



The Embassy of the Republic of Turkey

Copenhagen, 20 January 2017

Distinguished members of Folketinget.

I have followed the discussion, yesterday, on the F3 parliamentary query about the recognition of 1915 events as “genocide”. I am content to see that the majority is of the opinion that this historical controversy is not for parliamentarians to decide.

While I salute the principled stance of the Parliament, I would like to draw your attention to a severe mistake taken up during the parliamentary debate and going to be voted on the 26th of January.

The proposals suggest that “the Turkish law prohibits citizens and media from using the phrase “genocide” in relation to the events” of 1915 which is completely false. ***There is no such law.***

Moreover, the claim that there is “an improper infringement on both freedom of research and freedom of speech” is also baseless. These are not more than a part of the narrative orchestrated by the known circles to draw an image against Turkey to support their claims of genocide.

As a matter of fact, the issue is not a taboo in Turkey. Countless activities and debates about 1915 are organized in a democratic environment almost on a daily basis. Every year on 24th of April, commemoration events take place in all major cities of Turkey. Almost all the books published in Armenia on this matter are translated into Turkish. Hundreds of books defending the Armenian view of events, televised debates and newspaper columns giving support to the genocide thesis are freely published and broadcasted in Turkey. ***There is a lively public debate.***

Conferences presenting the Armenian version of history are also common in Turkey. A recent example took place in Taksim/Istanbul, just after the Bundestag resolution on the events of 1915, by the German Foundations with the participation of all notorious supporters of “genocide” thesis. Realization of such an event, when the public resentment towards Bundestag is at the highest, proves the tolerance of Turkey to any view regarding the events of 1915.

Members of the Foreign Affairs Committee
Folketinget

I am also obliged to correct the misunderstanding regarding the Armenian MP Garo Paylan. Mr. Paylan (one of the three parliamentarians of Armenian decent in the Turkish Grand National Assembly) has always been an explicit supporter of the “genocide” thesis. Only his recent remarks at the Turkish parliament has led him to be barred from attending three parliamentary sessions as an administrative measure. He is not subject to a criminal prosecution.

I appreciate the call for the “free and uncensored history research including the release of all official documents from the period” in the proposals. I hope that this message will be heard by Armenia as it is actually *the Armenian archives* (Armenian Revolutionary Federation archives, the archives of the Armenian patriarchate in Jerusalem and the Catholicosate archives in Echmiadzin) that *remain closed to non Armenian researchers*. No foreseeable date for access to them is suggested. The archives of the Armenian revolutionary committees and bands have to be made available to all researchers not merely to Armenian supporters of the “Armenian National Cause”.

On the contrary, *all Ottoman archives are open to the entire academic community*. Furthermore, our call for an Historical Joint Commission remains on the table, unanswered since 2005.

It is a sad situation that this issue again and again is taking the valuable time of Danish parliamentarians despite the fact that it can be only Turks and Armenians to come to terms with their common history and reach some common understanding. But this cannot be done with steps by Turkey only. Armenians also need to take steps. They should also be ready, as we are, to face some bitter truths.

National memories are important, but they alone cannot constitute “reality”. Especially when collective memories clash, as in the case of Turkish and Armenian memories, the need for proper scholarly studies becomes even more important.

On that note, I would like the esteemed members of the Folketinget to take into consideration the contents of this letter together with that of my deputy dated January 17, and amend the proposal accordingly.

Best regards ..



Mehmet DÖNMEZ
Ambassador

CC:
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Speaker
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