

PRESS RELEASE

ARMENIAN ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANISATION OF TURKISH CITIZENS JOINTLY DEMAND A GERMAN PARLIAMENTARY RESOLUTION ON THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

During their press Conference of April 17, 2000 the „**Working Group for Affirmation**“ and the **Society of Opponents of Genocide** announced that both organisations had forwarded petitions to the according committee of the German Federal Parliament (Deutscher Bundestag), requesting the German legislators to condemn the genocide of one and half million Armenians committed in 1915 in the then Ottoman Empire and, secondly, to call upon the government and parliament of the Republic of Turkey to admit the fact of genocide which official Turkey denies until this day. In this context the petitioners recall the resolution of the European Parliament of 1987 which made the affirmation of the Armenian genocide a precondition of Turkey's accession to the European Union. In their appeal towards the deputies of the German parliament the petitioners explain: „With your urge for affirmation of the Armenian genocide by the Turkish parliament you will at the same time support the process of democratization in Turkey as well as those Citizens of Turkey who in their homeland are still persecuted by law if they attempt to study the past in an objective way.“

The petition „The time has come: Genocide must be condemned“, written by the „Working Group for Affirmation“ emphasizes that the Armenian genocide was the culmination in the nationalistic program for the turkification of Asia Minor. Not only Armenians became victims of expulsion, deportation and slaughter during the period of 1914 until 1923, but also Greeks, Arameans and Assyrians. As a result only 150,000 Christians reside in today's Turkey, whereas in 1914 the total figure of Ottoman Christians was estimated to be nearly five millions.

The „Working Group for Affirmation“ is a union of the Central Council of Armenians in Germany, the Institute for Armenian Questions, the Centre for Information and Documentation on Armenia and the Co-ordinating Group Armenia of the international human rights Organisation Society for Threatened Peoples. At the time of their press-conference, about 2,500 persons residing in Germany or of German citizenship had signed the petition, among them numerous Turks, Kurds, Arameans and Armenians. Among the first corporate signatories of this petition is the „**Human Rights Society Turkey/Germany - TÜDAY**“. Among the foreign supporters of the petition are internationally known scholars of genocide and Holocaust research, for example, Professor Yehuda Bauer (International Institute on Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem) and Professor Israel Charny (Executive Director of the Institute on Holocaust and Genocide, Jerusalem).

The Society of Opponents to Genocide was founded in 1998 by Citizens of Turkey residing in Germany. Their petition was originally addressed to the great National Assembly of Turkey. „We demand“, wrote the petitioners to the Turkish members of parliament, „that denials, threats and defamation must end in the 21 st Century, that the genocide must find affirmation as a historic fact and that Turkey Stretches out her hands for peace and reconciliation with the nations concerned.“ The „sincere endeavour towards reparation“ is considered to be „the most reliable guaranty for peace and friendship“ as well as an enormous contribution „in order to save our

human dignity". After the Turkish parliament had refused to receive this petition signed by more than ten-thousand Citizens of Turkey the petitioners believe they have to address to the parliament of the country in which they reside and pay taxes. „Please urge your Turkish colleagues to lay the ghosts of the past, because the affirmation of the past is imperative for the democatization of our country", the Society of Opponents to Genocide wrote in its letter to the German deputies of parliaments.