

'There was no Armenian genocide'

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Orhan Tung, researcher (London, UK)

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There is a legitimate historical controversy concerning the interpretation of the events in question and most of the scholars who have propounded a contra genocide viewpoint are of the highest calibre and repute, including Bernard Lewis, Stanford Shaw, David Fromkin, Justin McCarthy, Guenther Lewy, Norman Stone, Kamuran Gürün, Michael Gunter, Gilles Veinstein, Andrew Mango, Roderic Davidson, J.C. Hurwitz, William Batkay, Edward J. Erickson and Steven Katz.

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This is by no means an exhaustive list. A good number of well-respected scholars recognize

the deportation decision in 1915, taken under World War I conditions, as a security measure to stop the Armenians from co-operating with the foreign forces invading Anatolia.

On the legal aspect, the elements of the genocide crime are strictly defined and codified by the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Genocide, adopted by the General Assembly on 9 December 1948. However, Armenians, claiming that "the evidence is so overwhelming", so far have failed to submit even one credible evidence of genocide.

While the position of the British Government is clear on the issue - that the evidence is not sufficiently unequivocal to persuade us that these events should be categorised as genocide as defined by the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide - the attempt to present some British documents, particularly the infamous Blue Book, as they are confirming "genocide" is a typical example of the Armenian way of misleading the international community.

The following quotation from Arnold Toynbee, British historian and co-author of the Blue Book, which is claimed to "leave no doubt about what was taking place", clearly shows the extent of Armenian false propaganda and how they come up with fabricated evidence:

"...Yet at the very time when the agreement (Sykes-Picot Agreement) was being made, I was being employed by His Majesty's Government in a 'Blue Book', which was duly published and distributed as war propaganda. The French Government made use of the Armenians in a different way. They promised to erect an autonomous Armenian state, under their aegis, in the Cilician part of their Anatolian Zone and the promise brought them several thousand Armenian volunteers, most of whom were enrolled in the Legion d'Orient and served for the rest of the War" (Toynbee, Arnold J., *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey*, Howard Fertig, Inc. Edition, New York, 1970).

Hovhannes Katchaznouni's (The First Prime Minister of the independent Armenian Republic) remarks in his report entitled "Dashnagtzoutiun Has Nothing To Do Anymore" submitted to the 1923 Dashnagtzoutiun Party Convention, gives an idea about the truth:

"...Are we not capable of doing in the Soviet Armenia what we did in the Turkish Armenia, for tens of years? We certainly are. We might establish a base in the Iranian Qaradağ and send people and arms to the other side of Araxe, (just as we did in Salmas once). We might establish

the necessary secret relations and armed “humbas” in the Sunik and Dereleghez mountains just as we did in the Sasun mountains and the Chataq stream (in eastern Turkey). We might provoke the peasants in some far off regions to rise and then we might expel the communists there or destroy them. Later we might create great commotion even in Yerevan and occupy a state building at least for a few hours just as we occupied the Ottoman Bank or we might explode any building. We could plan assassinations and execute them just as we killed the officials of the Tsar and the Sultan...; in the same way, just as we did to Sultan Abdülhamid, we could plant a bomb under Myasnikov’s or Lukashin’s feet. ...when we created a great hubbub in Turkey, we thought we would attract the attention of the great powers to the Armenian cause and would force them to mediate for us, but now we know what such mediation is worth and do not need to repeat such endeavours...”

After the World War I, the Armenian allegations were investigated between 1919-1922 as part of a legal process against the Ottoman Officials. 144 high ranking officials were accused of “massacres” and deported for trial by Britain to the island of Malta. The information which led to the trial was mainly given by the local Armenians and the Armenian Patriarchate. While the deportees were interned on Malta, The British occupation forces in Istanbul, with absolute power and authority, looked everywhere to find evidence in order to incriminate the deportees. At the conclusion of the investigation, no evidence was found that could corroborate the Armenian claims.

Turkey is of the view that parliaments and other political institutions are not the appropriate forums to debate and pass judgments on disputed periods of history. Taking one-sided and biased decisions on this disputed period of the history can not be considered as a right and ethical approach. Also, such kind of issues should not be abused for the sake of the internal political concerns. Past events and controversial periods of history should be left to the historians. In order to shed light on such a disputed historical issue, the Turkish Government has opened all its archives, including military records to all researchers. On the other hand, Armenian state archives in Yerevan and archives in some third countries including the Dashnak Party archive in Boston are still being kept behind the closed doors.

In 2005, Turkey proposed to Armenia the establishment of a Joint History Commission, which will be composed of historians and experts from both sides and third parties in order to study the events of 1915 in their historical context and share the findings with the international public. The fact that this proposal is yet to receive a positive answer from the Armenian authorities, when considered together with their rejection to open all the relevant archives to the historians, gives a clear idea about their confidence in what they claim. On the contrary, Turkey has no reason to be afraid of its past and is ready to accept whatever the findings of this proposed commission will be.

It should be emphasized that Turkey has always been keen to normalize its relations with Armenia. In line with its vision towards Southern Caucasus, Turkey, recognised Armenia on 16 December 1991 and has produced a consistent policy of efforts to develop good-neighbourly relations with this country. Due to the difficult economic conditions it encountered after its independence, Turkey has extended humanitarian aid to Armenia. Turkey has also facilitated the transit of humanitarian aid to this country through its territory. Turkey supported Armenia's integration with the regional organisations, international community and the western institutions, and invited Armenia to the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization as a founding state. Additionally, Turkey took a series of unilateral steps that would help creating a favourable climate in the region. In this regard, some of Turkey's recent unilateral gestures towards Armenia are as follows:

Armenian citizens are welcome to visit Turkey through visas issued at the entry points valid for 30 days. In stark contrast, this is not the case for Turkish citizens who intend to visit Armenia. Thousands of Armenian citizens reside primarily for employment in Turkey.

Turkey opened two air corridors for facilitating the international flights, which amount in excess of hundred over-flights every month and Turkish and Armenian air charter companies operate between Istanbul and Yerevan on a regular basis, up to 4 times a week. Transit trade towards Armenia or from Armenia towards abroad, via Turkey is not subjected to any restriction or hindering. These unilateral steps clearly show Turkey's will for the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations.

However, these good-will gestures are not reciprocated by Armenia. Instead, Armenia, passed a new bill on 4 October 2006, which makes it impossible for any Armenian citizen, or third party in Armenia, to voice dissent about the "genocide"; refused to issue visa for the Turkish election observation team comprising eight academics, who were to be deployed at the Election Observation Mission (EOM) set up by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) prior to the Armenian parliamentary elections scheduled for 12th May 2007; rejected the inclusion of a Turkish officer to the NATO/PfP team that would conduct a working visit on border security in Armenia in July 2007.

Finally, I want to draw your attention to the desperate plight of the people of Armenia, suffering from the dire economic conditions in the country which is self-isolated as a result of the intransigent attitude of the wealthy diaspora. I believe that the Armenians have become captive to their own lie of "genocide" and every single support to the baseless Armenian allegations

from the third parties will further cut their connection with the truth and prevent their integration to the West.