



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

24 April 2013

The Foreign Minister of the Turkish Republic
Ahmet Davutoğlu

Via:

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

Sir,

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 or numerous 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 are qualified in the Rome Statute as a crime against humanity. As the Ottoman cases prove 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 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 instead 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 statement of early July 2012¹ we feel encouraged to address to you with the following requests:

- To use your influence 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 your 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 situation of the Syriac Orthodox Mor Gabriel Monastery, and about the increasing number of Greek Orthodox cathedrals and churches that have been converted into mosques or are intended to be converted as the 13th century cathedral of Haghia Sophia in Trabzon/Trapesunta, or even 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,

Arbeitsgruppe Anerkennung – Gegen Genozid, für Völkerverständigung e.V.
Armenische Gemeinde zu Berlin e.V.
Armenischer Kirchen- und Kulturverein Berlin e.V.
Assyrische Demokratische Organisation, Sektion Mitteleuropa e.V.
Bundesverband der Aramäer in Deutschland e.V.
DurDe_Initiative Deutschland
Verband der Vereine der Griechen aus Pontos in Europa e.V.
Zentralrat der Armenier in Deutschland e.V.

¹Quoted by Armenian media as: "There is no Turkish Foreign Minister saying nothing was committed against the Armenians in 1915. I do not consider those events genocide, but that's the choice of those who say it. We do not deny your grief; we do realize it. So let's think together what can be done. That cannot be a unilateral accusation." - <http://www.tert.am/en/news/2012/07/08/davutoglu-genocide/>

ARBEITSGRUPPE ANERKENNUNG - GEGEN GENOZID, FÜR VÖLKERVERSTÄNDIGUNG e.V.
Postfach 41 10 24, 12120 Berlin, Tel.: +49 / (030) 851 64 09, Fax: +49 / (030) 851 79 74
Internet: <http://www.ag-a-online.org>
E-Mail: info@aga-online.org