

**A CENTURY OF DENIAL: THE ARMENIAN  
GENOCIDE AND THE ONGOING  
QUEST FOR JUSTICE**

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**HEARING**  
BEFORE THE  
**COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND  
COOPERATION IN EUROPE**  
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FIRST SESSION

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**MARCH 18, 2015**

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# **A CENTURY OF DENIAL: THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AND THE ONGOING QUEST FOR JUSTICE**

**April 23, 2015**

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE  
WASHINGTON, DC

The hearing was held at 1:40 p.m. in room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC, Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding.

*Commissioners present:* Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Hon. Steve Cohen, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; and Hon. Sheldon Whitehouse, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

*Members present:* Hon. Brad Sherman (D-30), a Member of Congress from the State of California.

*Witnesses present:* Dr. Taner Akçam, Professor of History, Robert Aram, Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Chair in Armenian Genocide Studies, Clark University; Kenneth V. Hachikian, Chairman, Armenian National Committee of America; Van Z. Krikorian, Co-Chairman, Board of Trustees of the Armenian Assembly of America; Dr. Elizabeth H. Prodromou, Visiting Associate Professor of Conflict Resolution, The Fletcher School, Tufts University; and Karine Shnorhokian, Representative, The Genocide Education Project.

## **HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. SMITH. The Commission will come to order and good afternoon to everybody. Welcome to our witnesses and everyone joining us for today's hearing marking 100 years since the start of the Armenian Genocide—one of the most terrible crimes of the 20th century.

The Armenian Genocide is the only one of the genocides of the 20th century in which the nation that was decimated by genocide has been subjected to the ongoing outrage of a massive campaign of genocidal denial, openly sustained by state authority. This campaign of genocide denial is a slap in the face to the Armenian people, preventing reconciliation and healing. As Pope Francis said so eloquently at his Mass marking the 100th time period of the geno-

cide, quote, “Concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it.”

In September 2000 I chaired the first congressional hearing on the Armenian Genocide. It was a four-hour hearing and the testimony I heard that day, and many accounts of the atrocities I have read in the articles and books over the years before and since, including the eyewitness account “Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story,” have shocked me deeply. The facts were reported throughout the world as they were happening, corroborated immediately afterward by survivors and even some perpetrators, and have been amply documented by historians, including in a number of recent books.

In 1915, there were about 2 million Armenians living in what was then the Ottoman Empire. They were living in a region that they had inhabited for 2,500 years. By 1923, well over 90 percent of these Armenians had disappeared. Most of them, as many as 1.5 million, were dead. Some even say the estimates are higher. Most of them were death-marched into the desert or shot and in some cases raped and other unbelievable cruelties were meted out against men, women and children. The remainder, the remnant, was forced into exile.

When the term genocide was invented in 1944 to describe the systematic destruction of an entire people, its author Raphael Lemkin explained the term by saying, quote, “it was the sort of thing Hitler did to the Jews and the Turks did to the Armenians,” close quote. Since the facts are so well-established, this is not a hearing only to inquire into the events of 1915. Rather it’s also a hearing on what has happened since and is still happening today—genocide denial.

Sadly, the Turkish Government has driven this campaign of denial, and has done so over a course of decades using a variety of means to punish Turkish citizens who dared to acknowledge the crimes committed by the Ottoman government in 1915 and thereafter. The Turkish Government has also threatened other countries to keep them from acknowledging the genocide. Ironically, it is only the Turkish Government’s campaign of denial that obliges other countries to recognize the genocides officially. And the Turkish Government underwrites a disinformation campaign to confuse the historical record. It also tries to relativize the Ottoman government’s crimes, sometimes by changing the subject to the wartime sufferings of Turks or crimes committed by individual Armenians.

This is in no sense a hearing that’s designed to be against Turkey. Rather, I consider it a hearing that supports the Turkish people. Today many people in Turkey are in the process of freeing themselves from the effects of decades of denialist propaganda by their government. Many already see through the official denialism and some oppose it openly, and some have paid a price. I want to support and express my admiration for these people—for their courage, and for their Turkish patriotism. They act, sometimes at grave personal risk to themselves, for the good of their country and out of love for their country. They are thought-leaders. And there are many signs of this.

In recent weeks, in the lead up to the 100th anniversary of the genocide, there have been many deeply moving feature stories in the world press about Turks discovering their families’ secret Ar-

menian heritage, or seeking to connect with the Armenian aspects of Turkish history, or supporting efforts to rebuild Armenian churches which were also leveled and decimated, as our witnesses will attest to today. I'd like to insert one of those articles, "Remembering the Armenian Genocide," by Victor Gaetan, into the hearing record. And without objection so ordered.

No country is immune from evil. We all know that. All governments have been complicit at some point in their history in terrible crimes. And this certainly includes the United States—remember slavery. It also includes Germany. I want to urge the Turkish Government to take the path taken by Germany after World War II. And it was the right one.

Germany started with open acknowledgment of the crimes of the Holocaust, and it built from there over a course of decades, establishing relationships with Jewish groups and Israel in which it demonstrated remorse and commitment to righting its wrongs, as far as it could. Now there is a strong German-Israeli friendship. And today Germany is one of the most respected countries in the world. That path is still open to the Turkish Government. And working to put Turkey on it will be the truest, deepest expression of Turkish patriotism.

Finally, I must respond to President Obama. On Tuesday his aides met with Armenian leaders and made it clear once again he will not recognize the Armenian Genocide. That is to say, he will not use the word "genocide." This is in direct contradiction to the promises that he made before becoming President.

He said, and I would say very eloquently, in 2008, "I also share with Armenian-Americans—so many of whom are descended from genocide survivors—a principled commitment to commemorating and ending genocide. That starts with acknowledging the tragic instances of genocide in world history. As a U.S. Senator, I have stood with the Armenian-American community in calling for Turkey's acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide. Two years ago, I criticized the Secretary of State for the firing of U.S. Ambassador to Armenia John Evans after he properly used the term "genocide"—and he's here today—"to describe Turkey's slaughter of thousands of Armenians starting in 1915."

"I shared with Secretary Condoleezza Rice my firmly held conviction that the Armenian Genocide is not an allegation, a personal opinion or a point of view, but rather a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming body of historical evidence. The facts are undeniable. An official policy that calls on diplomats to distort the historical facts is an untenable policy. As a senator, I strongly support passage of the Armenian Genocide Resolution. And as President I will recognize the Armenian Genocide."

These are eloquent words that should echo today and ought to be expressed today. With Germany and the European Union lining up to do the right thing, our government needs to do likewise. At this point, according to the Congressional Research Service, the EU states listed as having recognized a genocide are France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Greece, and Cyprus, and the Holy See. The European Parliament has also referred to the deaths of the Armenians as genocide. The non-EU states that have also taken this important step

are Argentina, Canada, Chile, Lebanon, Russia, Switzerland, Uruguay, Vatican City, Venezuela. Sadly, after the President's powerful promise, we need that kind of statement to come very clearly and unambiguously from the United States.

As mass atrocities unfold in Syria and Iraq, the U.S. needs the Turkish Government to engage constructively with its neighbors. The Turkish Government can do this more effectively after it honestly faces its own past. The President, I think, is missing an opportunity. I'd like to yield to my good friend and colleague, Commissioner Cohen, for any comments he might have.

**HON. STEVE COHEN, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am a proud member of the Helsinki Commission and appreciate the chairman and his works. And I know this is a very special day for the Armenian people—tomorrow is an anniversary. So it's appropriate that we have a hearing of this sort. I did make a request, and I don't know at what level it was determined, that in historical accuracy or at least in fairness in discussion and determination of what occurred that there should be historians presenting a different perspective.

That was not granted. I can understand that, for this is a particularly sensitive moment to Armenian descendants and Armenian people. But at the same time, I think that if we're talking about having a determination of an historical event by a political body at a minimum we should have our ears open to all sides, regardless of what one might think the other side's perspective would be. To hear it would only be fair. I look forward to hearing from all the witnesses today. I wish we could have heard from the other witnesses.

And I know that what happened some 100 years ago was atrocious. There were awful, awful, awful things that happened. How you define those events, how you determine what caused them should be the study of historians and scholars, not politicians. But if politicians are going to be involved in trying to make a determination, they should hear from all sides on the issue. I look forward to hearing from you and indeed understand your position and certainly wish that what happened 100 years ago did not happen. And I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Commissioner Cohen. I just would note for the record that tomorrow marks the most solemn day of remembrance any nation can experience. Back in 2000 I put together a hearing. It was on September 14th, 2000. And it was all about the Armenian Genocide. We invited the Turks. We invited the Armenians. They sat at a table not unlike this one. And frankly, the denial—it was sophomoric, to say the least. And the arguments proffered by a distinguished member of the diplomatic corps for Turkey reminded me exactly of the Holocaust deniers.

But I would be more than happy to welcome, on another day when the remembrance isn't so acute and so filled with pain and sorrow by the Armenian community, to invite the Turks and the others, and I will ask them very, very difficult questions, as I did at that hearing. As a matter of fact, to take it one step further, right from the witness table the Turkish leader actually threatened



the United States. He and I got into a very significant argument—a NATO ally threatening as he was, is very unprofessional.

But I will give my promise that I would look forward to such a day to bring the Turkish side back. Nothing has changed. If anything, the historical record, particularly the archivists in countries, particularly in Europe and United States, the information has become even more one-sided, that this indeed was a genocide. But I will invite them back. But this is a remembrance day. And we have people who know this issue, have done brilliant scholarship on it. So I would—there is a uniqueness to this hearing to have such an array of individuals to speak truth to power, and that includes the United States and the White House.

Mr. Cohen.

Mr. COHEN. I thank you. And I understood that was the reason. And I think it's probably—it's appropriate because of the solemnity of the week and of the occasion. There are different issues than history that come into play on the determinations of whether or not to declare an event a genocide or not. Since I've been in Congress, I know some countries have and some feel politicians shouldn't be doing this, it should be somewhere else. But we had hoped that the Turkish Government would come to some rapprochement.

And there were some protocols that we at one time thought were going to be pursued and that there would be some type of rapprochement and that never occurred. And Prime Minister Erdogan suggested I think last year he was going to set up a hearing with scholars, and that didn't occur. I wish that such a hearing could be set up because it has gotten more and more difficult to hear promises that don't get followed through and to hear threats both at our government and at the Pope, who is a wonderful gentleman. I yield back my time.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Commissioner Cohen.

I'd like to now welcome our very distinguished panel, beginning first with Dr. Taner Akçam, professor of history and chair in Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University. Dr. Akçam is the pre-eminent scholar on the Armenian Genocide and has published widely on the topic. Without objection, all of your full resumes will be made a part of the record and your very distinguished backgrounds.

We'll then hear from Mr. Kenneth Hachikian, who's chairman of the Armenian National Committee of America, and Mr. Van Krikorian, who's co-chairman, board of trustees of the Armenian Assembly of America. We'll then hear from Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou, Visiting Associate Professor of Conflict Resolution, the Fletcher School, Tufts University. We'll then hear from Karine Shnorhokian, who is here as a representative of the Genocide Education Project and will speak to us about her family's experience as survivors of the genocide, and as an experienced activist in genocide education.

Dr. Akçam, if you could begin.

**DR. TANER AKÇAM, PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, ROBERT ARAM,  
 MARIANNE KALOOSDIAN AND STEPHEN AND MARIAN  
 MUGAR CHAIR IN ARMENIAN GENOCIDE STUDIES, CLARK  
 UNIVERSITY**

Dr. AKÇAM. Thank you, Chairman Smith. Thank you very much for inviting me. I would like to begin by thanking you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts on the centennial commemoration of the Armenian Genocide.

In 2000, when I first visited the United States for a series of lectures, my presence generated a great deal of suspicion among Armenian-Americans. Few could bring themselves to believe that a Turk would even acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. But after 30 years of research on this subject matter, I have gained the confidence of the Armenian community, as well as that of my own countrymen.

The Turkey that is best known today is one that is represented by a denialist government, but there is also another Turkey. And the citizens of that Turkey are ready to face their history. We Turks feel obligated to rectify the black stain upon us that was left by those who committed these crimes. At this very moment, in more than 25 cities from Istanbul to Van, people are not waiting for their government to recognize the genocide. Instead, they are blazing a new path—one that allows them to discover their past. Our history does not simply consist of murderers. It is also a history of brave and righteous people who risked their lives to save thousands of Armenians. When we recognize and honor such persons, we help to create an environment that would encourage others who would act likewise.

Why must we Turks, as well as the global community, recognize the Armenian Genocide? The answer, I would suggest to you, is very simple: If we agree to acknowledge and remember the Nazi-perpetrated Holocaust—and I'm confident that most of us feel that remembrance of those crimes is necessary—then we are equally obligated to acknowledge and remember the Armenian Genocide. I believe that this statement stands on its own merits, and that we should ask ourselves: Why is it that the question of recognizing the historicity of the Holocaust is not up for debate within political circles while the Armenian Genocide, despite its recognition within respectable academic circles, still is?

Recognition of my country's historic wrongdoings is not a simple opinion or attitude on a past event. Instead, it is directly related the kind of society that we envision for our future. Dehumanization is the most important component of all mass atrocities. In order to be able to kill, perpetrators dehumanize their victims. Recognition is necessary to acknowledge the human dignity of victim. Without recognition, the consequent generations cannot properly mourn and heal. Mourning and healing are necessary for closure and can only come after the truth is acknowledged. If we fail to acknowledge, we fall into a trap that continues to support the perpetrators and their ultimate goals. After decades of denials, Armenians need to heal and to understand that the justice they seek will prevail. If we want reconciliation and the establishment of peace between Turkish and Armenian people, we have to acknowledge the truth. Without truth, there can't be a peace.

If Turkey wishes to achieve a democratic, stable society and a vision for a better future, it needs to create an environment that is respectful of human rights. Confronting its past wrongdoing is a critical step towards this future. A hundred years ago, the Ottoman government had a flawed concept of national security. They viewed the Armenians and their demands for equality and social justice as a threat to the Ottoman state and society. Their solution to this problem was to target the Armenian people for extermination. Today, Turkish and Armenian children are taught, through textbooks published by Education Ministry in Turkey, that the Armenians continue to pose a threat to national security. These textbooks are steeped in false narratives about treacherous Armenians. This sounds unbelievable, but unfortunately it is the bare truth.

What continues to trouble me is that the United States has not officially recognized the Armenian Genocide. The justification for their position remains the same: National security interests in which Turkey is a critical partner. The argument goes something like this: It would be pointless to anger Turkey and jeopardize American security interests for a moral issue that goes back 100 years. It is ironic that the words, "national security," continue to haunt Armenian people even here in the United States.

But juxtaposing national interest and morality as being mutually exclusive is just plain wrong. Any security policy in the Middle East that excludes morality in favor of expediency is likely, in the long run, to undermine national security. Historical injustices are not dead issues; the past has always been the present in the Middle East. Insecurity felt by different groups towards each other as a result of events that have occurred in history is one of the central problems in the region. Kurds, Arabs, Alawites, Armenians and other Christians in the regions perceive each other and Turkey through this flawed prism of history. If we want a real politic to be successful in the region, we have to integrate the acknowledgment of past wrongdoings into any national security policy and to stop using it as an excuse.

Turkey's denialism of its past and making it as an essential part of its foreign policy is not simply a moral abomination. It represents a threat to democracy, stability and security not only in Turkey but in the region too. Turkey continues its denialist policies because until now it has not had to contend with serious external pressure to do otherwise. But there is other Turkey of which I spoke earlier. It is a Turkey that is determined to build a tolerant, democratic society ready to face up to the darker history of our country's past and to put an end to the denialist policy. All that is lacking is external pressure from international community.

The United States has a choice, but if it continues to support a denialist regime it will endorse this historical mistake. The refusal to recognize past injustices is fundamentally undemocratic and contributes to the destabilization of Turkey and the region. How can the United States, which prides itself on its exceptionalism in supporting liberal values and human rights at home and across the world, justify a position at odds with its own democratic values? America should not uphold human rights only when it's expedient. The test of American exceptionalism is the commitment to per-

severe in upholding these principles even when it may seem costly or inconvenient to do so.

By officially recognizing the Armenian Genocide, the United States could lend its moral and political weight to the cause of encouraging Turkey to come to terms with its history, to further embrace democratization and to contribute to its own future stability and that of the region. The citizens of my Turkey, the other Turkey, are waiting for you to join us in acknowledging the truth. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Doctor, thank you so very much for your courage in speaking out. I know you take risk by doing this. And I want you to know that we on this committee and Commission deeply admire how you have stepped up to speak out, and at potential cost to yourself. Thank you so very much for that.

I'd like to now ask Mr. Hachikian if you could speak.

**KENNETH V. HACHIKIAN, CHAIRMAN, ARMENIAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF AMERICA**

Mr. HACHIKIAN. Commissioner Smith—Chairman Smith, excuse me, Commissioner Cohen, thank you for organizing today's Helsinki hearing and for your invitation to share our views on the ongoing costs and consequences of the Republic of Turkey's denial of the truth and obstruction of justice regarding the Armenian Genocide.

We all know that the Armenian Genocide is settled history. No serious, objective historian questions the veracity of that characterization. We've seen debate around the false choices presented by Ankara's apologists, calling into question whether America can afford to speak the truth, as if we could ever advance our international interests by compromising our national values. Of course, we know that no foreign country deserves a veto over our human rights policy, a gag rule against our stand against genocide. We must never, ever outsource our nation's moral voice.

Most recently, we have seen a cynical campaign by Turkey to silence America's moral voice by arguing against all evidence that the recognition of the Armenian Genocide represents an obstacle to improved Armenian-Turkish relations. That position is akin to saying that postwar Germany's establishment of relations with Israel would have been somehow better served by the world's silence about the Holocaust, or that the path to Hutu-Tutsi reconciliation rests upon a refusal to speak forthrightly about the realities of the Rwandan genocide.

There are many aspects to the cost of Armenian Genocide denial—costs to both U.S. interests and American values as well as to international norms. I would like to address just a few of them today.

There is, of course, first and foremost, the moral cost. As the Chairman indicated, no one has spoken more powerfully to this aspect than Pope Francis. Earlier this month, he offered a sermon during an Armenian Catholic rite in St. Peter's Basilica. The pontiff, consistent with the Vatican's long standing principled tradition of Armenian Genocide recognition, spoke honestly about this atrocity, telling the world that concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it. The cause of geno-

cide prevention, a core moral imperative of our age, requires, as the Pope so powerfully stated, that we not engage in concealing or denying evil.

A second cost of Armenian Genocide denial is the danger to at-risk populations around the world created by Turkey's precedent of a genocide openly committed and unapologetically denied. Perpetrators of subsequent crimes—from Hitler to al-Bashir—have been emboldened by the international community's failure to confront genocide. Just this week, the president of Israel, President Rivlin, said, quote, "The Nazis used the Armenian Genocide as something that gave them permission to bring the Holocaust into reality." There is no more compelling observation than that this week.

A third cost of Armenian Genocide denial is the threat it represents to Armenians, a Christian nation with deep connections to the Western tradition and a long history of friendship with the American people. Very simply, Armenia cannot be safe as long as it is bordered by an over-armed, unrepentant perpetrator of genocide. Armenians cannot be secure as long as Turkish schoolchildren are taught that Armenians were traitors, the perpetrators were heroes, and the victims deserving of their fate.

A fourth cost is the price the Turkish people pay in terms of their own nation's progress toward greater tolerance and pluralism. A Turkey that fully accepts responsibility for the Armenian Genocide would very likely be one that is on the road to rehabilitation into a post-genocidal state. Sadly, we have seen few official signs of progress on this front.

And finally, a fifth cost is the destruction of the rich religious heritage of Anatolia, a cradle of the early Christian faith. As a result of these genocidal crimes, and Ankara's continued obstruction of justice, only a small fraction of the historic Christian presence in Anatolia remains today in modern Turkey. Estimates are that of the well over 2,000 Armenian churches which existed in the early 1900s, far fewer than 50 are functioning today. Perhaps as few as 200 even remain standing. The rest have been ground into dust with the properties illegally confiscated by the government, and only a small fraction of the historic Armenian Christian population that once populated Anatolia remains today in modern Turkey to care for their cultural heritage.

As an initial step, Turkey's return of the thousands of church properties it outright stole from Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks, Syrians and other Christians prior to, during, and after the Armenian Genocide era would represent a meaningful move by the Turkish Government toward accepting its responsibility for a truthful and just resolution of this still-unpunished crime against humanity. It would, as well, mark progress for the cause of international religious freedom in a corner of the world sadly known not for its pluralism, but rather for the depths of its intolerance. We need no look further than ISIS to realize the challenges of religious intolerance.

Finally, I must comment on President Obama's statement that will be coming out tomorrow. His ongoing failure to properly acknowledge the Armenian Genocide is nothing short of a moral disgrace and an insult to the victims of genocides worldwide. His fail-

ure to honor his word and his submission—and I'm saying submission—to Turkish blackmail is extraordinarily bad policy. He leaves the United States isolated, standing virtually alone with Turkey in the denialist camp. He leaves the United States open to ongoing blackmail from Turkey and any other country who can see the weakness of this administration's moral standing.

And finally, it leaves no doubt, sadly, that this President's words, his solemn commitment, his considered promises are simply meaningless and open for reconsideration under pressure from foreign governments. Shame on you, President Obama. It is time for the United States and the rest of the world to stand up to Turkey's shameless blackmail and demand justice for the Armenians—not just for the Armenians, but for all of civilized mankind. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so much, Mr. Hachikian, for your testimony and your very strong and persuasive words. I'd like to now recognize Mr. Krikorian.

**VAN Z. KRİKORIAN, CO-CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF  
THE ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA**

Mr. KRİKORIAN. Thank you, Chairman Smith and Commissioner Cohen. And thank you for agreeing to include my written statement in the record. It's extensive and it addresses some of the issues that denialists and people that would not have the United States use the correct term, Armenian Genocide, deal with. I want to start as I started in the written testimony though, with my sincere thanks to this Commission and this institution and Chairman Smith. My personal experience with the Helsinki Commission goes back to the late 1980s when Armenians were, again, at threat of Genocide by Azerbaijan, and when the threat was to eliminate the Nagorno-Karabakh problem by eliminating the Armenians. That threat still exists.

I've been fortunate in my life as the grandson and descendent of genocide survivors, have had several honors. One of the honors that I had was to be part of the official U.S. delegation to the human rights meetings in Moscow, where we heard really the best of the United States standing up for human rights in the Soviet Union.

This Commission's work on Nagorno-Karabakh, the independence of Armenia, in 2005 your hearings on religious liberty and religious situation of Christians and Armenians in Turkey were dramatic. And we hope that today's proceedings continue in that vein. The testimony and the facts that were submitted echo what Mr. Hachikian said regarding religious churches, monasteries, Armenian cultural heritage. And it's kind of sad that we're sitting here 10 years later, and while there's been some progress the disrespect that's been shown to our religion and to the Christian religion is still going on.

I also at the start want to reflect on this idea that we should let historians decide. I think that, again as my colleague and friend Ken Hachikian said, historians have decided. It would be just as useful to have a commission of historians look at the Armenian Genocide as it would to have one re-examine whether the Earth is flat. The people that run around saying that the Moon landing is a hoax are probably more entitled.

And for America and America's history, where our archives alone have 30,000 pages of documents detailing in the regions with photographs, with direct testimony from the perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide what their intent was and how brutal the extermination was, is beyond the pale. It is literally rewriting our history.

In the late 1800s and the early 20th century The New York Times distinguished itself—distinguished itself by chronicling the Armenian Genocide—eyewitness reports, facts, all in the newspapers, all in the archives. But Tuesday's New York Times headline I think is one we're going to remember. Tuesday's New York Times headline says: "White House Acknowledges Armenian Genocide, but Avoids the Term." It's absurd. And avoiding the term is fatal. It's fatal in the sense that we know that history repeats itself. And we know that avoiding the term empowers people who are going to commit this crime again.

Now, President Obama has used the Armenian term for Armenian Genocide, *Medz Yeghern*, which I understand can be difficult to pronounce for some. He's described and condemned all of the events, provided a dictionary definition of the Armenian Genocide. He's called on Turkey to deal with its past honestly, as a clear implication that they have not dealt with their past honestly. He's referred back to his prior statements as a senator, where he explicitly and passionately used the term Armenian Genocide and criticized those who would not use it.

But since his election as President, he's been misled by false promises and he's bowed to threats from the worst kind of people. This undercuts his credibility and, worst of all, it puts more lives at risk. When we saw that on the same day the United States Government—National Security Adviser Rice and Secretary Kerry—met with the Turkish foreign minister who made his annual—or made the annual trip here to talk about carrots and sticks and the same kind of sticks we heard about in 2000, and they put ISIL on the table, we knew what was coming. Turkey is ISIL's lifeline. There's no denying that either. And the United States, understandably, doesn't want to put American military at risk. But by continuing to bow to this kind of pressure, it just procrastinates and puts off the inevitable.

Now, we feel pain at this time of year. We really do. Our relatives are not in marked graves in places where we can visit. We don't know where—my parents never knew her aunts and uncles. They didn't exist. They were gone. Those people lie in unmarked graves in what's now Turkey. That's painful. So when President Obama acknowledges but doesn't use the term, that just deepens the pain even more. We also feel sorry that the kind of courage that leaders who aspire to be world leaders isn't shown.

But like other victim groups, and as part of our national character—and I say that in two senses; I was born in the United States and my parents were born in the United States. My wife's grandmother, who was affectionately called Betsy Ross because she was born in the United States, was also Armenian. We're more than resilient enough to rededicate ourselves to continuing the cause of preventing genocide because that's what we've inherited, and it doesn't seem to be going away.

My written testimony includes just a brief amount of the legal record and the historical record. In fact, the United States has recognized the Armenian Genocide several times—President Reagan in 1981, the United States Government in its formal submission to the International Court of Justice. And a brief summary of that is included in the written testimony. Today we're also announcing the opening of the Armenian Genocide Museum of America online—a virtual museum that people can go if they truly want to learn what happened and how to help.

What I want to do with the remainder of my time though, is speak again from personal experience, because historical dispute over whether it was a genocide is gone. Yes, there was an advertisement in The Washington Post today referring to Bernard Lewis. Unfortunately, the advertisement did not acknowledge that in prior editions of the same book that they rely on, Bernard Lewis talked about the terrible holocaust in which one and a half million Armenians were slaughtered.

It also omitted the fact that in a country like France, where they have laws against genocide denial, in 1995 Bernard Lewis was found guilty of genocide denial. We don't have those kinds of laws here because of our First Amendment, but in countries where they do and people have the opportunity not just to say things because they want to say them or because somebody's paying them to say them or because they're being threatened if they don't say them, they have to back up what they say.

President Obama is going to be quoted extensively in these coming days, and not just because of the Pope's statement and the European Parliament's decision and Chancellor Merkel's and the rest of the statements that were referred to, not just because President Putin, with whom a lot of people have issues, has made the kind of statement we would have liked to see the President of United States make—and President Putin is in Armenia at the commemoration, where we wish President Obama was. We're going to read President Obama's quote that the Armenian Genocide is not an allegation, a personal opinion or a point of view, but rather a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming body of historical evidence. The facts are undeniable.

"An official policy that calls on diplomats to distort the historical facts is an untenable policy." "America deserves"—and these are his words—"America deserves a leader who speaks truthfully about the Armenian Genocide and responds forcefully to all genocides." That's not the quote that I really want to use as the basis, though, for the rest of what I'm going to say.

I thought President Obama spoke eloquently in his 2009 inaugural address. And I think it reflects the sentiment that we hold—and not just we as Armenians, but all people of good will who want to see progress in this area—is that we seek a new way forward based on mutual interest and mutual respect. "To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict or blame their society's ills on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand to you if you are willing to unclench your fist."



Today the president of Turkey shows no respect. He sows conflict. He blames society's ills on the West. He is destructive. He clings to power through deceit. He silences dissent. He's on the wrong side of history in denying the Armenian Genocide and many other areas. How much would it take for President Erdogan to show respect for the unmarked graves of our ancestors and the unmarked graves of other Christians who were slaughtered during this period?

Instead, he cynically scheduled a commemoration of the Battle of Gallipoli on April 24th, outside the usual date, just to divert countries from participating in the Armenian commemoration. And then, he had the gall to criticize the Armenians for choosing April 24th as their commemoration date. The truth is, we didn't choose April 24th. Mr. Erdogan's predecessors did when they decided to start the killing on that day. The president of Turkey has again threatened to expel the Armenians living in Turkey. Last year, he stated it's ugly to be called an Armenian.

He conflated Muslim deaths during the war with no relation to Armenians with the deaths of Armenian victims—just as discredited deniers used to do in the early 1990s to claim mutual losses and no real victim group. In the city of Kars, an artist trying to promote Turkey-Armenian reconciliation put up a statute. In 2011, then-Prime Minister Erdogan had it torn down. Last month, thankfully, the court found for the artist and ordered President Erdogan to pay roughly \$3,800 in damages.

My testimony goes on—my written testimony goes on more and more about the bad faith that's being shown. But the truth is, as Professor Akçam has said, Armenians are willing to extend a hand if Turkey unclenches its fist. Armenia has had three presidents since 1991. Each has offered without condition to normalize relations with Turkey. In 2009, President Sargsyan took a bold and courageous step—and a lot of people didn't agree with at all—to normalize relations based on the protocols. After ratification, those agreements would have established diplomatic relations, reopened the border, and established mechanisms to resolve multiple issues between the countries, including the outstanding legal issues that need to be resolved. The protocols represented a breakthrough. Turkey didn't ratify them. Azerbaijan vetoed them.

Now, to try to be brief and summarize, because I could go on, I want to speak from some other personal experience. After those 2000 hearings, in 2001 a Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission was formed. And I participated in it actively. Our initial job was just to last one year and come up with joint recommendations to the governments. The genocide issue hung over our situation. The same ambassador who appeared before you, Chairman Smith, was on that commission.

And he insisted that we have a legal hearing. And the International Center for Transitional Justice facilitated that. Ted Sorensen was on the panel, Alex Boraine, who had been the vice chairman of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was on the panel. And we had a hearing. We had a hearing. The Turkish side brought their lawyers. They brought Ambassador Aktan. I actually had Samantha Power as my first witness. And

she was eloquent and persuasive and authoritative. And we'll always appreciate that.

They issued an opinion in 2003 that found the Armenian experience met all of the elements of genocide. And they made that finding not based on any disputed facts or disputed history, but essentially Turkish sources. In fact, if we are to look at history we should understand that the Turkish Government itself tried and convicted the leaders of the Armenian Genocide for the extermination of the Armenian people, and referred to the orders of the Central Committee, which included direct references to their intent and the plan to exterminate the Armenian people.

That Turkish ambassador, Gunduz Aktan, as Professor Akcam noted, has passed away. And even though it was rare for us to agree, I can say that he earned a measure of respect from us, even though we disagreed on so much, because he made sure that that study was correctly translated in Turkish and had it published. He didn't want to do that, but he did it because he kept his word. When we look at President Erdogan today and we see not even close to that level of honor.

I am going to skip to the end because I do understand that I have exceeded my time, and I appreciate it. We understand—actually, we had another anecdote that had one incidence, in a commission where one of our Turkish colleagues looked at us and said: You don't know how badly it makes us feel to say that we committed genocide. And one of our Armenian colleagues looked back and him and said—it was former Armenian Foreign Minister Arzumanyan—said, well, how do you think it makes us feel to have been genocided?

Those kinds of exchanges have to continue. There needs to be support for that kind of dialogue. And that reconciliation is not going to take place unless there is recognition by the United States. We understand that nobody wants to be branded as a criminal, and we're not painting an entire race with that brush at all. And we know there were courageous Turks that saved Armenians.

The lawyer Raphael Lemkin, who came up with the term Armenian Genocide, asked: "Why is the killing of a million a lesser crime than the killing of a single individual?" The philosopher George Santayana provides a response: "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

I have a lot to thank you for, but I'm really going to thank you for letting me go over my time. And I'll conclude here, Chairman Smith. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so very, very much.

We are joined by Senator Whitehouse, and I understand he has to be back to the Senate at about 3:00. Senator, if you'd like to make any comments or wait to the end?

**HON. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Well, I'm very pleased to be here and have a chance to participate in this very important hearing. I congratulate my fellow members of the Helsinki Commission for holding it. Now is the right time to address this issue, and it's long overdue that the facts and truth of what took place a century ago now be recog-

nized. It's not just a question of truth and it's not just a question of candor, it's also a question of this being a very important step to preventing things like this from happening again. So I think we all have a very common stake in this.

If I may ask unanimous consent that a full statement be admitted for the record, I'll—

Mr. SMITH. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. —end my comments, then, and allow us to go back to this very learned and articulate panel.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Senator.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Without objection, your full statement will be made a part of the record.

I'd like to now introduce Dr. Prodromou, if she could proceed.

**DR. ELIZABETH H. PRODRMOU, VISITING ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION, THE FLETCHER SCHOOL, TUFTS UNIVERSITY**

Dr. PRODRMOU. Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission, good afternoon. Thank you for the invitation to brief you here today on this very important subject. I respectfully request that my written comments, from which I'll draw for this testimony, be entered into the Congressional Record.

Mr. SMITH. Without objection, yours and all other statements, and—as well as any extraneous materials you'd like to add, articles or whatever, will be made a part of the record.

Dr. PRODRMOU. Thank you.

As a former Commissioner and Vice Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and as a member of the Secretary of State's Advisory Group on Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy, I'm particularly heartened by this hearing, and I want to applaud you and to thank you for holding this hearing today.

Given that the hearing aims to explore what the U.S. and other countries can do to help bring about recognition and eventually reconciliation, and given that this hearing also takes into account the importance and implications of U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide for U.S.-Turkey relations and more generally for the broader Transatlantic Alliance, I am going to focus my remarks on two general points.

First, I'd like to talk a bit about the architecture of genocide denial and the ideology of denialism because their logic and operation are oftentimes overlooked in terms of the pernicious, insidious, corrosive effects that they have on the kinds of foundational freedoms to which this Commission is dedicated to protect and to uphold, as well as on the kinds of foundational freedoms that inform the Constitution of the United States of America and our foreign policy.

And secondly, I'd like to consider the negative effects of genocide denial on Turkey's behavior and the corrosive consequences for U.S.-Turkey relations, as well as for Turkey's relationship with its Transatlantic partners.

And then finally, I'll conclude with some brief thoughts about what the U.S. and other countries might do to end Turkey's policy of denialism, and therefore to facilitate a move towards a durable, sustainable Turkish-Armenian reconciliation.

In terms of the architecture of genocide denial and the logic of denialism: As we all know, there's overwhelming, comprehensive and incontrovertible evidence, all of which is, in fact, available to the members of this Commission, that demonstrates the Ottoman Turkish government's deliberate intention to systematically exterminate 1.5 million Armenian Christians as well as between 1.2 and 1.5 million Assyrian and Greek Christians at the start of the 20th century. In a word, there was intentionality, there was a plan, and it was implemented, unfortunately with tragic efficiency in terms of outcome. This is what's called genocide. And there are endless eyewitness accounts, including those by survivors—by U.S. officials at the time, including U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau, U.S. Consul General in Smyrna George Horto among them; memoirs and papers of Ottoman Turkish government perpetrators; and a rich corpus of archival, scholarly and legal research and materials—all of which name the *Medz Yeghern*, the "Great Crime," for what it was, the crime of genocide.

However, an entire industry has arisen, cutting across government and academic and media and political lobby lines, funded by the Turkish state and its supporters, that is premised on the denial of those facts on the ground. The denial industry has constructed an architecture of denial and an ideology of denialism that rests on very simple principles and logics, but which we oftentimes overlook and of which we are not aware—simply, to emphasize ambiguity and lack of clarity; to obfuscate, distort and politicize the empirical evidence, towards a simple goal—to create controversy over the veracity of the events that constituted the Armenian Genocide, to create interpretive disagreements, to create a question about interpretation, and eventually to use these controversies about interpretation and veracity to uphold the Turkish Government's unrelenting commitment to denial of the Armenian Genocide.

So the ideology of denialism depends on focusing discussion and actions on the controversy rather than on the event. So it's the controversy and interpretative differences that are used to delegitimize those who claim that genocide occurred and to disregard the incontrovertible evidence.

Furthermore, the ideology of genocide depends on using all manner of tactics—threats, warnings, demands, retribution, punishment—to censor and to silence and to control freedoms of conscience, thought, speech and the press. So again, claims of genocide are either eventually defeated by a focus on the controversy, or by attrition and exhaustion.

Make no mistake: genocide denial is a totalitarian enterprise. And as Peter Balakian has pointed out, it's the continuation of genocide. Genocide denial is the final stage of genocide. Others have called this memoricide.

Now, the genocide denial industry has been deployed by Turkey to pressure the United States into not recognizing the Armenian Genocide, to ensure that a congressional resolution on the Armenian Genocide is not passed, and to ensure that no sitting American President speaks out about the Armenian Genocide by using the "G-word." And all of my fellow panelists have spoken to this.

The working premise of the genocide denial approach has long been to warn the United States that recognition would lead to ei-

ther the permanent rupture or permanent disrepair of U.S.-Turkish relations, and therefore would undermine U.S. strategic interests and geostrategic priorities and the capacity of the Transatlantic Alliance to execute its strategic operations. Furthermore, Turkey has used genocide denial to argue that recognition by the U.S. would undermine forward movement in Turkey's domestic democratization process, and would weaken what was once referred to as, quote, "a model for Muslim democracy" or, quote, "a secular democracy and NATO ally."

Now, I'd like to examine this claim here. In reality, by succumbing to the logic of the ideology of denial, U.S. policymakers have actually contributed to the emboldening of a politics of impunity and a culture of intolerance in both Turkey's domestic and foreign policy. And again, my fellow panelists have spoken about this.

Let me take each point in order. How does genocide denial as an ideology and an architecture embolden the kinds of behaviors that are associated with violence and intolerance in Turkey? Well, let's take a look at the reality in Turkey when it comes to its Christian populations today.

What we see is the near elimination of any Christian presence in Turkey today. Genocide, by the way, also includes annihilation of peoples and eradication of culture, so let me speak to that in terms of present-day Turkey. Christians in Turkey today comprise less than 1 percent of the total population, and their decline has been the result of combined policies of violence: pogroms, individual attacks, with direct support and indirect complicity of the Turkish state; perpetrators not being brought to justice; economic disenfranchisement, including a very arbitrary property rights regime and labor restrictions; as well as a policy of destruction of religious sites and conversion of religious sites into mosques. In Turkey today, there are approximately 50,000 to 60,000 Armenian Orthodox Christians, 25,000 Assyrian Orthodox Christians, less than 2,000 Greek Orthodox Christians, and maybe 5,000 to 6,000 Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians.

The logic of denialism messages to Turkey that there can be action with impunity against Christians and other minority populations in Turkey. And so the logic of denialism has, in fact, facilitated Turkey's ongoing behaviors towards its Christian minority populations and towards others—and towards other non-Muslim and non-Christian minority populations in Turkey as well. The rise of crude anti-Semitism, for example, in Turkey has been consequent to the logic of denialism and the failure to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide—again, by messaging to Turkey that there is no accountability when it comes to either discourse or practical actions of violence, intolerance and bigotry.

And we see ever-greater usage of terms like "*dhimmi*" and "*gavour*" in Turkey today, "*dhimmi*" being a very pejorative term for non-Muslims and "*gavour*" being a term meaning "infidels." The emergence of that kind of language, as well as, as I said, the expansion of anti-Semitic language and practices in Turkey today, is directly related to the perpetuation of this logic of denialism, which messages that there is no accountability for a culture that uses bigotry and a politics that uses bigotry and intolerance.

Furthermore, we see the emboldening of similar behaviors in Turkish foreign policy as a result of subscribing to this logic of denialism. Perhaps the most chilling case of the consequences of the denialist architecture has been in terms of Turkey's unfettered, systematic and near-complete religious cleansing in Turkish-occupied Cyprus. Today, there are less than 400, mainly elderly Christians in Turkish-occupied Cyprus after 41 years of Turkish military occupation. More than 500 Armenian, Greek and Maronite churches, cemeteries and religious sites have been desecrated and demolished, converted into mosques, stables, public toilets, casinos, hotels, and military storage and administration sites. The same goes for the desecration of Jewish religious sites/cemeteries. The Armenian—one of the most important Armenian monasteries in Turkish-occupied Cyprus is finally being allowed to be used for picnics, not for religious worship. The Turkish occupation authorities will allow an occasional picnic and a sandwich, but not a Liturgy. This, again, grows out of the logic of denialism—again, no accountability, so applying the same kind of violations of human rights that were the genocide in terms of present-day foreign policy behaviors is what we see in this case.

In terms of undermining democratization inside Turkey, here again we see the logic of denialism at work. The demonstrated willingness of civil society groups, attorneys, media, intellectuals, and average citizens to recognize and talk about the Armenian Genocide as a necessary step towards sustainable reconciliation inside Turkey and towards a broader Turkey-Armenia normalization is, again, something that Dr. Akçam spoke about. However, by subscribing and supporting the logic of denialism, those openings and those possibilities are suffocated. The rollback in media freedoms today in Turkey—press, social media such as Twitter and Facebook—as well as the rollback and the limitations on speech and conscience freedoms—for example, through a more expansive application of Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, by which insulting Turkishness now also includes Islamist blasphemy dimensions, but also speech about Armenian Genocide—this rollback in the last several years in Turkey has reached enormous proportions and has been widely reported. The perpetuation of Armenian Genocide denial inside Turkey falls within this framework of a culture of silencing and a totalitarian culture of regulation of language and thought.

The same holds true for a culture of violence—for example, the assassination of Hrant Dink as well as the arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of journalists and human rights attorneys in Turkey. These all grow out of this messaging from the culture of denialism, the logic of denialism, that there is no accountability when these kinds of actions are undertaken.

It's worth pointing out that, in terms of the argument of recognizing the Armenian Genocide as something that could undermine democracy in Turkey, in fact, this is something that's been wielded—this argument has been wielded regularly by the current AKP administration, but it's actually rooted in the previous Kemalist governments as well. However, in terms of the current moment, the approaching June 2015 elections in Turkey, President Erdogan is using genocide denial as part of his own political platform towards

the goal of securing support from the nationalist right for the AKP's platform, and ultimately for obtaining a supermajority that would allow for an amendment to the Turkish constitution in order to move to a muscular presidential system. The stakes for denialism in this respect are directly related to what's happening in terms of Turkey's domestic politics today.

And then, finally, in terms of emboldening Turkey to behave in foreign policy—in foreign policy terms that, again, are assuming that there will be no accountability—what we can see, for example, is that Turkey has ignored U.S. engagement and requests on issues related to U.N. sanctions on Iran, in terms of not selling or facilitating the sale of ISIS oil, as well as dealing with the closure of its border or, at the very least, not providing aid and sanctuary to al-Nusra and ISIS fighters along the Turkish border, and then finally U.S. requests that Turkey cease and desist from anti-Semitic provocation vis-à-vis Israel. Here, again, the Turkish Government's sense that it can behave with impunity and without any kind of accountability traces back to this logic and ideology of denialism.

In short, there's both a moral and strategic imperative for the U.S. to change its position on denialism and on the denial of the Armenian Genocide. Continuing to support denialism is not in Turkey's interest as a democratic country and a country struggling now with its democratization process. It's (denialisms) not in the interest of the Transatlantic Alliance, supporting an alliance that is built on shared values as well as interests. And it's (denialism) not in the interest of ongoing efforts to bring about a full normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations.

By way of very brief conclusion, in terms of some things that can be done in order to facilitate a shift beyond, a move beyond and a rejection of denialism, first of all, the United States could follow the example of the European Parliament, could follow the example of Pope Francis, and it could follow the example of Turkish citizens who are willing to speak about and recognize the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire. It could also—the United States could also ensure that the White House and our President names the genocide as a genocide.

Number two, our government should show zero tolerance for denialism as an ideology of silencing and as a form of memoricide.

Number three, the United States could work to empower Turkish civil society, those groups in Turkish civil society—Armenian groups and others—Turkish journalists, Turkish members of the media, Turkish human rights activists, and particularly in the educational sphere that recognize the Armenian Genocide and are dedicated to recognition and reconciliation.

Finally, the U.S. could support the creation of commissions to catalog, preserve and restore sites, and reject the conversion of churches into facilities that are not meant—for which they're not meant to be used. That includes mosques. A big test will be the great Cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul and what happens with that, but it includes mosques. It also includes, as I said, the Turkish authorities' use of Christian sites for public toilets, stables and concert halls.

And then, finally, the U.S. can utilize the full range of inter-agency support—for example, this Commission, the U.S. Commis-

sion on International Religious Freedom, the IRF Office in the State Department, and the newly created White House Office of Global Religious Affairs—to ensure that, again, in terms of discourse and practices, denialism is rejected, and that instead recognition of the Armenian Genocide can be a necessary and first step to full reconciliation and normalization.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much for your testimony.

I will now go to Mrs. Shnorhokian.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Chairman?

Mr. SMITH. We are joined by Congressman Brad Sherman, and I understand you're on a tight schedule, too. So I'd love to yield to you right now.

**HON. BRAD SHERMAN (D-30), A MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM  
THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you.

I apologize for being late here today, but I was on the floor of the House of Representatives doing a special order on the very topic of this hearing, joined by Mr. Royce, the chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and other members. It is very appropriate that we had that special order and that we have this hearing at this exact time, for it began a hundred years ago at this very hour, because it's April 23rd here in Washington, but it is very close to the midnight of April 24th in Istanbul. And just a hundred years ago to this very hour, the thugs were leaving their headquarters; the officials of the—of the Ottoman government were out to arrest and to kill 650 leaders of the Armenian community of Istanbul, then the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

We're here today, though, not just to commemorate a terrible wrong, for there are several terrible wrongs. When I meet—and I do, from time to time—to remember the Holocaust, there's one element that isn't there, and that is the need to combat governmental denial of the Holocaust. And that is why I want to commend the chair for holding these hearings, because we're here not just to commemorate but to correct. And we're not correcting a few crazy Holocaust deniers; we're here correcting a government of a major—of a major nation.

This genocide denial's harm to Armenians is obvious, but there's also a great harm to America. How do we have a basis for world leadership if we kowtow? Have we—especially a country and a government that we've done so much for. Since World War II, we've given them 23 billion [dollars] in aid. We saved them from communism. We built and helped build the pipeline that brings them oil. We prevented an independent Kurdish state. We have been the loudest voice for Turkey to be allowed to enter the European Union. And then, with all that, they demand that we be accomplices in genocide denial? And even worse, we accede to that demand.

And I want to thank the last witness. I've never heard it done so well, to explain how genocide denial harms not only Armenia and America, but harms the people of Turkey. There's nothing that we could do for the people of Turkey of greater significance than for the House of Representatives and the Senate to recognize the



Armenian Genocide, because how can Turkey be a modern nation in the future if it is so busy denying its past? And who is going to trust Turkey? Would anyone trust a German Government that denied the Holocaust? Would the world be willing to follow an America that was engaged in some multinational, multibillion-dollar slavery denial program? Turkey cannot be an effective ally or a trusted partner of any nation as long as it continues this denial. And as the professor just pointed out, it not only corrodes Turkey's position in the world, but corrodes the efforts to create real democracy in Turkey and to create an acceptance of religious minorities in Turkey.

So, Mr. Chairman, I thank you for holding this hearing. I thank our witnesses for being here. And I look forward to the day when we do the best thing we could do for Turkey, and that's recognize the Armenian Genocide.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Sherman.  
I'd like to now yield to Ms. Shnorhokian.

**KARINE SHNORHOKIAN, REPRESENTATIVE, THE GENOCIDE  
EDUCATION PROJECT**

Ms. SHNORHOKIAN. Chairman Smith and fellow Commissioners, thank you for organizing today's event and for the invitation. It's certainly humbling to be here.

It is sentimental as I think back to six years ago almost to the day, where on April 22nd, 2009, at the age of 96, my husband's grandmother, an Armenian Genocide survivor, Alice Khachadorian-Shnorhokian, arrived in Washington, D.C. one last time to meet with members of Congress, urging them to push forward for recognition of the Armenian Genocide. She considered herself one of the lucky ones, and felt a heavy burden on her shoulders to pursue justice for this cause.

That morning, after making the journey from New Jersey, she arrived on the Hill in a gray-colored suit, the same suit she would be buried in two years later. Her white hair short and recently manicured, large round glasses, black cane and wheelchair, she was wheeled around office to office, telling her story to different members of Congress—her mind sharp and her memories lucid, a smile on her face with knowing her presence was making a difference.

With her she carried two composition books older than she, entrusted to her by her relatives, who were midwives. The books were handwritten accounts of all the babies born in Aintab, Turkey during the turn of the 20th Century.

In the black book, with its fading pages, and broken seams, search through the Armenian handwriting and navigate to the month of August 1912, you will find Grandma Alice's name there, born Wednesday, August 28, 1912. Alice's father, a respected and successful trade route merchant, provided for his family, which consisted of his wife and six children.

When the order of the deportation of the Armenians arrived in 1915, Alice's family gathered whatever they could carry upon their donkey and began the marches, nearing closer and closer to the Syrian Desert. She and her brother, too young to endure the treacherous walk, were placed in the boxes on the sides of their

donkey. As fate would have it, a high ranking military official and neighbor to Alice's family was shocked to see the family in Maskanah, the final stop before entering Der Zor. He obtained a permit, essentially saving the family.

Attributing it to her faith in God, Alice, along with her family, survived the Armenian Genocide. From Aintab, they relocated to Aleppo, Syria, and later to Beirut, Lebanon, where she received her education and studied as a midwife. She practiced midwifery for many years. She later married and relocated to the United States in 1980, where she served her Church and was proud of her three children, Ivan, Arpy Sarian, and Harout, and six grandchildren; Tina Volzer, Vahig Shnorhokia, Tsoleen Sarian, Lori Shnorhokia, Sevan Sarian, and Nora Shnorhokia.

She continued to live in a world where the cycle of genocide continued. The traumas of what she endured visited her in her dreams, and Turkey's ongoing denial led her inability to move on. She had one simple ask, which was: "Before my time passes, I am asking for justice of this great country and for the world to not forget the tragic suffering and terrible genocide of the Armenians. I am an American citizen, and I want my voice to be heard. I have guaranteed rights that were denied to my family 93 years ago."

On June 16th, 2011, she passed away. She never saw justice and never saw recognition, and she could never quite comprehend how America continuously caved in to the empty threats of the Turkish Government.

The Turkish Government thinks that time will lead to faded memories. And as our last survivors walk this Earth, it is unfortunate, disheartening, and irresponsible that year after year broken promises and euphemisms are used to describe the Armenian Genocide by our own government.

My own journey to speak out is fueled by my passion, education, and Turkey's ongoing denial. Reading Peter Balakian's book, "Black Dog of Fate" at the age of 15 ignited a flame within me. My high school—Glenbrook North High School in Northbrook, Illinois, and history teacher Mr. James McPherrin—gave me the platform to speak out and educate others. The topic angered my classmates. Their anger, however, stemmed from the fact that they felt ashamed and embarrassed that they did not know the past. They were angry that the history books did not contain this content.

Denial of the genocide pushed me to educate America's youth. It has pushed me to pass legislation to teach Armenian Genocide and other genocides in schools. Through The Genocide Education Project, I have attended social studies conferences to give educators the tools they need to teach this difficult topic in their classroom, and recently led initiatives to develop a curriculum guide on the Near East Relief efforts during the time of the genocide to help those in need. This curriculum, entitled *They Shall Not Perish, The Story of the Near East Relief* was recently developed by a small subcommittee I spearheaded to allow for additional materials educators can use in their classrooms when teaching about genocide. I also proudly wear a pin honoring those efforts created during World War I. The pin is in red, white and blue and reads "American Committee Relief In Near East Save A Life," with a shining star at center.

Like Grandma Alice, I too studied nursing, graduating college with a Bachelors of Science in Nursing from Loyola University of Chicago over a decade ago. And at the age of 22, I worked as a nurse in an intensive care unit at Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, Illinois. My work to pursue justice was not enough, however. It is not easy for an Armenian youth to grow up knowing that the truth is plagued by denial, hostility and threats. Knowing there was a greater good out there to pursue justice, I took a sabbatical from my nursing career. And I left to continue to educate students and teachers, build coalitions with other victims of genocide, meet with members of Congress to pursue genocide recognition, and much more. On April 22nd, I joined several hundred students at Pascack Valley High School in New Jersey and presented with a genocide survivor from Rwanda, Mr. Daniel Trust, as well as another advocate for justice, Ms. Lee Ann De Rues, who's a voice for victims who have suffered traumatic rape and violence with the ongoing conflicts in Congo.

As descendants of survivors, it is our moral obligation to pursue justice for our survivors and end the cycle and denial of genocide. I by no means think I am the poster child for our cause because where this is just my story, multiply it by a hundred, a thousand or even 10,000, for that matter. And where we may face genocide denial in the schools or in Congress, Armenians in Armenia and Armenians here in the diaspora will never rest. The lights in our offices are always on. The media outlets will continue to be flooded. The telephone calls to members of Congress will never stop. And the education in schools will continue to anger and motivate students. The hashtags, the tweets, the social media campaigns will continue until justice prevails.

Turkey failed. Turkey failed because, at the age of 96, Grandma Alice, a survivor, came to Washington, D.C. to fight for this cause, the same cause I am fighting for six years later and for however long it takes for Turkey to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. Leadership that cannot speak the truth will come and go, and our adversaries will grow old and leave disgraceful legacies, but perhaps one day that one student I educated in world history will become the next world leader and remember that anger he or she felt for not knowing. They will speak the truth, because truth and justice will always prevail no matter what the cost and consequence will be.

And to close, several years prior, while serving as a Senator, I asked President Obama about the Armenian Genocide. He openly acknowledged it as a genocide, and discussed Turkey's ongoing denial. It is sad to think how his views have changed, and how he has backed down from taking a moral stand. He continues to give in to these blanket threats from the Turkish Government. It is a disgrace as an American citizen that our own great Nation cannot acknowledge the truth.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you for your very eloquent testimony.

All of you, this has been a panel with very few parallels. I've been in Congress 35 years, and you have all made extraordinarily important points that I hope a wider audience will take under consideration.

I do have a few questions, beginning first with, you know, as I talk to members—and this is decades long, but certainly in the last several years especially—there is that surface appeal argument that, after a century—now a century—that we just move on and acquiesce to the historical untruths promulgated by the Turkish Government and other opinion molders who are waging a campaign of disinformation. I suggest back to them, when I hear this from members and from parliamentarians—you know, we meet regularly as head of delegation for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly with members from around—from the 57 countries that make up the OSCE, and it's amazing how that argument has had staying power, that just turn the page, it's a hundred years ago.

The most immediate point to fire back, obviously, is that the memory of this festers. The families have suffered an agony that then is passed on from generation to generation because there has been no honest acceptance of these horrific deeds. But it is also—and I think your testimonies bring this out big time—a longer look at genocide denial, which is a calculated, premeditated, disingenuous policy that is truly designed to inculcate distrust and animosity towards the Armenians. I think that point has been made very strong. This is a current-day libel and slander against the Armenian people, and Armenians not just living in Armenia but everywhere else, and it is used quite adroitly by people like Erdogan to stir up those animosities.

I'm planning—and it came out of just thinking, listening to all of you—a second hearing that will focus on the textbooks. You now, the—as you, Mr. Hachikian, pointed out, that the Turkish people pay—it was your fourth cost point—because the young people are being taught a pack of lies that leads to a hatred and an animosity that then has real-world implications, particularly as they matriculate into government authorities themselves someday, or journalists, or whoever. So the textbooks, I think, need to be examined. You know, remember that famous song from Rodgers and Hammerstein's "South Pacific," "You've Got to be Taught," that the hatred has to be taught from generation to generation? Well, the textbooks are a conduit for that hatred, and I think we need to examine it, those textbooks.

I did this with regards to UNRWA and the anti-Semitic diatribes that are contained within the UNRWA textbooks, which we—the United States Government—supply to the PLA in large measure. We're the biggest donor to UNRWA that there is. So I held a hearing and we had individuals read from the textbooks. None of us had ever had such a textbook in our hand or even seen one. And it was an absolute eye opener, and I think we need to look at and examine and scrutinize what are the young people of Turkey being taught by this campaign of slander and this campaign of hatred towards the Armenians.

So that'll be our next hearing. I will announce that as soon as we pull that together. But I think it came right out of listening to all of you.

You might want to speak to the next generation, how they're being—you know, how do you break that off? You know, we've seen with every ethnic or any other racial animosity anywhere in the

world there's always this effort to reach the young minds and mold those minds and to fill it with hatred. So if you could speak to that.

Secondly, the issue of what would U.S. recognition mean. And I really do thank Mr. Krikorian for what you did—Krikorian, I should say—laying out some of those points about, in 1951, May 28th, U.S. written statement filed with the International Court of Justice regarding the U.N. Genocide Convention: “The practice of genocide has occurred throughout human history. The Roman persecution of the Christians, the Turkish massacre of the Armenians, the extermination of millions of Jews/Poles by the Nazis are outstanding examples of the crime of genocide.” So we got it right in 1951, and many other countries did as well. And Ronald Reagan, as you pointed out, when he pointed out in this proclamation, “like the genocide of the Armenians before it and the genocide of the Cambodians that followed it,” it seems to me there has been a seismic shift in policy, deliberate policy by the Turkish Government, to move more aggressively towards demonizing Armenians, and part of that effort is to—is to say the genocide never occurred.

When we had the ambassador testify here, his phrase was “just use ‘tragedy.’” Well, “tragedy” is if tomorrow or tonight I’m driving and I have a head-on collision and die. That’s a tragedy—in a car. This was a premeditated act of hatred and wanton killing, and that’s what defines a genocide.

So if you could speak to—and Turkey signed the Genocide Convention. They were one of first, Mark Milosch just reminded me, and I appreciate that. So if you could speak to that about the youth and then what the impact U.S. recognition would have.

I am amazed that we are being bullied, in 2015. And again, I’ve said it, you’ve said it: the President couldn’t have been more clear as a United States senator and as a candidate that he would do this. I’ll never forget, after we had the hearing in 2000—2000, September 4th—14th, it was on H. Res. 398, which Rogan had introduced, which would have been—it was a very bipartisan effort—they would have recognized the genocide. In comes a conveyance from Sandy Berger, then-chief security council adviser to Clinton, and unfortunately our speaker, Dennis Hastert, said, oh, can’t go forward with that, we’re getting admonished if not even more from the administration not to go forward with this. Shame on us. We should do this and we should do it now. The President should do it still. There are hours left.

If you could speak to those issues.

Mr. HACHIKIAN. Mr. Chairman, thank you for those thoughtful remarks.

Very quickly, in response to your second issue, I believe U.S. recognition would isolate Turkey in a way that’s absolutely necessary—because, after all, our ultimate goal is not recognition by the United States, it’s recognition by Turkey, and to bring to justice for the crimes that were committed. U.S. recognition, however, would pressure Turkey, in addition to isolating them. It would cause them to understand that there’s really no place they can turn in the world to hide behind. It would make it clear that the United States is not open to blackmail, which—you know, once you give into blackmail, you’ll always give into blackmail. And it is astonishing that this administration doesn’t understand that. And fi-

nally, it would—it would cause the United States to stand out as a clear voice of clarity on a moral issue of great importance and send a signal to other potential perpetrators of genocide that it cannot be tolerated. So thank you.

Dr. PRODROMOU. Thank you for your enthusiasm and focus in terms of immediate follow up. It's really heartening.

Regarding the isolation of Turkey, I think that recognition—the U.S. recognition wouldn't necessarily isolate Turkey. I think Turkey is already very isolated. I think what it would do in some ways, as you said, it would send a message that the United States has a zero-tolerance policy on these kinds of issues, and that extends well beyond Turkey. But also it would free up those in Turkey who would support a recognition, would support recognition. It will give them traction because, until now, the United States' willingness to bow its head to Turkish threats and Turkish condemnation has taken away that kind of traction from those in Turkey who might actually support recognition.

And the other thing I would encourage is, in addition to the textbooks—which, yes, portray, not only in terms of public school textbooks but in terms of the textbooks that are—and the training that is used for the Turkish armed forces, portray Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Assyrians as security threats to Turkey. I would encourage you to think about those textbooks as well.

And then finally, the issue of sites. That's where the United States can do a lot of work on its own, with its European allies and with the United Nations. I would encourage us to recognize that part of genocide is not only eradicating/annihilating the people, it's eliminating any footprint of those people—any physical evidence that they ever once existed. And the obliteration of religious sites, cultural monuments in Turkey proper, and as I mentioned in Turkish-occupied Cyprus, has proceeded apace. And that's part of a deliberate strategy to either redesign history, convert those sites into different kinds of cultural spaces, or to eliminate them and, again, eliminate any evidence that those people once were.

We talk about that—we talked about that when the Taliban was attacking religious sites in Afghanistan, Buddhist sites in Afghanistan. We're talking about it in terms of what ISIS is doing in Iraq. And we see the same thing happening in Turkey and Turkish-occupied Cyprus. So sites can be preserved, they can be cataloged, and they can be repaired. And that's, again, a place where, in terms of working with our European allies and the United Nations, UNESCO in particular, we can do a lot better.

Dr. AKÇAM. As a historian, I have to give short information on the political recognition of the genocide. We all think that Turkish Government's denied—has denied over the years. It was not true, actually. I strongly remind everybody that both Turkish Government in Ankara between 1918 and 1920 and the Ottoman government in Istanbul recognized the crimes, and they set up a military tribunal in Istanbul and they tried more than 200 defendants, and there were death sentences against 16 people and three were hanged. And I would really recommend to my government to follow up their founding fathers' footsteps, Mustafa Kemal, who made a speech in Turkish parliament April 1920 where he called Armenian massacres as a "shameful act." So it is not enough, maybe, for

today, but it is really a good beginning for Turkish Government to follow the footsteps of its founding fathers and call the event of 1915 a shameful act, and then carry out the consequences. Thank you.

Mr. KRIKORIAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think your idea about a review of textbooks and hearing in attention to that is brilliant.

One of the things that we do at the Armenian National Institute is have a website. It gets enormous amounts of use. It lays out the facts and the documents and—no editorial content, just the facts and the documents. And among the top five countries where we get use from it is Turkey because we have people who want to see what the real truth of it is.

With respect to textbooks and books in general, one of the more fascinating things that's happened as the world's opened up, not just through the Internet but communication and education, is that the grandson—the grandson of one of the actual architects of the Armenian Genocide—there were three primary architects of the Armenian Genocide. The grandson of one of them, Hasan Cemal, actually wrote a book called "1915: The Armenian Genocide" in Turkish, and he apologized. He did it based on his family's records and the rest of the history. It was an enormously brave thing to do. And it's pretty much—not that we needed more dispositive documents or facts, but a person like that needs to get recognized, and a person like that needs to be protected.

When we held meetings in Turkey as a Reconciliation Commission, we had a number of Turks that wanted to come to terms with their history. And they came to us and asked us, if they did, could we protect them? And we had to say: No, we can't. And if we can contribute to that, it would help a lot, too. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Before we close, is there anything else you would like to say to conclude?

Well, I want to thank you again for your brilliant testimony—incisive, persuasive, and it leaves the Congress with much more that we ought to be doing. And I thank you for that as well.

And again, we all mourn and pray for those who lost their lives, for their families. I, too, am a Christian, and believe strongly in the power of prayer. And my hope is—I think our collective hope is that through prayer and hard work this ongoing perpetuation of the hate that has been pushed by certain people in Turkey will not just be mitigated, but it will end. And it's only when there's a full recognition of a genocide—in this case, the Armenian Genocide—that that healing can begin.

Yes, please, for a final word.

Dr. AKÇAM. Maybe to close I would like to remind everybody about one important issue. After the assassination of Hrant Dink, my dear friend, in Istanbul, there is a growing civil society in Turkey. And these individuals, this civil society, is ready to face history. And I'm really hoping that the United States and the world community considers this growing civil society as the new Turkey. And this is the important part: Turkey does not only consist of a denialist government, but Turkish people are now on the streets and there is a new growing Turkey, and we should really recognize

this new growing Turkey, and Hrant Dink also as Martin Luther King of Turkey. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, and I just wanted to be clear that we have concerns for your safety as well, and the Commission will be doing whatever it can to ensure that the powers that be in Turkey know that.

And let me also point out that when you mention civil society, in the past I have had numerous meetings in Ankara as well as hearings here in Washington on behalf of journalists, who have suffered disproportionately. As a matter of fact, we had a hearing once where, unfortunately, the headline the next day was "State Department Defends Ankara From the U.S. Congress." It was—unfortunately, the State Department rep went out of his way to, instead of saying a journalist should have unfettered right, you know, with due regard to libel laws, to print—and of course, if you write about the Armenian Genocide, you are put at risk.

And I also wrote four laws on combating torture. The Torture Victims Relief Act, they're called, and there's four of them. And they helped torture victim relief centers, and there are those centers in Turkey. And I've gotten to know many people who have stood up and pushed back in those centers against the far-too-often utilization of torture methods. I have raised it personally with members of the parliament. I remember one time, in a bilateral meeting with a group of Turks in one of our parliamentary assemblies, after about an hour of back and forth, one of the top people said, you know, we do have a problem. [Chuckles.] So he at least admitted it. And you know, maybe that's the beginning of reform, when people finally realize there is a problem.

But we have to accelerate our efforts going into the second century, now, of denial of the Armenian Genocide. And I can assure you this Commission and my subcommittee, which is the Global Human Rights Subcommittee, will look for ways. Any ideas you have, please pass them along and we will act.

Hearing's adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:20 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]



# APPENDIX

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## PREPARED STATEMENTS

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Good afternoon and welcome to our witnesses and everyone joining us for today's hearing marking 100 years since the start of the Armenian genocide—one of the most terrible crimes of the twentieth century.

The Armenian genocide is the only one of the genocides of the twentieth century in which the nation that was decimated by genocide has been subject to the ongoing outrage of a massive campaign of genocide denial, openly sustained by state authority. This campaign of genocide denial is a slap in the face to the Armenian people, preventing reconciliation and healing. As Pope Francis said at his Mass marking the centenary of the genocide, "Concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it."

In September 2000 I chaired the first Congressional hearing on the Armenian genocide. It was a four-hour hearing and the testimony I heard that day, and many accounts of the atrocities I have read in the articles and books over the years, including the eyewitness account *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, have shocked me deeply.

The facts were reported throughout the world as they were happening, corroborated immediately afterward by survivors and even some perpetrators, and have been amply documented by historians, including in a number of recent books.

In 1915, there were about 2 million Armenians living in what was then the Ottoman Empire. They were living in a region that they inhabited for 2,500 years. By 1923, well over 90 percent of these Armenians had disappeared. Most of them, as many as 1.5 million, were dead—most of them death-marched into the desert or shot, and subject in some cases to rape or other unbelievable cruelties. The remainder had been forced into exile.

When the term genocide was invented in 1944 to describe the systematic destruction of an entire people, its author Raphael Lemkin explained the term by saying it was "the sort of thing Hitler did to the Jews and the Turks did to the Armenians."

Since the facts are so well-established, this is not a hearing only to inquire into the events of 1915. Rather it is also a hearing on what has happened since then, and is still happening today—genocide denial.

Sadly, the Turkish Government has driven this campaign of denial, and has done so over a course of decades, using a variety of means to punish Turkish citizens who dared to acknowledge the crimes committed by the Ottoman government in 1915. The Turkish Government has also threatened other countries to keep them from acknowledging the genocide—ironically, it is only the Turkish Government's campaign of denial that obliges other countries to recognize the genocide. And the Turkish Government's crimes, sometimes by changing the subject to the wartime sufferings of Turks, or crimes committed by individual Armenians.

This is in no sense a hearing *against* Turkey—rather I consider it a hearing that supports the Turkish people. Today many people in Turkey are in the process of freeing themselves from the effects of decades of denialist propaganda by their government. Many already see through the official denialism, and some oppose it openly.

I want to support and express my admiration for these people—for their *courage*, for their *Turkish patriotism*. They act, sometimes at personal risk to themselves, for the good of their country and out of love of their country. They are 'thought-leaders'—and there are many signs of this. In recent weeks, in the lead up to the centenary of the genocide, there have been many deeply moving feature stories in the world press about Turks discovering their families' secret Armenian heritage, or seeking to connect with the Armenian aspects of Turkish history, or supporting efforts to rebuild Armenian churches. I'd like to insert one of these articles, "Remembering the Armenian Genocide," by Victor Gaetan, into the hearing record.

No country is immune from evil, all governments have been complicit at some point in their histories in terrible crimes—and this certainly includes the United States. It includes Germany. I want to urge the Turkish government—the path taken by Germany after World War II was the right one. Germany started with open acknowledgment of the crimes of the Holocaust, and it built from there, over a course of decades establishing relationships with Jewish groups and Israel, in which it demonstrated remorse and a commitment to righting its wrongs, as far as

it could. Now there is a strong German-Israeli friendship—and today Germany is one of the most respected countries in the world.

That path is still open to the Turkish government, and working to put Turkey on it will be the truest, deepest expression of Turkish patriotism.

Finally, I must respond to President Obama. On Tuesday his aides met with Armenian leaders and made it clear that once again he will not recognize the Armenian genocide—he will not use the word “genocide” tomorrow. This is in direct contradiction to the promises that he made before becoming President—and in order to become President.

While a candidate, in 2008 the President made passionate statements in support of genocide recognition.

I also share with Armenian Americans—so many of whom are descended from genocide survivors—a principled commitment to commemorating and ending genocide. That starts with acknowledging the tragic instances of genocide in world history. As a U.S. Senator, I have stood with the Armenian American community in calling for Turkey’s acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide. Two years ago, I criticized the Secretary of State for the firing of U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, John Evans, after he properly used the term “genocide” to describe Turkey’s slaughter of thousands of Armenians starting in 1915. I shared with Secretary Rice my firmly held conviction that the Armenian Genocide is not an allegation, a personal opinion, or a point of view, but rather a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming body of historical evidence. The facts are undeniable. An official policy that calls on diplomats to distort the historical facts is an untenable policy. As a Senator, I strongly support passage of the Armenian Genocide Resolution (H.Res.106 and S.Res.106), and as President I will recognize the Armenian Genocide.

These are beautiful words which echo hollowly today. The President’s abandonment of this commitment is unconscionable and cynical.

With Germany and the EU lining up to do the right thing, our government needs to do likewise. At this point, according to the Congressional Research Service, the EU states listed as having recognized a genocide are France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Greece, and Cyprus, and the Holy See. The European Parliament has also referred to the deaths as genocide. The non-EU states are Argentina, Canada, Chile, Lebanon, Russia, Switzerland, Uruguay, Vatican City, and Venezuela. Sadly, after the President’s powerful promise, he is following, not leading—or rather, we are not even following.

As mass atrocities unfold in Syria and Iraq, the U.S. needs the Turkish Government to engage constructively with its neighbors. The Turkish Government can do this much more effectively after it honestly faces its own past—the President is missing an opportunity to move Turkey toward this path.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION  
ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

On April 24, 1915, the Ottomans rounded up and killed a group of Armenia's best and brightest, marking the beginning of what historians now recognize as a wider plan of eradication. Nearly 1.5 million Armenians were killed, in massacres and in forced marches into the Syrian Desert. Another half million Armenians were driven from their ancient homeland.

The slaughter of innocent Armenians was genocide, plain and simple. Indeed, our modern term "genocide" was first coined in the 1940s to describe both the Jewish Holocaust and the plight of the Armenians under Ottoman persecution in World War I.

Theodore Roosevelt called the Armenian Genocide the "greatest crime" of the Great War. And perhaps prophetically, he wrote in 1918 that the failure to honestly account for the perpetration of that crime would mean that "all talk of guaranteeing the future peace of the world is mischievous nonsense."

Words matter. The historical record matters. I believe that by properly accounting for crimes against humanity we stand a better chance of preventing them in the future.

His Holiness Pope Francis, known for his unwavering sympathy for victims of suffering, recently acknowledged the Armenian genocide, noting that "Concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it."

Today we gather to seek an honest appraisal of a painful past.

It is this terrible chapter, more than any other single event, that led to the Armenian diaspora, including in the United States and my home state of Rhode Island.

I am proud to call myself a friend of the Armenian community in Rhode Island and in the United States. Over the years, I've had the pleasure of being welcomed into the community, and for that I am grateful.

Senator Jack Reed, too, is a great friend of the Armenian community. He has worked for years to elevate the issues that are most dear to the Republic of Armenia and to the Armenian-American community in Congress.

When I first came to the Senate in 2007, one of the first bills I cosponsored-along with Jack Reed-was the resolution calling on the President to ensure that the foreign policy of the United States appropriately reflects the realities of the Armenian Genocide. It was a privilege to do so. And I have signed onto similar legislation in every session of Congress since then.

To this day, too many people are unaware of this tragedy, due in part to the unwillingness of some to call it what it was. This solemn recognition is important not only to so many Armenians in Rhode Island and throughout the world, but to our human obligation to the truth.

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. TANER AKÇAM

I would like to begin by thanking you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts on the centennial commemoration of the Armenian genocide. In 2000, when I first visited the United States for a series of lectures, my presence generated a great deal of suspicion among Armenian-Americans. Few could bring themselves to believe that a Turk would even acknowledge the Armenian genocide. In fact, some even believed I was a spy working for the Turkish government. But, after thirty years of research on this subject matter, I have gained the confidence of the Armenian community, as well as that of my own countrymen.

The Turkey that is best known today is one that is represented by an aggressive, denialist government. But there is also another Turkey, and the citizens of *that* Turkey are ready to face their history. We Turks feel obligated to rectify the black stain upon us and upon our honor that was left by those who committed these crimes. At this very moment, in more than 25 cities from Istanbul to Van, people are not waiting for their government to recognize the genocide. Instead, they are blazing a new path; one that allows them to discover their past. Our history does not simply consist of murderers. It is also a history of brave and righteous people who risked their lives to save thousands of Armenians. When we recognize and honor such persons, we help to create an environment that would encourage others who would act likewise.

Why must we Turks, as well as the global community, recognize the Armenian genocide? The answer, I would suggest to you, is very simple: If we agree to acknowledge and remember the Nazi-perpetrated Holocaust—and *I am confident that most of us feel that remembrance of those crimes is necessary*—then we are equally obligated to acknowledge and remember the Armenian genocide. I believe that this statement stands on its own merits and that we should ask ourselves: Why is it that the question of recognizing the historicity of the Holocaust is not up for debate within political circles, while the Armenian genocide—despite its recognition within respectable academic circles—still is?

Recognition of my country's historic wrong doings is not a simple opinion or attitude on a past event—instead is directly related the kind of society that we envision for our future. Dehumanization is the most important component of all mass atrocities. In order to be able to kill, perpetrators dehumanize their victim. Recognition is necessary to acknowledge the human dignity of victim! Without recognition the consequent generations cannot be properly mourn and heal. Mourning and healing are necessary for closure and can only come after the truth is acknowledged. If we fail to acknowledge, we fall into a trap that continues to support the perpetrators and their ultimate goals. After decades of denials, Armenians need to heal and to understand that the justice they seek will prevail. If we want reconciliation and establish peace between Turks and Armenians we have to acknowledge the truth! Without truth, there cannot be peace.

If Turkey wishes to achieve a democratic, stable society and a vision for a better future, it needs to create an environment that is respectful of human rights. Confronting its past wrongdoings is a critical step towards this future. A hundred years ago, the Ottoman government had a flawed concept of national security. They viewed the Armenians and their demands for equality and social justice as a threat to the Ottoman state and society. Their solution to this problem was to target the Armenian people for extermination. Today, Turkish and Armenian children are taught, through textbooks published by the Education Ministry, that the Armenians continue to pose a threat to national security. These textbooks are steeped in false narratives about “treacherous Armenians.” This sounds unbelievable but unfortunately it is the bare truth.

What continues to trouble me is that the U.S. has not officially recognized the Armenian genocide. The justification for their position remains the same: National security interests in which Turkey is a critical partner. The argument goes something like this: It would be pointless to anger Turkey and to jeopardize American security interests for a moral issue that goes back 100 years. It is ironic that the words, ‘national security’, continue to haunt Armenian people even here in the United States.

But juxtaposing “national interest” and “morality” as being mutually exclusive is just plain wrong. Any security policy in the Middle East that excludes morality in favor of expediency is likely, in the long run, to undermine national security. Historical injustices are not dead issues; the past *has always been* the present in the Middle East. Insecurity felt by different groups towards each other as a result of events that have occurred in history is one of the central problems in the region. Kurds, Arabs, Alevi, Armenians and other Christians in the regions perceive each other and Turkey through this flawed prism of history. If we want a real politic to be suc-

cessful in the region we have integrate the acknowledgment of past wrong doings into any national security policy and to stop using it as an excuse.

Turkey's denialism of its past and making it an essential part of its foreign policy is not simply a moral abomination; it represents a threat to democracy, stability and security, not only in Turkey but in the region too. Turkey continues its denialist policies because, until now, it has not had to contend with serious external pressure to do otherwise. But there is this "other Turkey" of which I spoke earlier. It is a Turkey that is determined to build a tolerant, democratic society; ready to face up to the darker history of our country's past and put an end to the denialist policies. All that is lacking is external pressure from international community.

The United States has a choice; but if it continues to support a denialist regime, it will endorse this historical mistake. The refusal to recognize past injustices is fundamentally undemocratic and contributes to the destabilization of Turkey and the region. How can the United States, which prides itself on its exceptionalism in supporting liberal values and human rights at home and across the world, justify a position at odds with its own democratic values? America should not uphold human rights only when it is expedient. The test of American exceptionalism is the commitment to persevere in upholding these principles even when it may seem costly or inconvenient to do so.

By officially recognizing the Armenian genocide, the United States could lend its moral and political weight to the cause of encouraging Turkey to come to terms with its history, to further embrace democratization, and to contribute to its own future stability and that of the region. The citizens of my Turkey, the "other Turkey," are waiting for you to join us in acknowledging the truth.

Sociologist and historian Taner Akçam holds the Robert Aram & Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen & Marian Mugar Endowed Chair of Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University. Akçam grew up in Turkey, where he was imprisoned for editing a political publication and was subsequently adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International in 1976. Akçam later received political asylum in Germany. In 1988 Akçam started working as a Research Scientist in Sociology at the Hamburg Institute for Social Research.

In 1995 he received his doctorate from the University of Hanover with a dissertation on The Turkish National Movement and the Armenian Genocide Against the Background of the Military Tribunals in Istanbul Between 1919 and 1922. Akçam came to the US in 2000 as a visiting scholar and worked first at the University of Michigan, Dearborn and at the University of Minnesota thereafter. He has been working at Clark University since 2008. Akçam is widely recognized as one of the first Turkish scholars to write extensively on the Ottoman-Turkish Genocide of the Armenians in the early 20th century.

He is the author of more than ten scholarly works of history and sociology, as well as numerous articles in Turkish, German, and English. His most known books are "A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility" (Metropolitan Books, 2006, received the 2007 Minnesota Book Award for General Nonfiction) and "Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire," Princeton University Press, 2012 (awarded in 2013 Hourani Book Prize of The Middle East Studies Association; and selected as one of Foreign Affairs' Best Books on the Middle East for 2012). Akçam's forthcoming book is "The Spirit of the Laws; The Plunder of Wealth in the Armenian Genocide" (coauthored with Umit Kurt, Berghahn Books 2015).

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF KENNETH V. HACHIKIAN

Chairman Smith, Co-Chairman Wicker, and Commissioners, thank you for organizing today's Helsinki Commission hearing and for your invitation to share our views on the ongoing costs and consequences of the Republic of Turkey's denial of the truth and obstruction of justice regarding the Armenian Genocide.

It is a tribute to the Commission that its leaders have chosen to title today's hearing: "A Century of Denial: The Armenian Genocide and the Ongoing Quest for Justice." For that is the essential matter at hand.

Far too often, over the past several decades, under Turkey's arm-twisting here in Washington, DC, official discussions of the Armenian Genocide were framed in denialist terms, on the basis of Ankara's artificially contrived "debate" about whether there was an Armenian Genocide. Of course we all know that the Armenian Genocide is settled history.

We have also seen debate around the false choices presented by Ankara's apologists, calling into question whether America can afford to speak the truth, as if we could ever advance our international interests by compromising our national values. Of course, we know that no foreign country deserves a veto over our human rights policy, a gag-rule against our stand against genocide. We must never, ever outsource our nation's moral voice.

Most recently, we have seen a cynical campaign by Turkey to silence America's moral voice by arguing—against all evidence—that the recognition of the Armenian Genocide represents an obstacle to improved Armenian-Turkish relations. That position is akin to saying that post-war Germany's establishment of relations with Israel would have been somehow better served by the world's silence about the Holocaust. Or that the path to Hutu-Tutsi reconciliation rests upon a refusal to speak forthrightly about the realities of the Rwandan Genocide.

The real open questions—the ones deserving of our attention—are whether the direct consequences of this genocide, which have to date all fallen upon the Armenian nation, will—as they should—also be shared by the state and society that have benefited so greatly from the fruits of this crime; and, whether the rightful resolution of this wrong can—as it must—serve as the fundamental basis for a true Armenian-Turkish reconciliation and an enduring regional peace. These are the real questions.

The fact is that, a century after 1915, Turkey's denial of truth and justice for the Armenian Genocide remains the central issue between Turks and Armenians, the one that must be openly acknowledged, honestly discussed, and fairly resolved for there to be real, sustained progress in relations between these two nations.

There are many aspects to the costs of Armenian Genocide denial—costs to both U.S. interests and American values as well as to international norms. I would like to address just a few of them today.

There is, of course, first and foremost, the moral cost.

No one has spoken more powerfully to this aspect than Pope Francis. Earlier this month, he offered a sermon during an Armenian Catholic rite in St. Peter's Basilica. The Pontiff, consistent with the Vatican's long standing principled tradition of Armenian Genocide recognition, spoke honestly about this atrocity, telling the world that "Concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it."

These powerful words by Pope Francis reflect the values of every faith's tradition, every nation's code of morality, every civilized culture's concept of justice. These principles are manifested in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, the life's work of Raphael Lemkin, the Polish Jewish lawyer who cited the Armenian massacres as a primary driver of his coining of the term "genocide" and his efforts to build a global consensus around this landmark international treaty.

The cause of genocide prevention, a core moral imperative of our age, requires, as the Pope so powerfully stated, that we not engage in "concealing or denying evil."

A second cost of Armenian Genocide denial is the danger to at-risk populations around the world created by Turkey's precedent of a genocide openly committed and unapologetically denied. Perpetrators of subsequent crimes—from Hitler to Al-Bashir—have been emboldened by the international community's failure to confront genocide. Our United Nation's Ambassador, Samantha Power, has properly called this phenomenon the "Problem from Hell."

If we are to end the cycle of genocide—and no one is more committed to this cause than our community—we must elevate America's and all the world's response to genocide from a political calculation to a moral imperative.

A third cost of Armenian Genocide denial is the threat it represents to Armenians, a Christian nation with deep connections to the Western tradition and a long history of friendship with the American people. Very simply, Armenia cannot be safe

as long as it is bordered by an over-armed and unrepentant perpetrator of genocide. Armenians cannot be secure as long as Turkish schoolchildren are taught that Armenians were traitors, the perpetrators were heroes, and the victims deserving of their fate.

A fourth cost is the price the Turkish people pay, in terms of their own nation's progress toward greater tolerance and pluralism. A Turkey that fully accepts responsibility for the Armenian Genocide would very likely be one that is on the road to rehabilitation into a post-genocidal state. Sadly, we have seen few official signs of progress on this front. President Erdogan has doubled down on denial while Armenians in Turkey are regularly threatened with renewed deportations. The vast majority of the remaining Christian heritage of Anatolia is being systematically erased. While many of Turkey's most popular films and books scapegoat and celebrate the destruction of "treasonous" minorities, there are encouraging signs of a small but growing civil society movement in favor of ending Turkey's denials. In fact, tomorrow, groups of brave Turkish citizens will be joined by Armenians from around the world—at the risk of prosecution or worse—to call for a just resolution of the Armenian Genocide. We should encourage and stand with these principled voices.

And finally, a fifth cost is the destruction of the rich religious heritage of Anatolia, a cradle of the early Christian faith.

As the esteemed leaders and members of the Commission know, Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, Pontians, and Arameans (Syriacs) long lived in what is present-day Turkey. It is in appreciation of your understanding of this rich history—and an awareness of the vast desecration being visited today upon Christian holy sites by violent extremists—that I would like to close with a brief review of how this aspect relates to Turkey's denials.

Thousands of years before the establishment of the Ottoman Empire, these nations gave birth to great civilizations and established a rich civic, religious, and cultural heritage. They were, upon these biblical lands, among the first Christians, dating back to the travels through Anatolia of the Apostles, Thaddeus and Bartholomew. Armenia, in 301 A.D., became the first nation to adopt Christianity as a state religion.

Present-day Turkey is home to many of the most important centers of early Christianity—most notably Nicaea, Ephesus, Chalcedon, and Constantinople, containing a rich legacy of Christian heritage, including thousands of religious sites and properties.

Ottoman Turkey's campaign of genocide against its Armenian and other Christian subjects, in addition to murdering over 2,000,000 Christians and exiling of hundreds of thousands of others from their homelands of thousands of years, also involved the systematic destruction of churches and religious sites, illegal expropriation of properties, discriminatory policies, restrictions on worship, and other efforts to suppress and ultimately erase the Christian heritage of these lands.

As a result of these crimes—and Ankara's continued obstruction of justice—only a small fraction of the historic Christian presence in Anatolia remains today in modern Turkey. Estimates are that of the well over 2,000 Armenian churches, which existed in the early 1900's, far fewer than 50 are functioning today. Perhaps as few as 200 even remain standing today. The rest have been ground into dust with the properties illegally confiscated by the government. And, only a small fraction of the historic Christian population that once populated Anatolia remains today in modern Turkey to care for their cultural heritage.

As an initial step, Turkey's return of the thousands of church properties it outright stole from Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks, Syriacs, and other Christians prior to, during, and after the Armenian Genocide era, would represent a meaningful move by the Turkish Government toward accepting its responsibility for a truthful and just resolution of this still unpunished crime against humanity. It would, as well, mark progress for the cause of international religious freedom, in a corner of the world sadly known not for its pluralism, but rather for the depths of its intolerance.

Ending Turkey's denials can contribute to the reversal of this destruction, the return of churches, the restoration of Christian heritage, and the re-emergence of the Christian faithful upon these sacred lands.

It is time for the United States and the rest of the world to stand up to Turkey's shameless blackmail and demand justice not just for the Armenians, but for all of civilized mankind.

Thank you.

Kenneth V. Hachikian grew up in Boston, Massachusetts, as a second generation Armenian American. He graduated from Harvard College with a BA in Economics,



cum laude, in 1971 and received an MBA from Harvard Business School with High Distinction in 1973.

Ken started his career with The Boston Consulting Group, where he consulted for Fortune 1000 companies from 1973-1982. For twenty years, he was the CEO of several businesses including equipment leasing, health care services, computer services, and light manufacturing. He has also been the primary principal for a boutique venture capital fund. Presently, he is a financial advisor/investment banker to business owners. He has been involved in over 80 industries and has been a principal in over 25 investment banking transactions.

Ken has consistently been active in the Armenian American community, having held a number of leadership positions including being on the Board of Trustees for his local church and being chairman of The Friends of Armenian Culture Society. In May 2001, he began his service as the Chairman of the Armenian National Committee of America, headquartered in Washington DC, the largest grassroots Armenian American advocacy organization in the United States with over 40 local ANCs and thousands of volunteers across the country.

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF VAN Z. KRİKORIAN

As painful as every April 24th is for those of us whose families were decimated during the Armenian Genocide to reflect on our losses, we are grateful to leaders like Chairman Chris Smith and institutions such as the Helsinki Commission for your critical work in support of human rights and American values.

We appreciate your efforts in helping to prevent Azerbaijan from solving its “Armenian issue” by eliminating the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh, and during the Sumgait and Baku pogroms. We appreciate your help to secure Armenia’s independence. Your work over the years has been inspiring. Your 2005 hearings and work on religious rights in Turkey made a difference, and we hope that trend continues with today’s proceedings. We know from our close work with other human rights advocates and victims how much they appreciate your work as well.

By necessity or nature, Armenians are a resilient people who value human rights for all. Here, I also want to pay homage to the Assyrian, Greek and other victims of this era in Ottoman Turkey who were massacred and driven out as part of the program to create a Turkey only for Turks. I also pay homage to the victims of the Holocaust, the Cambodian Genocide, Rwanda, Sudan, Bosnia, the Holodomor, and other genocides.

On this 100th anniversary, the annual Armenian Presidential Prize on Genocide went to the Armenian women who suffered so brutally and were the backbone of the Armenian nation’s rebirth—they deserve special attention and appreciation this week and forever.

We are also pleased to announce the opening of the online Armenian Genocide Museum of America: [www.ArmenianGenocideMuseum.org](http://www.ArmenianGenocideMuseum.org). It focuses on remembrance, education, and genocide prevention, and we were happy to be able to share the introductory film with the commission. There will be more to come.

In the late 1800s and in the beginning of the 20th century, the *New York Times* distinguished itself in its detailed reporting of the ongoing Genocide. This Tuesday’s *New York Times* had another headline that will be remembered: “White House Acknowledges Armenian Genocide, but Avoids the Term.” Avoiding the term is fatal.

President Obama has used the Armenian term for the Armenian Genocide (“Meds Yeghern”), he has described and condemned all of the events which provide a dictionary definition of the Armenian Genocide, he has called on Turkey to deal with its past honestly, and he has referred back to his prior statements as a Senator explicitly using the term Armenian Genocide. But since his election as President, he has been misled by false promises and bowed to threats from the worst kind of people. This undercuts his own credibility. Worst of all it puts more lives at risk as history does repeat itself.

The record has never been in doubt. To say that people are shocked is an overstatement. The news that the Turkish Foreign Minister met with Secretary Kerry and National Security Advisor Rice with ISIL on the table made everything clear. However, to say that we are deeply disappointed is an understatement.

The truth is we feel pain and sorrow, close to when a loved one is lost. We feel pain for the innocent people and civilization that was destroyed. We feel sorrow in the knowledge that it will continue unless change comes. And like other victim groups, we are more than resilient enough to rededicate ourselves to the cause of preventing genocide which we have inherited.

Turning now to the record, let us not forget that on April 22, 1981, President Ronald Reagan stated “Like the genocide of the Armenians before it and the genocide of the Cambodians which followed it—and like too many other such persecutions of too many other peoples—the lessons of the Holocaust must never be forgotten.” (Proclamation 4838). President Reagan issued similar statements as Governor of California.

Recognizing that Armenians suffered genocide has indelible roots in the legal record. The post-World War I Turkish Government tried and convicted the key perpetrators with an indictment for the “massacre and the destruction of the Armenians [which] were the result of the decisions by the Central Committee. . . .”

At the Nuremberg trials, British prosecutor Lord Shawcross cited the crime against humanity Armenian precedent as legal grounds to hold the Nazis responsible.

The May 28, 1951 official U.S. “Written Statement” filed with the International Court of Justice regarding the UN Genocide Convention states: “The practice of genocide has occurred throughout human history. The Roman persecution of the Christians, the Turkish massacre of the Armenians, the extermination of millions of Jews and Poles by the Nazis are outstanding examples of the crime of genocide.”

Let us also remember Hitler's chilling 1939 quote to his commanders urging no mercy. "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians." This quote is publicly displayed in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

Raphael Lemkin who coined the term genocide repeatedly pointed to the Armenian experience as not only a definitive example of the crime but also one of the reasons why the crime had to be codified in a treaty. Lemkin convinced Turkey to be one of the first signatories to the UN Genocide Convention in light of the Armenian Genocide.

To be clear, the person who invented the term genocide defined it by pointing to what happened to the Armenians.

The International Association of Genocide Scholars has unequivocally confirmed the obvious classification of the Armenian Genocide as such, and there are no reputable, qualified scholars who can seriously dispute it today. "America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915" published in 2000 edited by Jay Winter based on the joint Library of Congress, Armenian National Institute (ANI), and U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum conference is a definitive testament to the record, as is the 1990 publication of "The Armenian Genocide in the U.S. Archives 1915-1918."

In a 1989 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, a question was raised about 69 scholars allegedly questioning the Armenian Genocide—then Chairman Joe Biden characterized them as idiots. In fact, some of the signatories never consented to inclusion of their names, many had no expertise in the area, and others were either paid or threatened by the then Turkish Government to lend their names—calling them idiots was charitable.

Then how did denial start and how did it last as long as it has?

The answer is simple—successive Turkish governments have used the issue to instill fear, promote racism, distract their population from the truth, and avoid progress. Having re-written their own history, they are now afraid to tell the truth as they will lose votes and risk power.

Tragically, this pattern has found accomplices, as Turkish leaders have openly threatened countries which do not deny the Armenian Genocide. Those who bend to bullying continue to be bullied. Those who bend, do not show honor and backbone. German Chancellor Merkel and the Austrian Parliament added their names to the honor roll this week.

Turkish society is increasingly coming to terms with its past. More people in Turkey than ever before are learning their own history and even apologizing for it.

A surprising number of Turks are learning that in fact they descend from Armenian women who were stolen from their families and Turkified. Many of the hidden or crypto Armenians are openly embracing their Armenian roots, and asking the kinds of questions about their identity that any person naturally would. Kurdish leaders and the Kurdish population have apologized for their role in the Armenian Genocide and many of them are actively seeking to make amends. In the last presidential campaign in Turkey, one candidate, Selahattin Demirtas, actually included Armenian Genocide recognition in his campaign. Honest people in Turkey descended from families who witnessed the massacres and deportations know what happened, and they are being heard.

Among the bravest is a journalist, Hasan Cemal, whose grandfather was one of the three leaders of the World War I Turkish Government responsible for the genocide. Hasan not only apologized for the Armenian Genocide but also published a book in Turkish titled "1915: Armenian Genocide" in honor of his friend, fellow journalist Hrant Dink who was publicly assassinated in Istanbul for working toward reconciliation by a fanatic anti-Armenian nationalist in 2007—a crime that is still unresolved.

Documentation of the Genocide is overwhelming. There are over 30,000 pages in the U.S. archives alone. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau's cables and reports are chilling. He wrote, "Deportation and excesses against peaceful Armenians are increasing and from harrowing reports of eyewitnesses, it appears a campaign of race extermination is underway under pretext of reprisal against rebellion" (July 16, 2015). Consul Leslie Davis reported, "Any doubt that may have been expressed in previous reports as to the Government's intentions in sending away the Armenians have been removed and any hope that may have been expressed as to the possibility of some of them surviving have been destroyed. It has been no secret that the plan was to destroy the Armenian race as a race are legion and consistent." (July 24, 1915).

As scholars look deeper, the record is only reinforced. Recently, the role of another courageous American—Wilfred Post—has been uncovered. Thanks to the work of Dr. Rouben Adalian, we know the photographs taken in 1915 by Dr. Wilfred Post constitute a unique set of pictorial records of the Armenian Genocide, comparable only to those taken by Leslie Davis, U.S. Consul in Harput [Kharpert]. The precise loca-

tion of the pictures can be demonstrated through comparison with other photographs depicting scenes of Konya. The captions provided by Dr. Post leave no room for speculation about the people appearing in them.

It is amply evident from the captions he provided, as well as the supporting eyewitness reports which he personally authored, that decades prior to Raphael Lemkin's crafting of the definition of genocide, Dr. Wilfred Post had grasped the larger scope and nature of the state crime being committed. He intuitively documented the aspects of genocide as ultimately codified in the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. By recording these particular aspects consonant with the definition of genocide, he certified that the Ottoman government was committing the acts listed in the eventual UN Genocide Convention Article 2 definition: "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (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."<sup>1</sup>

The pictures reached the United States because they were delivered to Reverend William Peet, treasurer of the American Bible House in Constantinople, who worked closely with the American Embassy to protect the interests of the American missions and to guarantee the personal safety of the American missionaries once war broke out and relations between the United States and Ottoman Turkey became strained, particularly over the mistreatment of the Armenian population. The pictures were transmitted by Ambassador Henry Morgenthau to the Department of State, through diplomatic pouch, confirming that the ambassador, and his staff, were aware of what happened, and were fully advised of the conditions under which the Armenian people were perishing across the Ottoman Empire. Subsequently, along with Department of State records, Dr. Post's photographs were deposited at the United States National Archives.

Dr. Post, along with Dr. William Dodd, and Miss Emma Cushman, ran the American Hospital in Konya. Along with the educational establishments, the medical facilities created by American missionaries, most associated with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), constituted part of an extensive missionary network grown through the course of a century and guided by professionals, both men and women, who graduated from notable institutions of higher learning in the United States, including Mt. Holyoke, Oberlin, Princeton, Yale, and Harvard.

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Congress chartered the Near East Relief, which also reflects a monumental chapter in U.S. history. Its archives are also compelling.

Exemplary figures in the United States diplomatic service whose conscientious reporting remains a permanent testament to the horrors of the Armenian Genocide include Jesse B. Jackson, U.S. Consul in Aleppo; Leslie A. Davis, U.S. Consul in Harput (Kharpert); Oscar Heizer, U.S. Consul in Trebizond; George Horton, Consul General in Smyrna; and in Constantinople, Gabriel Bie Ravndal, Consul-General, Philip Hoffman, Charge d'Affaires, Abraham I. Elkus, Ambassador, and Henry Morgenthau, Ambassador.

Bowing to pressure on the U.S. record concerning the Genocide is not what these brave people could ever foresee. They were heroes.

We are honored that so many members of the Morgenthau family are in Armenia this week to uphold the honor of the Ambassador's service, including a two year-old Henry Morgenthau. They represent the best of America.

<sup>1</sup> Article 3 of the UN Genocide Convention defines the following crimes that are punishable: (a) Genocide; (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide; (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide; (d) Attempt to commit genocide; (e) Complicity in genocide.

The archives of France, Britain, the Vatican, Russia, Israel, Italy, Austria, Germany, Armenia, and many other holdings also confirm the enormity and truth of the murder of the Armenian nation. The German archives are particularly telling as Germany was Turkey's wartime ally. Other archives include captured Turkish records.

When the facts of the Genocide emerged, on May 24, 1915, France, Great Britain and Russia jointly declared "In view of those new crimes of Turkey against humanity and civilization, the allied governments announce publicly to the Sublime-Porte that they will hold personally responsible [for] these crimes all members of the Ottoman government and those of their agents who are implicated in such massacres." That 1915 use of the term crime against humanity was a breakthrough in international human rights law.

For decades, Turkish officials have sworn they are opening or have opened their archives. This disingenuous claim is a denial tactic aimed at obscuring the truth and avoiding recognition. Putting aside Wikileaks disclosures of diplomatic records confirming the years of obvious culling of the Ottoman Turkish archives, the archives holding all the trial exhibits from the post war Istanbul trials establishing the pre-mediated murder of a nation have never been made available. We know they existed; they were reported in the judicial decisions, and we know they substantiate the charges. We have called for their release for decades now; obviously, the only reason why they have not been released is that they further prove the crime.

In 2015, those who deny the Armenian Genocide have as much credibility as flat earthers. But they are funded and still remain quite dangerous; the consequences of their behavior cost lives.

In 2005, under the guise of a First Amendment case, the last vestiges of deniers filed a federal lawsuit in Massachusetts hoping to undermine the teaching of the Armenian Genocide in public schools by inserting genocide denial literature in the state curriculum. They contrived a ridiculous new term—"contra genocide scholarship"—and demanded their curriculum be included in teaching materials.

In a unanimous 2010 opinion (written by retired Associate Justice of the Supreme Court David Souter, sitting on a three judge panel including Michael Boudin and Jeffery R. Howard) the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts affirmed the decision of the District Court dismissing *Griswold v. Driscoll*. Today, forty four states mandate teaching or recognize the Armenian Genocide, with curricular materials that stand the test and have been vetted by scholars.<sup>2</sup>

Before I go on, I want to observe that we all know President Obama is going to be quoted extensively on the Armenian Genocide this week. The Pope's April 12 statements acknowledged the Armenian Genocide and called on other countries to recognize it. The resolution of the European Parliament, Chancellor Merkel's and the Austrian Parliament's use of the term Armenian Genocide, and the presence of Presidents Hollande of France and Putin of Russia with some 60 foreign delegations at the centennial commemorative events in Armenia this week places the U.S. record into sharp focus.

In the coming days, we will read many times the 2008 Barack Obama quote that "the Armenian Genocide is not an allegation, a personal opinion, or a point of view, but rather a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming body of historical evidence. The facts are undeniable. An official policy that calls on diplomats to distort the historical facts is an untenable policy. . . America deserves a leader who speaks truthfully about the Armenian Genocide and responds forcefully to all genocides. I intend to be that President."

He could not have been more clear on where he stood in 2008. As the rest of the world watches, Americans still anticipate his performance on that promise.

But the other eloquent quote I would ask this Commission and others to consider now reflects the same sentiment we hold toward the entire population of Turkey and Turks around the world—it is from President Obama's first inaugural address in 2009: "we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect. To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist."

<sup>2</sup> The 2012 9th Circuit case *Movsesian, et al. v. Victoria Versicherung AG* shows what happens if a President is not clear and consistent though. There the court did not apply a California state statute allowing payment on genocide era policies because of a mistaken reading of the U.S. record. Thankfully, President Obama's April 24, 2013 Remembrance Day statement corrected that misreading.

Today, the president of Turkey shows no respect. He sows conflict. He blames society's ills on the West. He is destructive. He is clinging to power through deceit. He silences dissent. He is on the wrong side of history in denying the Armenian Genocide, and in many other areas.

Turkey is where our family members' remains are—Armenian civilization goes back over 3,000 years there. The graves of those innocent victims murdered by a genocidal government are unmarked, their homes lost, and their churches and cultural riches ruined. How much would it take for President Erdogan to show real respect for those losses?

Instead, he cynically scheduled the commemoration of the battle of Gallipoli on April 24, outside of its usual date so as to divert countries from participating in the Armenian commemoration. When confronted with the obvious ploy, he criticized Armenians for choosing April 24 to conflict with his artificial commemoration date.

We did not choose April 24, 1915—Erdogan's predecessors ordered the start of the killing on that date. In fact, Armenian commemoration on April 24 after World War I began in Turkey with the permission of more sensitive and respectful authorities than apparently exist there now.

The President of Turkey has again recently threatened to expel Armenians living in Turkey. Last year he stated that it is ugly to be called an Armenian. He conflated Muslim deaths during the war with no relation to Armenians with the deaths of Armenian victims, just as discredited deniers used to do in the early 1990s to claim mutual losses and no victim group.

In the Turkish city of Kars, an artist created a statue in honor of Turkish Armenian Friendship. In 2011, then Prime Minister Erdogan had it torn down. Last month, a court found for the artist and ordered now President Erdogan to pay roughly \$3,800 in damages.

Turkish Nobel Prize laureate Orhan Pamuk has called Article 301 of the Turkish penal code which punishes anti-Turkish statements and has been used against him and others for speaking honestly about the Armenian Genocide, a "secret gun" which is hidden but can be taken out whenever the authorities choose to persecute free speech.

As we gather here today, Turkey is actively aiding Azerbaijan in avoiding compliance with the Conventional Forces in Europe arms limitations, providing military personnel, and working to debilitate Armenia, and wipe out the Armenians living in the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. Despite clear treaty obligations from 1921 requiring Turkey to grant Armenia free access to the Black Sea, Turkey continues to blockade Armenia. Turkey refuses to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia and even though Armenia is a member of the World Trade Organization, Turkey will not engage.

As Armenians have before, we are willing to extend a hand if the fist on the other side is unclenched.

Armenia has had three presidents since its independence in 1991. All three have supported normalizing relations with Turkey without any preconditions. Normalizing does not, however, mean abandoning efforts to gain recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

In 2009, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan took a bold and courageous step with Armenia's signature on Protocols to normalize relations with Turkey. After ratification, those agreements would have established diplomatic relations, reopened the border, and established mechanisms to review multiple issues between the countries, including legal issues that should be resolved.

The Protocols represented a breakthrough as there was no linkage of Turkish-Armenian relations with Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. With Swiss mediation and the foreign ministers of France and Russia as well as the U.S. Secretary of State present, the agreements were signed six years ago. The diplomatic history revealed that Azerbaijan had been briefed in advance and never objected; but after the signing, Azerbaijan vetoed Turkey's keeping its commitments and to this day Turkey has not fulfilled its obligations.

With those facts apparent to everyone who can read, earlier this month, President Erdogan said with no apparent shame that Turkey's "door is still open to Armenia." He also continued to misrepresent that all historical documents are available and called for a commission to study the Genocide.

Considering the record, Armenian President Sargsyan has a good response on the disingenuous commission idea—Turkey seems determined to keep asking for commissions until one finally agrees with its position.

I participated from 2001 to 2004 in the Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) chaired by David L. Phillips who is now at Columbia University. I found it to be one of the most significant endeavors of my life. Our commission was approved by both the Turkish and Armenian governments, and our composition in-

cluded former foreign ministers and seasoned individuals who represented diverse viewpoints. The Armenian side included Andranik Migranyan, Alexander Arzoumanian, and David Hovanissian; the Turkish side included Ilter Turkmen, Ozdem Sanberk, Sadi Erguven, Gunduz Aktan, Ustun Ergruder, and Emin Mahir Balcioglu.

Our initial task was to last one year and come up with joint recommendations to concerned governments if possible. Eventually we used a legal process on the Armenian Genocide facilitated by the International Center of Transitional Justice (ICTJ) with a hearing on the applicability of the UN Genocide Convention to the Armenian experience. In 2003, the resulting legal opinion, commonly referred to as the ICTJ opinion, declared that all the elements of the legal term genocide were established. Ted Sorensen and Alex Borraigne were on the hearing panel, and the matter was decided on facts that were not in dispute.

If the ruling had gone the other way, there is no doubt that deniers would have trumpeted it forever. With that difficult process behind us, however, it is time to move forward and not question the terminology any more.

Chairman Smith, I expect, will remember one of the Turkish TARC members, Ambassador Gunduz Aktan who appeared before your House Subcommittee in 2000 to oppose the Armenian Genocide resolution. He was adamant in his denials and threatened retaliation against the U.S. if the resolution passed. Chairman Smith responded honorably and forcefully in defense of the U.S. He would not succumb to the threats.

Ambassador Aktan (since deceased) could be an infuriating person, and no one would think I or my Armenian colleagues would ever find common ground with him. He was the person who most wanted the ICTJ legal process though, and he participated in the presentation of the Turkish case along with their side's attorneys. (Samantha Power who is currently the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and author of "A Problem from Hell—America and the Age of Genocide" was our first witness, and I will always be grateful to her for that and more.)

Ambassador Aktan was not pleased with the result of the process, but to his everlasting credit, he made sure the opinion was correctly translated into Turkish and published. He did that because he gave his word. Compare that to how Turkey signed the Protocols in 2009, immediately tried to re-write the deal, and never ratified the terms.

The TARC process did a lot more than produce the ICTJ opinion of course, and shows that Armenians are willing to engage with Turks to solve problems. This week, the Project 2015 group has gone to Turkey to meet people and participate in the commemorative events there. Catalyzed by TARC, civil society contacts and initiatives were started that prosper to this day. One of our most useful projects was to ask groups of Armenians and Turks what they wanted from each other and more importantly what they felt the other side wanted from them. The answers surprisingly created more than enough common ground. Eventually, we agreed on joint recommendations to concerned governments and terminated our activities in 2004.

So, we have seen fists unclenching and hands opening. And that needs to continue.

For it to continue productively though, the U.S. cannot stand by the whitewashing of its own record. Reconciliation cannot fully occur without recognition. America does deserve a leader who speaks truthfully about the Armenian Genocide and responds forcefully to all genocides.

During our TARC work, one of our more distinguished counterparts did not like where we were heading at a particular point and told us that Turkey would never act under pressure. He then thought for a moment, and said on the other hand Turkey will never act without pressure either.

That lesson needs to be remembered in Washington and in other capitals. There are people in Turkey who have very much gone out on a limb to help their country come to terms. Whenever the U.S. hedges, it is sawing the limb off and discouraging the next person from advancing. The consequence is the victory of deceit and a greater likelihood of more human rights violations and genocides.

Ironically, in our case it is also a betrayal of some of the most courageous and noble diplomats and public officials to serve the United States. The U.S. was neutral at the beginning of World War I and U.S. diplomats were able to travel in Turkey and at great risk document and photograph the ongoing extermination of the Armenian race and civilization.

After President Reagan issued the 1981 proclamation, the Department of State Bulletin publication featured an article in 1982 by Andrew Corsun which concluded with a "Note." That "Note" stated that because the historical record was ambiguous, the Department of State did not endorse allegations on the Armenian Genocide. The "Note" was eventually retracted, and the Federal Courts in the context of a Freedom

of Information Act case found that U.S. policy historically recognized the Armenian Genocide.

The records released showed that Corsun did not author the “Note,” and in fact the first drafts squarely reflected President Reagan’s views. But some mystery editor rewrote the document and our U.S. history. Congress became more engaged than ever in illuminating these issues since 1982, and we need to express our appreciation for all of those efforts.

But, the success in rewriting the State Department “Note” emboldened the denial industry to believe that history could be rewritten. In turn, the practice of threatening the U.S. and spreading foreign money to rewrite history grew in the 1980s and 1990s.

Of course, the record of successive U.S. Presidents in deferring to pressure is embarrassing and wrong. Whether it changes because the U.S. will no longer be bullied or because the President decides to support the forces of reconciliation and progress may not matter. But any chance for improvement needs a strong U.S. role as this is an instance where leadership is needed. France, Russia, the European Parliament and many other countries did not compromise their principled stances. Russia, for example, has over \$10 billion more in trade with Turkey than the U.S. It has recognized the Genocide. Standing on principle would also enhance the U.S. position in the region in other ways by gaining it a new level of respect and credibility.

This week, another Turkish foreign minister has been in Washington to repeat the same discredited lines about archives and commissions and to make threats if the U.S. respects its own record and uses the G-word. This is the same group that gives a lifeline to ISIL.

In an article reflecting on the current situation published this week, TARC chairman Phillips wrote: “President Obama referred to the Genocide as ‘Meds Yeghern’ in the Armenian language. Obama says ‘my personal views are well-known.’ However, the President of the United States is not entitled to a personal opinion. He should say ‘Genocide’ in this year’s Presidential Statement on Remembrance Day. Doing so would catalyze greater discussion in Turkish society. It would put the United States on the right side of history. Genocide recognition is also a legacy issue for Barack Obama.”

I will conclude with another anecdote. We had another memorable commission moment when one of our Turkish colleagues sincerely complained that we made them feel terrible by accusing Turks of genocide. Former Armenian Foreign Minister Arzoumanian looked up and responded “how do you think it makes us feel to have been actually genocided?” That exchange helped, and we need more of them if we are to see justice and restore balance to the lands where our families lie in those unmarked graves.

We understand that no one likes to be branded as a criminal—and we are not painting an entire race with that brush at all. We know that there were courageous Turks who saved Armenians—like many, my father’s family was saved that way. At the same time, like most, my maternal grandmother’s entire family was massacred, and as a young girl she was made a slave. My story or something close can be repeated by almost all Armenians.

We think it is fair that Lemkin’s word be respected, that our inspiring U.S. history be upheld, that treaties be applied, that risk takers for good not be cut off at the knees, and that efforts toward reconciliation and justice continue based on reality not fiction.

The lawyer Raphael Lemkin famously asked “Why is the killing of a million a lesser crime than the killing of a single individual?”

The philosopher George Santayana provided a fitting response: “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

Thank you again for holding this hearing, and allowing us to give voice to those who cannot speak. I am sure they are watching, as we remember.

Van Z. Krikorian serves as Counselor and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Armenian Assembly of America ([www.aaainc.org](http://www.aaainc.org)). He began with the organization in 1977, and has served as Chairman of its Board of Directors, and in other positions for over 30 years. He is a trustee of the Armenian Genocide Museum of America ([www.armeniangenocidemuseum.org](http://www.armeniangenocidemuseum.org)) and Chairman of its Building and Operations Committee. He is also on the Board of the Armenian National Institute ([www.armenian-genocide.org](http://www.armenian-genocide.org)), and serves in other community organizations. His testimony is solely as a representative of the Armenian Assembly of America.

Since January 2007, Mr. Krikorian has worked as Chairman and CEO of Global Gold Corporation ([www.globalgoldcorp.com](http://www.globalgoldcorp.com)). He joined the Greenwich, CT based company in 2003. This international gold mining, development and exploration company currently has operations in Chile, Armenia, and Canada. Previously, Mr.



Krikorian was a partner in the New York office of Vedder, Price, Kaufman & Kammholz and until 1998 practiced with Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler. In 2005, he was appointed to the International Council of George Washington University, and he is an Adjunct Professor of Law at Pace University Law School in White Plains, NY.

In private practice, Mr. Krikorian was an international attorney working in project finance, strategic planning, structuring investments, negotiating agreements and resolving disputes for businesses and non-profits operating overseas, primarily in the former Soviet Union, the Middle East and the Caribbean. These projects included energy, transportation, agribusiness, banking, government regulation, trade, and mining.

Mr. Krikorian has also initiated several pieces of human rights legislation, including Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act and the Humanitarian Aid Corridors Act. In the 1993 decision *Krikorian v. Department of State*, the District of Columbia Federal Court of Appeals acknowledged that United States policy historically recognized the Armenian Genocide.

Mr. Krikorian is a founding member of the Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission, which began in 2001 and ended in 2004, and was appointed and served as a member of the U.S. delegation to the Moscow CSCE meetings of 1991 during the first Bush Administration. In 1992, he served as Deputy Representative and Counselor to the United Nations for the newly independent Republic of Armenia.

He is a member of the American Bar Association, the Armenian Bar Association, the New York Bar, the District of Columbia Bar, and the Vermont Bar Association (Professional Responsibility Committee). He is also admitted to practice in the United States Court of International Trade and the United States Tax Court and has been admitted as an Authorized House Counsel in Connecticut.

Mr. Krikorian received his B.A. in 1981 from George Washington University and his J.D. in 1984 from Georgetown University Law Center. Following law school, he was a clerk in the United States Federal Court for the District of Vermont. In the summer of 1980, he studied at the Armenian Seminary in Bikfaya, Lebanon. He resides with his wife, Priscilla, who is also an attorney, and their four children in Rye, New York.

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. ELIZABETH H. PRODROMOU

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Commission,

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the invitation to brief you today on the subject of the ongoing denial of the Armenian Genocide by the government of Turkey. I respectfully request that my written comments, from which I will draw for this testimony, be submitted into the Congressional Record.

Allow me to begin by congratulating the Chair and this Commission for the decision to hold this hearing. As a former Commissioner and Vice Chair of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom and a current member of the Secretary of State's Working Group on Religion and Foreign Policy, I am heartened and encouraged by this Commission's recognition of the critical importance of and need for Turkey's recognition of the Armenian Genocide, as a first step for the possibility of full normalization of Armenia-Turkey relations and as a necessary step in ensuring that justice is realized when it comes to the events of and reconciliation from the Genocide. Given that this Hearing aims to explore "what the United States and other countries can do to help bring about recognition and, eventually, reconciliation," and given that this hearing also takes into account the importance and implications of US recognition of the Armenian Genocide for US-Turkey relations, I will focus my remarks on two points: first, the architecture of genocide denial and the ideology of denialism, because their logic and operation are oftentimes overlooked in terms of the pernicious, insidious, corrosive effects on the kinds of foundational freedoms to which this Commission is committed to protect and uphold and which are enshrined in the Constitution of the United States of America, as well as on our foreign policy commitments to universal values and rights of freedom and equality; and second, I will consider the corrosive, negative effects of genocide denial on Turkey's behavior and the deleterious consequences of Turkey's official policy of genocide denial for US-Turkey relations and for US soft and hard power, values and interests.

Finally, I will conclude with some brief thoughts about what the United States and other countries can do to end Turkey's policy of denialism and, therefore, to facilitate a move towards durable, sustainable Turkish-Armenian reconciliation.

#### **Architecture of Genocide Denial and Logic of Denialism**

There is overwhelming, comprehensive, and incontrovertible evidence, all of which is, in fact, available to this Commission, that demonstrates the Ottoman Turkish government's deliberate intention to systematically exterminate 1.5 million Armenian Christians—as well as, by the way, 1.2–1.5 million Greek and Assyrian Christians—at the start of the 20th century. In short, there was intentionality, there was a plan, and there was implementation of that plan—unfortunately, with tragic efficiency in terms of outcome. Taken together, these three elements constitute Genocide: and there are endless eye witness accounts, including those by survivors and by US officials at the time (US Amb. to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, and US Consul General in Smyrna, George Horton, among them); memoirs and papers of Ottoman Turkish government perpetrators; and a rich corpus of archival, scholarly, and legal research and materials—all of which name the *Meds Yeghern*, the Great Crime, for what it was: the crime of Genocide.

However, an entire industry has arisen, cutting across government and academic and political lobby and media lines, funded by the Turkish state and its supporters, that is premised on the denial of those facts on the ground (for example, see the work of US Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power—*A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*). The denial industry has constructed an architecture of denial and an ideology of denialism that rests on very simply principles and logics: simply, to emphasize ambiguity and lack of clarity, to obfuscate, distort, and politicize, the empirical evidence, towards a simple goal: to create controversy over the veracity of the events that constituted the Armenian Genocide, in order to justify indifference on the part of Turkey, and eventually, to uphold the Turkish government's unrelenting commitment to denial of the Armenian Genocide. The ideology of denialism depends on focusing discussion and actions on the controversy, rather than the event—so that the controversy, and competing historical interpretations, or interpretive differences, are used to delegitimize those who claim that genocide occurred. Furthermore, the ideology of genocide depends on using all manner of tactics—threats, warnings, demands, retribution, punishment—to censor and to silence and to control freedoms of conscience, thought, speech, and the press, so that claims of genocide are eventually defeated by either focus on the controversy or by attrition. Make no mistake: genocide denial is a totalitarian enterprise. And, as Peter Balakian (see, for example, his *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide*

and *America's Response*) has so insightfully and compellingly pointed out, genocide denial is the continuation of genocide; it is what other scholars have called memoricide.

### **Implications for Turkey's Behavior and for US Strategic Interests**

The genocide denial industry has been deployed by Turkey to pressure the United States into not recognizing the Armenian Genocide—to ensure that a Congressional Resolution on the Armenian Genocide is not passed and to ensure that no sitting American President speaks about the Armenian Genocide with the G word. The working premise of the genocide denial approach has long been to warn the United States that recognition would lead to the permanent rupture and disrepair of US-Turkish relations and, therefore, would undermine US strategic interests and geostrategic priorities and the capacity of the Transatlantic Alliance to execute its strategic operations. (e.g.'s: lobbying, campaign financing, ad hominem, closing US out of Incirlik). Furthermore, Turkey has used genocide denial to argue that recognition by the US would undermine forward movement in Turkey's protracted democratization process and weaken what was once referred to as Turkey as a "model for Muslim democracy" by virtue of being a "secular democracy and NATO ally."

In reality, by succumbing to the ideology of denial, US policymakers have actually contributed to the emboldening of a politics of impunity and a culture of intolerance in Turkey's domestic and foreign policy—in other words, to weakening the kinds of values and norms that are intrinsic to any rule-of-law democracy; have impeded those courageous, principled, and determined groups and individuals in civil society inside Turkey who/which have demonstrated a willingness and desire to support recognition of the Armenian Genocide; and in the process, have weakened America's moral authority, its soft power, and ability to protect its strategic interests.

Taking each point in order, it becomes clear that Turkey's success until now in garnering tacit and direct support for genocide denial has exerted measurable, negative effects.

First: concerning the emboldening of the kinds of behaviors associated with violence and intolerance, what do we see? Inside Turkey, we see the near elimination of any Christian presence today (it is worth emphasizing here that genocide includes both the annihilation of peoples and the eradication of culture, and Turkey's treatment of its Christian citizens includes both of these types of practices). Christians in Turkey today comprise less than 1 percent of the total population (approximately 25,000 Assyrian Orthodox, 60,000 Armenian Orthodox/Apostolic, less than 2,000 Greek Orthodox, and an estimated 5,000 combined Roman Catholics and Protestants), and their steady and precipitous decline over the 20th-century history of the Republic of Turkey has been the result of combined policies of violence (pogroms and individual attacks, with direct support and indirect complicity of Turkish state, particularly as perpetrators are not brought to justice), economic disenfranchisement (an arbitrary property rights regime of expropriations, coupled with labor rights restrictions), as well as a policy of systematic destruction of religious sites and/or conversion into mosques (the various Aghia Sophias) and/or conversion into buildings intended for other use (e.g. concert halls); the revival of terms such as *dhimmi* (an Ottoman term referring to non-Muslims, which implied, theoretically, protected status, but in reality, second-class status) and *gavur* (a pejorative ethnic and religious slur used against non-Muslims) is part of this. Indeed, the rise and spread of crude anti-Semitism (including anti-Semitic language by members of the Turkish government, cutting across political party lines, as well as the use of anti-Semitic tropes in state media and by President Erdogan, with reference to Turkey's Jewish citizenry in connection to Israel) has been associated with and consequent to the ideology of denialism and failure to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. Why: because the messaging to Turkey has been that there is no accountability for discursive and practical actions of violence, intolerance, and bigotry. This is critical: acceptance of Turkey's architecture of denial and ideology of denialism has signaled, both symbolically and empirically, that there are no consequences, no penalties, for continuing to complete genocide, through erasing the Christian population and cultural presence from the contemporary landscape of Turkey.

Second: concerning the emboldening similar behaviors in Turkish foreign policy, we see some of the most egregious results of Turkey's success in getting away with genocide denial. Without a doubt, the most chilling case of the consequences of the denialist architecture and logic has been Turkey's unfettered, systematic, and near-complete, religious cleansing in Turkish-occupied Cyprus. There are less than 400, mainly elderly, Christians in Turkish-occupied Cyprus after 41 years of Turkish military occupation in the northern part of the island. Additionally, there is documentation of more than 500 churches, cemeteries, and cultural sites (Greek and Armenian, as well as Maronite and Latin Catholic) and Jewish religious sites and

cemeteries, having been desecrated, demolished, converted into mosques, stables, public toilets, casinos and hotels, and military storage and administration sites. Indeed, in one of the most important Armenian monasteries on the island, the Turkish occupation regime is now permitting Armenian Christians to use that site as a picnic area, but not as a religious site—sandwiches are permitted, but religious worship is forbidden. The message to Turkey when it comes to the ideology of denialism has had clear consequences in their occupation policies in Cyprus: eradication of the Christian presence, by eliminating Christians and by erasing the cultural footprint of Christian presence stretching more than 2,000 years. The US and the European Union have enabled Turkey to continue what amount to genocidal practices in occupied Cyprus, by failing to hold Ankara accountable for its policy of denying the Armenian Genocide, and by signaling to Ankara that the “question of genocide” remains open, emboldening Turkey to continue the same practices in its foreign policy.

Third: Let us consider one of the most critical aspects of the architecture of genocide denial and the ways that it has functioned to support the argument that goes as follows: it is in the US’s strategic interest to support continuing democratization in Turkey and, therefore, to tread lightly regarding the issue of the Armenian Genocide. This argument is, in reality, coded language for US failure to recognize the Armenian Genocide and for Washington’s failure to push Turkey to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. In fact, the genocide denial industry funded by Turkey—in terms of lobbying groups, activist organizations, and networks of engagement with US policymakers—has been effective in convincing US policymakers until now of supporting a proposition (as just outlined) that runs exactly counter to the interest of providing traction for democratization in Turkey. Put simply, genocide denial has impeded and weakened and undermined democratization inside Turkey: some examples will illustrate the dynamic at work. Specifically, there is growing, demonstrated evidence of a willingness by civil society groups, attorneys, media, and intellectuals, inside Turkey to recognize the Armenian Genocide as a necessary step towards sustainable reconciliation inside Turkey and towards Turkey-Armenia normalization. In this regard, civil society is leading in Turkey, and the Turkish state (and this pertains to the current government, and certainly, to previous, self-styled, Kemalist governments) is blocking, disregarding, undermining these democratization currents in civil society, who view discussion and recognition of the Armenian Genocide, and more broadly, cleansing of the country’s Christian communities, as a *sine qua non* for advances in citizenship rights and equality before the law. Indeed, the pervasive rollback in media freedoms (press, social media such as Twitter and Facebook) underway in Turkey during the Erdogan-Davutoglu period, as well as the erosion and violation of speech and conscience freedoms (through a more expansive application of Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, by which “insulting Turkishness” also now includes Islamist blasphemy dimensions and references to the Armenian Genocide) has reached legendary proportions, and is widely reported.

The perpetuation of Armenian Genocide denial inside Turkey—which has resulted in assassinations (Hrant Dink), imprisonment (journalists and human rights attorneys), and media closures—relies on the kind of totalitarian silencing that has had longterm, corrosive and deleterious consequences for Turkish democracy. Again, this dynamic, whereby genocide denial feeds authoritarian and totalitarian discourses and practices that undermine and distort democratization in Turkey, both in civil society and in state institutions, has been a particular problem under this last AKP administration, but make no mistake, this is a phenomenon that is rooted in the previous Kemalist governments. However, in the current case—and with the approaching June 2015 elections and President Erdogan’s objective of obtaining a super-majority that will allow for an amendment to the Turkish constitution in order to move to a muscular, robust presidential system—the stakes associated with continued support for the ideology of denialism, and will have significant consequences for the short- and long-term pathway of Turkish democracy. Simply, aiding and abetting genocide denial has been bad for democratization in Turkey, and will produce ever-worse outcomes for deepening the country’s democratic culture and institutions.

To conclude, in a word, the US, by bowing to Turkish threats and warnings and demands around genocide denial—all framed according to claims that Washington’s recognition of the Armenian Genocide, or use of “the G word” will lead to a rupture in US-Turkey relations and a decline in Turkish democracy—has actually contributed to a paradoxical, and measurably negative, outcome. By emboldening Turkey to ignore US engagement and suggestions about recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the US has messaged Ankara that it has *carte blanche* to violate its international human rights obligations and its NATO obligations (e.g. Turkey’s UN-sanctions busting vis-a-vis Iran; Turkey’s selling of Islamic State oil and providing aid and comfort to IS fighters along the Turkish-Syrian border; Turkish Government

members' use of anti-Semitic provocations vis-a-vis Israel and Turkey's Jewish citizens; and Turkey's religious cleansing of Christians and Christian sites in Turkish-occupied Cyprus, in a manner that is a blueprint for the kinds of atrocities now being committed by IS), and Washington policymakers have also messaged Ankara that there will be no accountability for Turkey when it comes to such violations of international law in the country's foreign and domestic policies.

Taken as a whole, compliance with Turkey's demands and warnings to the US regarding denial of the Armenian Genocide is detrimental to the US' moral authority and soft power in the world (US statements about commitments to international religious freedom, civil and political liberties, and other human rights, are rendered irrelevant, at best, and hypocritical, at worst, in the face of Washington's unwillingness to name the Armenian Genocide, at the least, and more actively, to encourage Turkey to do the same). Furthermore, Turkey's dangerous turn towards authoritarianism and entitlement only accentuates the zero-sum nature of the Euro-American security relationship with Ankara, thereby weakening the capacity of the NATO alliance and further prolonging Turkey's EU membership negotiations.

There is, in short, a moral and strategic imperative for the US to change its position, rejecting pressures from the mechanisms and ideology of Turkey's genocide denial, and embracing unequivocal recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Holding Turkey to international standards and to the expectations of a US partner and NATO ally makes immanent strategic and moral sense: the strength of the bilateral relationship and of the Alliance depends on shared values and interests.

### **Some Concluding Suggestions**

By way of brief conclusion, I offer some suggestions for your consideration, in response to the question of "what the United States and other countries can do to help bring about Turkey's recognition of the Armenian Genocide, gradual reconciliation within Turkish society, and, eventually, Turkey-Armenian normalization and reconciliation"—i.e. the questions put to those of us testifying in this Hearing.

I offer the following concrete suggestions:

1. The US should follow the example of the European Parliament and of Pope Francis, and officially recognize the Armenian Genocide by Ottoman Turkey. Recognition would mean passage of a Congressional Resolution, as well as a White House statement that unequivocally names the *Medz Yeghern* as Genocide.

2. The US should show zero tolerance for Turkey's ideology of denialism as a mechanism for silencing free speech and as a form of memocide. This means, as well, ensuring that issues of the protection of religious freedom according to universal human rights standards should be part of the US's diplomatic dialogue and policy agenda with Ankara, particularly with regard to endangered Christian communities and the increasingly vulnerable Jewish community inside Turkey.

3. The US can take concrete steps to empower and enable civil society groups inside Turkey—whether media groups, human rights organizations, religious freedom groups, and especially, educational dialogue and debate—that expands and protects freedom of speech and conscience, with regard to the Armenian Genocide and the genocide against Christians by Ottoman Turkey, recognizing that strengthening freedoms of speech and conscience inside Turkey will invariably enhance and improve pluralist democracy in Turkey.

4. The US should support the creation of Commissions to catalogue, preserve, restore, and protect Christian religious sites, artifacts, and patrimony in Turkey and Turkish-occupied Cyprus. (The future of Aghia Sophia, the Great Byzantine Orthodox Cathedral of the Holy Wisdom, in Istanbul, will be a bellwether on how Turkey intends to proceed with what, until now, has been deliberate destruction and/or misuse of Christian sites in Turkey). The US should take a principled stand, in line with international law, that holds Turkey accountable for the practice of memocide, or the ongoing practices of genocide, which aim to erase any evidence of the presence of Christians in their lands of origin inside Turkey and Turkish-occupied Cyprus.

5. The US should think innovatively and creatively about how to use the full range of US foreign policy mechanisms—most specifically, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, the International Religious Freedom Office at the State Department, the White House Office of Global Religious Affairs—to encourage Turkey to recognize the Armenian Genocide as the first step to Armenia-Turkey normalization and as a means of democracy-deepening in Turkey.

Thank you, again, to the Chairman and Members of this Commission for holding today's Hearing. Your willingness to encourage the United States to lead on the issue of recognition of the Armenian Genocide is an example that can produce

change and reconciliation, and I thank you for your efforts and commitment. Thank you for your attention.

Dr. Elizabeth H. Prodromou is Visiting Associate Professor of Conflict Resolution at The Fletcher School for Law & Diplomacy (Tufts University), where she teaches in the Program in International Negotiation and Conflict Resolution. She is Co-Chair of the Eastern Mediterranean and Europe Study Group at Harvard University's CES. Before coming to Fletcher, Prodromou served a diplomatic appointment as Vice Chair and Commissioner on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (2004–2012); and since 2011, is a member of the U.S. Secretary of State's Religion & Foreign Policy Working Group, serving on the Subgroup on Religious Freedom, Democracy, and Security in the Middle East and North Africa. Her research deals with issues of religious freedom, democratization, and security threats, with particular focus on comparative religion-political regimes in the Near East and on Transatlantic responses to religious radicalism. Published widely in scholarly and policy journals and international media, she has been involved in research and advisory work for international and non-governmental organizations on religious freedom rights. Her current research focuses on rights of religious minorities under secularist and non-secularist regimes, as well as on strategies of religious institutions to state repression and persecution. She holds a Ph.D. and an S. M. in political science from MIT. She was awarded a Distinguished Service Award by the Tufts University Alumni Association in 2008.

## BIOGRAPHY OF KARINE SHNORHOKIAN

Karine Birazian Shnorhokian was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. Learning first-hand accounts of the Armenian Genocide from her family, she became actively involved educating close to 10,000 students and teachers on this topic. In 2003, she began exhibiting and presenting on genocide at the National Council for the Social Studies—an annual conference attended by thousands of educators in the U.S., and further enhancing this by working to pass legislation in Illinois on teaching genocide in schools in 2005. In 2009, she was selected as a Carl Wilkens Fellow with the Genocide Intervention Network (now I-Act) to engage and respond to ongoing issues facing not only Armenia, but Sudan, Congo, and Burma. Most recently her involvement with the Genocide Education Project, led to the creation of new curriculum on the Near East Relief, and America's response. Shnorhokian graduated in 2004 with a nursing degree from Loyola University of Chicago, and currently works as a nurse manager at Holy Name Medical Center in Teaneck, NJ.

“REMEMBERING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE,” BY VICTOR GAETAN, NATIONAL CATHOLIC REGISTER, APRIL 14, 2015

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis commemorated the centennial of the massacre of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire—“the century’s first genocide” in the Pope’s words—on Sunday with a solemn Mass at St. Peter’s Basilica.

The Holy Father also inscribed St. Gregory of Narek, a 10th-century Armenian monk and mystic poet, as the newest doctor of the universal Church.

By honoring martyrs of the *Medz Yeghern* (Great Crime) together with leaders from the Armenian Apostolic Church and Armenian Catholic Church, the Holy Father highlights reconciliation—even though his actions and words were received negatively by the Turkish government, which recalled its Vatican ambassador in protest after the April 12 commemoration.

“The Holy Father was very involved with the Armenian community in Buenos Aires,” New York-based Apostolic Archbishop Khajag Barsamian told the Register, the day before leaving for Rome. “Armenians across the world appreciate this Mass.”

The tragedy being marked through ecumenical unity, though, is a grotesque example of human brutality that began on April 24, 1915, in Istanbul, when some 200 Armenian elites, ranging from bishops and journalists to poets and politicians, were rounded up, arrested and killed within a few days. Tens of thousands more were liquidated in the following weeks.

In various guises, extermination continued into 1923. Approximately 1.5 million Armenians and 1 million Syriac and Greek Christians were murdered during this period.

A triumvirate of Ottoman leaders (known as the “Three Pashas” from the Young Turks movement), tightly controlling the last vestiges of the 600-year-old empire, ordered the systematic murder, deportation and expropriation of non-Turkish communities.

German historian Michael Hesemann described it last month to Zenit as the “greatest persecution of Christians in history.”

Hesemann based his findings on more than 2,000 pages of unpublished documents he discovered in the Vatican Secret Archives, summarized in the book *Armenian Genocide (Völkermord an den Armeniern)* published in Germany early this year.

#### *Vatican Spontaneity*

Until February, the commemoration on Sunday was scheduled as an Armenian-rite Catholic liturgy celebrated by Catholic Patriarch Nerses Bedros XIX, the spiritual leader of Armenian Catholics, who is based in Beirut, Lebanon.

Armenian Catholics represent less than 10% of the global Armenian population. More than 90% worship in the Oriental Orthodox tradition, which includes the Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopian and Malankara Churches.

The Armenian Apostolic Church is considered one of Christianity’s oldest living faith communities, founded by the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew.

According to Archbishop Barsamian, the Vatican only changed its plan two months ago, based on Pope Francis’ endorsement of a more ecumenical event: “I was in Rome with Cardinal Parolin, Cardinal Sandri and Cardinal Koch as part of the dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox and Catholic Church” sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

“I said, ‘It would be wonderful if [the April 12 Mass] would be a pan-Armenian celebration, with the Holy Father celebrating and all the Armenian *Catholicoi* [Church leaders] present.’ The Holy Father accepted” this idea.

Subsequently, the event took on international significance, with Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan attending, as well.

Armenia was the first nation to adopt Christianity, in 301 A.D., as a result of St. Gregory the Illuminator’s conversion of the king. Today, the population of Armenia is 3 million, while more than 10 million Armenians live across the globe—mainly as a result of the diaspora following the 1915 genocide campaign.

Pope St. John Paul II had a monumental statue of St. Gregory the Illuminator installed in the last empty niche of St. Peter’s Basilica’s exterior walls in 2005, just months before he died.

In fact, the beloved saint traveled to Armenia in 2001 to celebrate its 1,700th anniversary of Christianity.

“Armenians still talk about Pope John Paul II’s visit,” recalled Archbishop Barsamian, a Turkish-born prelate whose family’s life was directly impacted by the genocide—and whose personal story reflects the beautiful mystery of the Holy Spirit, who inspires leaders in unlikely circumstances.



*Imitating Priests*

Khajag Barsamian was born in 1951 in Arapkir, a historical town near the Euphrates River founded by an Armenian king in the 11th century when the area was in the Byzantine Empire.

In 1071, the Ottomans conquered Arapkir, but the Armenian community remained and thrived, eventually building a textile industry there. By 1911, Arapkir's population of 20,000 was split almost evenly between Armenian Christians and Muslims.

With the massacres that began in 1915, virtually the entire Armenian community was murdered or deported. Arapkir's seven Armenian Apostolic churches, one Catholic church and one Protestant church were looted and destroyed.

The Cathedral of the Holy Mother of God, a major 13th-century church that seated 3,000 people, was burned, then repaired and used as a school. In 1957, town leaders used dynamite to blow it up.

Archbishop Barsamian described how the men of Arapkir were taken away in 1915 and shot, including his grandfather.

"My grandmother was three months pregnant, so my father never met his father." Some Turkish friends helped Barsamian's grandmother survive.

Only 35 Armenian families remained in Arapkir when Barsamian was a child.

"Grandmother was very pious. There was no church, but grandmother was praying, teaching us how to pray, reading Bible stories—at home there was church," recalled the archbishop.

"Mother said, when I was a little boy, I imitated the actions of a priest, although there was no church where I could see this. At age 6, we moved to Istanbul, and I started going to daily celebrations, so it seems there was this calling [from God] from childhood," he said.

"Thank God, my parents and the Armenian patriarch in Istanbul supported me," added Archbishop Barsamian, who began religious studies at age 13 and was sent to seminary in Jerusalem at age 16. He was ordained a celibate priest at age 20.

Three years ago, he led a pilgrimage of Armenian-Americans to Armenia and Turkey. It was the first time he had returned to Arapkir: "The Turkish mayor accepted us very warmly, but of the Armenian community, only two Armenian brothers remained," Archbishop Barsamian said.

*Denial*

What makes the entire subject of the Armenian genocide especially tense today is the Turkish government's historical refusal to acknowledge it happened—although the "Three Pashas" who ruled the Ottoman Empire during World War I were court-marshaled and condemned to death in 1919–20, even though they had already fled the country.

When Adolph Hitler asked rhetorically, in August 1939, "Who speaks today of the extermination of the Armenians?" he used indifference about the Armenian tragedy as a rationale for his own genocidal campaigns.

Turkish officials today challenge the overall number of Armenians killed, saying some 500,000 died in violence related to World War I. They defend forced deportations as a necessary wartime strategy.

Ottoman Turkey had entered World War I in 1914, siding with Germany against the Allies, including Russia; most Armenians lived in the eastern provinces, closer to Russia, and Ottoman leadership suspected the Armenians of supporting the Russian enemy on its border.

To this day, there are legal disagreements over Armenia that reveal a deep antagonism between "Turkishness" and the Armenian experience.

Article 301 of the country's penal code makes it a crime to insult the Turkish nation. The law has been used to prosecute people who evoked the Armenian genocide, including Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk in 2006, although charges were eventually dropped.

One of the best-known Armenian journalists in Turkey, Hrant Dink, was also prosecuted under Article 301 in 2006. He got a six-month suspended sentence. A year later, Dink was openly assassinated by a Turkish nationalist in Istanbul.

Last month, the mayor of Ankara, Turkey's capital city, sued a journalist for defamation because the journalist called the mayor "Armenian."

*Positive Signs*

Close observers, however, see positive signs: Some Turkish citizens are increasingly willing to share a sense of guilt that crimes against Armenians occurred. To date, it has been those in mainly pro-Kurdish regions in Turkey's southeastern part who have spoken out.

A few important Armenian churches have been restored—including the 10th-century Holy Cross Cathedral on the island of Akhtamar and the 13th-century St. Giragos Armenian Apostolic Church in Diyarbakir, a church that had been used as a depot for Armenian goods taken from people killed or forced to leave.

In addition, Turks are increasingly interested in discovering Armenian ancestry, rather than concealing it.

A European Jesuit now serving in Turkey, who prefers not to be named, pointed to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's statement in April 2014 offering condolences to the Armenian descendants of those who died, referring to "shared pain" and "events that had inhuman consequences."

The priest considers the president's comments to represent a major change in attitude "that will have a serious impact on public opinion."

Archbishop Barsamian says he sees positive signs in Turkey, as well: "I'm happy today to see an increase in the number of intellectuals who write about it. In bookstores in Istanbul, you find books on the genocide. Sometimes you see historians discussing it. Some speak in favor and some against, but at least it is an open topic."

#### *Primary Sources*

One young scholar of the period is Ügur Ümit Üngör, a Turkish-born historian who grew up in the Netherlands and is a professor at Utrecht University. His award-winning book "The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-50" (Oxford University Press, 2011) is a micro-history of how the Armenian genocide defined the emergence of the modern Turkish state.

He also explores why the Turkish Government continues a "denial policy" to this day.

Üngör explains that the systematic destruction of Armenian churches—for example, dynamiting the cathedral in Arapkir even when the Armenians had already been banished—together with destroying Armenian books and forensic evidence was an attempt to destroy memory itself.

Üngör says the Turkish Government wanted to create the illusion that Armenians did not exist because there's no longer physical evidence of their presence, but, Üngör points out, real people remember.

Working in the Vatican Secret (meaning "private" in Latin) Archives, German historian Michael Hesemann discovered a cache of unpublished documents related to the Armenian genocide providing multiple perspectives on the horrible reality of the event.

For one thing, Hesemann believes the documents demonstrate that the genocide targeted Christians. After the Armenian population, the Turks moved on to exterminate some 1 million Syrian and Greek Christians.

He points out that women who agreed to convert to Islam were allowed to live. They married Muslim men and concealed their identities, but many remained "crypto" Christians.

Hesemann also traces efforts by the Catholic Church, including Pope Benedict XV, to intervene in order to stop the killing.

Meanwhile, President Woodrow Wilson's ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, recommended the U.S. Government not take action vis-a-vis the Ottoman rulers, although he confirmed mass murder.

In July 1915, Morgenthau wrote, "Deportations of and excesses against peaceful Armenians are increasing, and from harrowing reports of eyewitnesses, it appears that a campaign of race extermination is in progress under a pretext of reprisal against rebellion."

He continued, "Protests as well as threats are unavailing and probably incite the Ottoman government to more drastic measures . . . I believe nothing short of factual force, which, obviously, the United States is not in a position to exert, would adequately meet the situation."

#### *History Repeating Itself*

While reading firsthand accounts of the Armenian genocide, Hesemann found the gruesome nature of the crimes hard to believe.

"Honestly, when I originally read the eyewitness reports by Catholic priests, Franciscan and Capuchin fathers and the Armenian Catholic clergy and patriarchate, I feared that they might include some exaggerations. I just could not imagine that such a brutality was possible in the 20th century," the historian shared with the Register by email.

"There were reports of crucifixions and the slaughter of humans 'just like you slaughter a lamb in a religious sacrifice,' as one report states, or soldiers piercing bayonets into the wombs of pregnant women," he added. So many Armenian bodies were thrown into the Euphrates River, it ran red with blood for days.

“Only when I saw reports on the brutality of the Islamic State in northern Iraq and Syria I realized how realistic those [earlier] reports were and that history repeats itself in our times,” wrote Hesemann.

Last November, Islamic radicals blew up a great Armenian church in Deir el-Zor, burning thousands of original records related to the genocide of 1915 and displacing the remains of hundreds of victims who had been entombed in the crypt.

Deir el-Zor was one of the locations where hundreds of thousands of Armenians died of starvation and typhoid after being forced to walk there, from Turkey, on forced death marches.

Hesemann warned, “Now, in our times, again Christians are slaughtered in this very same region. And what do we do to stop those massacres and atrocities? Certainly not enough! Future generations will rightly blame us and make us responsible for every drop of Christian blood spilled there right now.”

To Christians, Archbishop Barsamian urges, “Let’s hope and pray that positive signs grow, because this will help bring reconciliation and peace. Our prayer, our wish, is: Yes we are different, but we have to respect each other, and that is God’s will.”

Victor Gaetan writes from Washington. He is a contributor to Foreign Affairs magazine.



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