Only US lawmakers of Turkish origin have the ability to oppose such resolutions, providing that they hold enough seats to do so.

Currently, 46 out of 50 states adopted resolutions with regard to the “Armenian Genocide”.²⁸ Some states adopted more than one resolution. The best example is the State of California; in California, where Armenians have great influence, the number of adopted resolutions as well as Governors’ statements is more than thirty.²⁹

The recognition (or re-recognition) of the Armenian genocide allegations by US states were also among this year’s activities to commemorate 24 April.

a. Wyoming

The Armenian genocide allegations were recognized in Wyoming for the first time via a commemorative letter by Wyoming Governor Matthew H. Mead, in which he, besides the Holocaust that is commemorated every year, mentioned the Armenian allegations.³⁰

b. Colorado

Both the Colorado House of Representatives and Senate unanimously recognized the Armenian genocide allegations.³¹ However, this is not the first time; since 1981, these allegations were recognized thrice by the Governor of Colorado and twelve times by both legislatures.

28 States that have not adopted such resolutions are Alabama, Indiana, Iowa, and Mississippi.

29 Detailed information about country and state assemblies, city and municipal councils that adopted the Armenian genocide allegations can be found from the “International Affirmation” section of the “ArmenianGenocide.org” website: <http://www.armenian-genocide.org/>

30 “Wyoming Becomes 45th US State to Recognize the Armenian Genocide,” *Public Radio of Armenia*, April 22, 2017, <http://www.armradio.am/en/2017/04/22/wyoming-becomes-45th-us-state-to-recognize-the-armenian-genocide/>

31 “Armenian Genocide Resolution Adopted in Colorado Legislature,” *The Denver Channel*, April 27, 2017, <http://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/local-news/armenian-genocide-resolution-adopted-in-colorado-legislature>

c. Pennsylvania

Adopting a similar resolution, the Pennsylvania Senate stated that Armenians were systematically exterminated by the Ottoman Government in their historic home within the present-day Republic of Turkey. Furthermore, in the resolution, 24 April 2017 was designated as “Pennsylvania’s Day of Remembrance of the Armenian Genocide”.³² It would be beneficial to remind that prior to this, the State of Pennsylvania had already recognized the Armenian genocide allegations nine times.

d. Rhode Island

The Rhode Island House of Representatives and Senate, at the same time but separately, adopted resolutions to commemorate both the “Holocaust Remembrance Day” and “Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day”.³³

Since 1990, the Rhode Island House of Representatives and Senate have adopted around 30 resolutions recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations.

e. Texas

Although the newspaper *Asbarez*, which is the most significant newspaper of the Armenian minority in the US, in its 19 May 2017 issue, wrote that the Texas became the 46th state in the US to officially to recognize the “Armenian Genocide” following a resolution adopted by Texas House of Representatives on the same date,³⁴ there is a message by the Texas Governor in 2006, a House resolution in 2006, and a resolution of the Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission about the Armenian genocide allegations. Therefore, the latest House resolution is not the first about the Armenian allegations.

f. California

California is the US state with the largest Armenian population. While Armenian sources indicated the Armenian population in the state as one

32 Daylin Leach, “Pennsylvania’s Day of Remembrance of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923,” Pub. L. No. Resolution 86 (2017).

33 “Armenian Genocide and Holocaust Recognized at R.I. State House,” *The Armenian Weekly*, April 17, 2017, <http://armenianweekly.com/2017/04/17/armenian-genocide-%E2%80%8Band-holocaust-%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8Brecognized-at-r-i-state-house/>

34 “Texas Becomes 46th U.S. State to Recognize Armenian Genocide,” *Asbarez*, May 19, 2017, <http://asbarez.com/163544/texas-becomes-46th-u-s-state-to-recognize-armenian-genocide/>

million, this number is very exaggerated; perhaps half a million is more realistic.

The Armenians of California are known for their extreme behavior and approach in defending the genocide allegations and opposing Turkey. It could be remembered that on 24 April 2015, the centenary of 1915 events, 130-160 thousand people marched towards the Turkish Consulate General in Los Angeles.³⁵

Armenians of California attach much importance to attain a place in the political organs of the State of California (Senate, House of Representatives, etc.) and in fact, are successful in being elected to these organs. Thanks to this, Armenians have able to achieve a combined total of 38 resolutions/statements from the state legislatures or governor since 1968.

This year, upon the initiative of California State Senator Anthony Portantino, who is quite new in advocating Armenian allegations, the California Senate adopted a resolution (Senate Resolution 29) declaring April as a month of “Armenian Genocide” recognition and commemoration, calling for Turkey to return historic church properties to rightful congregations and requesting that the United States Government formally recognize the “Armenian Genocide”.³⁶ Differently from the resolutions in previous years, this resolution mentions the return of church properties to congregations, which could be a reference to Armenian Catholicos of Cilicia Aram I’s request for return of the church and monastery in Kozan and although not related to this subject, the re-opening of the Greek Heybeliada Seminary.

On 2 June 2017, on the initiative of Adrin Nazarian, who is a member of the California State Assembly of Armenian origin, the California State Assembly adopted a bill “calling for the divestment of California public funds from Turkish government controlled financial instruments, ensuring taxpayer funds are no longer used in this manner to aid and abet Turkey’s century long obstruction of justice for the Armenian Genocide.”³⁷ Commenting on the bill, Nazarian stated that “if Turkey continues to fund Armenian Genocide deniers they must be financially punished”.³⁸

35 Ömer Engin Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar,” *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 51 (2015): 143.

36 “‘The Promise’ Screens in Sacramento as State Senate Commemorates Genocide,” *Asbarez*, April 18, 2017, <http://asbarez.com/162345/the-promise-screens-in-sacramento-as-state-senate-commemorates-genocide/>

37 “California State Assembly Adopts Bill Calling for \$500 Million Divestment from Turkey,” *The Armenian Weekly*, June 2, 2017, <http://armenianweekly.com/2017/06/02/calif-divest-turkey-ab-1597/>

38 “California State Assembly Appropriations Committee Approves “Divestment From Turkish Bonds” Bill,” *Armenian Assembly of America*, May 31, 2017, http://www.aaainc.org/index.php?id=7&no_cache=1&newsID=726

What is important here is the fact that the bill was not adopted for financial reasons, but due to racial hatred. Indeed, there is no other explanation for such a punitive financial measure against Turkey about an event that took place more than a century ago and is not determined as “genocide” by international law. This bill will come into effect if approved by California Governor Jerry Brown.

4.1.6) Freedom of Expression in California

In our previous issue, we had given examples for acts and attempts by Armenians to limit freedom of expression for some Turks in California in recent years.³⁹ Recently, anti-Turkey sentiments manifested themselves also in another incident. A “Turkey Business Forum”, which was planned to be organized on 25 May between twelve Turkish firms operating in various sectors and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, was cancelled by the Chamber in response to the request by Los Angeles City Council Member Paul Krekorian to cancel the Forum on charges that the brawl between President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s security staff and several protesters during President Erdoğan’s visit to Washington D.C. was a breach of US laws.⁴⁰

What is important here is the fact that this commercial meeting had nothing to do with the brawl in Washington D.C. Whether the brawl incident was a breach of US laws or not should not be of concern to Los Angeles City Council Member Krekorian or the Chamber of Commerce as it does not fall under their authority or responsibility. Therefore, the cancellation of the Forum is nothing but a cheap show of anti-Turkey sentiments.

4.1.7) The Denial of Amnesty for a Terrorist

In our previous issue, we had mentioned that Hampig Sassounian, who is one of the assassins of Turkish Consul-General to Los Angeles Kemal Arıkan and has been serving life-sentence, had become eligible for parole after being behind the bars for long years and was granted parole by the relevant court in the final hearing on December 2016 after several failed attempts.⁴¹ The parole

39 Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar,” Issue 56: 27-28.

40 “Turkey Business Forum Cancelled Due to Security Detail Attack,” *Agos*, May 25, 2017, <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/18596/turkey-business-forum-cancelled-due-to-security-detail-attack>

41 Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar,” Issue 56: 25.

decision, which was subject to the approval of California Governor Jerry Brown, was expected to be approved by Governor Brown due to his close relations with the Armenians.

However, contrary to expectations, Governor Brown reversed the parole decision. As justification, he cited the letter opposing Sassounian's release from the US Department of State, which came a day before President Erdoğan's visit to the US, and indicated that he was not convinced that Sassounian regretted his actions and that he was committed to peace. Governor Brown further stated that Sassounian would still pose "an unreasonable danger to society if released".⁴²

Another reason for the Governor's decision is the great awareness in the US against terrorist movements that emerged following the attacks on 11 September 2001 and led to massive casualties in different parts of the world especially in recent years.

Another reason is the strong efforts of Turkish American associations, especially the Turkish American National Steering Efforts (TASC), against the release of Sassounian.

There was no significant reaction from Armenians, save for Sassounian's lawyer, to the denial of the Sassounian's parole. Perhaps, Governor Brown's decision to allocate one million dollars for an "Armenian American Museum", which is planned to be constructed in Glendale near Los Angeles, played a role in this (an additional three million dollars was later inserted to the State Budget for this project).⁴³

The denial of Sassounian's release is also important in terms of dealing a blow to the idea among Armenians to heroize certain Armenian terrorists. As it is known, Soghomon Tehlirian, who assassinated Talat Pasha, is at the top of the list of such "heroes". Even a statue has been erected in his name in

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42 Bob Egelko, "Gov. Brown Vetoes Parole for Killer of Consul General," *SF Gate*, May 17, 2017, <http://www.sfgate.com/crime/article/Gov-Brown-vetoes-parole-for-killer-of-Turkey-11151278.php>

43 "State Senate Budget Committee Approves \$3 Million for Armenian American Museum," *Asbarez*, May 23, 2017, <http://asbarez.com/163635/state-senate-budget-committee-approves-3-million-for-armenian-american-museum/>

California, and every year, Armenians hold a ceremony in front of the statue. Furthermore, as a more recent example, Monte Melkonian, who was an ASALA leader, has been regarded as a “hero” in Armenia after his death during the Karabakh war.

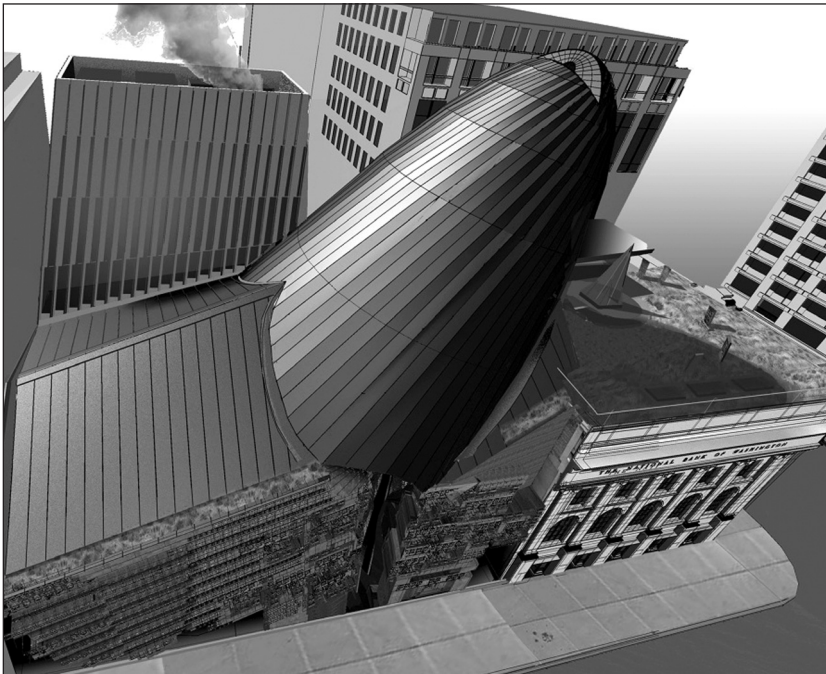
4.1.8) The Demise of the Armenian Genocide Museum of America

In 1993, a Holocaust Memorial Museum was opened in Washington D.C. Thanks to its original design and the successful showcasing of items, the museum has quickly become a major attraction with large numbers of visitors. Seeing this, several Armenians began works for an “Armenian Genocide” museum in the same city. For this purpose, the Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial Inc. was established jointly by the Cafesjian Family Foundation, which is known for its art activities, Anoush Mathevosian, a wealthy individual of Armenian descent, and the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA), which is an influential Armenian association, and the partners began to purchase buildings necessary for the museum. The most important among these buildings is the former building of the National Bank of Washington along the 14th Street. However, due to the relatively small size of the building, four more buildings adjacent to the bank building located on a side street (G Street) were purchased. Thus, a space of 8,500 square meters was acquired for a total spending of approximately 20 million dollars.⁴⁴

The close proximity of the planned museum to the White House was seen as the guarantee for high interest to the museum. It is also our opinion that if the museum had been established, it could have the Armenian genocide allegations to be perceived as fact by the American and even the world public opinion.

As it was not possible to demolish or remodel the bank building due to its historical value, it was foreseen to use the bank building as the entrance of the museum and to demolish the remaining four buildings on the side street in order to construct a new building that would cost approximately 100 million dollars as the main museum building. In the architectural plan by architect Edgar Papazian, a map of Turkey on the façade of the new building was seen to be shattered by a bomb like structure representing the “Armenian genocide” that fell on and devastated Anatolia.

44 For more information, see: Ömer Engin Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar,” *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 30 (2008): 36-44; Ömer Engin Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar,” *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 37-38 (2010-2011): 146-147.



While the Cafesjian Family Foundation supported this project, the remaining partners, especially the Armenian Assembly of America, were in favor of a humbler project; they believed the old bank building was enough for the museum and that the four adjacent buildings should be sold, with the revenue to be used for modifications in the museum building. Thus, two different concepts emerged for the museum: one larger (see above photos) and one smaller. Failing to come to an agreement, the sides went to court.

Ultimately, after a long trial process, the properties on G Street, later the old bank building were awarded to the Cafesjian Family Foundation. As a result, Armenian Genocide Museum of America project was not realized.

Meanwhile, real estate prices in that part of Washington D.C. greatly increased. It was later revealed that the bank building was sold to a real estate agency for 57 million dollars.⁴⁵ Hayk Demoyan, the Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan, learning about the hefty price tag of the bank building during his visit to the US on April, criticized this transaction by stating that “it’s disagreeable to be ruled only by business interest in this kind of issue [the genocide issue]”.⁴⁶

As mentioned above, if the Armenian Genocide Museum of America project had been realized, the museum would have attracted high interest and many visitors due to its close proximity to the White House. Research made in that period showed that Turkey could not legally prevent the construction of this museum. Nonetheless, although preliminary authorization for the construction of the Museum was granted, following the opening of the Museum, it could have been argued that exhibited materials, such as documents and photographs, were forgeries.

Since numerous forged documents, such as the telegrams attributed to Talat Pasha, form the basis of the Armenian genocide allegations, and since photos such as those of Armin Wagner are yet to be proven to be related to the “Armenian Genocide”, it could have been possible to prevent the exhibition of these materials by taking legal action. Despite the length of this process, ultimately, the credibility of the museum would have been dealt a blow. However, eventually, there was no need for such a process; the greed of the financiers destroyed plans for the museum. Considering these factors, it is possible to say that the fact that the plans for a museum fell through did not only benefit the Turks, but also the Armenians.

4.1.9) Armenian Genocide Library in Washington

The Armenian National Institute (ANI), which was established in Washington D.C. in 1997 under the guidance of the Armenian Assembly of America

45 Rebecca Cooper, “Building formerly slated for Armenian Genocide Museum sells for \$57M,” *Washington Business Journal*, April 5, 2017, <https://www.bizjournals.com/washington/news/2017/04/05/building-formerly-slated-for-armenian-genocide.html>

46 “Hayk Demoyan: Alienation of Building in Washington where Armenian Genocide’s Museum Was Planned to be Opened, Provokes Bewilderment,” *Arminfo*, April 21, 2017, http://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=25428&lang=3

(AAA), contains many documents with regard to the Armenian genocide allegations, which can be accessed by researchers via the internet. Among these, the most referred documents are resolutions by parliaments and local assemblies recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations. The institute can be accessed from their internet address (<http://www.armenian-genocide.org>). Dr. Ruben Adalian has been serving as the director of the Institute for many years.

Lastly, it was reported that over 5,000 publications were opened for access to researchers with the newly-established Armenian Genocide Library. On the other hand, while it was also reported that a Turkish-language version of the Institute's website will become operational, it has not yet happened.⁴⁷

4.1.10) Armenian American Museum Project in Glendale

Glendale is a town located near Los Angeles, California with a population of around 200,000, of which %35 is Armenian. The "Armenianization" of this town is something rather new. It is understood that thanks to the rising Armenian population in the Glendale, more and more Armenians have come to live in the town. This has led to militant Armenians to picture Glendale as a base of operations for Armenians in the US. The election of Vartan Gharpetian as the Mayor of Glendale in early May has also reinforced Armenians' position in the town.

The construction of an Armenian American Museum in Glendale has been long in the agenda of Armenians. The building is planned to be serve not only as museum, but also as a culture center. The "Armenian Genocide" is planned to have an important place in the museum.⁴⁸

The financing of the museum is expected to be covered by some Armenian organizations and wealthy individuals of Armenian descent. Thus, many organizations and persons will be contributing to the financing. This financing system is different from that of the failed Armenian Genocide Museum of America project in Washington D.C., and perhaps thanks to this system, the Armenian American Museum has better chance to be achieved. Furthermore,

47 "ANI Armenian Genocide Library Opens, Special Remarks by Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Director Dr. Hayk Demoyan," *Armenian Agenda*, April 10, 2017, <http://www.armenianagenda.com/post/159426347856/ani-armenian-genocide-library-opens-special>

48 Aram Arkun, "Major Armenian Museum is Planned for Southern California," *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, January 26, 2017, <http://www.mirrorspectator.com/2017/01/26/major-armenian-museum-is-planned-for-southern-california/>

it is understood that the monetary assistance will be provided from the California State Budget for the construction of this museum.⁴⁹ We already mentioned above Governor Brown's decision to allocate one million dollars for this museum, and that an additional fund of three million dollars was inserted into the State Budget for this project.⁵⁰

While the land for the museum has already been found, there are no detailed plans regarding the structure of the museum since it will be determined based on the amount of the donations. Yet, a representation of the building found in the internet is as below:



4.1.11) The Education of the “Armenian genocide” in California Schools

During the term of former California Governor George Deukmejian, who is of Armenian descent, in 1985, it was considered to teach the “Armenian Genocide” in schools, and a new curriculum was prepared and printed in 1987. Based on this, it is understood that it was begun to be taught in some schools. In 2001, the curriculum was expanded to also include the topic of human rights. Still, the teaching of the “Armenian Genocide” was not as widespread as desired, especially due to the inadequate training of teachers, leading to

49 “Jerry Brown Reaffirms Allocation of 1 Million Dollars for Construction of Armenian-American Museum in Glendale,” *Armenpress*, May 13, 2017, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/890493/jerry-brown-reaffirms-allocation-of-1-million-for-construction-of-armenian-american-museum-in-glendale.html>

50 “California Approves Millions for Armenian Museum and Genocide Education; ANCA-WR Praises State Legislators,” *The Armenian Weekly*, June 16, 2017, <http://armenianweekly.com/2017/06/16/california-approves-millions/>

discussions on the allocation of more funds. Ultimately, on 15 June 2017, The California Legislature passed a State Budget Act, which allocates 10 million dollars to support the History-Social Science curriculum framework for the education of the “Armenian Genocide” and other human and civil rights issues.⁵¹ It is likely that large amount of money will allow the education of the “Armenian Genocide” in a more widespread manner.

4.1.12) Protests against President Erdoğan in the US

On 16 May 2017, during President Erdoğan’s visit to Washington, President Erdoğan’s security staff interfered in a demonstration by Armenians, Kurds, Greeks, Yezidis and Assyrians,⁵² due to the demonstration endangering the Turkish Ambassador’s Residence, which also hosted President Erdoğan at the time, and the American security forces failing to take necessary measures. Several people were injured during the ensuing brawl. The American media and political circles labelled the incident as an attack to the freedom of expression, causing the launch of an anti-Turkey campaign.

After the issue was brought before the Congress, on 25 May, the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee adopted a resolution demanding that Turkish security forces (security staff of President Erdoğan) involved in the incident should be prosecuted under United States law, and that steps should be taken to strengthen freedoms for the press and civil society in countries such as Turkey.⁵³ In response to a question regarding this topic, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey stated that the incident was caused as a result of the refusal of US authorities to take necessary security measures, despite repeated official warnings, and that the further advancement of the issue in the legislative process in the House of Representatives with a view to changing the basis will not help the settlement of the matter.⁵⁴ Although this issue normally should have been resolved at that

51 “California Legislature Allocates \$10 Million For Human Rights Curricula, Includes Armenian Genocide Education Training,” *Armenian Assembly of America*, June 16, 2017, http://www.aaainc.org/index.php?id=7&no_cache=1&newsID=732

52 Bridget Johnson, “Armenian Witness to Bloody Protest: Erdogan Regime Violence ‘Has Now Been Exported Here’,” *PJ Media*, May 17, 2017, <https://pjmedia.com/news-and-politics/2017/05/17/armenian-witness-to-bloody-protest-erdogan-regime-violence-has-now-been-exported-here/>

53 “House Set to Condemn Erdogan-Ordered Attack on Protesters Tomorrow,” *Asbarez*, June 5, 2017, <http://asbarez.com/164107/house-set-to-condemn-erdogan-ordered-attack-on-protesters-tomorrow/>

54 “SC-26, 25 Mayıs 2017, Dışişleri Bakanlığı Sözcüsü Büyükelçi Hüseyin Müftüoğlu’nun A.B.D. Temsilciler Meclisi Dış İlişkiler Komitesinde Oylanan Karar Tasarısı Hakkında Bir Soruya Cevabı,” *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, May 25, 2017, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc-26_-disisleri-bakanligi-sozcusu-buyukelci-huseyin-muftuoglu_nun-abd-temsilciler-meclisi-dis-iliskiler-komitesinde-oylanan.tr.mfa

point, it was further advanced and the above-mentioned resolution was unanimously passed by the House of Representatives (H.Res.354). The Foreign Ministry of Turkey considered this resolution as unconstructive “steps taken by the US legislative branches to distort and politicize the matter”, and stated that it was “against the spirit of alliance and partnership between Turkey and the US”.⁵⁵

When closely analyzed, the incident gives the impression that it was some sort of a premeditated “trap” to cause President Erdoğan’s visit to go badly: members of minorities in Turkey organize a demonstration based on their right to protest, but overstep the limits of this right by attacking the Ambassador’s Residence, and while doing this, they do not meet any resistance from the American security forces; several people get injured after the interference of President Erdoğan’s security staff; this interference leads to the launch of an anti-Turkey and anti-Erdoğan campaign, leading to the adoption of the above-mentioned resolution by the House of Representatives.

It appears that the main reasons for such a plot is Islamophobia, which has begun to dominate the US, and anti-Turkey sentiments, which is a reflection of Islamophobia. It is also seen that Aram Hamparian, the Executive Director of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), which is an affiliate of the Dashnak Party, played a key role in the implementation of this plot. Hamparian, who joined the protests, led the protestors, filmed the brawl, disclosed the footage to the press, gave testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe, and alleged that Ankara was exporting its intolerance and violence to the US.⁵⁶

There is no doubt that racial hatred against Turkey and Turks lies at the heart of this behavior. Yet, at the same time, as mentioned above, it was likely expected that the negative atmosphere caused by this incident would facilitate the adoption of several anti-Turkey resolutions.

4.2) France

When it was clear that French President François Hollande, who during his term supported the Armenians in nearly all fields, would not become a

55 “SC-29, 7 Haziran 2017, Dışişleri Bakanlığı Sözcüsü Büyükelçi Hüseyin Müftüoğlu’nun A.B.D. Temsilciler Meclisinde Onaylanan Karar Tasarısı Hakkında Bir Soruya Cevabı,” *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, June 7, 2017, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc-29_-disisleri-bakanligi-sozcusu-buyukelci-huseyin-muftuoglu_nun-abd-temsilciler-meclisinde-onaylanan-karar-tasarisi-hakkinda.tr.mfa

56 “ANCA’s Hamparian Testifies Before Congress Urging Strong Response to Erdogan-Ordered Attacks,” *Asbarez*, May 25, 2017, <http://asbarez.com/163783/ancas-hamparian-testifies-before-congress-urging-strong-response-to-erdogan-ordered-attacks/>

presidential candidate for another term, the French Armenians engaged in efforts for the election of a president who would protect Armenian interests. However, when looking from outside, it appeared that this was not a difficult task since nearly all of the politicians in France have had a favorable attitude towards Armenians.

Nevertheless, prior to the elections, French Armenians tried to obtain a promise from candidates that they will protect Armenian interests. For this, they sent certain question to the candidates and asked them for their answers.

This is a method commonly used by the Armenian Americans. In this way, based on their answers, candidates are informed on whether they will get Armenian votes. Those who need Armenian votes answer these questions in a manner that would satisfy the Armenians. However, there is no guarantee that candidates will act in accordance with these answers after being elected. A case in point is former US President Barrack Obama. Obama, who had promised twice to the Armenians that he would describe the 1915 events as genocide if elected, did not keep this promise after his election and instead used the Armenian term “Metz Yeghern,” dissatisfying the Armenians. The Dashnaks had reminded Obama in every possible occasion that he did not keep his promise during his presidency (8 years). However, by doing this, they have harmed their relations with the White House. Perhaps influenced by this, Donald Trump did not respond to the questions sent by the Armenians.

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French Armenians, via the Paris-based magazine *Nouvelles d'Arménie*, sent a questionnaire to the six presidential candidates in order to learn their approach on the Armenian issue.⁵⁷ When examining the answers of Emmanuel Macron and his closest competitor Marine Le Pen, who both won the first round of the presidential elections, it is seen that Macron's answers, compared to those of Le Pen, are more accordant with the Armenian views. However, when closely analyzed, it is seen that Macron's support for Armenian views is rather superficial, such as attending 24 April ceremonies and including 24

⁵⁷ *Nouvelles d'Arménie Magazine*, Issue 238 (March 2017): 24-30.

April in the French Republic's calendar, and that he does not go into main topics such as the international recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations, Turkey's EU membership and Karabakh, suggesting that he will follow the traditional French policy. Most probably concerned by this, Murat Papazian, the Chairman of the Coordination Council of the Armenian Organizations of France, stated that Macron told him during a conversation that he will oppose Turkey's membership in the EU, will support efforts for the recognition of Armenian genocide allegations, and will work for a pro-Armenian solution in the Karabakh conflict.⁵⁸ There has been no confirmation or refutation from Macron or his office with regard to this conversation. Normally, with regard to Turkey's membership to the EU, Macron should act based on Turkey's fulfilment of the criterion set by the EU, and with regard to the Karabakh conflict, he should act in unison with the OSCE Minsk Group.

It appears that Armenians will have the sympathy and support of the new French President Macron, although not to the extent of former President Hollande. On the other hand, there are other names in the new French government who are known for their sympathy towards Armenians. Foremost among these is the new Minister of the Interior Gérard Collomb. Collomb, prior to his appointment as Minister of the Interior, was the mayor of Lyon, a city with a large Armenian population, since 2001, and a Senator for the Rhône region since 1999. In order to gain votes, he has been always close to and supportive of the Armenians. He ensured the building of an "Armenian Genocide Memorial" in Lyon in 2006. He visited Armenia numerous times. While on an official visit in France in March, President Sargsyan visited Lyon and awarded Collomb with the Armenian Order of Honor for his "considerable contribution to the strengthening and development of the Armenian-French friendly relations".⁵⁹ Collomb has been supporting the Armenian views in the political arena as well. During a speech he made on the occasion of the centenary of the 1915 events, he claimed that the Young Turks exterminated two-thirds of the Anatolian Armenians (allegedly 1.5 million) within a couple of months, and stated that Turkey was still not recognizing the existence of genocide even after a century. Indicating that to recognize the crimes of the past does not mean to lower oneself but, on the contrary, to grow, he stated that a society can be at peace with itself only by recognizing its past. Finally,

58 "French-Armenians Have Positive Expectations from Macron – Murat Papazyan," *Tert.am*, May 9, 2017, <http://www.tert.am/en/news/2017/05/09/murad-papazian/2365179>

59 Mathilde Régis, "Gérard Collomb décoré par le Président de la République d'Arménie," *Lyon Capitale*, March 9, 2017, <https://www.lyoncapitale.fr/Journal/Lyon/Politique/Politique/Gerard-Collomb-decore-par-le-president-de-la-Republique-d-Armenie>

he stated that he is in solidarity with not only the Armenians also with all those who, within Turkish civil society, want to put an end to denial.⁶⁰

The appointment of Gérard Collomb as the Minister of the Interior led to hopes that Georges Képénékian, Deputy Mayor of Lyon, could become the new mayor.⁶¹

The mayors of Paris and Marseille, which are cities heavily populated by Armenians, also maintain good relations with the Armenian community. Each year, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo attends 24 April ceremonies, and on the same day, hosts hundreds of people, including Armenia's Ambassador to Paris, at a big event at the city hall. Making a speech at this year's event, in reference to Turkey, Hidalgo stated "if we deny history, it can repeat itself". She also stated that she is working for the establishment of an Armenian Cultural Center in Paris.⁶²

Marseille mayor Jean-Claude Gaudin, in consideration of the fact that a population of 80 thousand well organized Armenians live in the city, is also in good relations with the Armenian community of Marseille. The Deputy Mayor of Marseille, Didier Parakian, is also of Armenian descent.

French Armenians' support towards Macron in all fields led to speculations that an Armenian would be appointed as a minister in the new Macron government. Consequently, it was claimed that Astrid Panosyan, a businesswoman, could be appointed as Minister of Labor.⁶³ However, ultimately, Muriel Péricaud was appointed as Minister of Labor.⁶⁴

60 "Tribune - Gérard Collomb : 'La Turquie Doit Accepter son Histoire Sans en Trier les Faits'," *Le Point*, April 24, 2017, http://www.lepoint.fr/politique/tribune-gerard-collomb-la-turquie-doit-accepter-son-histoire-sans-en-trier-les-faits-24-04-2015-1923869_20.php

61 Paul Terra, "Qui Pour Remplacer Collomb à Lyon et à la Métropole?," *Lyon Capitale*, May 17, 2017, <http://www.lyoncapitale.fr/Journal/Lyon/Politique/Elections/Municipales-2014/Lyon/Qui-pour-replacer-Collomb-a-Lyon-et-a-la-metropole>

62 "Commémoration à la Mairie de Paris - Anne Hidalgo : « L'histoire de ce génocide est aussi mon histoire car c'est l'histoire de l'humanité »,» *Nouvelles d'Arménie*, April 24, 2017, http://armenews.com/imprimersans.php3?id_article=140978&nom_site=Nouvelles%20d%92Armenie%20en%20ligne&url_site=http://armenews.com

63 "Astrid Panosyan, Ministre du Travail du Gouvernement Macron?" *Nouvelles d'Arménie*, May 16, 2017, http://armenews.com/imprimersans.php3?id_article=142066&nom_site=Nouvelles%20d%92Armenie%20en%20ligne&url_site=http://armenews.com

64 "Astrid Panosyan ne Figure Pas Dans la Liste des Ministres du Gouvernement Macron," *Nouvelles d'Arménie*, May 17, 2017, http://armenews.com/imprimersans.php3?id_article=142109&nom_site=Nouvelles%20d%92Armenie%20en%20ligne&url_site=http://armenews.com

Prior to the end of his term, François Hollande, for the last time as president, attended commemoration ceremonies at the genocide memorial in Paris (the monument of priest and composer Komitas) and made a speech. The highlights of his speech are below:

- François Hollande announced the introduction of an annual “week of research on genocide, crimes against humanity and mass crimes” in schools which will symbolically begin on 24 April.⁶⁵

- He announced the creation of a commission for judicial archives of the “Armenian Genocide”, which will be directed by historian Raymond Kevorkian (it is not understood how this commission will be created as nearly all of the judicial archives are located in Turkey).⁶⁶

- Referring to the annulment of a law on denial by the Constitutional Council of France at the beginning of the year, Hollande stated that other ways can be found and if necessary, that the recognition of adapted texts by the European Court of Human Rights can be ensured.⁶⁷ Thus, he suggested that the Constitutional Council of France can be by-passed. Time will show whether the newly-elected Macron will go as far as Hollande.

Yet, it should be mentioned that Emmanuel Macron visited the “Armenian Genocide” memorial in Paris and laid a wreath. Making a speech, Macron stated that he will fight for the international recognition of the “Armenian Genocide” if elected as President of France.⁶⁸

The failure of France’s last two presidents, Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande, in coping with the country’s problems led to the easy victory of Emmanuel Macron, who was a young and a rather unknown politician at the time, in the presidential elections. Macron, although serving as Minister of Economy for a while during François Hollande’s presidency, entered the presidential race as an independent candidate, then he founded a centrist political party “En Marche!” (En. Onward!/Forward!) for the parliamentary elections. In the parliamentary elections held in June 2017, “En Marche!” won

65 Ara Toranian, “Mauvais 24 Avril Pour le Négationnisme,” *Nouvelles d’Arménie*, April 29, 2017, http://armenews.com/imprimersans.php3?id_article=141168&nom_site=Nouvelles%20d%92Armenie%20en%20ligne&url_site=http://armenews.com

66 Toranian, “Mauvais 24 Avril Pour le Négationnisme.”

67 “Génocide Arménien: Hollande Annonce une Semaine d’Étude dans les Établissements Scolaires,” *Le Parisien*, April 24, 2017, <http://www.leparisien.fr/societe/genocide-armenien-hollande-annonce-une-semaine-d-etude-dans-les-etablissements-scolaires-24-04-2017-6886281.php>

68 “Ermeni Teziyle Başladı,” *Hürriyet*, April 25, 2017, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ermeni-teziyle-basladi-40437340>

an absolute majority in the French National Assembly. The MPs of the party are relatively young and new to politics. Furthermore, a large number of MPs elected from this party are women.

Several members of the Armenian community, which attaches great importance to have a voice in French internal politics, were also nominated as MPs by the party “En Marche!”, and ultimately, four of them were elected as MPs - a first in history.⁶⁹

How can four MPs of Armenian origin influence France’s policies with regard to issues such as the recognition of the genocide allegations, reparations by Turkey, the return of Armenian properties, Turkey-Armenia relations and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict? It should be mentioned that this number of MPs do not hold the power to change or form a policy. Therefore, as we will explain below, France most probably will not change its policy towards Turkey.

Lastly, let us mention Serzh Sargsyan’s visit to France in March.

According to President Sargsyan, Armenian Presidents visited France 25 times. While he attributed this to the depth of relations between Armenia and France, relations between the two countries does not require this many visits. Furthermore, it is very unorthodox to conduct visits to a country on the presidential level every year.

It is understood that Sargsyan, who conducted most of these visits, is trying to use Armenia’s good relations with France as a means to develop his countries relations with the EU. It also appears that good relations with France is also considered as a balance against Russia, which is very influential in Armenia in all fields.

On the other hand, it is understood that, other than to appease the Armenian minority in its territories, France attaches importance to its good relations with

On the other hand, it is understood that, other than to appease the Armenian minority in its territories, France attaches importance to its good relations with Armenia to prevent Armenia from going further into Russia’s orbit and to ensure that Armenia preserves its ties with the EU. However, it is not possible to say that Armenians and the Armenian diaspora are satisfied with the foreign policy of France.

⁶⁹ Their names are as follows: Guillaume Kasbarian, Danielle Cazarian, Nadia Essayan, Jacques Marilossian.

Armenia to prevent Armenia from going further into Russia's orbit and to ensure that Armenia preserves its ties with the EU.

However, it is not possible to say that Armenians and the Armenian diaspora are satisfied with the foreign policy of France:

- France wants a resolution to the Karabakh conflict within OSCE and its Minsk Group format. Such resolution does not foresee an independent Karabakh or the annexation of Karabakh to Armenia.

- France maintains good relations with Armenia's nemesis, Azerbaijan. Shortly after Sargsyan's above-mentioned visit, Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev and his wife visited France and received a warm welcome. Azerbaijan economically occupies an important place for nearly all countries due to its oil and gas reserves and its generated income. Armenia, on the other hand, is economically the opposite.

- While adopting an approach satisfactory to the Armenians with regard to the genocide issue, France has been completely silent on the topics of reparations and return of properties, which are brought up by Armenians as part of their "elimination of the consequences of genocide" formula.

- With regard to the topic of the cession of Turkey's territories to Armenia, since Armenia has not made an official demand, France, like other countries, is not required to adopt a stance on this issue. If such a demand is made, France will definitely not support it given its relations with Turkey in all fields. In fact, except for Greece and the Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus, all countries would be expected to act similarly. No country would accept a dream dating back to the First World War to disturb today's world which is already dealing with many problems.

As a result, it is not possible to say that the seemingly good relations between France and Armenia covers all aspects.

4.3) The Czech Republic

We had previously mentioned Czech Republic's approach towards the Armenian genocide allegations.⁷⁰ To sum up, Czech official authorities and generally the public, due to the reasons such as the country being Catholic,

70 Lütem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar," Issue 51: 164-165; Lütem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar," Issue 53: 31.

an EU member and under the influence of Germany, are in favor of the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations. However, due to favorable relations with Turkey especially in the economic field, they avoid drawing the negative reaction of Turkey.

The Czech President Milos Zeman, probably in an effort to imitate former German President Joachim Gauck, appears to have an approach in favor of the Armenian claims. Zeman, who had described the events of 1915 as “genocide” during Sargsyan’s visit to Prague in 2014, also visited the Genocide Memorial during his visit to Armenia in 2016 and stated that 1.5 million Armenians were killed in 1915.⁷¹

Following the footsteps of the President, the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies, on 14 April 2015, unanimously adopted a resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations, condemning genocide denial, and expressing solidarity with the Armenian nation.⁷² In June the same year, Czech Foreign Minister Lubomír Zaorálek visited Yerevan but made a speech in a way that avoided a clear recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations.⁷³

Thus, a legal uncertainty with regard to the Armenian genocide claims emerged. In order for the allegations to be officially recognized, a resolution must be adopted by the Czech parliament or the government, and there is no such resolution. However, there are the statements of the President and the resolution of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, which was not approved by the parliament itself.

Although it was most probably thought that the issue can be gotten by with a “semi recognition”, ultimately, the Chamber of Deputies, on 25 April 2017, unanimously adopted a resolution that openly recognized the Armenian genocide allegations. According to the resolution,

“The Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic condemns the crimes against humanity committed against the Jews, Roma and Slavs in the territories conquered by the Nazis during the Second World War; condemns the Armenian Genocide and genocides

71 “Turkey Denounces Czech Recognition of the Armenian Genocide,” *Prague Daily Monitor*, April 28, 2017, <http://praguemonitor.com/2017/04/28/turkey-denounces-czech-recognition-armenian-genocide>

72 “Çek Cumhuriyeti de ‘Ermeni Soykırımı’ nı Tanıdı,” *T24*, Nisan 15, 2015, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/cek-cumhuriyeti-de-ermeni-soykirimini-tanidi,293632>

73 “Czech MFA: Our Country Will Continue Discussions on Armenian Genocide,” *News.am*, June 25, 2017, <https://news.am/eng/news/273680.html>

of other ethnic and religious minorities which took place within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, as well as genocidal acts committed in other parts of the globe”.⁷⁴

A day before the adoption of this resolution, President Zeman, in a letter he sent to the Armenian community in his country, wrote that history should not be interpreted by politicians because they often used it to promote their political interests, and expressed sympathy to the people of Armenia and the Armenian minority in the Czech Republic.⁷⁵

On 26 April 2017, the Turkish Foreign Ministry released the following statement regarding the resolution adopted by the Chamber of Deputies and President Zeman’s letter:

“No: 132, 26 April 2017, Press Release Regarding The Resolution Adopted By The Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic On the Events of 1915 and the Statement Made By President Zeman on the Same Issue

We condemn and reject in the strongest terms the resolution adopted by the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic on 25 April 2017.

We are also disappointed by President Zeman’s letter of 24 April 2017 addressed to the Armenian diaspora in his country with regard to the events of 1915, as it includes serious inconsistencies.

President Zeman, while stating in his letter that history should not be interpreted by politicians, and exposing the fact that politicians abuse history for their political interests, and that the past should first and foremost be analysed and interpreted by historians; contradicts his own words as he makes political assessments with regard to the events of 1915.

Our reaction to these political actions that openly contradict historical facts as well as the basic tenets of law has been conveyed to the Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Ankara.”

74 “Parliament of Czech Republic Recognizes Armenian Genocide,” *Agos*, April 26, 2017, <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/18340/parliament-of-czech-republic-recognizes-armenian-genocide>

75 “Turkey Denounces Czech Recognition of the Armenian Genocide.”

As it can be seen, while briefly condemning and rejecting the resolution adopted by the Chamber of Deputies, the Turkish Foreign Ministry laid stress on the inconsistencies in the letter sent by President Zeman. Indeed, Zeman, while mentioning that history should not be interpreted by politicians, he himself looks out for his own political interests.

The Czech government, on the other hand, distanced itself from the resolution of the Chamber of Deputies. In a press statement, the Czech Foreign Ministry stated that the assessment of this regrettable event (the events of 1915) was up to independent historians.⁷⁶ The Czech Foreign Ministry further stated that Ankara was informed that the Czech Chamber of Deputies' resolution was not legally binding and that "it is the cabinet, not lawmakers, who is responsible for Prague's foreign policy".⁷⁷

As a result, the Czech government, while failing to prevent the Chamber of Deputies from adopting a resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations and to force President Zeman to act in accordance with the policy of the Czech government, tried to preserve its relations with Turkey by stating that Chamber of Deputies' resolution was not binding for the government.

4.4) Lebanon

In our recent issues,⁷⁸ we pointed out the position of Armenians in Lebanon and certain circles who are under their influence with regard to the "Armenian Genocide" and other Armenian allegations.

Within this context, we mentioned that Lebanon, which recognized the Armenian genocide allegations twice, was represented by delegations both from the government and the parliament in the ceremonies held on 24 April 2015 in Yerevan, and that all schools in Lebanon were closed on 24 April. We also mentioned that demonstrations were held in Lebanon, which were supported by Armenian Catholicos of Cilicia Aram I (of the Armenian Apostolic Church) who is based at Antelias near Beirut, and that Bedros XX, Armenian Catholic Catholicos-Patriarch of Cilicia (of the Armenian Catholic

76 "LN: Genocide Resolution May Harm Czech Diplomatic Aims," *Prague Daily Monitor*, April 28, 2017, <http://praguemonitor.com/2017/04/28/in-armenian-genocide-resolution-may-harm-czech-diplomatic-aims>

77 "Formin: Czech MPs' Armenian Genocide Resolution Not Binding," *Prague Daily Monitor*, April 28, 2017, <http://www.praguemonitor.com/2017/04/28/formin-czech-mps-armenian-genocide-resolution-not-binding>

78 Lüttem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar," Issue 53: 84-68; Ömer Engin Lüttem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar," *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 54 (2016): 36.

Church), defended the “Armenian cause”. In 2016, the Minister of Culture of Lebanon Roni Arayji also made statements embracing the Armenian views, in which he accused Turkey of denying historical facts.

This year, the new Minister of Tourism of Lebanon Avedis Guidanian, who is of Armenian descent, in an interview he gave to a TV channel, disparaged his own country by stating that he would prefer Armenia over Lebanon. Furthermore, as for Turkey, he said: “Currently, there are many problems in Turkey. These problems, while being bad for them, it is an opportunity for us. I am very happy about this because I don’t like them (Turks)”. To the question on whether he would encourage Turkish tourists to come to Lebanon, he responded: “I would not promote anything related to Turkey, none of their products, or establish relations with them.”⁷⁹

These openly racist comments were criticized in the social media in Lebanon, and the former Minister of Justice Ashraf Rifi asked him to step down.⁸⁰ However, there was no known public reaction by the Lebanese government, especially the Prime Minister, to Guidanian’s comments.

The Lebanese Minister of Planning Michel Pierre Pharaon made an official visit to Armenia on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Lebanon. Of course, during his stay, Pharaon also visited the Genocide Memorial.⁸¹

The 102nd anniversary of the “Armenian Genocide” was commemorated by the Dashnak Party in Lebanon in a grandiose manner. The ceremony was attended by the above-mentioned Minister of Tourism Avedis Guidanian, Dashnak Party leader Hagop Pakradounian and several non-Armenian Lebanese MPs. Making a speech at the ceremony, Pakradounian, in reference to the aftermath of the Armenian relocation, stated that the consequences of uprooting and loss of identity was still being felt, and that the crime (genocide) would continue unless Turkey recognized its crime, apologized for it, offered reparations, and returned the territories of the State of Armenia.⁸²

79 “Lübnanlı Ermeni Bakanın Türkiye Hakkındaki Sözleri Tartışma Yarattı,” *Milliyet*, March 31, 2017, 2017, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/lubnanli-ermeni-bakanin-turkiye-dunya-2424131/>

80 “Lübnanlı Ermeni Bakanın Türkiye Hakkındaki Sözleri Tartışma Yarattı.”

81 “Le Ministre Libanais Michel Pierre Pharaon s’est Recueilli au Mémorial du Génocide des Arméniens à Erévan,” *Nouvelles d’Arménie*, April 30, 2017, http://www.armenews.com/article.php3?id_article=141208

82 “Pakradounian Exige Que La Turquie Moderne Offre Réparation au Peuple Arménien,” *L’Orient-Le Jour*, May 1, 2017, <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1049421/pakradounian-exige-que-la-turquie-moderne-offre-reparation-au-peuple-armenien.html>

What lies behind the Lebanese Armenians' ability to show their hostility towards Turkey in an open and blatant manner is that Lebanon has a state structure that is grounded on religious communities. Under Lebanon's constitution, the president must be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of parliament a Shiite Muslim. Furthermore, each community has an allotted number of seats in the Parliament (Armenians have 6). With how many ministers each community will be represented in the cabinet is also determined (at least 1 for Armenians).

As a result, the system in Lebanon, which features religious communities instead of "national will" as in other countries, operates very slowly. In Lebanon, it takes months to elect a president, to form a cabinet, and to resolve issues that are quickly resolved in other countries, and the hardly established balances are always fragile. Within this uncertainty, Armenians are able to easily defend and promote their "cause" (their demands and their hostility towards Turkey).

What lies behind the Lebanese Armenians' ability to show their hostility towards Turkey in an open and blatant manner is that Lebanon has a state structure that is grounded on religious communities.

Meanwhile, it should be also mentioned that anti-Turkey sentiments are not limited to Armenians. In the 19th century, Christian elements in Lebanon and partly in Syria fell under at least the cultural influence of certain European countries, particularly France, and, inspired by them, began to demand independence from the Ottoman Empire. This attitude of Maronites during the First World War increased the possibility of a rebellion. However, Cemal Pasha, the Commander-in-Chief of the Fourth Army, who was responsible for the administration of that region, did not allow these movements to grow, and established tribunals for the trial of suspects, which resulted in the executions of some. Among these were also Muslims. It must be noted that this act by Cemal Pasha was completely legal under Ottoman law.

During the war, the Allied fleet imposed blockades against the Ottoman Empire and blocked food imports to the Empire. This led to food shortages in coastal towns. Coastal towns in Anatolia, despite difficulties, were able to receive food from the inlands. However, Lebanon, whose inland regions were not as fertile, shortly suffered from famine.

Lastly, contagious diseases seen in nearly all over Ottoman due to conditions of war,⁸³ also caused many casualties in Lebanon. Famine and contagious

83 For more information see: Hikmet Özdemir, *Salgın Hastalıklardan Ölümler 1914-1918* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2005).

diseases are the natural result of wars. Therefore, no fault can be attributed to Cemal Pasha for these.

However, when Lebanon and the surrounding regions were occupied by the French, Maronites and some Muslims began to blame Cemal Pasha for executions, famine, and contagious diseases. This also served the purpose of the French who wanted to remove Ottoman influence in Lebanon. Thus, an anti-Ottoman climate emerged in Lebanon through hatred towards Cemal Pasha.

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In time, famine and contagious diseases began to be forgotten, but executions by Cemal Pasha became some sort of a uniting element. As a result, in 1960, a martyrs’ monument was built, and 6 May began to be observed as martyrs’ day.⁸⁴

The negative sentiments in Lebanon against the Ottoman Empire due to Cemal Pasha’s actions provides the Armenians with an environment that facilitates their anti-Turkey activities.

However, it is also possible to say that today, as in the past, there is a sympathy towards Turkey among the Sunni Muslims of Lebanon.

On the other hand, Lebanese governments have been attaching great importance to having good relations with Turkey. However, due to fragile political balances, Lebanese government has been unable to prevent the anti-Turkey activities by Armenian ministers, and has been trying to distance itself from these activities by stating that they are the personal acts of the ministers.

4.5) Other Countries

During the period we analyze here, several developments regarding Armenian genocide allegations, which we can characterize as minor, also took place in other countries, among which we will mention Jordan, Sweden and Canada.

84 Youssef Mouawad, “La Légende Noire de Djemal Pacha, Comment Le Liban a Construit sa Mémoire,” *Orient XXI*, April 3, 2017, <http://orientxxi.info/l-orient-dans-la-guerre-1914-1918/la-legende-noire-de-djemal-pacha,1792>

4.5.1) Jordan

In April, Princess Dina Mired of Jordan, who is also the president of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), visited Armenia on the occasion of the Cancer Survivor Congress.⁸⁵ During her visit, she met with President Sargsyan, visited the Genocide Memorial, laid a wreath and signed the Book of Honorary Guests where she wrote that she remembers the war brutalities, wherever they occur, referring to the violence against the civilian population throughout the world where women and children are the primary victims. The Princess of Jordan also watched the movie “The Promise”, a movie promoting Armenian genocide allegations.⁸⁶

4.5.2) Sweden

In 2010, the Parliament of Sweden (Riksdag) had adopted a resolution claiming that Armenians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Pontic Greeks were subjected to genocide. However, the fact that the resolution passed by a one vote margin, the then Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt’s statement that “historical events should not be judged at political level, but should be left to the parties concerned to discuss” and that the Parliament of Sweden was not unanimous regarding Armenian genocide allegations, and the fact that foreign policies are determined by governments, not parliaments, had rendered the resolution insignificant.⁸⁷

Margot Wallstrom, the successor of Bildt, characterized the 1915 events only as “tragic”. She also stated that that an independent committee would need to be established to investigate the 1915 events.⁸⁸

Unlike many other countries, the Parliament of Sweden did not adopt a resolution on the centenary of the 1915 events.

In April 2017, the Swedish Social Democratic Party rejected a motion about the Armenian genocide allegations.⁸⁹

85 “President Sargsyan Hosts Her Royal Highness Princess Dina Mired of Jordan,” *Armenpress*, April 29, 2017, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/888825/president-sargsyan-hosts-her-royal-highness-princess-dina-mired-of-jordan.html>

86 “Princess Dina Mired of Jordan Visited Armenian Genocide Memorial,” *Panorama.am*, April 29, 2017, <http://www.panorama.am/en/news/2017/04/29/Princess-Dina-Mired/1769783>

87 Lüttem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar,” Issue 53: 41.

88 Lüttem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar,” Issue 53: 42.

89 “İsveç’te Sosyal Demokrat Parti 1915 olayları önerisini gündeme almadı,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, April 12, 2017, <http://aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/isvecte-sosyal-demokrat-parti-1915-olaylari-onerisini-gundeme-almadi/795543>

Lastly, on 20 April 2015, the municipal council of Norrköping, which is located about 160 km from Stockholm, had adopted a resolution to erect a “Seyfo Genocide Memorial” within the borders of the municipality. However, upon the appeal of Kenan Gündoğdu, a Turkish citizen, in May 2017, this resolution was cancelled by court decision.⁹⁰

4.5.3) Canada

Thanks to the efforts of the small but active Armenian minority in Canada, the Canadian Senate and House of Commons had adopted separate resolutions recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations. Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, on behalf of the government, had also recognized the genocide allegations, and thus formalized Canada’s recognition. Harper’s attitude had caused sort of a crisis between Turkey and Canada with the Canadian Foreign Minister trying to preserve good relations between the two countries. We have provided detailed information about these developments in our previous issues.⁹¹

Stephen Harper, who lost the 2015 elections, was succeeded by Justin Trudeau as Prime Minister. Trudeau, in his statement on 24 April 2016, had used a moderate tone and stated that this matter should not lead to divisions in Canada.

The message Prime Minister Trudeau issued this year on the occasion of the 102th anniversary of the “Armenian Genocide” was also moderate. In his message, Trudeau mentioned that the House of Commons declared April 24 as “Armenian Genocide Memorial Day” in 2015, paid tribute to those who lost their lives and their descendants, and stated that they will “never stand indifferently in the face of fate or violence in any form”.⁹² What is noteworthy in his message is that there are no references to the Ottomans.

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