



**TOWARDS THE CENTENNARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE:**

## **THAT'S ENOUGH! STOP DENIALISM!**

On the eve of World War I, around 2 million Armenians lived in the Ottoman Empire in 2,925 settlements including cities, towns, neighbourhoods and villages all over the Asia Minor from West to East, North to South. They had 1,996 schools with 173,000 students, both boys and girls, and 2,538 churches and monasteries.

The Genocide as well as the policies pursued by the Turkish government during the Republican period put an end to these communities. The villages and neighbourhoods after the annihilation of their inhabitants were no longer Armenian settlements. Today's Armenian population in Turkey, estimated to be around 60,000, live dispersed mainly in three major cities, primarily Istanbul. The state did not only exterminate Armenians, but erased their traces. You will not find any indication of Armenian life in places which were once Armenians' hometowns. Churches were not only left to become ruins due to the forces of nature, but they were destroyed by cannon balls and dynamite. There is not a single Armenian school today all over the Anatolian peninsula. Armenians were not only killed en masse but also their whole civilization with their schools, churches, cemeteries, monasteries, businesses was wiped out.

During this process other Christian peoples of the Asia Minor, Assyrians/Syriacs and Greeks also fell victims to the Genocide orchestrated by the central government. At the beginning of the 20th century every one out of 5 people, in other words 20% of the total population in Asia Minor was non-Muslim. Now this ratio has fallen below 0.01. Under normal conditions, taking as basis the rate of increase in population, the Christian population in what is Turkey today would have been around 17 million. This simple mathematics is clear enough to conceive the magnitude of the annihilation.

Genocide is not only unimaginable atrocities, mass murders, dead bodies floating on rivers, valleys filled with mutilated human bodies. Nor is it only the fatal march where death becomes a salvation, as compared to the horrors, robbery, rape, illness, or being forced to leave behind the dead bodies of your loved ones, the deep, incurable injury passed from one generation to the other, an indescribable, irreparable, unforgivable evil in action.

Genocide is also an enormous robbery. And it is not only limited to the Armenians' countless real estates, seized by the state and the local notables, that are worth amounts beyond calculation.

In addition to this well-known version of the plunder, the robbery also included confiscation of the Genocide victims' money and jewelry deposited in Ottoman Bank branches across the country, totaling some 22 million dollars at 1915 rates. Furthermore, starting from the beginning of the 20th century American and French insurance companies had started to sell life insurance policies in Anatolian provinces to tens of thousands of Christians at a value of, again at 1915 rates, more than 20 million dollars. The Ittihadists right after the Genocide tried to collect this money from the insurance companies,

by writing numerous official letters and also trying to persuade the American Ambassador Morgenthau, saying "the owners are dead with no heirs to make any claims, so this amount should be transferred to the Ottoman treasury".

This immeasurable robbery is one of the major reasons for the denial of the Genocide for 99 years and today's corruption in Turkey has its roots in the Genocide theft.

Denial is not just saying "I didn't do it". Denial means to say "we did it because they deserved it".

The shameless denialists on TV channels, those "reputable" academics and intellectuals are legitimizing and justifying the Genocide. They are encouraged by the fact that the majority of the Turkish public are ready to believe them, even expect them to reinforce in this manner what they already believe in - i.e. the official theses. Denial means to insult the victims, their memory and their descendants. Denial means criminalizing and antagonizing the descendants of the victims. Denial means the continuation of the Genocide, this biggest crime against humanity. What is worse, it means creating and winning the support of a society which chooses to be a bystander and keep silent.

We, as human rights defenders, insist that the Genocide should not be reduced to a political and diplomatic agenda item of negotiations, a tool to be used in international relations. It can't and it should never be forgotten that Genocide is before anything else and more than anything else a mass human rights violation committed by the state itself - a crime against humanity.

Denial is the most comprehensive, most effective and most widespread human rights violation, due to the simple fact that it becomes the source of, furthermore an encouragement for a wide variety of many more current and future human rights violations.

The Turkish state should hear and respond to the demands, requests and wishes expressed by the Armenians who are uprooted from their homeland and dispersed throughout the world for the restitution of the incalculable losses their ancestors and they themselves have suffered and continue to suffer because of the Genocide and its denial. Denialism is also an obstacle to the process of restitution of losses, to any step for alleviating the continued sufferings and to the achievement of justice.

Therefore we, on the 99th anniversary of the Genocide, on 24th April 2014 raise our demand from all the branches and representation offices of our Human Rights Association throughout the country at the same time of the day:

**THAT'S ENOUGH! PUT AN END TO DENIAL OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE FOR JUSTICE AND TRUTH!**

**HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION, TURKEY**