



Arbeitsgruppe Anerkennung – gegen Genozid, für Völkerverständigung e.V. (AGA)

19th April 2014

The President of the Turkish Republic
Abdullah Gül

Via:
Embassy Berlin of the Republic of Turkey
Excellency Hüseyin Avni Karslıoğlu
Tiergartenstr. 19-21
10785 Berlin-Tiergarten

Dear Mister President,

Since many years human rights defenders and members of the Armenian community, together with Arameans/Assyrians and Greeks of Asia Minor or Pontos descent, and also ethnic Turks and Kurds gather in front of Turkish representations in Germany and numerous other countries in order to demand the recognition of massive, state induced crimes as genocide.

These crimes which were caused by the intention to ethnically homogenize the population of the late Ottoman Empire form the empirical base of the 1948 United Nations *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* – together with the extermination of the European Jewry during the Second World War:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Deportations that had been ordered and conducted in the Ottoman Empire at least since 1913, starting with Greek Orthodox populaces are qualified in the Rome Statute as a crime against humanity. As the Ottoman case proves, this crime frequently tends to bleed into genocide, in particular when deportations are organized as death marches. As a consequence, more than three million Christians of Ottoman nationality – Armenians, Arameans/Assyrians and Greeks of Asia Minor, Pontos and Eastern Thrace - died from massacres, starvation, exhaustion and wide-spread decease, from malnutrition and exhaustion during slave labor. Infants and children were forcibly taken from their parents and relatives, forcibly alienated from their parental culture and Islamized in private households or state “orphanages” where the fatality rate was about 50%.

While an increasing number of Turkish scholars and intellectuals have acknowledged these facts as genocide according to the above quoted Convention, Turkey’s lawmakers and governments persist in denying the historic facts and their legal qualification as genocide, causing additional grief among the descendants of survivors and preventing reconciliation.

Judging by your statements during a recent press conference in Paris on 28th January 2014¹ we feel encouraged to address to you with the following requests:

- To use your influence as Head of State to achieve a profound legal re-evaluation of the historic facts in Turkey;
- To use your influence to ensure that the Turkish education system and in particular school textbooks are free from hate speech and discriminative depictions of Non-Muslims. It is not acceptable that the Christian minorities of today are continuously denounced as 'traitors';
- To bring to the attention of Turkey's government our request to ensure full information on the facts of the history of modern Turkey, including the transformation period at the turn of the 19th to 20th centuries; we firmly believe that the population of Turkey and her Diaspora has the right to learn about historic facts as established by international scholarship;
- To bring to the attention of your government the international concern for the collective and individual religious freedoms of Christian minorities in Turkey. In this context, we are in particular concerned about the increasing number of Greek Orthodox cathedrals and churches that have been converted into mosques, such as the 13th century cathedral of Haghia Sophia in Trabzon/Trapesunta, or are intended to be converted, such as the main church of Orthodox Christianity, the Haghia Sophia of Constantinople/Istanbul. Turkey of today boasts enough genuine mosques to serve its spiritual needs without misusing previous Christian architectural monuments or offending the feelings of other creeds;
- To use your influence to ensure that the descendants of forcibly Islamized Ottoman Christians have the full right to freely determine their religious and cultural affiliation and identities according to international human rights standards;
- To bring to the attention of your government our request to ensure the full right of free speech, research, print and expression in the context of the crimes committed against the Ottoman Christians.

We hope that by April 2015 we have no further reasons to hold a human rights vigil in front of Turkish diplomatic representations.

Sincerely,

¹ Quoted by Armenian media from Aksam as: "From time to time, this topic casts a shadow upon our relations; this matter cannot be solved unilaterally. The second point is that there may-be different views on this matter.

"Our former laws were prohibiting the discussion of such issues; but we have changed these laws. Numerous French friends think that they cannot yet discuss many things in Turkey; [but] we want for everything to be easily discussed, in connection with this matter, in France, too.

"Instead of passing on this pain from generation to generation, it is indispensable to instill friendship."

<http://www.tert.am/en/news/2012/07/08/davutoglu-genocide/>

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(in alphabetic order):

- **Arbeitsgruppe Anerkennung (AGA) e.V.**
- **Arbeitsgruppe Armenier, Pontos-Griechen, Assyrer/Aramäer, Dersim Alewiten, Ezidis und Kocgirir (AG AGADEK)**
- **Armenischer Akademiker Verein 1860 (AAV 1860) e.V.**
- **Armenische Gemeinde zu Berlin e.V.**
- **Armenische Kirchen- und Kulturgemeinde Berlin e.V.**
- **Assyrische Demokratische Organisation (ADO) e.V.**
- **Bundesverband der Aramäer in Deutschland e.V.**
- **DurDe!_Initiative Deutschland**
- **Föderation Suryoye Deutschland - HSA e.V.**
- **Hellenische Gemeinde zu Berlin e.V.**
- **Institut für Armenische Fragen e.V.**
- **Solidaritätsgruppe Turabdin und Nordirak**
- **Verband der Vereine der Griechen aus Pontos in Europa e.V. (OSEPE)**
- **Verein der Völkermordgegner e.V.**
- **Zentralverband der Assyrischen Vereinigungen in Deutschland und Europäischen Sektionen e.V. (ZAVD)**

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