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## The Resolution

*„Remembrance and commemoration of the expulsions and massacres of the Armenians 1915 – Germany must make a contribution to the reconciliation of Turks and Armenians”*,  
issued by the German Parliament on  
June 16, 2005

*A critical assessment*

## *Before the adoption of the resolution*

With the exception of the German denial of the genocide, committed by Imperial German Colonial forces against 70,000 members of the tribes of Herero and Nama in Namibia during 1904-1908 (then so-called South-West Africa), the official denial by the Republic of Turkey remains the longest in the history of genocide denial. This situation, which is as painful to the descendents of genocide victim groups, as it is unbearable from a human rights defence point of view, has led to continued struggle for international and, consequently, for Turkish recognition of the genocide(s), committed against the Armenians and other ethnic groups, in particular Christian ethnic groups (Arameans/Assyrians, Greeks of Asia Minor and East Thrace).

A focus of this struggle was the recognition by international and national lawmakers. So far, parliaments of 17 states have “recognized” the genocide against the Ottoman Armenians as a historic fact. Meanwhile, three of them – Uruguay, Argentina, France - issued the recognition as a law. Not all recognizing national legislative bodies have completed the recognition procedure yet, for countries with a two houses system are supposed to bring the recognition to both houses.

The history of parliamentary resolutions on the genocide against the Ottoman Armenians goes back until 1965. With the German resolution of June 16, 2005, we have a unique situation after forty years of successful years of international and national recognition, for the German resolution contains the longest reasoning ever. Both the reasoning and the resolution obviously avoid the term *genocide*, and this arouses ongoing debates not only among Armenians in Germany and abroad. A known German law expert, Prof. Dr. Otto Luchterhandt (University of Hamburg, expert on international law) opposes the German parliamentary resolution for this avoidance, while Prof. Wolfgang Benz, head of the Centre for Studies on Anti-Semitism (Technical University Berlin) and known German scholar in genocide studies, described the resolution’s position as “avoidance of truth”; he also criticised the deliberate use of terms such as “expulsion”, “massacres”, “pogroms” as alleged synonyms for genocide.

For the first time German lawmakers were confronted with the request of genocide recognition, when a petition was brought into the parliamentary Petitions’ Commission on April 13, 2000. This petition was jointly forwarded by the *Working Group Recognition* and the *Association of Genocide Opponents*, the first being an initiative of German and Armenian NGOs, focussing on recognition issues, and the second is a predominantly Turkish NGO, which had collected more than 10,000 signatures from Turkish citizens to a petition, which was originally forwarded to the Grand Assembly of the Republic of Turkey in 1999. This petition called on Turkey’s lawmakers to recognize the genocides, committed against Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks. The joint petition of the year 2000 to the German lawmakers demanded the recognition of the Armenian genocide by the German parliament and Germany’s call on Turkey to come to terms with its past. Although the parliament decided on April 2001 to bring this petition to government level, it was eventually declined in the German parliament because of then existing *Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission* (TARC). At that stage, the German lawmakers rejected the request to make an own statement about the Armenian genocide with the argument, that the possibility of a direct Turkish-Armenian dialogue should not be disturbed by the intervention of a German parliamentary decision.

Four years later, however, the situation had changed. The interest of the ruling Social-Democrat/Green coalition in supporting Turkey’s admission to the EU, which had blocked all recognition initiatives during 2004, gave way to the increasingly influential conservative opposition, the Christian Democrats. A new situation emerged in early 2005 and after the scandal the temporarily successful diplomatic intervention by Turkey against the Brandenburg school curriculum, which for the first time in German history contained the Armenian genocide as an example of “expulsion” and “mass violence” in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The intense media coverage and the

public awareness of the Turkish intervention into the educational autonomy of a German Federal State highlighted problems with the large Turkish community in Germany, but in particular with the refusal of official Turkey to deal with its criminal past or at least to tolerate different views on Turkish history. On February 22, 2005 the fraction of two oppositional conservative parties of Germany published a motion, which was tabled on April 21.

The fraction of the ruling Social Democrats made a groundbreaking statement at that occasion: For the first time, the German share in the genocide against the Armenians was mentioned. Secondly, the German equivalent of *genocide* (Voelkermord) was introduced into this statement. After the official visit of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder to Turkey in early May, 2005, the debates on the “Armenian motion” continued in parliamentary commissions, in particular in the commission for Foreign Affairs. All four parliamentary fractions accepted eventually the text of an inter-fractional motion, which combined the interests of the Social Democrats with those of the Conservatives. The final version of this motion leaked to the media on June 14, 2005 - two days before it was formally and without further debate accepted. On June 16, 2005 at 13:30 the president of the German parliament recorded in protocol the unanimous acceptance of this the motion “*Remembrance and commemoration of the expulsions and massacres of the Armenians 1915 – Germany must make a contribution to the reconciliation of Turks and Armenians*”.

## **Questions:**

### ***Was it genocide recognition?***

Yes and no. The German resolution of June 16, 2005 does not explicitly recognize the Armenian genocide, because the German lawmakers did not consider recognition or a legally precise judgment on Turkey’s state crime(s) to be their task. The motion’s title names two main interests: a) “remembrance and commemoration” at the occasion of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the genocide(s) of 1915 and b) “reconciliation of Turks and Armenians”. The German lawmakers feel, that Germany, because of its “historic role in the German-Turkish-Armenian relations” bears a “specific obligation” to mediate and to work for the “normalisation and improvement of the situation between Armenia and Turkey” and thus to contribute to “stabilisation of the Caucasus region”.

In order to fulfil the first task, the lawmakers “deplore the deeds of the Young-Turkish government of the Ottoman Empire, which led to the nearly complete annihilation of the Armenians in Anatolia.”

The resolution qualifies the Young-Turkish crimes with the words of German contemporaries, in particular from the German diplomatic correspondence of 1915/16, as “annihilation”, “destruction” (*Vernichtung*) and “atrocities” (*Gräuel*). In addition to this, the reasoning enumerates the elements of this genocide: arrest, deportation and “murder in their majority” of the “Armenian political and cultural elite” of Istanbul; slave labour and “murder in their majority” of the Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman forces; “death marches” of “women, children and seniors” into the Syrian deserts since spring 1915; “massacres by special forces, recruited for this purpose alone”; oppression of any resistance by high-ranking Turkish officials and oppression of criticism among the Ottoman parliamentarians.

The number of victims of “deportations and mass murders” is given with “more than a million Armenians”. Coming to conclusions after a summary of the events, the authors of the *explanatory memorandum* state: “Numerous independent historians, parliaments and international organisation call the expulsion and annihilation of Armenians a genocide”.

The insertion of the last phrase goes back to the Social Democrats. Already in its press release of

April 21, 2005, the German Social-Democrat fraction introduced the G-word, although only in the context of German co-responsibility.

The German share in the crimes of its Turkish war ally is a less profoundly researched subject. Lately, younger scholars in genocide research such as Donald Bloxham (Scotland) and Dominick Schaller (Switzerland) articulated objections against the prevailing view of German responsibility for the Armenian genocide. Dominick Schaller pointed at the fact that Germany's Turkish allies obviously tried from the start to blame Germany for their own crime. For this purpose, for example, they tried to involve German officers, serving in the Imperial German Military Mission to the Ottoman Empire in the crimes committed against the Armenian population.

Notwithstanding these exculpating factors, there is a general understanding among the German political and intellectual elite, that Germany, which was involved at least into two genocides as a perpetrator, lacks the moral right to accuse Turkey for genocide against the Armenians. Instead, many Germans prefer to speak rather about their own nation's involvement and co-responsibility, hoping that Turks may eventually follow the German example(s) of public guilt confession and deal more often and more critically with Turkey's past. The first draft of a parliamentary motion in this spirit goes back to the genocide scholar Prof. Dr. Dr. Gunnar Heinssohn (University Bremen, Raphael Lemkin Institute), who sent it in 1998 to the then State Secretary for Culture, Michael Naumann. Despite the fact, that this draft never reached the legislative, the concept of inviting Turkey to genocide recognition by giving an example gained ground and was realized in the above mentioned Social-Democrat press release of April 21, 2005, which reads among others:

„The German Parliament (Der Deutsche Bundestag) acknowledges, that during the First World War a German co-responsibility existed for this genocide as a result of partial acceptance and of the omission of effective counter-measures, and therefore asks the Armenian people for forgiveness.”

In the reasoning of the resolution of June 16, 2005 the aspect of co-responsibility is further developed, although without the term “genocide”:

“As the main military ally of the Ottoman Empire, the German Empire, too, was deeply involved into these events. The political as well as the military leadership of the German Empire was informed about the persecution and assassination of the Armenians from the very beginning. The files of the Foreign Office, based on reports by the German ambassadors and consuls in the Ottoman Empire, document the planned implementation of the massacres and expulsions.”

In conclusion, the position of the German legislative can be described as an implicit recognition of the historic facts and an explicit acknowledgment of own (German) co-responsibility. The reasons for this decision originate in the specific historic, political and psychological situation in Germany and of Germans.

### ***What are the implications? Pros and Cons of the German resolution***

The advantages of the parliamentary motion are:

- 10 Its comprehensiveness, in particular, if compared with the French one phrase- recognition (“France recognizes the Armenian genocide”), which completely avoided naming the perpetrator (the Ottoman Empire, the Young Turkish war regime).
- 11 Impact on reforms and democratisation: The German lawmakers clearly wanted not just a statement, but intended an improvement of the state of affairs both in Turkey and in Germany. But the German lawmakers again avoid direct criticism and demands towards Turkey. Instead, the demands are addressed towards the German executive (government) and the Federal States of Germany. The German parliaments calls on the German government to see for an

- 12 “Unconditional discussion in the parliament, government and society of Turkey on their role towards the Armenian people in history and present”,
- 13 To see for the “general public accessibility not only of the files of the Ottoman Empire, but also of those file copies from the archives of the (German) Foreign Office, handed out to Turkey by Germany”.
- 14 “To campaign for the realization of the conference, planned in Istanbul, but postponed under governmental pressure”
- 15 “To campaign for the granting of freedom of opinion in Turkey, in particular in regard to the fate of the Armenians.”
- 16 “To support the normalisation of inter-state relations between Turkey and Armenia.”

The lawmakers call on the Federal States of Germany to implement the “expulsion and annihilation of the Armenians” into the teaching of the history of ethnic conflicts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The only direct criticism made on Turkey is articulated as a regret, “that even today a comprehensive discussion about the events of the time in the Ottoman Empire are not possible yet in Turkey, and that scholars and writers, who wish to discuss this part of Turkish history, are exposed to legal prosecution and public defamation.” Again, the German lawmakers avoid direct confrontation by diplomatically emphasising the achievements, already made by Turkey (the Grand Assembly inviting Turkish citizens of Armenian origin to speak about crimes against Armenians and Turkish-Armenian relations; first contacts between Armenian and Turkish historians, including the exchange of documents; a Turkish-Armenian “dialogue of women” in Vienna; the opening of a first Armenian Museum in Istanbul by Patriarch Mesrob and Prime Minister Erdoğan).

#### 17 Reference to co-victims:

“In the same way members of other Christian nationalities, in particular Aramaic/Assyrian and Khaldean Christians, but also certain Muslim minorities fell victim to deportations and massacres.”

Undoubtedly, this reference to co-victims is progress compared to the previous limitations on the Armenians, which not only did not correspond with the historic truth, but regularly offended communities of these victim groups, living together with Armenians in Germany and other Diaspora states. A petition for recognition has been forwarded by the *Assyrian-Syriac-Khaldean Union* (ACSU) to the German parliament in 2002; in its decision of February 20, 2003 the parliament ruled in a similar way as previously in the case of the petition by the *Working Group Affirmation*: It forwarded the petition to the attention of the Foreign Office with the request, to inform Turkey through diplomatic channels, that the German lawmakers “took notice of the issue of the fate of Assyrians in the Ottoman Empire.”

The disadvantages of this resolution:

Already during the debates on the above mentioned petitions in the years 2000 until 2003 it became obvious that the German parliament preferred to foster direct Armenian-Turkish dialogue instead of making an own statement on the matter of genocide. This approach persists even four years later and after the dissolution of TARC.

The most problematic aspect of the German parliamentary resolution is the request to the German government,

“to support the establishment of a commission of historians, including not only Turkish and Armenian scholars, but also international experts”.

With this request, the German legislative adopts a recent official Turkish point of view, which purposely ignores not only the results of comprehensive scholarly, archives-based publications on

the Armenian genocide, but also the Ottoman legal proceedings of 1919 and 1920. It suggests that the Armenian genocide is still a debatable “question”. Secondly, the request to establish a commission of historians is a psychologically impossible imposition for descendents of a nation, which not only suffered from genocide, but from decades of the denial of this crime. Nobody in his or her senses would ever suggest that Jewish scholars sit together with representatives of revisionist views and try to convince the latter of the Shoah as a matter of historic facts. Why then impose such a demand on Armenian scholars? The denial of facts by Turkey cannot be solved in any Turkish-Armenian dialogue. It demands first of all an internal discourse, which can and must be encouraged from outside. Its pre-conditions are a legal situation in Turkey, which allows open public discussion inside and outside academic circles, open general access to all kinds of information including the guaranteed freedom of publishing sources, furthermore in increase of ethical awareness among Turkish media, which so far used to threaten, defame and offend dissenting scholars in Turkey and abroad. Only after the realization of these pre-conditions, on the base of genocide recognition and after the end of the “second killing” (Elie Wiesel) by official Turkey, a bi-lateral Turkish-Armenian or multi-lateral dialogue can take part and will become successful.

Therefore, the major weakness of the German resolution of June 16, 2005 lies in contradicting statements, aims and beliefs. On the one hand, the explanatory memorandum quotes the opinion of scholars, international organisations and other parliaments, which qualified the events in question as a genocide (“Numerous independent historians, parliaments and international organisation call the expulsion and annihilation of Armenians a genocide.”), on the other hand the resolution supports the Turkish request for a “fact-finding” Turkish-Armenian historic commission, with all the negative and distorting implications of this request. On the one hand, the German lawmakers admit historic German involvement into state-crimes of Germany’s then military Turkish ally, on the other hand the lawmakers avoid an own statement on the legal nature of such crimes, hiding behind the contemporary vocabulary and the opinions of third sides.

### ***What next? Our agenda***

With a two houses-system in Germany, the logical next step for the Resolution would be its adoption by the *Bundesrat* (Federative Council), which is combined by the representatives of the *Laender* or Federal States of Germany. The question is, whether this can be combined with a revision of the recent resolution.

Parliamentary recognition of denied genocide is a pre-condition for further steps. It remains to be seen, whether the obvious weaknesses of the resolution allow a more efficient fight against the denial of genocide(s), committed by Ottoman Turkey during 1912-1922, in particular of the Armenian and Aramaic/Assyrian genocide of 1915. The public commemoration of Talaat Pasha by Turkish organisations of Germany in Berlin on March 18, 2005, at a place of commemoration for the victims of the Nazi regime is a telling example of the necessity for legal regulations against such activities. Genocide recognition should be followed by the penalisation of genocide denial. This leads to the problem of genocide definition. Here, the Belgium lawmakers recently adopted a law, which makes this definition depending on the decisions by international courts. Such a ruling excludes automatically genocides previous to WW2 and emphasizes again the necessity of legally precise definitions by national legislative bodies. Therefore any future anti-denial law must be inclusive, as far as the genocides of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are concerned.

School-textbooks are another topic on the agenda. Here, the resolution of the German parliament created a favourable situation, which allows the inclusion of the genocide(s) against the Armenians and, hopefully, the Aramaic/Assyrian Christians, too.

But laws and textbooks are not enough. Genocide awareness comes from active educational work on

various levels and not only in schools. And parliamentary resolutions do not automatically change denialist thinking after decades of genocide revisionism. The ardent resistance of even Turkish students in Germany to the public mentioning of the genocide against the Armenians, their active defence of the teachings of the official Turkish historiography underlines the difficulties of the work still ahead. If the denial of genocide grows into an integral part of national identity, the concept of the German resolution is difficult to accept. For the Turkish FO minister Abdullah Gül the German resolution comes as a personal offence. In particular painful for Turkey is the following sentence:

“This Turkish position (of denial; T.H.) is a contradiction to the concept of reconciliation, which guides the community of shared values of the European Union.”

In conclusion, one hopes that Germany will understand and value eventually the potential which lies in those Turkish citizens of Germany, who already share the values of the European community, including the readiness to take a critical position towards the criminal aspects of one's national history. Textbooks in Turkish, written by Turkish human rights defenders, and educational work, led by such colleagues, would enormously improve the recent situation of European genocide accusations and Turkish defence.

Fighting genocide and genocide denial must be seen as a universal task, a tasked of all humanity. In this aspect, there are no “Turkish losses” and “Armenian gains”. And the German resolution of June 16, 2005 is not to be seen as an “Armenian victory”, but as a further step towards the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide.

## APPENDIX

### German Bundestag

15th electoral term

Printed Paper 15/5689

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### Motion

**tabled by the parliamentary groups of the SPD, CDU/CSU, ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS and the FDP**

Remembering and commemorating the expulsions and massacres of the Armenians in 1915 - Germany must make a contribution to reconciliation between Turks and Armenians

The Bundestag is requested to adopt the following motion:

The German Bundestag bows down in commemoration of the victims of violence, murder and expulsion which the Armenian people suffered before and during the First World War. It deplores the deeds of the Young Turks government of the Ottoman Empire, which led to the almost total annihilation of the Armenians in Anatolia. It also regrets the inglorious role of the German Reich which, in the face of the wide variety of information available regarding the organised expulsion and annihilation of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, did not even attempt to stop the atrocities.

With this commemoration, the German Bundestag honours the efforts of all those Germans and Turks who, under difficult circumstances and against the resistance of their own governments, supported the rescue of Armenian women, men and children in words and deeds. Particularly the memory of the work of Dr Johannes Lepsius, who fought energetically and effectively for the survival of the Armenian people, should be saved from being forgotten, and instead be kept alive and maintained in order to help improve relations between the Armenian, the German and the Turkish peoples.

The German Bundestag, due to its own long experience, is aware of how difficult it is for any people to acknowledge the dark sides of its past. It nevertheless firmly believes that honestly confronting the past is necessary and represents the most important foundation stone for reconciliation. This applies in particular in the framework of a European culture of remembrance, which involves countries openly confronting the dark sides of their national histories.

Against this background, the German Bundestag regrets the fact that comprehensive discussion about the events which took place at that time in the Ottoman Empire is still not possible in Turkey today and that academics and writers who wish to confront this part of Turkish history are liable to prosecution and public defamation. At the same time, however, the German Bundestag believes the first positive signs can be seen that Turkey is increasingly tackling these issues in the spirit of the above-mentioned European culture of remembrance. Examples of this are:

- 18 The Grand National Assembly of Turkey has, for the first time, invited Turkish citizens of Armenian descent to take part in discussions on the crimes against the Armenians and Turkish-Armenian relations.
- 19 A Turkish-Armenian women's dialogue has taken place in Vienna.
- 20 Initial contacts between Turkish and Armenian historians have led to the beginning of an exchange of documents.
- 21 Prime Minister Erdogan, together with the Armenian Patriarch Mesrob, has opened Turkey's first

Armenian museum in Istanbul and has openly proposed the establishment of a bilateral Turkish-Armenian commission of historians.

In this context, however, the German Bundestag is again deeply concerned by the fact that the conference on the Armenians due to take place from 25 to 27 May 2005 in Istanbul, involving internationally esteemed Turkish academics, was prevented from taking place by the Turkish Minister of Justice and that the positions of these Turkish academics, which did not conform to the government view, were defamed as a "dagger in the back of the Turkish nation". Prime Minister Erdogan's proposal of establishing a joint Turkish-Armenian commission of historians can only be successful if it is implemented on the basis of free and public academic discourse.

Germany too, which contributed to the denial of the crimes against the Armenian people, has an obligation to face up to its own responsibility. This includes supporting the Turks and Armenians in their efforts to overcome the rifts of the past and find paths towards reconciliation and understanding.

For many years, the two major churches in Germany in particular have been advocating the integration of the Armenians from Turkey. The Armenian communities that have emerged here offer opportunities for encounters and for remembrance. Especially in view of the large number of Muslims from Turkey living in Germany, recalling the past and thereby contributing to reconciliation is an important task.

However, confronting these historical events is also of direct importance for the present. The normalisation of relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Armenia is today of particular interest for the future of the entire region. Confidence-building measures in line with the OSCE principles are urgently needed on both sides. The opening of the border by Turkey, for example, could put an end to the isolation of Armenia and promote the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Because of the role it has played historically in German-Turkish-Armenian relations, Germany today has a special obligation in the framework of the EU's Neighbourhood Initiative. The aim must be to help to bring about a normalisation and improvement of the situation between Armenia and Turkey, thus contributing to the stabilisation of the Caucasus region.

The *Länder*, or federal states, can make an important contribution to remembrance. Education policy is tasked with helping to ensure that the subject of the expulsion and annihilation of the Armenians is also confronted in Germany in the context of confronting the history of ethnic conflicts of the 20th Century.

The German Bundestag calls on the Federal Government,

- 22 to help ensure that the situation between Turks and Armenians is resolved through confronting the past, reconciliation and forgiveness of historical guilt,
- 23 to advocate parliament, government and society in Turkey unconditionally confronting their past and present role vis-à-vis the Armenian people,
- 24 to actively support the establishment of a commission of historians, including not only Turkish and Armenian academics, but also international experts,
- 25 to actively support both the relevant files of the Ottoman Empire and the copies given to Turkey by Germany from the Federal Foreign Office's archives being made accessible to the public,
- 26 to help ensure that the conference planned in Istanbul but postponed in response to pressure exerted by the state does actually take place.
- 27 to actively support freedom of speech in Turkey, in particular also with regard to the fate of the Armenians,

28 to help Turkey and Armenia in the process of normalising their bilateral relations.

Berlin, 15 June 2005

Franz Müntefering and parliamentary group

Dr Angela Merkel, Michael Glos and parliamentary group

Katrin Göring-Eckardt, Krista Sager and parliamentary group

Dr Wolfgang Gerhardt and parliamentary group

## Explanatory Memorandum

Ninety years ago, on 24 April 1915, the members of the Armenian political and cultural elite in Istanbul were, at the command of the Young Turks movement ruling the Ottoman Empire, arrested and deported to the interior of the country, where the great majority of them were murdered. This day became the day of remembrance of Armenians across the world for the expulsions and massacres of the Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire which began at the end of the 19th Century, but increased during the First World War.

When the Ottoman Empire entered the War, the recruited Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman army were grouped into work battalions and the majority of them murdered. Women, children and the elderly were sent on death marches through the Syrian desert, starting in spring 1915. Those deportees who had not yet been murdered or died on the way met this fate in the inhuman camps in the desert around Deir ez-Zor at the latest. Some massacres were committed by special units set up specifically for this purpose. The resistance of high-ranking Turkish officials to these actions, and also criticism raised in the Ottoman parliament, were brutally dismissed by the Young Turk regime. Many regions from which the Christian Armenians had been deported were settled with Kurds and Muslim refugees from the Balkan wars. Similarly, members of other Christian ethnic groups, especially Aramaic/Assyrian and Chaldean Christians, but also certain Muslim minorities, were the victims of deportation and massacres.

According to independent calculations, over 1 million Armenians fell victim to the deportations and mass murders. Numerous independent historians, parliaments and international organisations describe the expulsion and annihilation of Armenians as genocide.

The legal successor to the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey, denies to this day, despite the facts available, that these events were systematically planned, and that the deaths occurring during the resettlement treks, and the massacres committed, were intended by the Ottoman government. There is an admittance that the Armenians were treated harshly, but this has always been justified by arguing that, both in 1878 and in 1914/15, many Armenians had fought on the Russian side against Turkey, and that there was a danger that the Armenians would betray the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. Other Turkish justifications cite Armenian violence against Turks which occurred in the armed resistance to the Turkish resettlement measures. The terrorist attacks carried out by Armenians against Turks until the 1980s are also used to justify the Turkish position.

Overall, the scale of the massacres and deportations is still played down and largely denied in Turkey. This Turkish stance is at odds with the idea of reconciliation that is the foundation of the community of values existing in the European Union. To this day, historians in Turkey are not free to address the history of the expulsion and murder of Armenians and, despite the fact that the previous regulations on liability to prosecution have been toned down, are still subject to considerable pressure.

As the principal military ally of the Ottoman Empire, the German Reich was also deeply involved in these events. Both the political and the military leaders of the German Reich were thoroughly informed of the persecution and murder of the Armenians from the outset. The files of the Federal Foreign Office, which are based on reports from the German ambassadors and consuls in the Ottoman Empire, document the systematic implementation of the massacres and deportations. Despite urgent petitions submitted by many prominent Germans from academic, political and church spheres, including politicians like Philipp Scheidemann, Karl Liebknecht or Matthias Erzberger and major figures from the Protestant and Catholic churches, such as Adolf von Harnack and Lorenz Werthmann, the leaders of the German Reich failed to exert an effective influence on their Ottoman ally.

When Protestant theologian Dr Johannes Lepsius presented the results of his research, conducted in Istanbul in July/August 1915, in the German Reichstag on 5 October 1915, the entire subject of the Armenians was placed under censorship by the government of the German Reich. Similarly, in 1916, the German military censors banned and confiscated the documentation of Johannes Lepsius' "Report on the Situation of the Armenian People in Turkey". Copies of this documentation that were sent directly to the members of the German Reichstag by Lepsius were intercepted by the authorities and only handed out to the members in

1919 after the end of the War.

The German Reich's policy of denial, which has almost been forgotten, demonstrates that this chapter of history has still not been confronted satisfactorily in Germany either.