Commemorating the Armenian Genocide: The Politics of Memory and National Identity

by

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Abstract

Turkey's long-standing denial of the annihilation of about one million Armenians, between 1915 and 1917, is well documented. Over the past five decades, however, the nation state has come under increasing pressure from a range of internal and external sites, not only to acknowledge these grave historical atrocities, but also to name them as 'genocide' (a term coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944, on the basis of the annihilation of the Armenians and the Holocaust, which has become a cornerstone of international legal language surrounding crimes against humanity). I begin by rehearsing the official denialist state narratives which are in play immediately following the terrible events of 1915-17 and have continued almost unchallenged in the public sphere until the 1990's, when fuelled by tectonic shifts in Turkish politics and a serious crisis of national identity, critical- revisionist strands of history-writing began to challenge the Turkish official narrative. During the past two decades, there has been a proliferation of individual and collective initiatives advocating a coming to memory of the genocide at a wide range of sites: history-writing, the Law, Civic discourses, fiction, and public commemorations, among others. While I trace the longer trajectory of these counter-memories, the major aim of my dissertation is to provide a "thick description" of commemorative events which concentrates on the post-1980 period and documents and analyzes, for the first time, very recent commemorations of the Armenian genocide in Turkey. I suggest that challenges provoked by an ongoing commitment to the denialist ethos resulted in strategies such as a discourse of "shared pain" which unwittingly mute the transformative potential of these commemorations. In the end, they operate in an in-between space of

transgression and containment that reminds us of the immense complexity of the coming to memory of national "difficult pasts".

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There is no genocide without denial. More than that: the essence of genocide is denial. Why? Because those who conceived and carried out the extermination conceived and carried out, by the same token, the elimination of every trace of their act. In the Armenians' case, they succeeded rather well. In this sense, genocide is an absolutely, resolutely modern phenomenon.

Marc Nichanian, "Between Genocide and Catastrophe"

İnkâr olmadan soykırım olmaz. Daha da fazlası: inkâr soykırımın özüdür. Neden? Çünkü yoketmeyi planlayan ve uygulayanlar aynı şekilde eylemlerinin izlerini de ortadan kaldırmayı planlamış ve uygulamışlardır. Ermenilerin vakasında, gayet başarılı olmuşlardır. Bu anlamda, soykırım mutlak ve tereddütsüzce modern bir olgudur.

Marc Nichanian, "Soykırım ve Felaketin Arasında"

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Introduction

I. Statement of the Problem

The history I am trying to trace here is less the journey of positivity implicit in my title, than a promise of what such a forestalled coming to memory might look like.

Turkey's denial of the annihilation of about one million Ottoman Armenians through forced deportations, massacres, and attrition, confiscation and plunder of their belongings and property and their erasure from the history of their homeland is well known in the international arena. It is against this widespread acknowledgment of the genocide that I wanted to chart a multi-faceted and complex dialectic of recognition and denial within Turkey – one forged in a cauldron of passionate debate, so intense, that the genocide came to be known as a "hot memory."¹ How much of the national resistance is strengthened by the very force of the concept "genocide"? What are the implications – epistemological, ethical, and psychoanalytic – of the research interest in memory across a range of disciplines?

The work that I am trying to do is enabled by frameworks that are relatively recent on the academic horizon. Two burgeoning discursive clusters of genocide studies and historiography of memory, which grew up as a response to the civilizational shock posed by the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust, provide the general framework of the dissertation. These already interdisciplinary clusters help me to disentangle complex articulations, contests of meaning, and discursive formations at work in the coming to memory of the Armenian genocide.

¹ Charles S. Maier, "Hot Memory... Cold Memory: On the Political Half-Life of Fascist and Communist Memory," *Transit: Europäische Revue*, no. 22 (2002): 153–65.

I am using the term “discourse” in its Foucauldian sense, where discourse is a historically situated cluster of ways of constituting knowledge through language, institutions, and practices.² Foucault’s approach aimed to historicize these “discursive formations” in order to show their constituted characteristic, rather than taking them for granted, and to demonstrate the relationship between various formations.³ Discursive formations operate through discursive practices that are formed in power and, in return, channel power through subjects and institutions in a centre-less network of relations. These practices include, but are not limited to: constant articulations, makings and unmakings, categorizations, and classifications that sustain regimes of truth, which is to say, what counts as “truth” within given epistemes. These regimes shape the boundaries of permissible practices and statements in a particular historical moment and they are subject to change. Foucault defined subjugated knowledges as “those blocks of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory and which criticism – which obviously draws upon scholarship – has been able to reveal.”⁴ These bodies of knowledge, deemed unfit for meeting the requirements of a specific episteme and hence marginalized, carry the potential to bring back “*a historical knowledge of struggles*.”⁵

The arc of memory work I am tracing here is also a recoverable scene of discursive struggle in which both power and knowledge are implicated. Certainly, the underground knowledge of the genocide by the Armenians themselves is subjugated

² Stuart Hall, “Introduction,” in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage in association with the Open University, 1997), 6.

³ Paul Rabinow, “Introduction,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 4.

⁴ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 82.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

knowledge in the Foucauldian sense. But my story is not a simple one which juxtaposes a strong official history, secured by law as well as taboo, as it circulates throughout Turkish institutions, operating against actors who have worked transgressively to instate a counter- memory of the genocide. An historical understanding of discourse also allows us to read this struggle as often highly compromised as well as contested when subjugated knowledge emerges only to be tamed or co- opted by the dominant regime of truth.

Certainly, the starting point for any understanding of the force of the denialist impulse in Turkey requires us to look more closely at the history and investments of Turkey as a nation state. For that reason, I add to my twin methodological frameworks of genocide studies and the historiography of memory, a third overlapping discourse, that of "Nation". The dark undercurrent of the sustained official and popular denial of the genocide is the fact that the genocide is *the constitutive violence* of the nation and the republic. Genocide is co-terminous with the nation's foundation or, in Fatma Müge Göçek's words, it is "a foundational violence in the constitution of the Turkish republic."⁶ As a result, its disavowal is one of the cornerstones of Turkish national identity.

I approach nation mainly from a cultural constructionist perspective that emphasizes the culturally and historically situated constituted characteristic of nations.⁷ As such, nation is a narrative construct imagined and reproduced in a variety of registers

⁶ Fatma Müge Göçek, *Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present, and Collective Violence against the Armenians, 1789-2009* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 19.

⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991); E. J Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

including the pedagogic and the performative.⁸ Nation is a modern phenomenon and its deep relations with modernization and industrialization constitute its historical location,⁹ but emphasizing the inherent modernity of the nation should not allow us to gloss over its longer historical roots. The emergence of nation and nationalism in non-Western contexts needs to be conceived within the wider context of the coeval and uneven unfolding of modernity,¹⁰ rather than declaring it as a “belated” reflection of the Western original construed as the yardstick of progress.¹¹ This distorted image not only imposes a reductionist perspective on national identity-formation in non-Western context, but also reproduces power asymmetries through discourses of good forms of nationalism and bad ones, which generally follow a civic and ethnic nationalist divide. Historiographies of modernity in non-Western contexts have revealed multi-layered negotiations between cultural forms and identity-formations, including the national one.¹²

In the case of Turkey, which emerged newly-born from the broken shards of the Ottoman Empire, with its concomitant trauma, into a strong new narrative of nation as told by an equally strong leader, identity was palpably at risk should the mirror of nation break. This is an important part of the story I hope to tell in my account of the oscillation back and forth between denial and coming to memory of the Armenian memory, sharply intensified in recent years.

⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation,” in *Nation and Narration* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990).

⁹ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

¹⁰ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

¹¹ Gregory Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). For a critique of temporal hierarchies of modernity, please see Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

¹² Harry D Harootyan, *Overcome by Modernity History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

II. Frameworks of Analysis

Genocide Studies Framework

The term “genocide” is inescapable in confronting the crisis of memory in Turkey regarding the policies that the wartime Ottoman government enacted against the Armenian population of the empire because it crystallizes the deliberately destructive intent of these policies. It helps us conceive the notions of historical responsibility and perpetrator status in the clearest way. The crux of the problem is the deliberate targeting and destruction of Ottoman Armenians by the Ottoman administration, army, and population at large.¹³ The bone of contention about the annihilation of the Armenians has always been the culpability of the dominant group in the perpetration of the genocide. The official denial was never about the refusal to accept Armenian suffering. Instead, the state has argued that the policies against Armenians were justifiable from the Ottoman security perspective and hence, there was no injustice or crime.

The Armenian Genocide created the conditions of possibility of the Turkish Republic as a nation-state with a relatively homogeneous population. Along with the demographic engineering component, the genocide contributed immensely to the foundation of the national economy by transferring Armenian property to Muslims. Ongoing official, semi-official, and popular denial reveals that the genocide, rather than

¹³ Maksudyan’s analysis of cases of self-censorship points in the same direction as the repression of historical knowledge about the policies against the Ottoman Armenians. “The real reason behind repression of freedom of expression on the Armenian massacres of 1915-1916 and for the reluctance to speak about the issue in the public sphere is beyond any terminological annoyance. It is a more serious attempt to silence and repress an actual historical event. What disturbs the state is not merely the word genocide itself, but all other concepts that point to the act of killing people.” Nazan Maksudyan, “Walls of Silence: Translating the Armenian Genocide into Turkish and Self-Censorship,” *Critique* 37, no. 4 (2009): 646. Hence the crux of denial is not necessarily about the name of the events, but rather about the motivations, intentions, actors, and processes that constituted the events themselves.

being a past event, is a “modus vivendi” being perpetrated and reproduced in the present moment. It is the justification and approval of the exterminatory, expropriating, and assimilatory policies the Committee of Union and Progress government put into motion, and the successive governments of the Turkish Republic have since followed this national script.

Raphael Lemkin coined the term “genocide” during the Second World War¹⁴ as a response to the annihilation of the Armenians and in the face of the Holocaust.¹⁵ Hence, the Armenian case was intrinsic to the conception of genocide from the very beginning. “Genocide” entered international law discourses in the second half of the 1940s. Due to the immense destruction of the Holocaust and as a result of Lemkin’s tireless campaign, the international public quickly realized the significance of the term genocide for the present and future. The General Assembly of the United Nations declared genocide a crime under international law in December 1946 and requested preparation of a convention to define, punish, and prevent this crime. It took two years and much heated debate for the UN bodies to finalize the convention text. The compromise definition of genocide was already over-determined and thoroughly politicized. As such, it had serious omissions and ambiguities that hindered its effective mobilization for the prosecution of genocide perpetrators until very recently.

¹⁴ Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944).

¹⁵ Raphael Lemkin, *Raphael Lemkin’s Dossier on the Armenian Genocide : Turkish Massacres of Armenians : (manuscript from Raphael Lemkin’s Collection, American Jewish Historical Society)* (Glendale: Center for Armenian Remembrance, 2008); Dan Eshet, *Totally Unofficial: Raphael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention* (Facing History and Ourselves, 2007); Dominik J. Schaller and Jürgen Zimmerer, *The Origins of Genocide : Raphael Lemkin as a Historian of Mass Violence* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009).

Yet, despite its limitations as a definition of a crime, genocide has slowly become the general framework to come to terms with intentional destruction of specific communities. The Second World War and, more precisely, the Holocaust not only led to immense human and material devastation but also caused an irreversible rupture in ontological, epistemological and ethico-legal discourses. The Holocaust was an ontological shock to Germany and it paved the way for a deep identity crisis that shattered the mirror of the nation. For countries like France, the collaboration with the Nazis in their exterminatory policies posed serious challenges to the national identity and memories of collaboration became a symptomatic “syndrome” in their own right.¹⁶ The destruction of the European Jewry dealt a deep blow to European identity. European, and in a broader sense, Western civilization had an uncanny experience during the Holocaust. The ability of a self-identified “civilized” country like Germany to commit unimaginable human cruelty and extermination in the midst of Europe shattered the self-image and self-identity of the West. Germany’s conduct against its victims was immediately seen as “barbarity,” a level of existence that was believed to be transcended by Western civilization. A familiar but hated social element uncannily returned and destroyed the prevailing myth of a shared European civilization.¹⁷

¹⁶ Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

¹⁷ The immediate popular and scholarly reaction against the Holocaust took the form of marginalization or exteriorisation. The Nazis were labelled as “barbarians,” and their actions were seen as irrational and as edging bestiality, the complete opposite of a civilized world. This othering was necessary for protecting Western identity. However, it was almost impossible to completely exteriorize Germany because it was a fundamental member of the European family. Thus, the Holocaust was explained as a historical accident or aberration, an exception rather than the rule. Subsequently scholars started to relate the Holocaust to the “peculiarities of German history,” to borrow the title of Blackbourn and Eley’s book. Late national unification, powerful rural actors, and militarist culture were all mobilized to explain German peculiarities. Accordingly, as long as the Holocaust could be attributed to these peculiarities the basic tenets of Western civilization, such as progress, could be rehabilitated. For a more nuanced historical

Although there were myriad examples of group extermination in human history, it was the Holocaust which was perceived as creating a rupture in the history of mass violence and murder. The mass extermination of the Jews, along with the murder of the Romani, homosexuals, political dissidents and physically and mentally disabled populations, was seen as an unprecedented event that demanded a new term and new epistemological approaches. The foundation of genocide studies as a field of academic inquiry was laid in the midst of this epistemological and ethico-legal shift. The subsequent development of the field has leaned on interdisciplinary contributions, pushing the boundaries of disciplines such as political science, sociology, psychology, and anthropology, among others.

The Contribution of Genocide Studies to the Study of the Armenian Genocide

“Historians of the late Ottoman Empire and Turkey in the twentieth century have a special responsibility, because we have been part of the fabric that maintained the silence for so long.”¹⁸

The self-critical perspective of Zürcher, quoted above, echoing the late Donald Quataert’s earlier criticism,¹⁹ highlights a serious problem in historiography of the

account of Europe’s tumultuous twentieth century, please see Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (New York: A.A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1999).

¹⁸ Erik Jan Zürcher, “The Role of Historians of Turkey in the Study of Armenian Genocide,” Research Turkey, May 9, 2015, <http://researchturkey.org/the-role-of-historians-of-turkey-in-the-study-of-armenian-genocide/>.

¹⁹ Quataert highlighted Ottomanists’ long reluctance to and self-censorship about the policies against the Ottoman Armenians. He argued that genocide as a politicized term does not contribute to “dispassionate inquiry,” however he underlined that “what happened to the Armenians readily satisfies the U.N. definition of genocide.” Donald Quataert, “The Massacres of Ottoman Armenians and the Writing of Ottoman History,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 37, no. 2 (Autumn 2006): 249–59.

Quataert’s criticism of the Ottoman history-writing and acknowledgment of genocide paved the way for Turkish authorities to force him to resign from his post as chairman of the board of governors of the Institute of Turkish Studies housed at the Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. David Gutman, “Ottoman Historiography and the End of the Genocide Taboo: Writing the

Armenian genocide. Many professional historians of the late Ottoman Empire have been involved in producing denialist narratives, propagating the official thesis on the late Ottoman policies regarding the empire's Armenian population.²⁰ Especially after the late 1970s, taking over the task of sustaining and disseminating official narratives from the retired diplomats, many Ottomanists, in Turkey and abroad, have been instrumental in denying the genocide.²¹ Along with these actively invested historians, those who could have taken a critical distance have long been reluctant to engage with the political violence committed against the Armenians, as well as other subaltern groups, during the late imperial period. On the whole, Ottomanists, a group of highly specialized historians who have mastered the Ottoman language and been trained in Ottoman archival research, have

been complicit, often inadvertently and out of well-founded fear, in accepting the divisions of Ottoman history that excise Armenians from Ottoman state and society, explain away or just avoid the genocide and World War I generally, and steer clear of questions regarding the politics of transition and continuity

Armenian Genocide into Late Ottoman History,” *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 2, no. 1 (2015): 168.

In response to Quataert's forced resignation at the end of 2006, the President of the Middle East Studies Association, Mervat Hatem, penned an open letter to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan criticizing the dismissal of Quataert. The letter supported the view that Ottoman-Turkish scholarship had so far failed to produce academically sound studies. Hatem also highlighted the inherent contradiction between the PM's "recent call to leave the debate regarding the events of 1915 to the independent study and judgment of scholars" and pressure on Quataert to retract his article. Mervat Hatem, "The MESA President Mervat Hatem's Letter to the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan" (MESA, May 27, 2008), <http://mesana.org/pdf/Turkey%200527.pdf>.

²⁰ Fikret Adanır, "Kırım, Soykırım ve Tarihçilik," in *İmparatorluğun Çöküş Döneminde Osmanlı Ermenileri: Bilimsel Sorumluluk ve Demokrasi Sorunları* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 31–42; Oktay Özel, "Arşivler Meselemiz: Siyaset Kurumunun Tarihçiyle Tehlikeli Dansı ve Meşruiyet Kaybı," in *Dün Sancısı: Türkiye'de Geçmiş Algısı ve Akademik Tarihçilik*, Second (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2012), 111–27.

²¹ Fatma Müge Göçek, "Reading Genocide: Turkish Historiography on 1915," in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

between the Ottoman and Republican Turkish states, at the core of which lie questions of culpability for the Armenian Genocide.²²

Amounting to structural self-censorship, which has sustained and perpetuated denialist conventions, the historians' disengagement had profound and negative effects on public discourse about the genocide.²³ The lack of expert interest in the policies, processes and events leading to the extermination of Ottoman Armenians has significantly contributed to the overall silence and ignorance in Turkey regarding the treatment of Armenians.²⁴ The major outcome of this historiographic disengagement was the obliteration of the category of perpetrators in the annihilation of the Ottoman Armenians. Yet, historians were not alone in their complicity. The social sciences and humanities in Turkey have not, until very recently, problematized genocidal policies of the late Ottoman leaders or the willing involvement of ordinary perpetrators.

Partly as a result of the new conceptual and empirical framework offered by Genocide studies, scholars such as Vahakn N. Dadrian, Robert Melson, Donald Bloxham and Raymond Kevorkian began to challenge the silence of scholars in Turkey and abroad.

²² Christine Philliou, "The Armenian Genocide and the Politics of Knowledge," *Jadaliyya*, May 22, 2015, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/21698/the-armenian-genocide-and-the-politics-of-knowledg> [*sic*].

²³ This structural self-censorship is shared by other agents in intellectual and cultural life controlling the flow of historical knowledge, such as editors, translators, and publishers. "The contradictory position of the Armenian massacres of 1915-1916 vis-à-vis the official ideology of political power and 'national history writing' in Turkey leads to processes of self-censorship by translators, editors and publishers who strive to abide by social and contextual norms and not to conflict with predominant ideas in the society." Maksudyan, "Walls of Silence," 636.

²⁴ Ayda Erbal recently argued, "in the past, as in the present, the sustenance of denial has been secured not only by the state's official historians, but also by scholars of Ottoman and Turkish studies as a class in and outside of Turkey." Erbal's argument, which is corroborated with self-reflexive statements of the Ottomanists above, highlights the blurred boundaries between the state and civil society in terms of reproducing the denial. Ayda Erbal, "The Armenian Genocide, AKA the Elephant in the Room," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 04 (November 2015): 785. Gutman also underlined the critical negative impact that the Ottomanists' "silence or outright denial" had on public discourses on the genocide. Gutman, "Ottoman Historiography and the End of the Genocide Taboo."

Nevertheless, in the absence of significant critical studies coming from the Ottoman-Turkish historiography, histories of the Armenian genocide did not engage in strong dialogue with histories of the Ottoman Empire. This lack of dialogue paved the way for the failure of these pioneering accounts to grasp the complexity of the late Ottoman history and inter-ethnic relations.²⁵ However, the state of research began to change when Ottomanists such as Erik Jan Zürcher, Hans-Lukas Kieser and Hilmar Kaiser joined Genocide Studies scholars such as Taner Akçam in using the archives in Turkey and approaching primary materials in these archives from a new perspective with new questions. Critical approaches to historiography in Turkey regarding the extermination of Armenians, voiced by Fatma Müge Göçek, Ronald Grigor Suny, Halil Berktaş, Mete Tunçay and Selim Deringil, have broadened the limits of legitimate scholarly and public discourse regarding the genocidal events. The last decade witnessed not only an increase in the number of studies on Ottoman-Turkish history focusing on inter-ethnic conflict, but also the emergence of more nuanced and sophisticated accounts on the genocide.

Memory Studies Framework

“Is it possible that the antonym of ‘forgetting’ is not ‘remembering’, but *justice*?”
Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*.

Genocide is a limit event, “an event or practice of such magnitude and profound violence that its effects rupture the otherwise normative foundations of legitimacy and so-called civilising tendencies that underlie the constitution of political and moral community.”²⁶ As such, it tears down the social fabric irrevocably, creates a cruel

²⁵ Gutman highlighted some of the historiographic weaknesses in Dadrian and Kevorkian’s works. Gutman, “Ottoman Historiography and the End of the Genocide Taboo,” 172. Donald Quataert, in his review of Bloxham’s work, underlined similar issues.

²⁶ Simone Gigliotti, “Unspeakable Pasts as Limit Events: The Holocaust, Genocide, and the Stolen Generations,” *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 49, no. 2 (June 1, 2003): 164.

inequality of power, and ensures the dominance of a specific ethno-religious group over other(s). The post-genocidal political regime, social order, and economic relations bears deep marks of genocidal policies. The way the genocidal past is remembered in the aftermath of annihilation legitimizes a specific relationship with that past. The naming of the events, the frames used to interpret them, and the assignment of responsibilities related to them, all determine how a society lives in the present and how it will live in the future.²⁷ Unquestionably, the Holocaust's aftermath motivated much research into the realm of memory as ethico-political work and contributed substantially to the development of Memory Studies.²⁸

The mid-1980s witnessed the emergence of a growing scholarly interest in memory, a concept long forgotten since its inception during the early twentieth century in von Hofmannsthal and Halbwachs' works.²⁹ According to Klein, the emergence of Yerushalmi and Nora's works marked the beginning of intellectual and academic focus on memory.³⁰ Since then, memory has come to be one of the central concepts in humanities and some social sciences.³¹ Memory's rise to prominence in these traditionally

²⁷ Herbert Hirsch, *Genocide and the Politics of Memory: Studying Death to Preserve Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 10–23; David E Lorey and William H. Beezley, "Introduction," in *Genocide, Collective Violence, and Popular Memory: The Politics of Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David E Lorey and William H. Beezley (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2002), xi – xxxiii; Dan Stone, "Genocide and Memory," in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. Alexander Laban Hinton (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 102–19; Alexander Laban Hinton and Kevin Lewis O'Neill, *Genocide: Truth, Memory, and Representation* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2009).

²⁸ Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, "The Witness in the Archive: Holocaust Studies/Memory Studies," in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 390–405.

²⁹ Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse," *Representations*, no. 69 (2000): 127.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Susannah Radstone, "Working with Memory: An Introduction," in *Memory and Methodology*, ed. Susannah Radstone (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2000), 1.

bounded disciplines was deeply related to socio-political, cultural, and academic transformations in the post-1980s. Jay Winter lists some of the major reasons behind the expansion of memory discourses in this period. First of all, he underlines that the public commemorations of the twentieth century, starting from the First World War and extending to the Second World War and the Holocaust, have motivated reflections on memory. The second factor is the rise of identity politics and its relevance to memory discourses. Here collective memory becomes an instrument of belonging that confers political and cultural identity. Another crucial factor was the revaluation of the category of witness and witnessing in current historical consciousness. The third factor is the affinity between family histories and history in general, especially in terms of situating the memories of older generations into the bigger historical narratives of the century. The last factor explaining the “memory boom” is the “cultural turn” in the discipline of history.³² An umbrella term devised to cover a whole set of new historical sensitivities and methods, the cultural turn in historical studies was based on a critique of existing scientific and positivist tendencies in the discipline and a shift towards a new interest in the narrative construction of history on the one hand and identity as a new category of interest.

As many historians and memory scholars observe, studying memory poses some methodological challenges along with opportunities to explore new fields. One of the

³² Jay Winter, “The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the ‘Memory Boom’ in Contemporary Historical Studies,” *GHI Bulletin*, no. 27 (Fall 2000): para. 59–70, <http://www.ghi-dc.org/files/publications/bulletin/027/b27winterframe.html>. Especially important in this emphasis on culture for historiography was Hayden White’s constructivist intervention that argued that nineteenth-century historians used specific rhetorical strategies and modes of articulation in order to construct the past. This narrative construction included argumentation, emplotment, and ideological tendencies and worked through a variety of modes such as comedy, satire, tragedy, or romance. Hayden V White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

most important challenges is related to conceptualization of memory. Rather than taking collective memory as an antonym of history, it is important to study memory both as a source of information and as a historical phenomenon. However, collapsing the crucial difference between the two is equally problematic. As Le Goff emphasizes, relations between memory and history are complex and multifaceted.³³ Especially important is the constitutive impact of history's self-distancing from living memory, or memory as living tradition, on the emergence of historiography as a critical engagement with the past. As a result of this differentiation and distancing, memory became an object of analysis for historians. Studying memory with its myriad, manifold, and present-oriented representations of the past, for Le Goff, brought forth questions of historical truth. Memories are not transparent, organic and authentic carriers of the past; instead they are subject to various contestations, distortions, and manipulations. However, as Ricoeur reminds us, memory as a form of knowledge of the past is still accountable to historical truth no matter how malleable or open to manipulation it is. In other words, memory, as a mediation, makes truth claims.³⁴ Memory studies would contribute more by focusing on investigating these dynamic relations between memory and truth and their constant negotiations within a particular community. Crucial here is studying the transmission and reception of collective memories that requires understanding the dynamics in which memories are incorporated into collective mental maps governed by a variety of social meanings. As Kansteiner underlines, shared memories reach their most collective moment when they transcend their strict ties with the events' immediacy to "become the

³³ Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

³⁴ Paul Ricoeur, "Memory and Forgetting," in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, ed. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 5–11.

basis of all collective remembering as disembodied, omnipresent, low-intensity memory.”³⁵

Another caveat is needed in terms of using individual memory as a model for collective memory. This conceptual jump undermines the tenets of socio-cultural analysis of memory and writes the individual/subject back into the narrative in a way that obstructs more than it facilitates the understanding of dynamics of memory. A richer and more revealing approach would study the interactions between individual and collective levels of remembering. Keeping in mind what Halbwachs conceived of as the social framework of memory³⁶ and its impact on individual memories is helpful for understanding both affective investments in national identities and shared fantasies that sustain specific narratives on the past.

Convergence of Genocide Studies and Memory Studies

The intersection of Genocide Studies and Memory Studies produced a significant amount of scholarly works and shaped the public discourses on mass political violence in a variety of contexts. Studying memory discourses in relation to genocide requires, first of all, visiting the relations between history and memory as dominant modes of engaging with the past. The relationship between history and memory studies is tense and conflict-ridden. It is possible to discern two main approaches to this relationship. One approach argues for an unproblematic conflation of history and memory.³⁷ Another approach

³⁵ Wulf Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies,” *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (2002): 189.

³⁶ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. Lewis A Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

³⁷ Hirsch, *Genocide and the Politics of Memory : Studying Death to Preserve Life*, 16–22.

situates history and memory in an essentially antagonistic relationship.³⁸ Neither of these positions facilitates our understanding of complex historical events. Memory, however imperfect and open to manipulation, does not undermine historical truth and within a growing body of historical writing, it has become an important object of study in itself.

The turn towards memory in the social sciences is evidence of a challenge to long-held positivist approaches.³⁹ This call for interpretative perspectives is accompanied by re-evaluation of experience as a concept⁴⁰ and it also gives prominence to testimonies, life-story narratives, and oral history as significant forms of knowledge. Additionally, the growth of memory studies raises issues about the role of memory in contemporary culture. For many commentators and survivors of past atrocities, remembering has a pedagogical function. Remembering and bearing witness are perceived as an ethical duty towards victims of mass violence and murder in order that these victims and their memories should not be forgotten.⁴¹ Even more importantly, testimonies of survivors and witnesses are conceived to be one of the most powerful forms of struggle against

³⁸ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations*, no. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring 1989): 8–10. For a response to Nora's somewhat nostalgic assessment of memory and history, please see Berel Lang, "Introduction: Between History and Memory," in *The Future of the Holocaust: Between History and Memory* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 1–12. Historians such as Dominick LaCapra are looking for ways to place history and memory in a dynamic dialogue. Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell Univ. Press, 1998).

³⁹ Hirsch formulates one of the most ardent assaults against positivistic perspectives on memory. Hirsch, *Genocide and the Politics of Memory: Studying Death to Preserve Life*, 73–82.

⁴⁰ Joan Wallach Scott's conception of experience in historiography has been an influential source for memory studies, please see Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 773–97.

⁴¹ However, as Felman and Laub assert, the Holocaust and its immense traumatic dimensions caused a crisis in memory and witnessing. Dealing with these traumatic dimensions is a precondition for survivors to bear witness. If the event defies experience and remembrance, how is one supposed to build a narrative of witnessing? For a discussion of this question, please see Dori Laub, "An Event Without A Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York; London: Routledge, 1992), 75–91.

genocide-denial, a phenomenon disturbingly widespread in the present.⁴² In turn, the according of evidential status to witnesses expands the historical archive.⁴³

The deep fissure the genocide causes, and the state of “permanent extermination” established by the denialist ethos, in turn pose serious questions related to the role of memory in coming to terms with the past.⁴⁴ “Coming to terms with the past” has been the English translation of the German term, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (mastering, wrestling into submission of the past), that broadly encapsulates an ethico-psychoanalytic working through the wounds of memory, accepting responsibility for the violence, and finding ways of incorporating collective violence into the historical consciousness of the community. Although it came to be used for a myriad of cases of collective violence, the term has been anchored in the experience of the Holocaust and closely tied to admitting German collective responsibility for the genocide. The concept also has a pedagogical

⁴² Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: The Free Press, 1993); Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992). These works clearly delineate the historical evolution and strategies of Holocaust denial in Europe and North America. On the denial of the Armenian Genocide, please see Richard G Hovannisian, “Denial of the Armenian Genocide in Comparison with the Holocaust Denial,” in *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Richard G Hovannisian (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998).

⁴³ Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 96–144.

⁴⁴ Susanne Buckley-Zistel, “Remembering to Forget: Chosen Amnesia as a Strategy for Local Coexistence in Post-Genocide Rwanda,” *Africa* 76, no. 02 (May 2006): 131–50; Leslie Dwyer, “A Politics of Silences: Violence, Memory, and Treacherous Speech in Post-1965 Bali,” in *Genocide: Truth, Memory, and Representation*, ed. Alexander Laban Hinton and Kevin Lewis O’Neill (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2009), 113–46; Debra Rodman, “Forgotten Guatemala: Genocide, Truth, and Denial in Guatemala’s Oriente,” in *Genocide: Truth, Memory, and Representation*, ed. Alexander Laban Hinton and Kevin Lewis O’Neill (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2009), 193–218; Rachel Hughes, “Nationalism and Memory at the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide Crimes, Phnom Penh, Cambodia,” in *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory*, ed. Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 175–92; Paul Williams, “Witnessing Genocide: Vigilance and Remembrance at Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 18, no. 2 (January 1, 2004): 234–54; Paul B. Miller, “Contested Memories: The Bosnian Genocide in Serb and Muslim Minds,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 3 (September 1, 2006): 311–24.

aspect, for it posits learning from the past as a crucial step toward removing the conditions that made the violence possible in the first instance.⁴⁵ For the purposes of the present research on the memory of the Armenian genocide, the term means more than just remembering the past.⁴⁶ It is a whole set of convictions, strategies and tools

⁴⁵ However, critics such as Adorno criticised the term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* as early as 1959. According to Adorno, *bewältigung* (mastering over) implied a sense of ultimate repression of the Holocaust memory or its externalization from the historical consciousness. Instead, he suggests *Aufarbeitung* (working through or reprocessing) because the latter better represents the components of the memory work Germany needed to undertake. This memory work could be carried out through a “democratic pedagogy” closely connecting with the Enlightenment framework and a “turn toward the subject.” Theodor W. Adorno, “What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?,” in *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986), 125–128. For critical discussions and reviews of the coming to terms with the past discourses in Germany, please see Alf Lüdtke, “‘Coming to Terms with the Past’: Illusions of Remembering, Ways of Forgetting Nazism in West Germany,” *The Journal of Modern History* 65, no. 3 (1993): 542–72; Robert G. Moeller, “What Has ‘Coming to Terms with the Past’ Meant in Post-World War II Germany? From History to Memory to the ‘History of Memory,’” *Central European History* 35, no. 02 (June 2002): 223–56. For a crucial critique of the “mastering the past” perspective, please see Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit (coming to terms with the past) was one of the central issues in the Historians’ Debate (*Historikerstreit*) that took place among German scholars between 1986 and 1989. It was inaugurated by philosopher Jürgen Habermas’s critique of revisionist historians’ Ernst Nolte, Michael Stürmer and Andreas Hillgruber for their neo-conservative normalization of German history through minimizing the role of the Holocaust. Richard Wolin, “Introduction,” in *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians’ Debate*, by Jürgen Habermas, ed. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989). The debate drew a number of historians and social scientists and revealed that coming to terms with the past in West Germany was still a controversial topic. Caroline Sharples, *Postwar Germany and the Holocaust* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016).

⁴⁶ “Coming to terms with the past,” entered into Turkish as *geçmişle hesaplaşma* (settling accounts with the past) or *geçmişle yüzleşme* (facing, confronting, or encountering the past) during the second half of the 2000s. Mithat Sancar published his introductory work presenting the concept of coming to terms with the past in 2007. Mithat Sancar, *Geçmişle Hesaplaşma: Unutma Kültüründen Hatırlama Kültürüne* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2007). In the same year, Bilgi University hosted an international conference on coming to terms with the past. “Hem Geçmişle Hem Gelecekle Yüzleşmek,” *Bianet - Bagimsiz Iletisim Agi*, February 26, 2007, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/92606-hem-gecmisle-hem-gelecekle-yuzlesmek>. Conference proceedings were published by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, which sponsored the conference, later that year. *Geçmişin Yükünden Toplumsal Barış ve Demokrasiye: Geçmişle Hesaplaşma: Neden? Ne Zaman? Nasıl?* (İstanbul: Heinrich Böll Stiftung Derneği Türkiye Temsilciliği, 2007). Influential leftist-left liberal monthly magazine Birikim published two dossiers on the issue in December 2009 and in February 2011. “Birikim Dergisi - No. 248,” December 2009,

established to restore justice for past atrocities, crimes, and injustices. Hence, the ethico-political implications of this memory- work require the current generations, before anything else, to adopt a self-reflexive approach to their own situatedness in this dark history - and to understand it as an ongoing process.

In line with these considerations, the first question concerns the purpose of memory in the aftermath of cases of collective violence such as genocide, for in addition to being a form of knowledge of the past, memory is an action.⁴⁷ This is a nexus which paves the way for the “duty to remember,” which

is an ethico-political problem because it has to do with the construction of the future: that is, the duty to remember consists not only in having a deep concern for the past, but in transmitting the meaning of past events to the next

<http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim/2426/248>; “Birikim Dergisi - No. 262,” February 2011, <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim/2438/262>.

In addition to publications, civil society organizations focusing specifically on coming to terms with the past emerged in the same period. The Association of Confronting the Past and Researching Social Events (*Toplumsal Olayları Araştırma ve Yüzleşme Derneği*) was founded in 2007. “Yüzleşme Derneği Kuruldu,” *Birgun.net*, September 17, 2007, <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/yuzlesme-dernegi-kuruldu-36061.html>. The Center for Truth Justice Memory (*Hafıza Merkezi*) was established in 2011. “About Hafıza Merkezi | Hafıza Merkezi,” accessed May 4, 2016, <http://hakikatadalethafiza.org/en/about-hafiza-merkezi/>. Coming to terms with the past discourses paired most frequently with discourses of human rights and democracy constitute the main thrust behind the coming to memory of the Armenian genocide in Turkey. Recent scholarly seminars and conferences on the topic include: “‘Coming to Terms’ with Gendered Memories of Genocide, War, and Political Repression | Columbia Global Centers,” *Columbia Global Centers*, September 17, 2014, <http://globalcenters.columbia.edu/content/Gendered-Memories>; “Encountering the Past in Turkey: 11-12-13 May 2015,” *London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE): Contemporary Turkish Studies*, May 2015, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/research/ContemporaryTurkishStudies/Encountering-the-Past-in-Turkey.Conference.Paper-Abstracts-and-Speaker&ModeratorBios.LSE.pdf>. For a brief survey of the politics of coming to terms with the past, please see Alev Özkazanç, “Geçmişle Yüzleşme Siyaseti ve Türkiye,” in *Hakikat ve İnsan Hakları*, ed. Özkan Ağtaş and Bişeng Özding (Ankara: Dipnot, 2012).

⁴⁷ Ricoeur discusses three levels of memory: pathological-therapeutic; pragmatic; and ethical-political. The first level deals mostly with psychological or psychoanalytical components of memory with emphasis on some of the central Freudian concepts such as melancholia, repression, and working through. The second level concerns memory’s practical role in building and sustaining individual and group identities. The third level engages with the imperative of remembering. For the purposes of the argument, the present writer focuses on the last level. Ricoeur, “Memory and Forgetting.”

generation. The duty, therefore, is one which concerns the future; it is an imperative directed towards the future, which is exactly the opposite side of the traumatic character of the humiliations and wounds of history. It is a duty, thus, to tell.⁴⁸

This duty to remember genocide victims and survivors as well as perpetrators is a foundational element of every present moment in a post-genocide society. Collective memory necessitates exploring memories and choosing appropriate frames of remembering.⁴⁹ Commemorations (which form a critical component of this dissertation), memorials, museums, art, literature, architecture, truth commissions etc. are all components of such a collective memorialization.

The dialectics of remembering and forgetting, since Nietzsche's foundational analysis,⁵⁰ has been at the center of the understanding of memory in relationship to catastrophic pasts.⁵¹ Constituting a potential "surfeit of memory,"⁵² the oscillation between too much and too little memory has been an important component of memory perspectives in genocidal contexts. In some genocidal cases, relations between remembering and forgetting are much more complicated in terms of building a *modus vivendi* for groups who were involved in the genocide.⁵³ Critical approaches to the "duty to remember" have argued that, in some instances, remembering past atrocities and

⁴⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁹ Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick; London: Transaction Publishers, 1994).

⁵⁰ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957).

⁵¹ Barbara Gabriel, "'Writing against the Ruins': Towards a Postmodern Ethics of Memory," in *Postmodernism and the Ethical Subject*, ed. Suzan Ilcan and Barbara Gabriel (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004).

⁵² Maier's critical take on contemporary "surfeit of memory" has raised serious questions about the politics of public remembering. Charles S. Maier, "A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, Melancholy and Denial," *History and Memory* 5, no. 2 (1993): 136–52. For an engagement with Maier's arguments within the frame of the Holocaust remembrance, please see LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, 13–16.

⁵³ Buckley-Zistel, "Remembering to Forget."

injustices would challenge an existing harmony by polarizing groups⁵⁴ and work paradoxically to consolidate genocide denial. Nevertheless, there is widespread consensus that the act of remembering the victims and survivors of a genocide is an historical and ethico-moral responsibility. Further, memories of certain limit events can act as a foundation for European or even global memory.⁵⁵

The “duty to remember” takes on a different meaning in the context of the Armenian genocide because of the re-victimization produced by Turkish denial for the descendants of victims, as well as for survivors and their own descendants, in turn. Yet, acts of memorialization, in themselves, do not mean much in the face of Turkey’s long-standing denial unless these memory practices have as their goal the establishment of justice.⁵⁶ In turn, foregrounding justice and responsibility introduces categories of crime and guilt, especially in collective contexts. Following Arendt, it is possible to make the case for collective responsibility, if not guilt, in situations of mass violence.⁵⁷ Insisting on an individual-only definition of responsibility and guilt undermines the process of

⁵⁴ Ziya Meral, “A Duty to Remember? Politics and Morality of Remembering Past Atrocities,” *International Political Anthropology* 5, no. 1 (2012): 29–50.

⁵⁵ Tony Judt, “The Past Is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe,” *Daedalus* 121, no. 4 (Fall 1992): 83–118; Tony Judt, “From The House of the Dead: On Modern European Memory,” *The New York Review of Books*, October 6, 2005, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2005/10/06/from-the-house-of-the-dead-on-modern-european-memo/>; Aleida Assmann, “Europe: A Community of Memory? Twentieth Annual Lecture of the GHI, November 16, 2006,” *GHI Bulletin*, no. 40 (Spring 2007): 11–25; Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and memory in the global age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006). For an account on the shaping of the frames of the Holocaust remembrance through visual representation and the impacts these global frames have had on memories of other genocidal cases, please see Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget : Holocaust Memory through the Camera’s Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁵⁶ Aleida Assmann, “To Remember or to Forget: Which Way Out of a Shared History of Violence?,” in *Memory and Political Change*, ed. Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt, Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012), 61.

⁵⁷ Hannah Arendt, “Collective Responsibility,” in *Amor Mundi: Explorations in the Faith and Thought of Hannah Arendt*, ed. James William Bernauer (Dordrecht ; Boston ; Lancaster: M. Nijhoff, 1987), 43–50.

coming to terms with the past. Refuting the categories of crime, guilt and responsibility in contemporary Turkey narrows the horizon of politics and limits the possibilities for transformation.

The Coming-to-Memory of the Armenian Genocide in Turkey since the 1980s

The coming-to-memory of the Armenian genocide marks such a problematic moment of contestation⁵⁸ for Turkey. It is a struggle for truth in which a variety of agents of memory have challenged the official historical narrative and urged the Turkish state to acknowledge and take responsibility for these dark events. At stake is both a description of what happened and how to name it. In this discursive and performative struggle, a series of public commemorations of the Armenian genocide have taken centre stage.

The 1980s witnessed, alongside an aggressive official denialist campaign, the emergence of dissenting voices that are critical of the official narrative on the genocide. These voices, not all of whom recognized the massacres as genocide, have made possible the coming-to-memory of the Armenian genocide. Mobilizing public discourses and discussions about the treatment of Ottoman Armenians, this coming-to-memory of the genocide has coexisted with an aggressive and widespread denialist movement. Nevertheless, Turkey is not the only case where the memory of past atrocities threatened to shatter the nation's mirror.

Vichy France has been read by historians as a locus-classicus of contested history and memory. French historian Henry Rousso, provides a subtle analysis of the problematic of Vichy history in French collective memory. His influential study of Vichy

⁵⁸ Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, "Introduction: Contested Pasts," in *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 1–21.

memory,⁵⁹ with its detailed documentation of contemporary memory contests and France's belated coming to memory of its suppressed collaborationist past, would seem to offer an ideal model for Turkey's longstanding denial of the Armenian genocide. I had assumed, at the start, that my own mapping of the coming to memory of the genocide in Turkey, which mobilizes similar discourses of collective guilt, national trauma, and unfinished memory business, would also follow a similar teleological arc of progress.

Interrelated voices of the state and civil society in the formation of the collective memory of the Armenian genocide were to be the focus of research. A simple dichotomy seemed to explain the politics of memory. On the one hand, there was the official history, propped up by government bureaucracies and supported by a wide range of institutional networks, including the educational sphere which shaped a normative Turkish identity. On the other hand, there seemed to be a growing breach in this. Even though the histories of these two layers of discourse were far from being uniform and static, the distinction between denialists and those who were advocating genocide recognition was pretty obvious; this was the driving assumption. The only matter at hand was to grasp the complexity of this coming-to-memory which could be traced by exploring the horizons of this multiple and dynamic history.

In order to investigate this double structure, it was enough to follow Rousso's model of a culpable nation emerging from a repressed national trauma.⁶⁰ According to Rousso, studying the history of memory in a given social entity means engaging with the historical evolution of various social practices and discourses that have distinct manifestations. These social practices and discourses constitute the field of collective

⁵⁹ Rousso, *The Vichy syndrome*.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

memory where various representations and interpretations of past events are circulated, contested and negotiated. The model for the timelines of coming to memory in a nation that is inflected by a framework of national trauma⁶¹ or what Schivelbusch calls a culture of defeat⁶² remains important.

Using Rousso's "event-oriented" approach to the study of collective memory made sense and still does. This approach focuses on events whose memory survives long after the events themselves and whose influence extends over the whole of society. In

⁶¹ Trauma Studies as an inter-disciplinary cluster in the Humanities was inaugurated by the work of Cathy Caruth in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), though her ontology of the traumatic event is critiqued by Ruth Leys in *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), among others. Also of interest for intersections of trauma and history is Dominick LaCapra *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). More relevant to my own work, however, is the theorization of National Trauma, which introduces complex and new problematics. Insofar as psychoanalysis is historically mapped onto the experience of the individual subject, the concept of national trauma as I mobilize it here, requires a detour through questions of identity formation at the site of nation. This model is implicit, though not fully theorized, in Henry Rousso's figure of the broken mirror to describe France's "Vichy syndrome", a trope which returns us to the phenomenological underpinnings of psychoanalysis (explicit in the work of Jacques Lacan). For a more theorized discussion of national trauma see Barbara Gabriel, "The Unbearable Strangeness of Being: Edgar Reitz's *Heimat* and the Ethics of the Unheimlich" in *Postmodernism and the Ethical Subject*, ed. Suzan Ilcan and Barbara Gabriel (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004) and "The Wounds of Memory: Mavis Gallant's 'Baum, Gabriel (1935-),' National Trauma, and Post-War French Cinema," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, no. 80 (2003): 189–216. A number of recent studies of national trauma lean on Freud's discussion of melancholy and mourning Sigmund Freud. See "Mourning and Melancholia (1917)," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works* (London: Hogarth, 1957), 237–58. In what follows, I discuss both the influential work of the Mitscherlichs for German national trauma as well as the tropes of haunting and unfinished burial, which are widespread in recent discussions of national trauma in Argentina, Chile, and Spain. I have benefitted from Barbara Gabriel's 2008 doctoral seminar on National Trauma, a framework which is especially resonant for the longstanding Turkish denial of the Armenian genocide. For historical accounts which invoke the notion of trauma to account for official denial, see Fatma Müge Göçek, *Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present, and Collective Violence against the Armenians, 1789-2009* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁶² Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003).

dealing with these memories, it is not only crucial to ascertain the facts about such events, but also to comprehend their endurance. Rousso provides a four-part periodization of what he calls the Vichy Syndrome that frames the key events in each period. The first period between 1945 and 1953 is called “Unfinished Mourning.” During this period, France was trying to deal with the immediate aftermath of German occupation. However, this period marks an imperfect or failed coming to terms with the past because it ignored the Vichy regime’s active involvement in the deportation of French Jews and its pervasive anti-Semitism. Rousso’s second period, “Repressed Memory,” marks the period between 1954 and 1971 when, under the leadership of de Gaulle, the new republic sought to repress its collaborationist past and replace it with an aggrandizement myth of resistance. Rousso’s third period, “The Broken Mirror,” marks the years between 1972 and 1980. The aftermath of the spirit of 1968 saw the emergence of new cultural products and sites challenging previous soothing myths and conventions. Especially important in this period was Marcel Ophuls’s *Le Chagrin et la pitié* in 1969 and the translation of Robert Paxton’s work on Vichy France in 1972. In Rousso’s periodization a similar obsession with Vichy France emerged after 1980. In this period, a series of high profile trials of Vichy officials contributed to a renewed sense of the immediacy of the past. De Gaulle’s comforting image of “the real and eternal France” was put in question and wartime experiences of the French Jewry came to populate the realms of memory to an unprecedented degree. It was as if France was trying to atone for itself.

Following Rousso’s model, I have proposed a timeline of the coming-to-memory of the Armenian genocide as a progression from silence to acknowledgment of historical

responsibility. There was no question that the dissertation would always remain unfinished business, as any attempt to write a “history of the present” could only be just that. Gradually, however, this linear narrative of progress began to dissolve as the research analyzed the presiding discourses of this coming-to-memory. A closer look at the actual language and memory practices employed by a variety of civil society agents actively invoking the past atrocities led to more complicated questions. The deconstructive “hermeneutics of suspicion” employed as a result of these new questions problematized the celebratory tone prevalent in civil society regarding this apparent coming-to-memory of the genocide. That framework and stance became critical to my research and analysis as I sought to focus on an important new body of cultural work around memory of the genocide, the public commemorations at often symbolic sites by increasingly well-known actors and collectivities.

The fact that the genocide was inextricably related to an Ottoman inner colonialism which had historically sustained Turkish-Muslim dominance over subaltern groups such as Ottoman Armenians, complicated the terms and grammar of this coming back to memory. The genocide was one of the conditions of possibility of the Turkish Republic and was an episode of constitutive violence for the republic and national identity. This essential role of the genocide for the emergence of national identity and Turkishness as the nexus of racialized domination and hegemony paved the way for official and popular denial, and it continued to shadow the politics of memory in contemporary Turkey. Could it be that some apparently progressive discourses and practices of memory were, in their effects, strategies of containment and authorized

transgression,⁶³ operating, in the end, as safety valves for governments and dominant groups to build legitimacy?

The over-determined field of collective memory in Turkey is polyvalent and multi-faceted. Deep and painful transformations of national identity, ongoing and contested reconfiguration of economic and political actors, and conflicting domestic class and group interests as well as international competition make for a highly unstable political field. The coming-to-memory of the Armenian genocide is shaped, to a great extent, by a political field populated by actors who have been involved in the establishment of the denialist status quo in Turkey.⁶⁴ The interplay of denial and coming-to-memory, hence, is closely tied to political alliances as well as conflicts between these different actors. Also important is the permanence of nationalist and colonialist foundations of socio-political relations that sustain the national front against genocide recognition. In Turkey, ethno-religious identity trumps other forms of identity such as class, and influences public responses to the Armenian genocide. For all of these reasons, arguably, the resistance to coming to memory of the genocide continues to be an intensely fraught corner of national life.

III. Chapter Outlines

My first chapter, “Contemporary Genocide Perspectives on the Armenian Genocide,” will situate the Armenian genocide within the historical discourses of genocide. I begin by tracing the emergence of genocide as a term in international law that was coined in response to both the Armenian genocide and the Second World War

⁶³ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

⁶⁴ Actors who were, to varying degrees, involved in the perpetuation of denial until very recently, now claim to be the most righteous members of the nation. To put it differently, everybody claims innocence where there is none.

Holocaust. I will suggest that the United Nations' Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was a political compromise which had severe limitations and that the international legal system was even more politicized when it came to mobilizing the new framework for the Armenian case.

Genocide developed as a juridical category, but it became much more widely used by scholars across various disciplines, providing a background and context for a post-nationalist historiography of Ottoman and Turkish history that resonated with scholars of the Armenian genocide. Beginning in the 1990's a new generation of Turkish scholars, working in Ottoman archives, joined international genocide scholars to produce highly nuanced accounts of the treatment of the Ottoman Armenians during the late Imperial period.

Yet, post-1980s Turkey also witnessed an intensification of existing official and popular genocide denial as successive governments began to aggressively disseminate an official narrative which sought to justify the genocide. I will trace the historical trajectory of denialist discourses that emerged simultaneously with the genocide, itself, bringing that history up to date with an emphasis on the specific arguments mobilized to make the denialist claims. I want to complicate the dominant narrative on the denial that represents it as one of silence until the decade of the 1970's. Instead, as I will suggest, Turkish public responses to the initiation of the Armenian genocide campaign abroad in 1965 were aggressively vocal in ways that inflicted severe symbolic violence against Armenians living in Turkey.

In the second chapter, "The Coming to Memory of the Armenian Genocide in Turkey since the 1980s," I attempt to chart the historical arc of the coming to memory of

the Armenian genocide in post-1980s Turkey through a historiography of collective memory as it crystallized in certain discourses, events, and cultural products. This attempt at writing a recent history aims primarily to document and provide a "thick description" of the various registers of a coming to memory in Turkey in the public sphere. I argue that the ethico-political engagement with the genocidal past emerged in an unstable political field where critical engagement with history has become an active site of struggle, fought on the terrain of a wider crisis of national identity in Turkey.

The chapter is divided into two sections. First, I outline four political and ethical shifts that made the coming to memory of the genocide possible. The first is the erosion of Kemalist hegemony over collective memory. The second is the increased public interest in inter-ethnic relations and conflicts that paved the way for the emergence of critiques of Turkish ethno-nationalism. The third historical shift is the increased demand for democratization within a human rights framework. The fourth condition of possibility of awakened memory is the international pressure put on Turkey by genocide recognition campaigns abroad, which in turn resonated within the country, itself.

In the second section of this chapter, I survey the breakthrough dates and areas of the coming to memory of the genocide. The first conspicuous area is the emergence of a post-nationalist and post-Kemalist historiography and its dissemination to the wider public through journalists, opinion leaders and activists. The second is represented by those civil society initiatives that a variety of agents of memory undertook in order to re-inscribe the memory of the Armenian genocide in the broader collective memory of the country. The third area which has been important for genocide memory is the field of cultural production (*Anneannem, Torunlar, Sireli Yeğpayrıs- Sevgili Kardeşim!, 100 Yıl*

Önce Türkiye’de Ermeniler, Sarı Gelin-Sarı Gyalin) which has helped to construct Armenians and Armenian culture as a new site of collective memory. The fourth area, more complicated and over-determined than the first three, has been legal prosecutions against public intellectuals challenging or criticizing the official state narrative of the Armenian massacres.

My third chapter, “Commemorating the Armenian Genocide in Turkey,” describes and analyzes a largely undocumented phenomenon that has much to tell us about the contradictions inherent in Turkey's coming to memory of the Armenian genocide. Because these commemorations are the most recent site of struggle for genocide memory in the public sphere they represent new material while foregrounding questions that are as old as the immediate post-genocide era when the first accounting of national responsibility took place.

Though I provide a brief introduction to the background and context of these events since 2005, the emphasis falls on commemorations organized between 2010 and 2013. Because this is the first substantial study of these commemorations in Turkey, I have set out to document and describe the events that took place in full. The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section I introduce the agents of memory organizing the commemorations, namely *İnsan Hakları Derneği İstanbul Şubesi Irkçılığa ve Ayrımcılığa Karşı Komisyon* (The Human Rights Association İstanbul Branch. The Commission Against Racism and Discrimination, İHD) and *İrkçılığa ve Milliyetçiliğe DurDe* (Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism, DurDe). I then provide a general description of the commemorations and outline the frames of remembrance they

produced in print and multimedia materials. Finally, I engage with the significance of the sites chosen by İHD and DurDe to stage their events.

I conclude the dissertation with a critical analysis of the discourses in play in the commemorations, suggesting that they inhabit an uneasy space between transgression and recuperation to dominant narratives. I begin by discussing public responses to the commemorations, articulating their potential for a genuine transformation in the public sphere. Yet, as I shall suggest, a critical analysis of the recurring tropes and discourses of the major commemorations (especially those of the prominent group DurDe) suggests ways in which their transformative potential was muted by strategies of language and performance that evaded Turkey's historic role as perpetrator in the genocides. In place of a framework and rhetoric of justice, they staged an affective drama in which Turks and Armenians were joined in mutual suffering. I conclude with a question as potent as any provisional answer: Were these commemorations an important if imperfect breach in the official narrative or did they accomplish little more than a new kind of "soft denial" in the often agonizingly slow and halting Turkish coming to memory of the Armenian genocide?

Chapter 1 – Contributions of Genocide Perspectives to Contemporary Discourses on the Armenian Genocide and Continued Genocide Denial

I. The Emergence of Genocide in International Law and Its Implications for the Armenian Genocide

The History and Politics of the United Nations Genocide Convention

The General Assembly of United Nations adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (UNGC) in 1948. This followed two years of debates, political negotiations, lobbying efforts and heated discussions, not only about how to prevent future genocides, but also about how to define a new category of crime in international law. The road leading to the adoption of the convention highlights the political priorities of the actors involved in the process as much as it illustrates a very particular example of international law making that is mainly based on the compromise between national sovereignty and international collaboration.

In 1946 the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) passed a resolution (96-I) formally recognizing genocide as a legal problem for the international community that requires a separate definition and a different set of measures for prevention and punishment than crimes against peace and war crimes.¹ According to this resolution,

¹ Raphael Lemkin was an ardent lobbyist and one of the most influential figures playing an important role in passing of this resolution. In fact, before the UNGC was adopted, the term ‘genocide’ was first used by Lemkin in his seminal work *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* where he argued that the Nazis did not fight against the states and the armies but against the peoples transgressing the legitimate boundaries of warfare. In his book, Lemkin suggested the international recognition of genocide as a crime and lobbied towards that aim. His definition has certainly constituted the basis of the future debates until 1948.

religious, political and other groups were extended protection from genocidal attacks by their own and international governments in times of both war and peace.²

In line with this resolution, two committees of the UN Economic and Social Council, first the Ad Hoc Committee and then the Sixth (Legal) Committee, debated the draft prepared by the Secretariat and made amendments in the course of two years.

Finally, on December 9, 1948 the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The UNGC entered into force on January 12, 1951 and is still in force without any amendments since its first ratification.

According to the UNGC's definition:

[G]enocide means 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.³

The definition of “genocide” by the UNGC, like any definition, includes and emphasizes particular dimensions of such a complex phenomenon as much as it excludes many other important aspects of it. The history of drawing the boundary between what is left out and what is embraced in that definition highlights the political priorities of the actors involved as well as compromises in international law making.

² Leo Kuper, *Genocide : Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 23–24.

³ “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 9 December 1948” (The United Nations, December 9, 1948), <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%2078/volume-78-I-1021-English.pdf>. For the full text of the Convention, please see Appendix A

The Political and Legal Context of the UNGC and Emerging Points of Contention

The end of the Second World War marked the starting point of a long-lasting divide in political and ideological reconfiguration of international political regimes as so-called Western liberal democracies and the Communist bloc. Although the UN established itself as a hopeful replacement of League of Nations for providing international peace and security, the immediate aftermath of World War II was still a tense and politically uncertain moment in history.⁴ Hobsbawm called this period between 1947 and 1951 “the most explosive period” in the reconfiguration of power that also covers the period of the adoption of UNGC.⁵ Thus, the political climate of the adoption of the UNGC was far from being clear and free from contention.

One of the most important contention points was the state’s defensive protection of the principles of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Despite the fact that the UN emerged as an ideal for peace and international collaboration, states were in vehement opposition against any interference with their domestic and colonial affairs on any basis. At the end, in such a political climate, when it came to negotiating the definition of ‘genocide’ as an international crime and the adoption of the UNGC for the prevention of it, these two principles have been fundamental for many compromises made.

In the same period that the UNGC was being drafted and debated, the international community was in the process of making other contributions to international law. As an example, crimes against peace and humanity were in the process of being defined in that time as a corollary to the UNGC. The UNGC was particularly important in

⁴ Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Perennial, 2003), 52.

⁵ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 2001), 229.

that legal scheme, as it had been regarded as a response to the Nuremberg Trials.

Although the trials were conducted in accordance with the Charter for the International Military Tribunal and effectively prosecuted Nazi war crimes, they failed to address any Nazi crimes committed before the war. Also, the universal human rights formulation, which was declared a day after the adoption of the UNGC, was also on the UN's agenda. It can easily be said that the period witnessed a very active reformulation of the scope of international law.

In this climate, the draft convention in its journey from committees to the General Assembly witnessed controversies over central aspects of this new criminal category. As Kuper suggests, foremost among the points of contention were “the groups to be protected, the question of intent, the inclusion of cultural genocide, the problem of enforcement and punishment, the extent of destruction which would constitute genocide, and the essential nature of the crime.”⁶ It is important to note that the debates on the various drafts were more like negotiations around the different agendas and expectations of different states from what the convention should achieve.⁷ As the debates unfolded, the major element of this consensus proved to be a compromise on the definition.

Excluded Items from the UNGC

Although there is no easy way to define a complicated phenomenon such as genocide, which changes in its form and function with the historical context and social and political climate, there are at least three crucial aspects of genocide that the compromised UNGC definition falls short of addressing. First is the exclusion of the

⁶ Kuper, *Genocide : Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, 24.

⁷ William Schabas, *Genocide in International Law : The Crime of Crimes* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 134.

political groups from the definition; second, the compromise made on the establishment of the principle of universal jurisdiction and an international body for prosecution of the crime; and finally, the exclusion of cultural genocide as a form of international crime. I will discuss the history of these three aspects with a view to account for the political climate that determined the ultimate definition in the UNGC.

Exclusion of Political Groups

Kuper and Schabas aptly document how a heated debate started following the inclusion of political groups in the Secretariat draft of the UNGC. Experts consulted by the Secretariat during the drafting process had diverging opinions. For example, Lemkin was strictly against the inclusion of political groups on the grounds that “political groups lacked the permanency and specific characteristics of the other groups,” while the other expert, Henri Donnedieu de Vabres, argued that “genocide was an odious crime, regardless of the group which fell victim to it and that the exclusion of political groups might be regarded as justifying genocide in the case of such group.”⁸ Against all the concerns about the support of the states, the inclusion of political groups in the category of protected groups was well received by representatives of states assigned to prepare the draft convention until late 1947. However, in the spring of 1948 the Ad Hoc Committee was seriously divided on the inclusion of political groups on the basis that the inclusion would pave the way for international actions against the interests of nation states by interfering with their domestic affairs. Voiced by countries such as Venezuela, Lebanon, and China, this line of argument implied a deep fault line on the road towards the convention.

⁸ Ibid.

Simultaneous with the Venezuelan concerns, delegates of the USSR, backed by Polish representatives, inaugurated a campaign against the inclusion of political groups among the protected groups category. According to the USSR, using a 'subjective' category like political groups along with the 'objective' categories of race, ethnicity and religion would undermine the 'scientific' use of the term. This distinction between objective and subjective group formations is hardly tenable as numerous studies showed.⁹ One of the arguments made in line with the USSR's claims was the difficulty in identifying the category of "political group." Against the arguments about the impossibility of identifying political groups, the counter-arguments to this exclusion asserted that in many genocidal cases, perpetrators had no difficulty in identifying and persecuting political group members. In addition, it was also stated that "those who committed the crime of genocide might use the pretext of the political opinions of a racial or religious group to persecute and destroy it, without becoming liable to international sanctions."¹⁰ These counter-arguments against the exclusion of political groups were successful in retaining political groups in the draft until late November 1948.

Representing the other side, and the politico-ideological interpretation of history and reductive conception of genocide, the USSR argued for confining the scope of the definition to the acts committed by the Fascist Nazi regime.¹¹ However, the Ad Hoc Committee refuted the Russian argument and maintained that "it would be dangerous to

⁹ For a more detailed discussion of this topic please see subsection "Victims of Genocide" below.

¹⁰ Quoted in Kuper, *Genocide : Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, 28. Furthermore, representatives of the United States, who were supportive of including political and economic groups, gave the example of "the decision of the Allied Control Council to proclaim the abolition of the Nazi Party, and the U.S.S.R. constitution which recognized the organization of the Communist Party as authorized to nominate candidates for the elections, thus proving that the Communist Party was a coherent and perfectly identifiable group." Ibid.

¹¹ Schabas, *Genocide in International Law : The Crime of Crimes*, 135.

create the idea that genocide should only be punished if it were a product of fascism-nazism, and that the Convention was concerned only with that historical accident.”¹² Objections to including political groups were repeatedly put forth by states such as Lebanon, Sweden, Brazil, Peru, Venezuela, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, Iran, Egypt, Belgium, and Uruguay.¹³ Kuper draws attention to the fact that while representatives of these states opposed the idea of including political groups in the convention, they did not deny national protection of political groups provided by national legislation coupled with international instruments of the Human Rights Commission.¹⁴ In addition, as Samantha Power points out, the USSR was afraid that it would encourage interference of other powers on the basis of Stalin’s attempts to terminate the minority groups and political dissidents to the regime.¹⁵

Although the category of “political groups” was kept in the draft until the very last minute, it did not make it to the final draft.¹⁶ As a result of secret compromise reached between the US, which did not have any problem with the inclusion of political groups but wanted the maximum number of states for ratification of the UNGC, and the Latin American states, the UN General Assembly ratified the convention without including the political groups in the definition, mainly as a result of the last minute political manoeuvring.¹⁷ According to Schabas, it was not only the political manoeuvring

¹² Kuper, *Genocide : Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, 27.

¹³ Schabas, *Genocide in International Law : The Crime of Crimes*, 140.

¹⁴ Kuper, *Genocide : Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, 26.

¹⁵ Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 68–69.

¹⁶ Kuper, *Genocide : Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, 29.

¹⁷ Schabas, *Genocide in International Law : The Crime of Crimes*, 139. Against the exclusion of political groups from the definition of genocide, the term “politicide” started to be used among scholars to account for the cases where the main victims were political groups. In the definition of politicide, “the victim groups are defined primarily in terms of their hierarchical position or political opposition to the regime and dominant groups.” Barbara Harff and Ted Robert Gurr,

of Latin American states and fears of the USSR that determined the outcome.¹⁸ The exclusion of ‘political groups’ was more about retaining “an unrestricted freedom to suppress political opposition,”¹⁹ which was a logical conclusion of the national sovereignty principle. This principle was also the reason why the US did not ratify the UNGC until 1988 despite the support it gave for its formulation.²⁰ As Chalk and Jonassohn point out, the international system and the UN were “a club of sovereign states that protects its members from interfering in their sovereign affairs.”²¹

Exclusion of Universal Jurisdiction and International Penal Tribunal

Article V of the Genocide Convention stipulates that “the Contracting Parties undertake to enact, in accordance with their respective Constitutions, the necessary legislation to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention and, in particular, to provide effective penalties for persons guilty of genocide or of any of the other acts enumerated in article III.” In other words, each contracting state is obliged to provide jurisdiction for genocide in domestic criminal law.²² However, state practices on that

“Toward Empirical Theory of Genocides and Politicides: Identification and Measurement of Cases since 1945,” *International Studies Quarterly*. - 323 (1988): 360.

The term politicide has been accepted in the field of genocide studies and popular use, although the distinction between genocide and politicide leads to problematic results in some cases. For a discussion of this point see footnote 7 in Adam Jones, *Genocide : A Comprehensive Introduction* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 321–322.

For example, Manus Midlarsky argues that what Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979 experienced was politicide, but not genocide. He states that “in fact genocidal activity was only a small proportion of the killing and that the vast majority of Cambodians died in a politicide, substantially different in origin from the genocides we have been examining.” Manus I. Midlarsky, *The Killing Trap : Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 309. However, one can make the case that this distinction defeats the purpose of removing limitations of the UNGC.

¹⁸ Schabas, *Genocide in International Law : The Crime of Crimes*, 140.

¹⁹ Kuper, *Genocide : Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, 30.

²⁰ Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 69.

²¹ Frank Robert Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 12.

²² Schabas, *Genocide in International Law : The Crime of Crimes*, 349.

score tend to differ substantially. The UNGC has not clarified specific penalties for the genocidal acts listed in its Article III. This lack of clarification has prevented the convention from being a “self-executing” treaty and led to the need for modification and additional legislation by ratifying states in the aftermath of the ratification.²³ In some cases, like Rwanda, the states that did not undertake necessary modifications and legislation in their own domestic criminal law failed to effectively prosecute genocide perpetrators. Furthermore, the convention has not included proper mechanisms to ensure the enforcement of the obligations of governments to insert genocide as a crime category in their domestic law.

Parallel to Article V, Article VI states that “persons charged with genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be tried by a competent tribunal of the State in the territory of which the act was committed, or by such international penal tribunal as may have jurisdiction with respect to those Contracting Parties which shall have accepted its jurisdiction.” The convention clearly endorsed the territorial basis for criminal jurisdiction and vaguely referred to an international criminal body that may or may not be established in the future upon the acceptance of its jurisdiction by sovereign states.

The main opponents of the universal jurisdiction principles were the US, USSR and France. Unsurprisingly, their opposition was based on the infringement of territorial jurisdiction and of the national sovereignty principle. It is not surprising to see that the U.S. and USSR shared the same view on universal jurisdiction given that the leaders of the newly emerging power blocs knew well that the rules of international politics were in transition. Both parties were in the midst of preparing for a global struggle that would

²³ Ibid., 350.

take place on every platform and instance.²⁴ In the ideology-driven context of the post-World War II world, universal jurisdiction was seen as a risk that no state wanted to take even to prevent and punish genocide. An Egyptian delegate revealed the underlying anxiety that affected all states: “it would be very dangerous if statesmen could be tried by the courts of countries with a political ideology different from that of their own country.”²⁵ The emerging Cold War environment, together with its inherent ideological struggle, led the issue of universal jurisdiction into a deadlock because none of the states wanted to be bound by international provisions with potential interference in their “internal” affairs.

Schabas aptly explains the basic problem with the territorial principle in dealing with genocide cases as follows,

States where the crime took place are unlikely to be willing to proceed, either because the perpetrators remain in power or influence, or perhaps because a post-genocide social and political *modus vivendi* is built upon forgetting the crimes of the past. For this reason, it is often said that universal jurisdiction must be a *sine qua non* if those responsible for genocide are to be brought to book.²⁶

The Cold War context also hindered the establishment of an international penal tribunal that was vaguely referred to in Article VI of the convention.²⁷ Efforts to study the desirability and possibility of establishing an international penal body came to a halt in 1954, not to be resumed until 1989.²⁸ The exclusion of universal jurisdiction and international penal body has long made the convention a political platform rather than an international legal tool to be used for the prevention and punishment of genocide

²⁴ It is important to interpret French delegate’s following warning in this context, “universal jurisdiction might invite expressions of hostility on an international scale.” Ibid., 356.

²⁵ Quoted in Ibid., 358.

²⁶ Ibid., 354.

²⁷ Ibid., 368.

²⁸ Ibid.

perpetrators. The first international tribunal was created for the Former Yugoslavia in 1993 and the second one was created for Rwanda in 1994.²⁹

Exclusion of Cultural Genocide

The first draft of the UNGC included provisions for the category of cultural genocide which included the forcible transfer of children to another human group, forced and systematic exile of individuals representing the culture of a group, the prohibition of the use of the national language even in private intercourse, the systematic destruction of books printed in the national language or of religious works or prohibition of new publications, the systematic destruction of historical or religious monuments or their diversion to alien use, and the destruction or dispersion of documents and objects of historical, artistic or religious value and of objects used in religious worship.³⁰ However, in the end, with the exception of the provision against the forced transfer of children to another group, cultural genocide shared the destiny of exclusion with political groups and universal jurisdiction.

Kuper underlines that in the controversy over cultural genocide, the roles were reversed between the Soviet Bloc and Western democracies. The Soviet Union strongly supported the inclusion of cultural genocide whereas the US, France, Canada, and Sweden strictly opposed it.³¹ Cultural genocide was a burning issue for countries with a history of violent policies towards especially indigenous peoples and immigrants.³²

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 179.

³¹ At the same place, he states that the issue was not so much about excluding cultural groups from the list of protected groups, but about “whether the protection of culture should be extended through the Convention on Genocide or in conventions on human rights and rights of minorities.” Kuper, *Genocide : Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, 31.

³² Schabas, *Genocide in International Law : The Crime of Crimes*, 184.

Among these countries were Sweden, Brazil, New Zealand, South Africa, and Canada.³³

These countries all indicated their opposition to including cultural genocide in the UNGC on the pretext that it is a matter of human rights, although they were aware that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was in the making did not have any reference to cultural rights.³⁴ The exclusion of ‘cultural genocide’ restricted the scope of the definition of genocide to the physical and biological destruction of human groups while perceiving cultural genocide as evidence of a state’s intent to destroy a human group.³⁵ Genocide scholars and activists around the world have long seen elimination of cultural genocide as one of the major inadequacies of the convention. The need for a term to explain cultural genocide led to the emergence of ethnocide. Since the ratification of the UNGC, ethnocide has been gaining currency in scholarly works, activist circles, and international instruments, but international legal platforms and institutions have still not adopted ethnocide.

Long-Term Limitations of the UNGC Definition

Just as there are problems associated with what the UNGC definition did not say, there are also problems with what it said. This section will review different aspects of the UNGC definition that have proven to be long-term limitations in implementation of the principles and understanding of different forms of genocide. By looking at questions of

³³ Schabas particularly documents Canada’s position vis-a-vis cultural genocide. He states that The National Archives of Canada reveal that ‘cultural genocide’ was the single most important issue for the Canadian Government. ‘The Canadian delegation to the seventh session of Economic and Social Council was instructed to support or initiate any move for the deletion of Article III on ‘cultural’ genocide (see document E/794) and, if this move were not successful, it should vote against Article III and, if necessary, against the whole convention. The delegation was instructed that the convention as a whole, less Article III, was acceptable though legislation will naturally be required in Canada to implement the convention.

Footnote 215, *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 188.

intent, techniques and scale of genocide, determination of victimhood and agents of genocide, I will review how the premises and practices of political actors and academic problematics evolve in a dynamic relationship.

Question of Intent

In its Article II, the UNGC refers to intent as “to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such.” In other words, an offender must be proven to have intended to destroy members of these groups, in whole or in part. Many legal commentators including Schabas underline that this definition of intent necessitates “specific intent” or *dolus specialis*.³⁶ Proving specific intent in a courtroom has been a hard task for many penal tribunals prosecuting the offenders. To some extent this difficulty has arisen from practical problems, but to a greater extent the vague and ambiguous definition of the intent in the convention has been the source of the problem.³⁷ It was easy, for example, in the case of the Holocaust to prove the intent of the Nazi perpetrators. Perpetrators repeatedly made their intent clear in their speeches; the whole extermination process was minutely documented; and the vast scale of measures undertaken against victims, the Jews, the Romani people, homosexuals, and political

³⁶ Ibid., 214.

³⁷ Kuper draws attention to the inclusion of the phrase “as such” to replace previously suggested enumeration of the grounds which clarified the motives of the perpetrators. In the previous draft of this article intent and grounds were listed together to specify the nature of the crime, but it led to heated debates and to overcome the impasse “as such” was included as a compromise. Kuper, *Genocide : Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, 33.

However, the inclusion of the term “as such” brought forth an ambiguity and led to legal problems. Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan underscore this ambiguity when they ask, “does ‘as such’ refer to the preceding word ‘group,’ meaning the destruction of people as a communal group, but not necessarily destruction of individual members” or “does ‘as such’ mean destruction of individual members *because of* their membership of the group?” “The Study of Mass Murder and Genocide,” in *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*, ed. Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15–16.

This ambiguity left the task of entangling it to the penal bodies dealing with specific cases of genocide.

dissidents, left no room for denial of guilt. However, in general, governments undertaking genocides rarely make their intent clear, and make specific efforts to destroy evidence revealing the criminal nature of their actions.³⁸

For example, in the midst of popular allegations against the government about the annihilation of the Guayaki (Aché) ethnic group by the government of Paraguay in the mid-1970s, the Defence Minister of Paraguay stated that “although there are victims and victimizer, there is not the third element necessary to establish the crime of genocide – that is, ‘intent’.”³⁹ One other example about the practical difficulty of proving intent is the Turkish government’s long-held defence against the allegations of genocide against the Armenian population. The Turkish state claims that the government intended to pacify an insurgent group which conspired with the Empire’s belligerents in the First World War, leading to “deportation” of the Armenian population as a self-defence policy.

³⁸ In the face of this situation, penal tribunals dealing with genocide perpetrators deduced intent from “the context of the crime, its massive scale, and elements of its perpetration that suggest hatred of the group and a desire for its destruction.” Schabas, *Genocide in International Law : The Crime of Crimes*, 222.

³⁹ Quoted in Kuper, *Genocide : Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, 34. Alex Alvarez uses the same case and same quotation from the Defence Minister to highlight another type of genocidal intent in legal discourse that, he argues, many experts and scholars have not incorporated into their analyses. He argues that “constructive intent includes cases in which the perpetrators did not intend to harm others but should have realized or known that their behaviour made the harm likely.” Seen from this perspective many of the previously contested cases of genocide need to be reinterpreted. Alvarez’s approach to the question of intent adopts a soft or broader interpretation of genocidal intent. In relation to the Paraguay government’s conduct against the Aché, Alvarez maintains that “systematically hunting down and killing members of a group, forcibly removing other members to reservations and then withholding food and medicine, and kidnapping many of their children to raise as slaves outside of the group’s culture clearly results in the destruction of that group of people, even if that result is neither intended nor desired.” Alex Alvarez, *Governments, Citizens, and Genocide: A Comparative and Interdisciplinary Approach* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 52. Measures listed in this statement can be extended to other major cases where native populations of a given territory have been exterminated. Such an understanding of intent leads Ward Churchill to propose “gradations of culpability” similar to “degrees of homicide.” Quoted in footnote 48, Jones, *Genocide : A Comprehensive Introduction*, 35.

Fein underlines, from a sociological point of view, that “the sociological concept of purposeful action is the bridge paralleling the legal concept of intent in the Genocide Convention; this lies between legal guilt (an external judgment) and the perpetrator’s construction of an account or motive (a psychological variable).”⁴⁰ Other scholars, such as Walliman and Dobkowski, argue that it is hard to pinpoint the exact intent in the complex “anonymous and amorphous structural forces.”⁴¹ Other scholars, like Charny, went as far as removing intent completely from their own definition of genocide, proposing that genocide in its generic sense “is the mass killing of substantial numbers of human beings, when not in the course of military action against the military forces of an avowed enemy, under conditions of the essential defencelessness and helplessness of the victims.”⁴²

Techniques and Scale of Genocide

The UNGC embraces a broad and inclusive approach in terms of techniques of genocide in Article II.⁴³ Jones points out a parallel to the vision of the article that “*one*

⁴⁰ Helen Fein, *Genocide : A Sociological Perspective* (London; Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1993), 20.

⁴¹ Isidor Walliman and Michael N Dobkowski, “Introduction,” in *Genocide and the Modern Age: Etiology and Case Studies of Mass Death* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), xvi. In a similar vein, Barta proposed “relations of destruction” to explain the fate of Australian Aborigines. He underlines that “it was not ‘an exclusively good or bad will on either side’ which caused the destruction of the Aborigines but ‘the objective nature of the relationships’ between (white) capitalist wool producers and (black) hunter-gatherers.” Quoted in George J Andreopoulos, “Introduction: The Calculus of Genocide,” in *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 8.

⁴² Israel W. Charny, “Toward a Generic Definition of Genocide,” in *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions*, ed. George J Andreopoulos (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 75.

⁴³ It echoes Lemkin’s understanding of genocidal strategies to culminate in a “plan of different action aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of life of national groups.” Jones, *Genocide : A Comprehensive Introduction*, 13.

For example, Lemkin included measures intended to decrease the birthrate of victim groups in “biological techniques” of genocide. It is also possible to see the forced transfer of offspring of

does not need to kill anyone at all to commit genocide!”⁴⁴ Although the field of genocide studies were divided into two between those prioritizing the role of killing versus those adopting a broader definition that consider other strategies equally, there is a growing agreement in the field that genocide must include mass killing to qualify as a case of genocide.⁴⁵ Kuper, Charny, Chalk and Jonassohn, Katz and Jones are the leading figures in this stream.⁴⁶

Although far from being controversial, in many cases mass killing appeared to be the only motive to have the United Nations take the case seriously. The UN’s decisions to intervene are motivated by a myriad of different political motives rather than adherence to a legal standard. This fact was most obvious in the United Nations’ failure in intervening in Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia. Thus, not only was the definition of genocide compromised by different political agendas, but the practice of intervention was also tainted by similar motives. As politics and state interests will always be the primary factors determining reactions against genocides, growing number of genocide scholars agree upon physical extermination almost as *sine qua non* knowing that genocidal acts

victim groups to other groups in this category. “Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group” clause does not refer to physical annihilation as well.

⁴⁴ Ibid., original emphasis.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁶ Helen Fein can also be included in this group, but her definition has a more nuanced approach where she adds the biological aspect into the picture. She argues that measures calculated to prevent the biological reproduction of a group should also be included in the definition of genocide. Fein, *Genocide : A Sociological Perspective*, 24.

Accordingly, Scott Straus argues that physical killing and other modes of genocide can be categorized as direct and indirect modes of annihilation. Scott Straus, “Contested Meanings and Conflicting Imperatives: A Conceptual Analysis of Genocide,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 3, no. 3 (2001): 364–365.

without mass killing are not considered as serious moral and legal breaches leading to intervention.⁴⁷

Related to the discussions and practical compromises of identifying techniques that constitute genocide, there are also discussions about the scale of genocide. The Convention uses the term “in whole or in part,” but does not specify it further, leading to a totally arbitrary interpretation of victim numbers or portions to define a case as genocide. Kuper’s question has crucial resonance for genocide studies and for international bodies aiming at preventing and punishing genocide. “What number or proportions or sections would constitute *part* within the definition?”⁴⁸ This question implies serious ethical and political considerations that affect the actions of international bodies and agents in the face of genocidal cases. Steven T. Katz argues that “the concept of genocide applies *only* when there is an actualized intent, however successfully carried out, to physically destroy an *entire* group (as such a group is defined by the perpetrators)”⁴⁹ However, general scholarly tendencies confirm the UNGC’s wording “in whole or in part.” Much controversy revolves around cases, like Kosovo in 1999, where the number or proportion of deaths is small in comparison to the immense human extermination scale of the Holocaust, and the UN fails to intervene on the basis of scale.

⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the growing primacy of physical extermination does not limit the inclusion of other genocidal acts that emerge out of recent genocide cases. The major example on this score is the inclusion of rape as a genocidal strategy by the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in 1998. The lack of sexual violence against members of a group in cases of genocide has been an important limitation of the UNGC and through its ruling the ICTR made a major contribution to amend this limitation.

⁴⁸ Kuper, *Genocide : Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, 32.

⁴⁹ Steven T Katz, “On Intentionality,” in *The Holocaust in Historical Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 128–129.

Victims and Agents of Genocide

Although the UNGC definition includes “national, ethnic, religious or racial groups” in its definition for referring to the victims, the lack of clarity in how these groups are constituted and sustained has been a source of debate among scholars. These groups “may be internally constituted and self-identified (that is, more closely approximating groups ‘as such,’ as required by the Genocide Convention).”⁵⁰ Fein’s conception of victim groups offered a more sensitive approach to the dynamics of group formations in societies. She states that “the specification of groups covered should be consistent with our sociological knowledge of both the persistence and construction of group identities in society, the variations in class, ethnic/racial, gender, class/political consciousness and the multiplicity and interaction of peoples’ identities and statuses in daily life.”⁵¹ From a different perspective, Chalk and Jonassohn, who underlined the primacy of the perpetrator’s conception of victim group, made a valuable theoretical contribution to the discussion of victim groups. They defined genocide as “a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that

⁵⁰ Jones, *Genocide : A Comprehensive Introduction*, 19–20.

⁵¹ Fein, *Genocide : A Sociological Perspective*, 24. Alexander Laban Hinton, on the basis of Fein’s conception of victim groups, took further the criticism of the categories in the UNGC and many scholarly works. He notes,

From an anthropological perspective, the reification of concepts such as race and ethnicity (while not surprising, given the historical privileging of perceived biological difference in much Western discourse) is problematic because – like class, caste, political or sexual orientation, and physical and mental disability – the terms reference “imagined communities,” to borrow from Benedict Anderson’s term. Genocides are distinguished by a process of ‘othering’ in which the boundaries of an imagined community are reshaped in such a manner that a previously ‘included’ group (albeit often included only tangentially) is ideologically recast (almost always in dehumanizing rhetoric) as being outside the community, as a threatening and dangerous ‘other’ – whereas racial, political, ethnic, religious, economic, and so on – that must be annihilated.

Alexander Laban Hinton, “The Dark Side of Modernity: Toward an Anthropology of Genocide,” in *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide*, ed. Alexander Laban Hinton (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2002), 6.

group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator.”⁵² This theoretical intervention brought a new perspective that is more open to dynamic relations between victims and perpetrators rather than taking them as fixed social categories. In a similar vein, Jones predicts that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda’s interpretation of victim groups as “any stable and permanent group” will be the norm for future cases.⁵³

In terms of agents of genocide, the majority of scholars focus on states and official authorities. However, the UNGC offers a broader conception of perpetrator in Article IV by stating that agents include “constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.” State-centric approaches are very common as the majority of genocides have been committed by states and state-sanctioned agents. However, the emphasis on state and its agents might undermine the significance of non-official agents of genocide. As a historically relevant case for massive genocidal acts, Jones gives settler colonialism as an example where non-state agents played a dominant role.⁵⁴ Thus, there is need for theoretical room, in genocide definitions, to accommodate extra-state agents’ ability to commit genocide.

The UNGC and the Armenian Genocide: A “Memory Hole”

So far this chapter has traced the history and politics of the “compromise definition” of the UNGC. The central argument is that the Cold War political context and national sovereignty and territorial integrity were the major political factors determining the outcome of genocide definition. Political compromises, first of all, led to the exclusion of three particularly crucial items from the definition of genocide. In addition,

⁵² Chalk and Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, 23.

⁵³ Jones, *Genocide : A Comprehensive Introduction*, 13.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

the lack of specification and ambiguous wording of the convention, aimed at generating consensus and facilitating the ratification, caused further problems for genocide scholars and legal bodies assigned with the task of prosecuting genocide perpetrators. The remainder of the chapter will engage with the implications of the UNGC for the Armenian Genocide and politics of recognition and denial.

Turkey signed the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide on March 23, 1950. Law number 5630 ratified the Convention without any modification. The law is published on the Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey on March 29, 1950.⁵⁵ However, it took Turkey more than half century to create the domestic laws aligned with its commitment to the UNGC. On September 26, 2004, the Turkish Assembly passed law number 5237, known as the new Turkish Penal Code.⁵⁶ Article 76 of the code offered a definition of the crime of genocide based on the UNGC. Nevertheless, the law seriously narrowed the definition by adding the condition that the genocidal acts should be carried out according to a plan in addition to demonstrating special intent.

The Armenian genocide has a complicated relationship with the international law. Long before the establishment of the UNGC, the treatment of Ottoman Armenians at the hand of their own government caused a reworking of possible ways of holding a government or group responsible for war-time crimes. During the early phase of the

⁵⁵ Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, *Milli, Irki, Dini, Kutleleri Kismen Veya Tamamen Imha Sucunun "Genocide" Onlenmesi ve Cezalandirilmesi Hakkindaki Sozlesmeye Turkiye Cumhuriyetinin de Katilmasinin Onanmasina Dair Kanun*, 1950, <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/main.aspx?home=http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/7469.pdf&main=http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/7469.pdf>.

⁵⁶ Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, *Türk Ceza Kanunu*, 2004, <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/main.aspx?home=http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2004/10/20041012.htm/20041012.htm&main=http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2004/10/20041012.htm>.

genocide, the Allied powers – France, England, and Russia – made a joint declaration regarding the Ottoman government’s criminal policies against the Armenians. The declaration reads, “[i]n the presence of these new crimes of Turkey against humanity and civilization, the allied Governments publicly inform the Sublime Porte that they will hold personally responsible for the said crimes all members of the Ottoman Government as well as those of its agents who are found to be involved in such massacres.”⁵⁷ It is generally agreed that this is the first time the formulation of “crimes against humanity” is used in the international law context.⁵⁸ While this formulation became a foundation of future international legal developments, the connection with the Armenian genocide has been obliterated in time as a result of the changing contexts of post-genocide international politics.

The next obscured connection between the UNGC and the Armenian genocide is related to the origin of the term genocide itself. Raphael Lemkin created the term as an umbrella name for a new class of crimes he had been observing unfold. The literature on Lemkin’s work and the emergence of the term reinforces the connection between “genocide” and the Holocaust. This left the Armenian genocide out of the process leading towards the establishment of this key international law concept in the post-WWII context. However, Lemkin’s interest in this new type of crime was closely connected to the massacre of the Armenians.⁵⁹ The failed Allied attempts at prosecuting the perpetrators of atrocities against the Armenians led Lemkin to conceive the necessity to create a new

⁵⁷ Quoted in Schabas, *Genocide in International Law : The Crime of Crimes*, 20.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Also see Aram Kuyumjian, “The Armenian Genocide: International Legal and Political Avenues for Turkey’s Responsibility,” *Revue de Droit* 41, no. 1 (2011): 255.

⁵⁹ Schabas, *Genocide in International Law : The Crime of Crimes*, 30.

international legal tool to deal with mass annihilation of targeted groups.⁶⁰ In 1933, he presented a paper at an international law conference underlining Armenian massacres and Hitler's rise to power. He argued that in order to prevent wholesale exterminations, exemplified in the Armenian case, the international community needed a new law banning and punishing such campaigns.⁶¹ Lemkin's efforts fell on deaf ears until the Holocaust. The experience of the Holocaust created a deep rupture in the European imagination and became the ultimate symbol of crime against humanity. The Holocaust, not surprisingly, dominated the evolution of the UNGC and the Armenian case was left out.

The omission of the Armenian genocide during the establishment of the UNGC set the tone for future developments. The Genocide Convention has not necessarily helped the canonization of the Armenian genocide within the United Nations system. So far none of the United Nations' organs or bodies has recognized the Armenian case as genocide.⁶² This lack of recognition is largely due to the Turkish government's blockade based on its influence in the UN. A major contestation about the Armenian genocide within the UN system was related to the UNGC and the inclusion of the Armenian case within recognized cases that happened during the 1970s. The outcome was, in Leo

⁶⁰ D. J. Schaller and J. Zimmerer, "From the Guest Editors: Raphael Lemkin: The 'Founder of the United Nations' Genocide Convention' as a Historian of Mass Violence," *Journal of Genocide Research* 7, no. 4 (2005): 448.

⁶¹ Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 19–20.

⁶² Kuyumjian, "The Armenian Genocide: International Legal and Political Avenues for Turkey's Responsibility," 295.

Kuper's words, the "pushing of Turkish Genocide down the United Nations memory hole."⁶³

The UN Commission of Human Rights, a part of the Economic and Social Council of the UN, approved a study of the prevention and punishment of genocide in 1971.⁶⁴ The Sub-Commission on the prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities was to prepare this study. The Sub-Commission conferred this task to special rapporteur Nicodème Ruhashyankiko. The rapporteur finished his preliminary report on June 25, 1973.⁶⁵ The Sub-Commission discussed the report in its 26th session in September 1973. This preliminary report's significance in relation to the Armenian genocide was paragraph 30. In the historical survey, Ruhashyankiko provided examples of genocide since the Middle Ages. The paragraph contained the following statement, "passing to the modern era, one may note the existence of relatively full documentation dealing with the massacres of Armenians, which have been described as 'the first case of genocide in the twentieth century'."⁶⁶ Kuper rightly criticized this statement on the grounds that it lacked any assignment of responsibility for the massacres. However, the inclusion of the Armenian genocide, even in this diluted form, was an important step towards formal recognition of the genocide in the UN.

⁶³ Leo Kuper, "The Turkish Genocide Against the Armenians and the United Nations Memory Hole," in *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1981), 219.

⁶⁴ Théo C. Van Boven, "Note concernant la suppression de la référence aux massacres des arméniens dans l'étude sur la prévention et la répression du crime de génocide," in *Le Crime de silence: le génocide des Arméniens*, ed. Gérard Chaliand et al. (Paris: Flammarion, 1984); Schabas, *Genocide in International Law: The Crime of Crimes*, 555; Kuyumjian, "The Armenian Genocide: International Legal and Political Avenues for Turkey's Responsibility," 295–296.

⁶⁵ Nicodème Ruhashyankiko, "The Study of the Question of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Progress Report, UN Doc. E/CN. 4/Sub. 2/L. 583" (The United Nations, 1973).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

The Commission of Human Rights included the report in its agenda for its meeting on March 6, 1974. At this meeting, the Turkish representative challenged the preliminary report, or to be more specific, paragraph 30. Van Boven stated that the Turkish representative had argued that the paragraph distorted historical truth and that it assimilated acts of war to the crime of genocide. The representative also claimed that this paragraph would rekindle hatred. He finally asked for the removal of all historical references, including paragraph 30, from the final version of the report.⁶⁷ The representatives of Pakistan, Italy, Iraq, France, Tunisia, Nigeria, the US, Austria, Iran, and Romania supported the Turkish side. In the end, the Commission decided to convey views voiced in the meeting to the rapporteur.

The issue was discussed once again in September 1975 during the 28th meeting of the Sub-Commission in line with the two new interim reports. The Turkish side reiterated its objections. The final conclusion was to respect the independence of the special rapporteur.⁶⁸ Ruhashyankiko delivered the revised and final version of his report on July 4, 1978.⁶⁹ The report was discussed during the 31st session of the Sub-Commission. This report removed paragraph 30 completely, together with paragraphs 28 and 29, and obliterated references to the Armenian case. The rapporteur's omission received criticism from the majority of the Sub-Commission members and observers.⁷⁰ The omission was

⁶⁷ Van Boven, "Note concernant la suppression de la référence aux massacres des arméniens dans l'étude sur la prévention et la répression du crime de génocide," 290.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 291.

⁶⁹ Nicodème Ruhashyankiko, "The Study of the Question of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Progress Report, UN Doc. UN Doc. E/CN. 4/Sub. 2/ 416" (The United Nations, 1978).

⁷⁰ Schabas, *Genocide in International Law : The Crime of Crimes*, 556.

supported by only one member of the Sub-Commission. Not surprisingly, the Turkish observer seconded this member.⁷¹ Ruhashyankiko replied to the criticism as follows:

We have received voluminous letters concerning the Armenian question. When we commenced the historical part of the survey, we were suggested to treat as many cases as possible. Many members of the Sub-Commission objected to this and only cases not subject to any doubt were included. Concern had been expressed that the study on genocide might be diverted from its intended course and lose its essential purpose. Consequently, it had been decided to retain the massacre of the Jews under Nazism, because that case was known to all and no objections had been raised; but other cases had been omitted, because it was impossible to compile an exhaustive list, because it was important to maintain unity within the international community in regard to genocide, and because in many cases to delve into the past might reopen old wounds which were now healing. That procedure seemed to him to be only logical. He had not abandoned his responsibilities and, if the Sub-Commission considered that the historical chapter of the chapter should include all cases, he suggested that it should take a formal decision to review the chapter and to include, for example, the Armenian case. He would, however, need to have the necessary evidence.⁷²

The Sub-Commission did not take such a decision. Next year there were efforts to reinsert the Armenian genocide reference. During the 35th session of the Commission of Human Rights, in March 1979, representatives from France, Austria, and the U.S. changed their original position in 1974 and supported the inclusion of paragraph 30 in the final report. However, these demands did not lead to a will to revise the report. The final version did not have any reference to the Armenian case.⁷³

This episode of wavering and omission helped the Turkish government to cast doubt on the genocide and to assert that there are two sides to the genocidal history. The

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Nicodème Ruhashyankiko, "E/CN. 4/Sub. 2/SR. 822" (The United Nations, n.d.). Quoted in Van Boven, "Note concernant la suppression de la référence aux massacres des arméniens dans l'étude sur la prévention et la répression du crime de génocide," 292; Kuper, "The Turkish Genocide Against the Armenians and the United Nations Memory Hole," 220. I have translated the first three sentences of the rapporteur's statement as Van Boven quoted it in French. The rest is quoted in Kuper in English.

⁷³ Van Boven, "Note concernant la suppression de la référence aux massacres des arméniens dans l'étude sur la prévention et la répression du crime de génocide," 293.

Turkish side also managed to undermine the credibility of the existing historiographic literature on the genocide and to impose a perverse “document fetishism”. It is also important to note that the Turkish side was successful in rendering silent certain pasts that were deemed dangerous for the present and in promoting silence and forgetting as legitimate options. The rapporteur’s statement that “to delve into the past might reopen old wounds which were now healing” can be read as an evidence of that success. Nevertheless, there is no indication whether Armenians would agree with such a prescription for healing. At this instance, the United Nations denied the recognition of the Armenian case and created a “memory hole”.

In 1982, the Sub-Commission asked for a revision and update of the study. Benjamin Whitaker was assigned as the special rapporteur. His final report, dated July 2, 1985, was accepted by the Sub-Commission in the same year. Whitaker’s report included the Armenian case within legitimate genocide cases in its paragraph 24. His take on the issue was brief, but unequivocal. He also provided the explanation for his inclusion in a footnote. It reads as follows:

At least 1 million, and possibly well over half of the Armenian population, are reliably estimated to have been killed or death-marched by independent authorities and eye-witnesses. This is corroborated by reports in United States, German and British archives and of contemporary diplomats in the Ottoman Empire, including those of its ally Germany. The German Ambassador, Wangenheim, for example, on 7 July 1915 wrote “the government is indeed pursuing its goal of exterminating the Armenian race in the Ottoman Empire” (Wilhelmstrasse archives). Though the successor Turkish Government helped to institute trials of a few of those responsible for the massacres at which they were found guilty, the present official Turkish contention is that genocide did not take place although there were many casualties and dispersals in the fighting, and that all the evidence to the contrary is forged.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Note 13 in Benjamin C. G. Whitaker, “Revised and Updated Report on the Question of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, UN Doc. E/CN. 4/Sub. 2/1985/6” (The United Nations, July 2, 1985), 9, <http://www.preventgenocide.org/prevent/UNdocs/whitaker/>.

The Whitaker report was the closest the United Nations system came to recognizing and canonizing the Armenian genocide.⁷⁵ It was not only unequivocal about the Armenian case, but also critical of the existing status quo and the omissions in the original text of the Convention itself.⁷⁶

Even though the Whitaker report was accepted as is, the Sub-Commission's final report chose to adopt an equivocal statement on the Armenian case.

Turning specifically to the question of the massacre of the Armenians, the view was expressed by various speakers that such massacres indeed constituted genocide, as was well documented by the Ottoman military trials of 1919, eye witness reports and official archives. Objecting to such a view, various participants argued that the Armenian massacre was not adequately documented and that certain evidence had been forged.⁷⁷

The Sub-Commission clearly takes a middle-of-the-road approach regarding the Armenian genocide. The "objective" and "neutral" representation of Whitaker's statement omits his inclusion of the Armenian case. As such it helps the further obliteration of the Armenian case. Since this last contestation there have not been any further attempts at revising and updating the UNGC in a way that would facilitate the Armenian genocide's international recognition in the UN system. As such, Kuper's contention that the UN pushes the Armenian case into a memory hole still holds true.

The already politically compromised definition of genocide in the UNGC was further politicized and manipulated when it came to the Armenian genocide. International legal frameworks and institutions were not instrumental in canonizing the atrocities committed against the Ottoman Armenians as genocide. Even increased international

⁷⁵ Kuyumjian, "The Armenian Genocide: International Legal and Political Avenues for Turkey's Responsibility," 297.

⁷⁶ Schabas, *Genocide in International Law: The Crime of Crimes*, 558.

⁷⁷ C.L.C. Mubanga-Chipoya, "Report of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities on Its Thirty-Eighth Session" (Geneva: The United Nations, August 5, 1985), para. 42, <http://www.armenews.com/IMG/4dd4d8e92.pdf>.

pressure through recognition and affirmation campaigns did not translate into recognition of genocide. Although the Armenians seem to have gained the moral higher ground, international law has not yet reached that level. International ambivalence and wavering attitudes towards the Armenian case paved the way for the perpetuation of the Turkish official denial through justification. In response to this unwillingness to recognize the genocide, there seems to be a move towards categorizing the atrocities as a crime against humanity as it is defined in international law. The outcomes of this shift are yet to be seen.

II. Scholarship on the Armenian Genocide

International legal definitions and processes have had limited impact on efforts to sustain a consistent and unequivocal public opinion and global memory of the Armenian genocide, unlike the Holocaust. However, the adoption of genocide by scholars as a unit of study had a decisive effect on discourses about the extermination of Armenians and on interpretative frameworks. Heightened interest in genocide paved the way for the emergence of sophisticated accounts of the unfolding of the Armenian case. The turning point came when Genocide Studies began to interact with, and force, Ottoman-Turkish history writing to study late Ottoman inter-communal relations. Slowly and painfully a growing number of established Ottomanists started to engage with questions and perspectives presented by genocide scholars. In addition, a new generation of Ottomanists and social scientists focused their dissertation research on various aspects of ethno-religious dynamics and governmental practices regarding the subaltern populations of the empire. Working with important archival sources, exploring previously dismissed bodies of evidence such as Armenian life-stories and testimonies, and engaging with the

body of literature produced by Armenian scholars around the world, this new scholarly impetus shed more light on the late Ottoman context and the genocide itself. Official denial and its scholarly reproduction notwithstanding, critical scholarship has created a consensus on some major aspects of the genocide. Research on some other aspects is still evolving. Nevertheless, at the moment, there is more convergence between approaches to the genocide than contestation. For the purposes of this dissertation, the following brief account on the Armenian Genocide constitutes the baseline. This brief overview is followed by a broader engagement with the literature on the genocide.

The Armenian Genocide: A Brief Overview

The Armenian Genocide refers to the forced deportations, systematic mass killings, and dispossession of the Armenian citizens of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, starting in early 1915. Using the official deportation policy as a disguise for the annihilation of Ottoman Armenians, the core members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) planned and conducted the genocidal policies. Establishing a double-track mechanism of official and unofficial orders and communications, the CUP core led by Talat and Enver Pashas, ministers of Interior and War respectively, mobilized *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* (the Special Organization) to carry out massacres. The Special Organization, relying on members of regular military and civil bureaucracy as well as irregular armed units, undertook empire-wide killings of Armenians. Ordinary people, especially those inhabiting cities with significant Armenian populations and who were living close to deportation routes, took part in dispossessing, abusing and killing Armenians. Mass killings, starvation, dehydration, disease, exposure to extreme weather and sexual violence during the forced deportations claimed the lives of between 800,000

and 1,500,000 Armenians. Along with killings, forced conversions and forced transfer of Armenian women and children to Muslim households with concomitant Islamization, there were other factors that undermined “Armenianness” in the empire. The confiscation and appropriation of Armenian movable and immovable property critically undermined their conditions of existence and was part of the genocidal policies.

A combination of internal and external factors led the CUP to decide to exterminate the Armenians. The majority of Ottoman Armenians were targeted because of the perpetrators’ perception of them rather than because of what they did. Nevertheless, the genocide was a result of historical, contextual, and contingent processes rather than deep-seated ethno-religious hatreds. The conditions of possibility for the genocide were created by transformation of Ottoman inter-communal relations; the changing nature of Ottoman statecraft and rule; shifts in ideological orientations of ruling elites and their communal counterparts; and the empire’s need to negotiate a new space in the imperialist context in the face of growing Western threats; and the outbreak of the First World War.

In February-March 1915, the military authorities disarmed Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman army and later placed them in labour battalions. These soldiers were later killed. Localized deportations of Armenians purportedly for military reasons also began around this time. Nevertheless, the widely agreed upon start date of the Armenian genocide was April 24, 1915. On that date, the Ottoman authorities began arresting the leading members of the Armenian community – intellectuals, politicians, clergy, educators, and businesspeople – in Istanbul. The arrests quickly expanded to other cities and the number of arrestees reached hundreds. The majority of community leaders were

murdered during deportations and imprisonment. Following the annihilation of community leaders, the genocidal process began. The round ups, marches and killings were underway at this point.

In late May the CUP government passed “*Tehcir Kanunu*” (the Deportation Law, or officially the Relocation and Resettlement Law) as the “legal” basis for the forced removal of Armenians. The law gave Ottoman military and civil officials the authority to deport or forcefully “relocate” populations that might threaten national security. The law did not specify which population groups were referred to and it was applied against Armenians and Assyrians, but it was clear that the Armenians were the main target. With this law, the CUP provided a “legal” ground for an already-continuing process. The same retroactivity was true for laws related to “*Emval-i Metruke*” (the Abandoned Properties). When the main law regulating “abandoned” Armenian properties was passed in September 1915, large scale plunders, confiscation and expropriation was already underway.

Deported Armenians were given short notice and did not have enough time to prepare for the deathly trip. They were unable to take their possessions with them, settle their accounts or take action on their property. The authorities repeatedly told them they would be returning to their homes, but this was not true. During the earlier deportations, some of the “relocated” Armenians were taken into inner Anatolia; later the destination was changed to Der Zor (Deir ez-Zor), a southeastern desert region in the imperial territory in current-day Syria. The government took no measures to protect the deportees on their march nor were there any provisions in the final destination.

During the first wave of the extermination process, mass killings took place, mostly during the marches. The majority of the killings occurred in 1915 and 1916. The regular and irregular armed units of the Special Organizations and gangs continuously attacked Armenian convoys, robbing, raping and killing the deportees. The local authorities were entrusted with the task of coordinating the killings. Talat Pasha's ministry of interior closely supervised the genocidal process, giving further orders, removing local authorities that disobeyed genocidal orders, and asking for detailed reports about the number of deported Armenians at each locality and about Armenian properties. In most cases the perpetrators used unofficial communication lines in order to organize and undertake the genocidal process. The second wave was the massacres of Armenians who were able to survive the deathly marches and arrive at Der Zor.

The genocidal process was well documented by the representatives of foreign states in the Ottoman Empire, including Germany, the US, England, France and Russia. Christian missionaries also wrote detailed accounts of genocidal practices. Surviving Armenians recorded the process in their memoirs and inscribed historical memory as witnesses. The Ottoman courts-martial, established in the aftermath of WWI in order to try the CUP leadership for their crimes against the Armenians and other Christian communities of the empire, unearthed important data and information about the genocide, even though the trials failed to deliver justice at the end of the day.

The Armenian Genocide is still being denied by successive governments in Turkey as well as by the majority of the population. The denialist arguments rationalize and justify the CUP policies against the Armenians, rather than denying Armenian casualties. The official position maintains that there was no deliberate policy of

extermination against the Armenians or any other communities. The “deportation” order is presented as a wartime necessity aiming to protect the army and war effort from a possible Armenian revolt and collaboration with the invading Russian army. To defend imperial security, the Armenian population had to be “relocated” away from the war fronts and logistic lines. According to the official position, rather than a one-directional massacre against Armenians, there was a process of “mutual killing” between two nationalisms fighting for the same territory. The official position depicted the process as “civil war” between Armenian and Muslim citizens of the empire with the Armenian committees involved in systematic mass killings of Muslim populations of eastern Anatolia.

Map 1 - Map of the Armenian Genocide
(Source: The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute)

Map 2 - Historical Map of the Armenian Genocide, 1915
(Source: Ara Sarafian, Gomidas Institute)

A Closer Look at the Growing Literature on the Armenian Genocide

The Armenian genocide had a complex historical background and existing literature reflects this complexity in the form of a variety of viewpoints. One of the divergences concentrates on whether the genocide was the final piece of a premeditated plan to exterminate the Ottoman Armenians or rather the outcome of a radicalization process on the Ottoman government's part as it responded to multiple crises of the empire.⁷⁸ This debate underlines the importance of historical studies focusing on the

⁷⁸ If taken into an essentialist point the first argument posits the presence of a cultural hatred among Muslims towards the Armenians. Such a perspective assumes an ahistorical conflict between petrified ethno-religious groups that were completely compartmentalized with their own national identity and agendas. This approach does not leave much room for multi-layered and complex structure of inter-communal relations during the late imperial period. At the other end of spectrum is the perspective highlighting fluidity of Ottoman identities offering multiple subject-positions and a generous amount of transitions between them. This perspective, more sensitive to integral hybridity of the Ottoman world, runs the risk of turning a blind eye to the persistence of social and racialized hierarchies forming internal colonial encounters in the imperial geography.

transformation of the Ottoman Empire from 1789 to 1922. Especially crucial were the changes in the Ottoman statecraft, inter-communal relations, and the politico-legal frameworks of the empire. Paired with imperial struggles of the nineteenth century, changing political imaginaries of subject populations and of the dominant group of the empire created significant amounts of tension in the imperial system. Nevertheless, the existence of tension does not necessarily lead to genocide. The political agents active during the end of the Ottoman Empire had a variety of options, and the genocide was not preordained. A convergence of Ottoman historiography with genocide studies could shed more light on the unfolding of inter-communal relations and could problematize teleological narratives of the genocide.

“Premeditated Continuum” or “Cumulative Radicalization”

Important scholarly debates focus on the origins of the Armenian genocide. Reminiscent of the exchange between “intentionalist” and “functionalist” interpretations of the Holocaust,⁷⁹ the debate on the Armenian case is centred on whether the genocide was the implementation of an exterminatory plan deliberately crafted and prepared by the ruling elite in advance, or rather the outcome of escalation of structural tensions inherent in the Ottoman system in reaction to a violent encounter in the environment created by the Great War. There are two broad approaches to this issue in the existing literature. While Hovannisian labels them as “wartime radicalization” and “premeditated continuum,”⁸⁰ Melson uses the terms “cumulative radicalization” and “conspiracy.”⁸¹

⁷⁹ Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

⁸⁰ Richard G Hovannisian, “The Armenian Genocide: Wartime Radicalization or Premeditated Continuum?,” in *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, ed. Richard G Hovannisian (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Books, 2007), 3–18.

Scholars adopting the “premeditated continuum” approach, including Vahakn Dadrian, Yves Ternon, Peter Balakian and Tessa Hoffman, argue that the Young Turk leadership had taken the decision to annihilate the Armenians before the outbreak of the First World War. According to this view, the CUP was only waiting for an excuse or opportune moment to implement its genocidal plan. The Great War gave the CUP the perfect opportunity in that respect.⁸² Dadrian, a major and earlier subscriber to this view, maintains that there was a discernible historical continuum between the Armenian massacres in 1894-96 under the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II and the genocide during the CUP rule. This continuum leads Dadrian to assert that strong ideological and cultural undercurrents were in operation. The most important of these, for him, “was the persistence of a tradition, in part rooted in the dogmas of Islam, that more or less sanctioned the resort to lethal violence in the handling of acute conflicts with non-Muslim subject nationalities of the empire.”⁸³ The rulers of the empire were able to translate this existing “tradition” into exterminatory policy against the Armenians because the European powers failed to establish a deterrence mechanism.⁸⁴

In Dadrian’s perspective, the Hamidian massacres were “the experimental prelude” to what was to come later.⁸⁵ This approach offers a very powerful and “tidy” framework laying out a linear narrative of an existing will to exterminate the Armenians. However, there are certain pitfalls in this approach. First of all, what Dadrian calls

⁸¹ Robert Melson, “Recent Developments in the Study of the Armenian Genocide,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 27, no. 2 (2013): 313–21.

⁸² Hovannisian, “The Armenian Genocide: Wartime Radicalization or Premeditated Continuum?,” 5.

⁸³ Vahakn N Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1997), 172–173.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

“Islam’s bent for divisiveness, exclusivity, and superiority”⁸⁶ is an essentializing argument. Second, the role Islam played in Ottoman governance was more complicated than Dadrian’s frame allows. Third, it does not elucidate the timing of the violence against the Armenians. Hovannisian’s foray into the debate, which sees a continuity starting from the 1890s to the 1920s in terms of “de-Armenization of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey” through different means,⁸⁷ does not do justice to a much more complicated history of inter-communal relations and politics during the imperial context either.

In clear contrast to this perspective of continuum, scholars such as Taner Akçam, Norman Naimark, Ronald Suny, Donald Bloxham and Raymond Kevorkian emphasize the gradual radicalization of the official policy against the Armenians. This growing perspective asserts that the CUP did not have a decision or plan to exterminate the Armenians.⁸⁸ A major stream among these studies argues that the genocide was a result of what Bloxham calls “cumulative radicalization.”⁸⁹ The genocidal trajectory started with localized and limited deportation measures and quickly reached empire-wide and centrally coordinated massacres.⁹⁰ This perspective maintains that the CUP, even though increasingly aggressive in its adoption of ethnic homogenization of Anatolia, was

⁸⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁸⁷ Hovannisian, “The Armenian Genocide: Wartime Radicalization or Premeditated Continuum?,” 7.

⁸⁸ Ronald Grigor Suny, “Truth in Telling: Reconciling Realities in the Genocide of the Ottoman Armenians,” *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 4 (2009): 945.

⁸⁹ Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide : Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 69. Bloxham borrowed the term from Hans Mommsen, “Cumulative Radicalization and Self-Destruction of the Nazi Regime,” in *Nazism*, ed. Neil Gregor (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 191–94.

⁹⁰ Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide : Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*, 69.

considering several policy options in order to achieve that goal. Mann also argues that the Armenian genocide was a “developing process.”⁹¹

Melson’s critique of the radicalization perspective, and especially against Suny and Kevorkian’s accounts, underlines that the Hamidian massacres were not sufficiently studied. Melson argues that “even before the genocide of 1915 the Ottoman population was predisposed to violence against the Armenians. This murderous predisposition of the population, combined with the cumulative radicalization of the Young Turk elites during the war, made the genocide possible.”⁹² Another recent critique of the radicalization argument underlines that it reproduces a deterministic understanding of late Ottoman inter-ethnic relations. Türkyılmaz maintains that instead of escalating conflict, the political situation in eastern Anatolia “offered manifold choices for the elites from various groups who, even in the midst of competition and rivalry, continued to cooperate.”⁹³ According to this view, some areas of the relations between Armenian leaders and the CUP were actually improving in some contexts. Underlining the unpredictability, contingency and multi-vectorial nature of human agency, Türkyılmaz argues that even as late as July 1914, the trajectory of the relations was not set and multiple potentialities existed.⁹⁴ This perspective emphasizes uncertainties, anxieties and opportunities about the potential fall of the empire that became a strong possibility after the Balkan Wars as the primary factor tipping the inter-ethnic balance and undermining the precarious peace that, against all odds, existed in the eastern provinces.

⁹¹ Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 145.

⁹² Melson, “Recent Developments in the Study of the Armenian Genocide,” 320.

⁹³ Yektan Türkyılmaz, “Rethinking Genocide: Violence and Victimhood in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1915” (Duke University, 2011), 14, <http://hdl.handle.net/10161/5038>.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

While Trkyılmaz relied on specific research about eastern Anatolia, and more specifically about Van, to posit that the local inter-ethnic relations actually showed signs of improvement, there is room for some questions. Addressing earlier moments of political violence against the Armenians might have strengthened the stress of contingency. During the last fifty years or so of the empire, there existed several courses of action for political agents. As the 1894-1896 and 1909 massacres revealed, there was undeniable tension in the system prone to produce mass violence against Armenians. However, these moments, rather than pointing at a unidirectional progression towards the genocide, attested to co-existing potentialities with the political configuration. Subaltern and dominant political actors responded to transforming conditions in a myriad of ways, and they wanted to keep their options open as long as it was possible. Both parties were operating within a wide range of political possibilities and were making decisions in line with these multiple possibilities. Visions for Armenian independence and sovereignty, i.e. separation from the empire, coexisted with demands for equal imperial citizenship status, personal freedom, and justice within the political imaginaries of Armenians actors. The Young Turk leadership simultaneously entertained agendas of redefining the imperial identity to favour Muslims or Turks and agendas of maintaining its multi-ethnic and multi-religious characteristic. For Trkyılmaz, the outbreak of the First World War “did not simply magnify or radicalize an existing situation; rather, it created a new situation that escalated into a catastrophe primarily because of the wartime decisions of political actors.”⁹⁵ Before focusing on the transformative impact of the Great War, the pre-genocide situation in the nineteenth century needs more consideration. Here, an alternative and more dynamic explanatory framework can be found at the intersection of

⁹⁵ Ibid., 333.

transforming Ottoman statecraft and ruling methods, petrification and polarization of communal identities, economic relations, and ideological shifts.

Change in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire and Its Impact on Inter-Communal Relations

Ottoman Reforms of the Nineteenth Century

During the nineteenth century, imperial wars and defeats against the Habsburgs and Russia caused serious territorial losses for the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁶ In addition, domestic rebellions and separatist movements emerged as a new and major threat to Ottoman territorial integrity. Egypt, Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria, among others, cut their ties with the empire. The problem of Ottoman decay and territorial erosion was at the centre of European politics as well. European powers supported some of these domestic separatist movements to varying degrees as long as doing so served their interests and strengthened their influence over the Ottomans. A complex political process, dubbed “the Eastern Question,” was underway, aiming to manage Ottoman territorial losses in a way that would not tilt the European balance of power and cause a wide-scale clash. The convergence of domestic dissent and imperial struggle and their impacts on Ottoman sovereignty and territorial integrity constituted the general background of the century. Meeting these challenges was the aim of Ottoman imperial politics.

The Ottoman elites, the Sultan and central bureaucracy, initiated a multifaceted reform movement starting with the reign of Sultan Selim III and accelerating with the Tanzimat (Reorganization) in 1839. These reforms were part and parcel of what James Gelvin called “defensive developmentalism”, which sought to consolidate and centralize

⁹⁶ Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 54.

state power, weaken centrifugal forces, and strengthen the imperial economy in the face of increasing Western pressure.⁹⁷ The first move was to strengthen and expand the Ottoman central state apparatus, reform the military, and establish a rationalized legal framework. As part of Ottoman centralization, not only did the number of civil and military bureaucrats rapidly increase, but the state also started to enter areas where it was previously absent.⁹⁸ The centralization agenda transformed the relations between central and local loci of power. Central elites sought to undermine, weaken and destroy local rivals as much as possible. However, due to complex political configurations and fiscal hardships, centralization did not culminate in the imposition of a uniform central authority over the vast empire. Instead, the emerging Ottoman rule was much more manifold, adapting to local conditions, pragmatic, deliberately ambivalent, and ready to accommodate contingencies. In many locations, the centre, in order to win local leaders' loyalties, chose to make compromises and local leaders maintained their relative autonomy and authority.

Centralization also had deep effects on state-subject and inter-communal relations. In broad strokes, the previous Ottoman order was based on indirect relations between the state and its subjects, the latter organized as communities along ethno-religious and occupational lines.⁹⁹ This order was based on differences and structured to sustain governing hierarchies of the empire. Muslims were legally the superior groups and non-Muslims were their subordinates. The latter had to pay extra taxes in return for

⁹⁷ James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History*, 4th Edition, 2015.

⁹⁸ Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 62.

⁹⁹ These communities were not isolated from each other. There was considerable inter-penetration. Communal identities were rather fluid.

protection and religious liberties.¹⁰⁰ The state interacted with these communities through a number of intermediaries who represented their communities. Starting with the Gülhane decree of 1839, the start of the Tanzimat era, the Ottoman state inaugurated a move to make all male Ottoman subjects legally equal and to guarantee justice for all, regardless of their confessional differences. This move, in theory, legally removed the importance of differences. However, differences were present. From this point onward, “where to find a balance between the poles of incorporation (the empire’s claim that its subjects belonged within the empire) and differentiation (the empire’s claim that different subjects should be governed differently) was a matter of dispute and shifting strategies.”¹⁰¹ The 1856 reform decree reiterated similar goals. The state was offering equal rights and equal responsibilities, such as taxation and universal male conscription.¹⁰² As a corollary to this transformation, the state began to relate directly with its subjects. As part of establishing direct relations, the state redefined its population. The Law of Ottoman Nationality of 1869 recognized, for the first time, Ottoman subjects as citizens. The proclamation of an Ottoman constitution in 1876, which lasted only until 1878, was a move to limit the Sultan’s power and to guarantee legal equality for all male citizens of the empire. “Ottomanism”, the umbrella term for this ruling ideology, continued to be a state policy until the end of the empire.

The introduction of “Ottomanism” was a response to the dialectic of integration and disintegration in the empire. It aimed at integrating all members of the Ottoman body politic under the control of the central state, winning ethno-religious communities’

¹⁰⁰ Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 65.

¹⁰¹ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 154.

¹⁰² Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 66.

loyalties, and undermining privileges some communities had acquired as a result of their ties with European countries. It created an empire-wide field of political discourses and practices where involved parties asserted their own visions of Ottomanness and negotiated with other visions. However, Tanzimat reforms and Ottomanist policies did not live up to the expectations they had created, and failed to create a viable Ottoman order based on equality, inclusion, and peaceful coexistence of the diverse Ottoman population. The empire-wide system was left in limbo between what was gone and what was yet to come. During the Tanzimat and following periods, Ottoman communal identities that had been fluid became increasingly petrified. Ethno-religious identifications were increasingly exclusive and divisive. The Ottoman elites' failure to devise an inclusive and integrative regime for all Ottoman citizens, the influence of nationalist ideals, the introduction of Western capital and the uneven integration of some Ottoman groups within it, as well as Western interference in Ottoman domestic affairs, all contributed to the polarization of Ottoman inter-communal relations and created an explosive atmosphere.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, this historical trajectory was not necessarily headed towards mass violence against non-Muslim communities of the empire.

A Question of Internal Colonization

Along with legal redefinition of the population from the centre's perspective, Ottoman reform with its focus on political centralization and on redefining the nature of Ottoman territory population created unprecedented power dynamics and methods of rule. In this respect, the Ottoman experience and practices converged with those of other

¹⁰³ Ibid., 174–176.

empires when it came to controlling their territories.¹⁰⁴ Ottoman historians have recently begun to study these dynamics within the parameters of colonialism. Although there have been no studies relating Ottoman colonialism with the Armenian genocide, this connection will shed light on the genocide.

Postcolonial historiography investigates Ottoman methods of rule and state-society relations during the nineteenth century with a critical focus on polarizing communal identities, escalating power inequalities, and a complex centre-periphery continuum.¹⁰⁵ Postcolonial perspective led historians to revise the conventional view of the empire as an object of colonialism and to highlight that it was a colonizing political entity.¹⁰⁶ Relatedly, the revisionist position challenges the representation of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire as a declining power falling prey to Western imperialism and replaces it with a perspective portraying the Ottoman rulers as actively pursuing their own imperialist agendas and policies.¹⁰⁷

Postcolonial scholarship situates the Ottoman Empire on the same analytical level with other contemporary empires and points to potential comparative perspectives that would shed more light on Ottoman colonialism.¹⁰⁸ However, uncritical use of categories

¹⁰⁴ The concept of territoriality, conceived by historian Charles S. Maier as “the properties, including power, provided by the control of bordered political space, which until recently at least created the framework for national and often ethnic identity.” Charles S. Maier, “Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era,” *American Historical Review* 105, no. 3 (2000): 808.

¹⁰⁵ Fatma Müge Göçek, “Parameters of a Postcolonial Sociology of the Ottoman Empire,” ed. Julian Go, *Political Power and Social Theory* 25 (2013): 89–90.

¹⁰⁶ Vangelis Kechriotis, “Postcolonial Criticism Encounters Late Ottoman Studies,” *Historein* 13 (May 2013): 39.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁰⁸ A number of highly nuanced recent studies of empires and colonialisms constitute the broader context of this comparative research trend. These studies include, but are not limited to, Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2007); Craig J. Calhoun et al., *Lessons of Empire: Imperial Histories and American Power* (New York: New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton, 2006); Cooper,

such as “foreign domination” or “illegitimate rule” would gloss over important peculiarities in the Ottoman context as what was at stake there was a transformation of governance within the existing borders of the empire and not territorial expansion. The emphasis falls on the relations between central authority and periphery populations. The scholarship uses terms such as “borrowed colonialism”¹⁰⁹ and “Ottoman Orientalism”¹¹⁰ to conceptualize the characteristic of these relations. Looking at central elites’ mobilization of a variety of technologies of governance based on power knowledge nexus, these studies suggest ways in which Ottoman ruling ideologies and practices shifted after the Tanzimat era. It is also important to note that the Ottoman elites were responding to similar dynamics of change as other multi-ethnic empires of the time and these elites adopted similar technologies of governance as the latter. “Like others, the Ottomans employed modern state-building technologies as they sought to delimit their borders and to define and control the people inside of them.”¹¹¹ Drawing borders, making spaces, and classifying people paved the way for the emergence of new concepts or transformed socio-political relations imbued in them.¹¹² While Ottomanness, Kurdishness, Armenianness, and Turkishness were getting invested with new meanings, a

Colonialism in Question Theory, Knowledge, History; Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2003); Harry D Harootunian, *The Empire’s New Clothes: Paradigm Lost, and Regained* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000); Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, 1997.

¹⁰⁹ Selim Deringil, “‘They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery’: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History: An International Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (2003): 311–42.

¹¹⁰ Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” *American Historical Review* 107 (2002): 768–96.

¹¹¹ Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011), 12.

¹¹² Ibid.

complex network of colonial encounters and colonial intimacies governed by distance-proximity and similarity-difference emerged in the eastern provinces.¹¹³

A combination of factors including, but not limited to, the advent of modernity, responses to shrinking territory, and meeting the challenges of imperial struggle led Ottoman elites to transform their perception of and control over regions such as Libya,¹¹⁴ Lebanon,¹¹⁵ Hijaz,¹¹⁶ Yemen,¹¹⁷ and Transjordan,¹¹⁸ among others, that were mostly populated by Muslims. The expanding Ottoman state was pushing its direct rule into areas that it previously governed indirectly. This process revealed the “paradox of Ottoman reform - inclusivist insofar as it sought to integrate all provinces and peoples into an official nationalism of Ottomanism and yet also temporally segregated and ultimately racially differentiated [the population].”¹¹⁹ A dual track unfolding was evident. On the one hand, central rulers were establishing a uniform order for all members of the Ottoman world regardless of ethno-religious differences. On the other hand, they were introducing new markers of difference justifying their political rule over these regions.

¹¹³ Ali Sipahi, “At Arm’s Length: Historical Ethnography of Proximity in Harput” (Phd Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2015), https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/116706/asipahi_1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

¹¹⁴ Lisa Anderson, “Nineteenth-Century Reform in Ottoman Libya,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, no. 03 (August 1984): 325–48.

¹¹⁵ Ussama Samir Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000), <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=223529>.

¹¹⁶ Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

¹¹⁷ Thomas Kühn, “Shaping and Reshaping Colonial Ottomanism: Contesting Boundaries of Difference and Integration in Ottoman Yemen, 1872-1919,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 2 (2007): 315–31.

¹¹⁸ Eugene L Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹¹⁹ Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” 770.

Clearly echoing dynamics laid out by Edward Said, binaries such as civilization/savagery made their way into Ottoman ruling discourses and practices with their concomitant implications of civilizing missions of state officials.¹²⁰ Central elites assumed a transformative agency in imperial peripheries not so dissimilar to colonial administration. Technologies they introduced were similar to those studied by Foucault within the framework of bio-politics. However, in the Ottoman case, instead of an absolute dominance of the centre, power holders in the periphery had a significant amount of agency and authority to create a two-way dynamic based on negotiation rather than top-down imposition of central will.¹²¹ One of the major reasons behind this was a set of limitations the state had, such as fiscal ones. Also central authorities could not risk alienating local loci of power at a time when competing imperial interests were approaching Ottoman communities with promises of autonomy and self-determination.

Postcolonial studies of the Ottoman Empire have so far provided valuable insights about the relations between the centre and Muslim-inhabited peripheries. However, we still do not have not enough knowledge about colonial perceptions and practices related to other communities of the empire, such as Greek Rums, Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, Alawites, Kurds and Circassians.¹²² Kechriotis's question, "what did it mean for a Christian to be subordinate to a Muslim, in terms of colonial domination", highlights tensions inherent to late Ottoman political dynamics, allegiances and inter-communal relations.¹²³ This question also has a particular bearing for the status of Armenians within

¹²⁰ Deringil, "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery."

¹²¹ Göçek, "Parameters of a Postcolonial Sociology of the Ottoman Empire," 90.

¹²² Ibid., 91.

¹²³ Kechriotis, "Postcolonial Criticism Encounters Late Ottoman Studies," 43.

the empire, but we need more studies investigating the ties between Ottoman colonialism and Armenians.

Introduction of new forms of differences incorporating older and newer hierarchies not only redefined Ottoman ruler-ruled relations, but also legitimized the convergence of the categories of Ottoman and Turk as the legitimate owner of the empire.¹²⁴ Within this new configuration of differences in the late Ottoman Empire, non-Turkish/non-Muslim groups had to play ambivalent roles. Even though they were conceived as equal members of the Ottoman body politic, they were objects of deep suspicion among the rulers and wider society. Central elites expected the groups to demonstrate their loyalty and allegiance to the Ottoman state and to prove their commitment to Ottoman identity, all the while formally and informally reminding them of their difference and undermining their full participation in the order.

Capitulations acquired by the European powers further complicated colonial encounters between Ottoman rulers and non-Muslim citizens of the empire. Through these sets of exemptions, many non-Muslims gained European protection and avoided Ottoman control, providing them with considerable economic advantages and socio-political privileges. For western imperial powers, capitulations were part of the “Eastern Question” and gave them inroads to Ottoman domestic affairs.¹²⁵ As a result of this dynamic and multi-vectorial process of colonial relations, inter-communal tensions and antagonisms intensified. Nevertheless, this tense political atmosphere did not mean the collapse of the Ottoman system. The complex world of Ottoman politics, determined by seemingly conflicting political imaginaries, stayed alive until the First World War. The

¹²⁴ Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” 794.

¹²⁵ Kechriotis, “Postcolonial Criticism Encounters Late Ottoman Studies,” 43.

late Hamidian and the Second Constitutional eras witnessed a heightened sense of unity, increased expectations of political inclusion and fair representation, and a better future among many components of the empire. On the other hand, during the same periods, clashes over the ownership of the empire intensified, political imaginaries became much more homogeneous and exclusive, and ethno-religiously defined groups' identities increasingly polarized. Nationalism was a factor to reckon with, as was Social Darwinism. The war in Tripolitania (1911-1912) and the Balkan wars (1912-1913) intensified the perceived threat of extinction as a sovereign political entity among the ruling elite. In the social Darwinist perspective, the survival of one group would mean the extinction of others. The advent of positivist ideals, visions of nationalist demographic engineering, and clashing ethno-nationalist agendas created the conditions for the breakdown of Ottoman co-existence.

Multi-Layered Changes in the Eastern Provinces

Internal colonization had a decisive impact on the relations in eastern Anatolia as well. Quick and drastic territorial shrinking and influx of Muslim refugees transformed the central elites' perception and governance of eastern Anatolia. The peninsula inhabited by a heterogeneous population mostly consisting of Turks, Kurds, Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians slowly became the core territory in the last five decades of the empire. Co-existence of competing nationalist movements laying claims to the eastern provinces catalyzed governmental change. Control over territory and the population living in it became an issue of state security, sovereignty and integrity, for centrifugal elements would lead to disintegration. As a result, population movements, demographic ratios and land ownership became closely supervised criteria. Governmental technologies such as

population censuses,¹²⁶ statistics, cartography, toponyms and ethnographic research were introduced or used with an unforeseen intensity and frequency.¹²⁷ In addition, some parts of eastern Anatolia quickly integrated with capitalist economy through trade and commercial agriculture.¹²⁸ In tandem with increased trade and agriculture, the land became a commodity itself, making its ownership a further contested issue. Also crucial was taxation. Central administration attempts to increase direct tax collection clashed with the local Kurdish notables who had been traditionally acting as intermediaries between the state and the population.

Studies focusing on the eastern provinces of the empire, where the majority of Ottoman Armenians lived, point to the previously ignored complexity of inter-communal and state-society relations. These relations were in flux and multi-layered. The change was not predetermined to be negative. There were areas of collaboration among the political actors, such as Kurds, Armenians and Turks. However, there were many other areas where relations were strained to the level of exasperation. Recent studies complicate a previously one-dimensional understanding of regional inter-ethnic relations with a special bearing on Armenians. They also offer nuanced accounts of some of the reasons behind Hamidian violence against the Armenians between 1894 and 1896.

Land ownership, taxation and changing religious identities are at the centre of these studies. Kieser argues that Ottoman authorities failed to establish a stable and

¹²⁶ Kemal H Karpas, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

¹²⁷ Fuat Dündar, "Empire of Taxonomy: Ethnic and Religious Identities in the Ottoman Surveys and Censuses," *Middle Eastern Studies* 51, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 136–58; Fuat Dündar, *Crime of Numbers: The Role of Statistics in the Armenian Question (1878-1918)* (Transaction Publishers, 2010).

¹²⁸ Reşat Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy: The Nineteenth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

operating socio-economic and political order to replace the previous regional *modus vivendi* relying on Sunni Kurds' domination over Armenians and Alawites.¹²⁹ Political centralization undermined Kurdish notables' authority and autonomy in the 1820s and 1830s, but the vacuum was not filled in a way that met the realities of the region until the end of the empire. Questions of coexistence under a new order, the position of local communities vis-a-vis each other and the state, conflicting claims over local resources and interests, and taxation remained unresolved. Demands for equality regardless of ethno-religious identities were not adequately addressed. The entry of Christian missionary organizations, especially the Protestant missions, to the region catalyzed redefinition of religious identities and the formation of new ones. Missions also laid the foundation of an alternative modern order with education, health, and economic re-organization competing with the order presented by the centre.

Kieser describes the central elites' breaking of Kurdish notables' power and authority to establish their own direct control as "internal colonization" of Anatolia.¹³⁰ The "second conquest" of Ottoman Kurdistan was an attempt at expanding central control. Centralization came with a different way of imagining the territory and it paved the way for the mobilization of different technologies of governance that all aimed to complete the internal colonization of eastern Anatolia. One of these technologies was settlement of Muslim refugees coming to Anatolia. Settlement had always been an important tool for Ottoman rule to clinch its sovereignty over a conquered territory.

¹²⁹ Hans-Lukas Kieser, *İskalanmış Barış: Doğu Vilayetlerinde Misyonerlik, Etnik Kimlik ve Devlet 1839-1938*, trans. Atilla Dirim (İstanbul: İletişim, 2005).

¹³⁰ Ibid. In a much earlier undertaking, sociologist İsmail Beşikçi argued that the treatment of Kurds under the Ottoman and Republican rules were colonial. He highlighted inherent power asymmetries between Turks and Kurds and pointed at colonial governance established to administer Kurdistan. İsmail Beşikçi, *Kürtlerin 'mecburi iskân'ı* (İstanbul: Komal, 1977); İsmail Beşikçi, *International Colony Kurdistan* (London: Parvana, 2004).

Settlement was also used to assimilate heterogeneous populations or to dilute their density at specific locales.

The settlement of incoming Muslim refugees, especially after the 1870s, allowed the central administration to build a population belonging to the dominant ethno-religious identity that would accordingly be loyal to the Ottoman state. Not surprisingly, the settlement policies were implemented at the expense of population groups that were deemed disloyal or potentially disloyal to the state. During the last quarter of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this group was mostly Armenians and to a lesser extent Assyrians. “Between 1870 and 1910, some 100,000 Armenians emigrated, and between 1890 and 1910 at least 741,000 hectares of Armenian property were illegally taken or confiscated by representatives of the state.”¹³¹ In other words, the central administration contributed to the emergence of a climate of insecurity and repression for Armenian inhabitants pushing them outward and dispossessing them. Replacing Armenians with Muslim refugees was a perfect way of remoulding the imperial population, redefining ethno-religious boundaries, and securing the state’s control over the territory.

Taxation also contributed to the complication of the relations in the region and the emerging double-taxation further intensified Armenian grievances and plight. Centralization and pressure for direct taxation had negative impacts on Armenian communities living in Erzurum, Van, Bitlis, Mamretülaziz, Sivas, and Diyarbekir

¹³¹ Donald Bloxham, “Internal Colonization, Inter-Imperial Conflict and the Armenian Genocide,” in *Empire, Colony, Genocide : Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*, ed. Moses, A. Dirk (New York: Berghahn, 2008), 330.

provinces during the Hamidian reign.¹³² The new tax regime and Hamidian methods and practices of collecting levied taxes were among the reasons for the outbreak of violence against Armenians. The central state's growing fiscal difficulties intensified the tax burden on agricultural producers who were already unjustly taxed. The central elites were trying to increase tax income and impose direct taxation instead of relying on local intermediaries, mostly Kurdish tribal leaders, who also collected taxes in line with their role as tax farmers. As a result of central and local taxation, local Armenian and Kurdish farmers faced double-taxation. In addition, the central administration primarily used law enforcement units, especially gendarmes, as tax collectors, resulting in severe abuses.¹³³

Astourian highlights “niche overlap”, i.e. different groups competing for the control of the same resource environment, as a major reason behind violence against Armenians that culminated in massacres in eastern Anatolia in 1895-1896 and in Cilicia in 1909.¹³⁴ Unfolding in these regions since the 1850s and 1870s, respectively, land usurpation, corruption, and oppression contributed to raising tensions. Astourian emphasizes that the “Armenian Question” was tied to “the agrarian and Kurdish questions, the demographic Islamization of Anatolia during the period in question, and the attempts of the Ottoman state at modernizing and centralizing the empire.”¹³⁵ The influx of Muslim refugees to eastern Anatolia from the Balkans and the Caucasus since

¹³² Nadir Özbek, “The Politics of Taxation and the ‘Armenian Question’ during the Late Ottoman Empire, 1876–1908,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 4 (2012): 770–97.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Stephan H. Astourian, “The Silence of the Land: Agrarian Relations, Ethnicity, and Power,” in *A Question of Genocide : Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 55–56.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 56.

the 1850s and 1860s, administrative corruption, and arbitrary oppression of Kurdish notables drove Armenian peasantry into a corner.¹³⁶

The Ottoman government failed to address, if not deliberately compounded, the grievances of the latter, leading to the internationalization of the situation in 1878. Instead, Abdulhamid II “chose to co-opt Sunni Kurdish tribes [...] to counter non-Muslim discontent in the eastern provinces; secure the borderlands with Russia; and bring the unruly Kurdish population to a great extent under his control.”¹³⁷ The Sultan’s deliberate settlement of the inbound Muslim refugees in the six provinces with a significant Armenian population was another component of the Armenian predicament.¹³⁸ The replacement of relatively more tolerant Kurdish leaders with more radical and ruthless ones during the first half of the nineteenth century, and the Sultan’s decisive siding with the latter in the 1890s through the formation of Kurdish light cavalry units, *Hamidiye Alayları*, as his security tool in the region, led to disaster for the Armenians.¹³⁹

Klein’s account of the foundation of these units shows that with this move the Sultan was pursuing a multiplicity of goals.¹⁴⁰ She also situates these units within modern technologies of power that the central administration employed in order to stabilize its

¹³⁶ Recently, Suny brought forth a new perspective regarding this competition over the control of resources. “What might have been seen as economic and social competitions were increasingly frames in ethnic and religious terms; what might have been understood as conflicts associated with social standing were seen as one ethnoreligious community against another.” Ronald Grigor Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else”: A History of the Armenian Genocide*, 2015, 55.

¹³⁷ Astourian, “The Silence of the Land,” 61.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 62.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 64.

¹⁴⁰ “It was, in fact, a manifold mission, not only to protect the frontier [with Russia and Persia], as official statements suggested, and not only to suppress Armenian activities, as some contemporary observers and later historians have argued; nor was it only to bolster the ties of Islamic unity in the empire by creating a special bond between the sultan and the Kurds, as others have suggested. It was a mission organized for all of these reasons, and more. Perhaps most significant, it was intended to bring the region into the Ottoman fold and to ensure, by almost any means necessary, that it remained there.” Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 4.

authority. Hence the co-optation of Kurdish notables, which would potentially pose a threat to the central power, the Hamidiye units operated yet as another component of internal colonization of the eastern provinces. This final official sanctioning of Kurdish treatment of Armenians was akin to letting the fox guard the henhouse, and made Armenians extremely vulnerable.¹⁴¹ Operating now under the aegis and protection of the Sultan, the Kurdish tribes increased their attacks against the Armenians peasantry.¹⁴² Officially condoning, if not motivating, mass violence against the Armenians, the Sultan and the dominant elites sought to dilute the Armenian population in the region and also reduce economic and organizational capabilities.

Inter-state conflict and imperialism

Transformations in the governance of eastern Anatolia were closely related to the imperial competition the Ottomans were engaged in against other imperial powers. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Ottoman inter-communal relations became an integral part of imperialist struggles. What the literature calls “the internationalization of the Armenian question” was this entanglement of Ottoman internal troubles with external ones. Scholars including Bloxham and Dadrian emphasize this longer backdrop of the Armenian genocide that comprises complex dynamics between Western powers, Ottoman administration and Armenians in their accounts of factors behind the genocide.

The period of 1798-1922 witnessed increasing pressure on the Ottoman Empire, both in terms of its growing weakness against Western powers, especially the Russian Empire, leading to massive territory losses in wars, and of the growing separatist

¹⁴¹ Kieser, *Iskalanmış barış*.

¹⁴² Astourian, “The Silence of the Land,” 64.

nationalist movement among various ethno-religious groups of the empire. The majority of territorial losses during this term happened as a result of the revolts of subaltern communities, and this was a new phenomenon.¹⁴³ In this complex dynamic of imperial struggles to maintain and expand their interests, Western powers became increasingly involved in Ottoman internal affairs on the grounds that they were protecting ethno-religious subaltern groups of the empire from central oppression and discrimination. The Ottoman elites were feeling besieged¹⁴⁴ and were trying to use diplomacy to turn the delicate international balance to their advantage. Any internal or external factor that would tip that balance was increasingly seen as a threat to the survival of the state. Within this environment subaltern groups became suspects. The Western intervention on behalf of nationalist movements had different effects on the imperial administration and ethno-religious groups. The ruling elite's perception of a level of threat associated with ethno-religious groups critically increased as a result of Western intervention on their

¹⁴³ The first rebellion by a subaltern ethnic community that took a nationalist character was the Serbian revolt that started in 1804. Located at the borderlands between the Ottoman and the Habsburg empires, Serbia went through a national awakening during the late eighteenth century. A complex process of struggles between the Ottoman rulers and Serbians turned a revolt that had emerged for not necessarily nationalist reasons into a nationalist one. When the Russian Empire sided with the Serbs against the Ottoman Empire during the Russo-Ottoman war of 1807-1812, the direction of the rebellion became autonomy and possible independence. De facto Serbian self-rule was established in 1816 and in 1838 Serbia became an autonomous state, Ottoman only on paper. The final Serbian independence was ratified in the Congress of Berlin in 1878. M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 51–53; Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 55. Greek independence followed a similar pattern. Engaged with the Ottoman administration in a war of independence between 1821 and 1830, the Greek nationalist movement was able to secure British, French and Russian military intervention in the conflict and was able to declare the independent Greek state at the Treaty of London in 1830 in the southern part of modern Greece. Ibid., 56. This pattern, revolting against the Ottoman administration to get Western support and with that support further corner the administration was to become a rule. “The Greeks set a precedent for the other Christian populations of the empire, who observed that internationalization of local grievances provided an effective new lever for the dilution or termination of Ottoman rule.” Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 69.

¹⁴⁴ Virginia H Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700-1870: An Empire Besieged* (Harlow, England: Longman/Pearson, 2007).

behalf. Political movements representing ethno-religious minorities were further encouraged by this intervention because they thought they had solid support and backing from Western powers.

Even though the reform movement initiated by the Ottoman rulers starting with the Tanzimat in 1839 and continuing with the Islahat in 1856 attempted to respond to demands and complaints of the minority groups, in the last analysis it failed to create a viable framework to achieve this. For Armenians, the main points of contention consisted of the lack of protection of private property, unfair taxation, and the persistence of structural inequality and discrimination.¹⁴⁵ These chronic issues and the rise of nationalist ideology paved the way for the emergence of a proto-nationalist movement among the Armenians.¹⁴⁶

As the Ottoman government consistently failed to address the above-mentioned issues and to meet their demands, the Armenians, in a similar fashion to Serbians and Greeks, sought international support for their cause. The turning point for Armenian-government relations came during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78. The definitive defeat for the Ottomans paved the way for the San Stefano Treaty in March 1878.¹⁴⁷ However, the possibility of Balkans becoming a complete Russian domination zone with the establishment of puppet states with large territories was unacceptable for other

¹⁴⁵ Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide : Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*, 42–43.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 44.

¹⁴⁷ According to this treaty, “Serbia, Montenegro, and Rumania became independent states; Bulgaria was granted autonomy under a Christian prince; and Bosnia-Herzegovina became an Austrian protectorate. Russia gained territory in Caucasia: the towns of Batumi, Kars and Ardahan, with the surrounding villages. Article 16 of the treaty compelled the Sublime Porte to carry out ‘the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians, and to guarantee their security from the Kurds and Circassians.’ The Russians would continue to occupy the region until the reforms went into effect.” Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else*, 94.

European powers, as such a zone of Russian control threatened the European balance of power.¹⁴⁸ Hence, Great Britain and other powers intervened and, with the help of German chancellor Otto von Bismarck, arranged a congress in Berlin to discuss the terms of the peace between the Russians and Ottomans.¹⁴⁹

The Ottoman Armenian community also sent its representatives to the Congress led by the former patriarch Khrimian *Hayrik* to express Armenian grievances and demand support for reforms in the eastern provinces. Inspired by the formation of an autonomous regional government in Lebanon in 1861 giving proportional representation to Christian and Muslim communities, the Armenian delegation tabled their proposal, which

included a map indicating the provinces (the six *vilayets*) to be included in the reform and estimates of the Armenian population, claimed to number about 2 million, that is, almost two-thirds of those living in eastern Anatolia. Consultative councils made up of equal numbers of Muslims and Armenians were to be set up to report on conditions in the provinces, and the sultan would appoint Armenians as governors. Those to be represented in the new institutions and the subsidized schools would be the settled population; the nomadic Kurds were not included in the proposed reforms.¹⁵⁰

However, the Treaty of Berlin, which replaced the Treaty of San Stefano, did not incorporate the Armenian proposal. Even though reform in eastern Anatolia was part of the new treaty, Article 61, there was no time frame for its implementation nor was there any assignment of a guarantor. The Armenian delegation was frustrated with the European powers' dismissal, and armed struggle against the sultan became a popular idea among some members of the Armenian community.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 58–59.

¹⁴⁹ Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else*, 95.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.S

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 96.

Raised Armenian expectations and their ultimate fall into oblivion notwithstanding, the Treaty of Berlin had a deep impact on Ottoman-Armenian relations.

The internationalization of the “Armenian Question” turned Armenians into

an instrument that could be used by European states to intervene in the internal affairs of the sultan’s realm. They were a category distinct from other Ottoman peoples, possessing a special status and international visibility that even with the subsequent neglect by Europe isolated them as a special problem for the Ottoman government. These overtures to the Great Powers, along with the Western styles affected by some wealthy Armenians, conspired to create in the minds of many Turks an image of an alien population within an Islamic empire, foreigners in what each side considered their own homeland.¹⁵²

The Ottoman government and dominant population were feeling more threatened by the Armenians because they were interpreting the reforms as building blocks of Armenian autonomy or even independence,¹⁵³ hence they were becoming more aggressive towards them. Much of the Hamidian-era political violence against the Armenians was related to this perceived threat and it was more towards protecting traditional order of inter-ethnic relations than exterminating the Armenians. Increased levels of perceived threat paved the way for closer surveillance, more oppression and violence, which, in turn, increased the level of Armenian grievances, their drive towards self-defence and self-determination, and their appeal to Western powers for change in their situation. A vicious circle emerged for all parties involved. Within the ruthless clash of imperialisms, Armenians were like a kite dancing in a hurricane.

The Armenians attempted to take control of their faith within the quicksand of late-nineteenth century imperial politics by organizing through political parties.¹⁵⁴

Signalling the Ottoman Armenian community becoming a more political rather than

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide : Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*, 16.

¹⁵⁴ Armenian political parties will be studied in detail below.

religious community, revolutionary political parties transformed the characteristics of being Armenian. The question of reforms was brought to the table again and again, as a result of Armenian revolutionary parties' activities such as the Ottoman Bank occupation, or when the question was in alignment with Western interests. The last time Russian and Armenian representatives pushed for reforms was in 1913-14, right after the Ottoman defeat in the Balkan Wars leading to the almost complete loss of the Balkans and a drastic Muslim flight towards the empire.¹⁵⁵ For many commentators, this demand for reform had a determining effect on the CUP political calculations regarding the Armenian population of the empire.

Emergence of Armenian Revolutionary Movement

“You left us outside of the protection of the law when we tried to benefit from the rights granted us by the truncated Midhatian Constitution ... I am not a separatist from this country. On the contrary, it is [this country] that is separating itself from me, being incapable of coming to terms with the ideas that inspire me.”

Paramaz,¹⁵⁶ 1915, during his trial, Libaridian, 107.

If the nineteenth century Ottoman reforms made new forms of belonging, being, and acting possible for the imperial populations by undermining many of the traditional bindings, the constant, state-sanctioned oppression and violence against the Armenians in

¹⁵⁵ Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide : Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*, 17.

¹⁵⁶ Paramaz, or Mateos Sarkisian, was one of the revolutionary socialist Hunchak members who was arrested in July 1914 on the grounds of conspiring to assassinate Talat Pasha. At the end of the trial, 20 of the defendants were sentenced to death for trying to establish an independent Armenia and for committing assassinations to this effect. Together with Sarkisian, Benne (Bedros) Torosian, Aram Achekbashian, Kegham Vanigian, Mourad Zakarian, Yervant Topuzian, Hagop Basmajian, Smpat Kelejian, Roupen Garabedian, Armenag Hampartsoumian, Apraham Mouradian, Hrand Yegavian, Karnig Boyajian, Hovhannes Ghazarian, Mgrdich Yeretsian, Yeremia Manoukian, Tovmas Tovmasian, Karekin Boghosian, Minas Keshishian, Boghos Boghosian were executed on June 15, 1915. Nesim Ovadya İzrail, *24 Nisan 1915: İstanbul, Çankırı, Ayaş, Ankara* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2013), 148–150; Kadir Akin, “Comrade Paramaz: A Revolutionary from Turkey,” *MassisPost*, July 17, 2014, <http://massispost.com/2014/07/comrade-paramaz-a-revolutionary-from-turkey/>.

the eastern provinces paved the way for these new forms to be tested by the Armenian community, especially by its revolutionary parties. Stigmatized by the Ottoman-Turkish historiography as “nationalists” and “secessionists”, therefore deemed as an existential threat to the Ottoman state, and hence blamed as the “real” responsible party for the Armenian-Muslim conflict, the Armenian political parties were initially depicted in a rather reductionist way. Recent studies, however, have provided much more nuanced accounts, more attentive to complexities of historical subject positions and inter-ethnic relations at the end of the empire. Revising the dominant characterization of the Armenian revolutionary parties, and arguing that they were pursuing a unidirectional political agenda of independence through guerilla warfare, terror, and rebellion, these more recent perspectives demonstrate that these parties were entertaining more than one political agenda. Like other late Ottoman political actors, they had multiple roads to take and, like others, they were trying to keep all of them open until the point of no return. As such, understanding the Armenian revolutionary activities in the last three decades of the empire is a study in contradiction, complexity and a series of double binds.

In line with the broader reforms in the empire, Der Matossian notes that “Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire experienced four major transformations during the nineteenth century: emergence of cultural nationalism as a result of the Armenian Renaissance (*Zartonk*); change in the power dynamics within the Armenian community after the introduction of the Armenian National Constitution (1863) and the formation of the Armenian National Assembly; the rise of the Armenian merchant class; and deterioration of the political situation of Armenians in the eastern provinces in Anatolia

that led to the emergence of Armenian revolutionary movements.”¹⁵⁷ Deep and painful changes within the Armenian community and imperial population coincided and resonated with each other to constitute an atmosphere that included infinite potential for political reorganization but also strong possibilities of political violence. The last quarter of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth centuries witnessed a pendulum motion between these two.

During the first half of the nineteenth century the representatives of the Armenian community, the Patriarchate and the Amira, wealthy and conservative leaders of the community holding significant influence over the church, were dominant actors in the Ottoman Armenian community. This traditional leadership, which owed its privileged position and status to the official recognition of the Sultan, faced a growing opposition coming from an amalgamation of other components of the community that had been gathering power and influence, intellectuals and the representatives of the organized guilds, *esnafs*. Starting with the 1830s, this new coalition engaged in a struggle against the old vanguard. The establishment of the National General Assembly and the promulgation of the Armenian Constitution in 1863 were the unmistakable signs of the power and influence amassed by the latter group.¹⁵⁸

The increased influence of this new, more secular and more liberal leadership was made possible by the Armenian communal awakening (*Zartonk*) which had its roots reaching back to the eighteenth century due to the efforts of the Mekhitharist Congregation, which emphasized the study of Armenian history, language and

¹⁵⁷ Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 2014, 9–10.

¹⁵⁸ Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement; the Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 42–44.

literature.¹⁵⁹ These efforts that continued to the nineteenth century supported a national imagination among the new generation of the community. The establishment of the Armenian Constitution and experiments with representative governance within the community fueled a renewed interest in national identity together with a widespread push for education. Filled with energy and dynamism, young members of the Ottoman Armenian community were quickly exploring new political horizons and disseminating them through popular channels of expression such as the printing press and media. The Armenians were entertaining a variety of political ideas and attempting to redefine their place within the Ottoman population.

Ottoman reforms stressing equality of imperial subjects, defining them as Ottomans and introducing the notion of universal imperial nationality after 1869, and promising the protection of individual and property rights, increased the expectations of this vibrant community. Nevertheless, the treatment of the Armenians in the eastern province was nowhere close to the treatment promised by reforms. The majority of the Armenian population was demanding administrative reforms, protection of property rights and establishment of justice in the eastern provinces. Their demands consistently fell on deaf ears in Istanbul and the situation became more and more unbearable. Starting in the 1860s, Ottoman Armenians living in the traditional Armenian strongholds of Zeitun, Van and Erzurum began to revolt against the abuse and usurpation of the local elites.

The following decades witnessed the emergence of revolutionary organizations such as Union of Salvation (1872), the Black Cross Society (1878), and the Protectors of the Fatherland (1881). These organizations emerged mostly as a response to local

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 32–34.

violation of Armenian security and rights, rather than to fight for Armenian independence. International recognition of the Armenian predicament, first in the Treaty of San Stefano and then in the Congress of Berlin in the aftermath of the Ottoman defeat against Russia, galvanized hopes for amelioration of the situation. For the Ottoman governments, under Western pressure, agreed to undertake administrative reforms addressing Armenian grievances in the eastern provinces. However, it quickly became clear that Sultan Abdulhamid II was not willing to carry out the reforms. After suspending the Constitution and proroguing the parliament in 1878, the Sultan embarked upon a repressive and autocratic project of centralizing state power. The Sultan's deliberate choice of not solving the problems of Armenians and his siding with the Kurdish leaders paved the way for an impasse for Armenians. As the Armenians realized that Western powers were not willing to put pressure on the Sultan to undertake the reforms, they began to entertain the use of arms as a means of protecting themselves and pushing the reform agenda.¹⁶⁰ The deterioration of the situation further undermined the communal authority of the church and other leadership that led to the establishment of three Armenian revolutionary parties, the Armenakan (1885), the Hunchakian Revolutionary Party (1887), and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation or Dashnaktsutun (1890).¹⁶¹

The last two political parties, the Hunchak and the Dashnaktsutun, deeply transformed Ottoman Armenian communal life from a predominantly religious one to a political one. Moreover, these parties came to dominate the political life of the

¹⁶⁰ The Armenian organizations began to arm themselves, which was a serious offence in the Ottoman system that prohibited non-Muslims from carrying weapons.

¹⁶¹ Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement; the Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century.*, 90–175.

community until the genocide at the expense of the church's authority.¹⁶² They were also significant actors in broader Ottoman politics. Both parties were established by radical Russian Armenian intellectuals. The Hunchak party was established in Geneva and the Dashnaksutiun was established in Tbilisi, Georgia. Both parties defined their area of political action as Ottoman Armenia and aimed at the liberation of the Ottoman Armenians.¹⁶³ The parties responded to the Sultan's refusal to remedy the Armenian predicament and also to the Armenian leadership's inability to address the issue.¹⁶⁴ Russian secret organizations fighting for radical transformation in the Russian Empire provided inspiration and organizational models. Balkan independence movements were also influential examples the Armenian activists were following closely.¹⁶⁵ Similar to the Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian revolutionary independence movements, the Armenian organizations founded committees and revolutionary units in villages and cities in the eastern provinces to take up arms and disseminate revolutionary and nationalist ideas.¹⁶⁶ The parties were in unison about the use of terror and armed struggle as tactical tools to bolster their cause. The Hunchaks adopted propaganda, agitation, terror, peasant and worker activities as their revolutionary methods.¹⁶⁷ The Dashnaks were fighting a

¹⁶² Gerard J. Libaridian, "What Was Revolutionary about Armenian Revolutionary Parties in the Ottoman Empire?," in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 85.

¹⁶³ However, the meaning of liberation was different for both parties and it changed over time in line with domestic and international politics.

¹⁶⁴ Libaridian, "What Was Revolutionary about Armenian Revolutionary Parties in the Ottoman Empire?," 86.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 87.

¹⁶⁶ Simon Vratzian, "The Armenian Revolution And The Armenian Revolutionary Federation," *The Armenian Review* 3, no. 3 (October 1950), <http://asbarez.com/144618/the-armenian-revolution-and-the-armenian-revolutionary-federation/>.

¹⁶⁷ Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement; the Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century.*, 109–110.

“people’s war against the Turkish government”.¹⁶⁸ Terror was to serve the following ends: “to protect and defend, to revenge injustices, to inspire the victimized Armenian peasants to resist, to convince the sultan to implement reforms, and to pressure Europe to fulfill its promises”.¹⁶⁹ Assassination was a common method of achieving some of these goals and was used by both parties.

The Hunchaks organized demonstrations protesting against the Sultan and demanding reforms and insurrections in cities and villages such as the Kumkapı Demonstration of 1890.¹⁷⁰ They were also involved in the organization of the Sassun Rebellion of 1894 that marked a significant offensive against the government and local Kurdish leaders to put an end to officially sanctioned Kurdish oppression. With the government’s violent reprisal against the Armenians and their resistance, the rebellion became an internationally visible event leading to Western investigation of the events and further pressure on the Sultan for reforms.¹⁷¹ When Abdulhamid II refused to implement reforms, the Hunchaks organized a mass demonstration in the capital in September 1895. The demonstration of Bab-i Ali (the Sublime Porte) had multiple audiences: the Sultan, the representatives of Western powers, and the Armenian community. The Ottoman government responded with mass arrests and killings. Nevertheless, under foreign pressure the Sultan had to sign the reform program in October 1895.¹⁷² However, this program like many others that came before it was a dead letter, and no reform ensued.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 156.

¹⁶⁹ Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else*, 142. Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert*, 142.

¹⁷⁰ Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement; the Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century.*, 118.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 121–122.

¹⁷² Ibid., 122–126.

The Dashnaks adopted similar, and more daring, methods to make their case. Between 1890 and 1896, the party focused on recruiting members, expanding its committees, forming guerilla units, smuggling arms to Anatolia from Russia and Persia, and building alliances with other revolutionary organizations such as the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization.¹⁷³ The first major activity of the Dashnak party took place in August 1896 and it was a rather major attempt at the heart of the empire. A group of Dashnak revolutionaries occupied the Imperial Ottoman Bank, which was a joint venture uniting British, French and Ottoman interests. The occupiers demanded implementation of reforms in the eastern provinces that had witnessed hundreds of thousands of Armenians perish in the 1894-96 massacres. The Porte refused to negotiate with the revolutionaries, but the Russian representative managed to convince them. The Ottoman government retaliated against the Armenian community of the capital in the day that followed the occupation, and thousands of Armenians were killed.¹⁷⁴ The brutal and ruthless retaliation quelled the Dashnaks' revolutionary fervor for a while. The next significant act of the Dashnaks was the attempted assassination of Abdulhamid II. On July 21, 1905, the Dashnaks exploded a carriage near the sultan's carriage. The bombing killed 28 people and wounded fifty-six, but the Sultan was not among those wounded. This attempt, though praised by the Young Turk opposition to the sultan, did not help the Armenian cause.¹⁷⁵

In clear contrast to dominant Ottoman-Turkish perspectives rather hastily labeling these parties as separatists, the issue of Ottoman Armenian independence was much more complicated for these parties. The Hunchaks advocated Armenian self-rule and

¹⁷³ Ibid., 175.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 176–178.

¹⁷⁵ Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else*, 146–147.

independence through revolution, beginning with the founding of the party until its sixth congress in 1909. At that congress they abandoned this objective with the view that the situation of the Armenians would change during the second Constitutional era established by the Committee of Union and Progress in 1908.¹⁷⁶ The Dashnaksutiun never included Armenian independence among the objectives of the party.¹⁷⁷ The parties were oscillating between different, and at times, contradictory positions. On the one hand, they kept the expectation of national liberation as a result of Western support and intervention alive, even after the harsh repressive violence of 1894-96. On the other hand, the parties were investing, to varying extents, in Ottoman domestic politics with the hope that it would lead to meaningful change that would accommodate Armenian demands for equality, freedom and political subjectivity.¹⁷⁸ This latter investment came to its apex in the context of the 1908 Revolution.

The oppressive Hamidian autocracy brought together almost all the oppositional groups in the empire to demand the re-establishment of the constitution, which was deemed to be a solution to the empire burning troubles. Dominant and non-dominant communities of the empire were expressing their discontent with the abusive rule of the sultan and organizing secret societies to overthrow him. Most of these societies were established in the diaspora as the Sultan was not tolerating dissenting voices in the empire. In cities such as Paris, away from the direct reach of Abdulhamid II, secret organizations conspired from the 1890s to liberate the empire. The Muslim opposition

¹⁷⁶ Libaridian, "What Was Revolutionary about Armenian Revolutionary Parties in the Ottoman Empire?," 90.

¹⁷⁷ Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement; the Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century.*, 169; Libaridian, "What Was Revolutionary about Armenian Revolutionary Parties in the Ottoman Empire?," 90.

¹⁷⁸ Libaridian, "What Was Revolutionary about Armenian Revolutionary Parties in the Ottoman Empire?," 90.

groups, including the Young Turks and liberals led by Prince Sabahaddin Bey, came into contact with the Armenian parties. Even though there was no immediate cooperation or agreement, between 1905 and 1908 there emerged a cautious rapprochement between the Young Turks and the Dashnaks. This rapprochement led to practical political cooperation among these organizations and a joining together in their struggle against the Sultan.¹⁷⁹ When the armed revolt organized by the Young Turks pushed the Sultan to proclaim the restitution of the constitution in July 1908, the Armenian and Turkish populations of the empire, like others, were euphoric and had great expectations about the future of the Ottoman Empire. With the revolution, the floodgates of political imagination and action were open. “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and Justice”, the slogan of the revolution, was everywhere. For many, the long history of Ottoman reforms attempting to remold the imperial society came to a glorious end. All the subjects of the sultan now became equal citizens of the imperial body politic. Political life reached an unprecedented dynamism as numerous political organizations pursuing a myriad of agendas emerged. However, the euphoria was short-lived and it was replaced with frustration, pessimism and anxiety, especially for the non-Muslim citizens of the empire. Soon enough mass ethnic violence targeted Armenians once more in the city of Adana in Cilicia in 1909 following a counter-revolutionary coup against the Committee of Union and Progress that forced it to leave the government.¹⁸⁰

The Armenian political parties, especially the Dashnaks whose expectations had risen with the Revolution, now had to deal with the post-revolutionary turmoil. They had representatives in the Ottoman national assembly; they were part of the Ottoman political

¹⁷⁹ Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution*, 15.

¹⁸⁰ Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else*, 165–173.

system as legal parties; they were deliberating on issues related to the entire empire; and they were the leaders of the Ottoman Armenian community. They still had close communication with the Young Turks, however the revolution and Ottomanism it established were heading in a direction they did not anticipate. To put it differently,

While Young Turks' version of Ottomanism entailed the assimilation of ethnic difference, Ottoman Turkish as the main language, a centralized administrative system, and the abandonment of ethno-religious privileges, the ethnic groups perceived Ottomanism as a framework for promoting their identities, languages, and ethno-religious privileges, as well as an empire based on administrative decentralization.¹⁸¹

Taking the revolution as a means of consolidating state power, the Young Turks refused to accommodate non-dominant communities' political demands.¹⁸² The Armenians, among these communities, were still loyal to the state.¹⁸³ Nevertheless, the Armenian political parties were in a position to pursue ethnic identity politics in an environment that was prohibitively against it.

The revolution created both the possibility of a positive change for all the populations of the empire and the necessary conditions for inter-communal conflict and violence. The outcome was not preordained as all the parties involved had the opportunity to choose different options. Nevertheless, the revolution evolved into the second scenario largely because of "the lack of a sincere negotiation process between the ruling elite and the non-dominant groups concerning the empire's political systems, the emergence of ethnic politics in tandem with the consolidation of national identities, and international pressure on the Ottoman state".¹⁸⁴ The failure of the elites in establishing a

¹⁸¹ Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution*, 7.

¹⁸² Ibid., 6.

¹⁸³ Libaridian, "What Was Revolutionary about Armenian Revolutionary Parties in the Ottoman Empire?," 105.

¹⁸⁴ Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution*, 6.

unified political imagination encompassing all members of the empire intensified tensions present in the system. “Both Armenians and Turks suffered the consequences of these tensions, but the price Armenians paid was far more dear.”¹⁸⁵

Ethno-nationalism and Demographic Engineering

Post-revolutionary politics posed serious challenges and opened new opportunities. The hopes of the leading elites for getting a break from Western encroachments and pressure did not materialize.¹⁸⁶ The Young Turks expected that restoring constitutional monarchy would consolidate the central control and gain subject populations’ allegiance, which would prevent further territorial losses. In that respect, the revolution was conservative in its essence. The Young Turks undertook the revolution to save the empire and to protect the state.¹⁸⁷ The constitution, parliament, and political representation were all means of achieving that overarching purpose. The CUP leaders were trying to pursue the agenda of universal Ottoman citizenship providing equal status to all components of the imperial population and attempting to compete for nationalist movements for the allegiance of subaltern groups. They would entertain representational politics as long as all the actors agreed to operate within the framework of imperial union. A similar purpose-driven approach determined their ideological tendencies as well.

¹⁸⁵ Libaridian, “What Was Revolutionary about Armenian Revolutionary Parties in the Ottoman Empire?,” 111.

¹⁸⁶ “In 1908, Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, which it had occupied since 1876; Crete and Greece united, and Bulgaria declared itself independent. [...] The 1908 revolution did nothing to stop the European powers’ search for spheres of influence inside the empire. Britain, France, and Germany had their respective spheres in Iraq, Syria, and Anatolia. Seeking more than influence, in September 1911 Italy demanded Tripolitania (Libya), the last Ottoman province in Africa. War broke out.” Carter Vaughn Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity: A History, 1789-2007* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2010), 205.

¹⁸⁷ Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 150.

Ideology of the CUP continues to constitute a major debate in Ottoman-Turkish historiography where competing, and often mutually exclusive narratives, focusing on Turkish nationalism and Ottomanism, clash. Until very recently the strongest line was that the Young Turks pursued Turkish nationalism after the revolution in order to establish a Turkish nation-state. This narrative provided a neat and teleological historical progression from empire to nation-state that would culminate in the Republic of Turkey in 1923. The positive take on the ethno-nationalism of the CUP approved the identity transformation it brought forth. The negative take saw it as authoritarian and assimilationist and explained many episodes of communal violence with this aggressive nationalism. However, new studies of the late Ottoman politics and ideologies paint a much more complex and multi-layered picture. These studies underline the imperial, rather than national, scope and characteristics of the Young Turks' policies and ideology.

The Young Turks who carried out the Genocide were never purely Turkish ethnonationalists, never religious fanatics, but remained Ottoman modernizers in their fundamental self-conception. They were primarily state imperialists, empire preservers, rather than the founders of an ethnic nation-state. There was no thought of giving up on the Arab lands that they still controlled, or even eliminating totally their Christian and Jewish subjects, and when opportunity presented itself in 1918 the Young Turks were prepared to move north and east into Caucasia to recreate buffer states using other Muslim and Christian peoples. On the other hand, over time the Young Turks came to believe that Muslims, particularly Turks, were the appropriate people to rule the empire, that Muslims, particularly Turks, were the most trustworthy supporters of the Ottoman state, and increasingly convinced themselves that egalitarian Ottomanism was a political fantasy. Moreover, the removal of the Armenians, and later the Greeks, laid the basis for the Kemalist state, the current Turkish Republic, and many of the surviving Young Turks were among the founders of the republic.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else*, xiv–xv. Quataert also underlined the commitment of the Young Turks to preserve the empire and their imperial political imaginary. “Ottoman state elites, including the Young Turks who came to power after 1908, by and large remained loyal to Ottomanism and did not opt for Turkish nationalism, although it is often alleged that they did. It is true that some leaders, after 1908, personally pursued a new cultural identity as Turks and came to believe in Turkish superiority to others. And yet, they and their political party continued to argue for and promote the imperial policies of Ottomanism and pan-

There is consensus in the literature regarding the turning point in the CUP's ideology and relations to subaltern groups. The Balkan Wars of 1912-13 are widely seen as the determining event for the CUP and empire.¹⁸⁹

The Ottoman defeat against Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, Montenegrin and Romanian armies not only paved the way for almost all of the empire's European territory, which was perceived as the heart of the empire, but also caused a deep transformation for elites' worldview and policy choices. As Anatolia and the Arab provinces became the core territory, the administration had to formulate new governmental strategies in order to ensure that these regions stayed as part of the empire. These strategies were about imperial security and controlling these lands were the absolute priority for the CUP. To achieve this goal, the CUP implemented different policies. In the Arab provinces the central elites were ready to negotiate with local notables in terms of recognizing their authority and privilege in return for their loyalty to the state.¹⁹⁰ In Anatolia, the CUP embarked upon an aggressive policy of demographic transformation that aimed at securing the control of the dominant group, Muslim-Turks, over those who were suspected, non-Muslims including Greeks, Armenians and Assyrians. These latter were increasingly perceived to pose a threat to imperial unity and state survival. The CUP viewed non-Muslim communities of the empire as a potential

Islamism. And it is also true that, despite the personal secularist tendencies of many Young Turks, the Islamist component of Ottoman identity became more important after 1908 because of the accelerating dismemberment of the (largely Christian) European provinces of the empire."

Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 190.

¹⁸⁹ Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity: A History, 1789-2007*, 202.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 202–204. The willingness to entertain the idea of incorporating local power holders, in a continuation of traditional politics of the notables had a complex background and ultimately failed to gain Arab leaders' allegiances. For a broad analysis of the process in the Arab provinces, please see Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*.

threat, “not only as an immediate menace but as a perception of potential danger, of future peril.”¹⁹¹

The CUP’s demographic transformation policy sought to homogenize the Anatolian population that was becoming more and more Muslim and Turkish with the influx of refugees from the lost territories. Citizenship, membership of the community and loyalty came to be defined along ethno-religious lines. The sought after homogeneity was defined along ethno-nationalist lines with a strong tendency to incorporate Islam as an amalgamating factor. So when it was implemented, the Young Turk demographic policy had different agendas regarding Christian minorities and non-Turkish Muslim groups. Christian minorities, i.e. Greeks, Armenians and Assyrians, were deemed to be incompatible with the new imperial body politic. However, non-Turkish but Muslim groups were to be subjected to assimilationist measures to be incorporated into the body politic. Hence, the CUP embarked upon exterminating the Christian citizens of the empire through expulsion or massacre¹⁹² and launched an assimilation campaign against the non-Turkish Muslim population.¹⁹³

The critical scholarship on ethno-religious reorganization of the Ottoman population documented this process well. Studies on CUP demographic engineering agree on several aspects of this multifaceted process. First of all, while not ignoring the context and ruling out contingencies, this literature highlights that the CUP was

¹⁹¹ Suny, “Truth in Telling,” 941.

¹⁹² It is important to note that in the context of the CUP exterminatory policies, even though Christian groups were targeted in whole as a group, the main goal of the CUP was to decimate these groups to a population level where they ceased to pose a threat. That is why the CUP leaders closely supervised demographic statistics during the Armenian genocide.

¹⁹³ Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks’ Crime against Humanity the Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=869206>.

intentionally pursuing a policy of ethno-religious homogenization of the imperial population in Anatolia. This policy used a set of methods to achieve intended demographic configuration. These methods were “planned, interconnected, and proactive (as opposed to ‘accidental,’ isolated, or reactive) elements of these policies.”¹⁹⁴ Different authors have similar views regarding the aims of these policies: “increasing and firmly establishing political and economic power of the Turkish ethnicity in territory within the jurisdiction of the Ottoman state”¹⁹⁵; “to provide ethnographic superiority for Turkish ethnicity and to strengthen this ethnicity economically”¹⁹⁶; “to homogenize Ottoman society and fit it into their ideological template of the Turkish nation-state”¹⁹⁷; “homogenization of the Ottoman Empire.”¹⁹⁸ The studies underlined that the Young Turks intensified their categorization of the Anatolian populations and differentiation between desirable and undesirable groups. The studies that are grouped under the demographic engineering category seem to define the Ottoman state during the genocide as a “gardening state,” a metaphor developed by the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman when discussing the connection between modernity and the Holocaust.¹⁹⁹

However, the CUP pursuing policies of demographic homogenization in Anatolia does not automatically explain the Armenian genocide. Ethnic homogenization and even ethnic cleansing do not necessarily entail genocide. If the sole aim of the CUP was to

¹⁹⁴ Matthias Bjørnlund, “The 1914 Cleansing of Aegean Greeks as a Case of Violent Turkification,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 10, no. 1 (2008): 42.

¹⁹⁵ Nesim Şeker, “Demographic Engineering in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Armenians,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 3 (2007): 464.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 465.

¹⁹⁷ Uğur Ümit Üngör, “‘Turkey for the Turks’: Demographic Engineering in Eastern Anatolia, 1914-1945,” in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 289.

¹⁹⁸ Bjørnlund, “The 1914 Cleansing of Aegean Greeks as a Case of Violent Turkification,” 41.

¹⁹⁹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).

cleanse Anatolia of its Armenian population, measures other than genocide were available and the Ottoman elites traditionally had a broad repertoire of demographic transformation methods. Actually, the CUP implemented an ethnic cleansing operation against the Greeks, particularly those living in Western Anatolia and Thrace in 1913 and 1914.²⁰⁰ The operations against the Greeks aimed more at forcing them to leave rather than to destroy the community's entire livelihood and existence. Violence was employed as a strategic means of pushing the Greeks out of their traditional homeland. There were localized pogroms that caused unjustifiable suffering for the Ottoman Greeks. While the expulsion of the Greeks was not genocidal, the policies against the Armenians reached the level of full-scale genocide. Many commentators agree on the qualitative difference between ethnic cleansing as a way of transforming a population's composition, and genocide, consisting mainly of the extermination of a specific group. However, as Norman Naimark has argued, the line between ethnic cleansing and genocide is not always a thick one and ethnic cleansing can and does turn genocidal.²⁰¹ Bloxham also underlines that the Armenian genocide marked the convergence of ethnic cleansing in the form of forced mass displacement and wide-scale massacres.²⁰²

There needed to be another factor or factors to escalate the situation and to pave the way for the genocide. That trigger was the CUP leadership's national security concerns (Akçam, crimes). Many commentators on the genocide have rightly pointed to the Armenian reform agreement of February 8, 1914 as a factor that immensely

²⁰⁰ Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1912-1923* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²⁰¹ Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 3–4.

²⁰² Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*, 69.

intensified the Young Turks' perception of the Armenian threat. This agreement was a source of much anger, animosity and resentment against the Armenians and the CUP was determined to prevent its implementation. That determination was highly important in terms of shaping the CUP's policy considerations.²⁰³ Some commentators argued that the CUP decision to annihilate the Armenians was a pre-emptive measure seeking to prevent the topic of Armenian autonomy from re-emerging. One of the first things that the CUP did after the official outbreak of the war was to unilaterally abrogate the agreement on reforms in eastern Anatolia together with capitulations.

The second factor was the First World War. The unfolding of the Great War, especially the military defeats the Ottoman army suffered during the winter of 1914 and the launch of the Allied campaign at Gallipoli in the spring of 1915, had heightened the ruling elite's fears of extinction.²⁰⁴ This cataclysmic moment for the empire was one of the final steps towards the ultimate radicalization of the state policy against the Armenians. Genocide studies literature also highlights wars, especially total wars, among the factors that would increase the possibility of mass violence to evolve into genocide.²⁰⁵ Scholars like Suny underline the crucial role played by the Great War, not only in terms of providing a cover up for massacres, but also in shaping the CUP's measures against the Armenians. Suny underlines wartime contingencies rather than a clearly laid out plan as the reason behind the genocidal turn of the Armenian deportations in the early summer

²⁰³ Naimark, *Fires of Hatred : Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe*, 28.

²⁰⁴ Hilmar Kaiser, while subscribing to the Ottoman wartime security concerns argument, notes that the prospect of a Russian invasion in eastern Anatolia played a determining role in the timing and perpetration of the Armenian genocide. Hilmar Kaiser, "1915-1916 Ermeni Soykırımı Sırasında Ermeni Mülkleri, Osmanlı Hukuku ve Miliyet Politikaları," in *İmparatorluktan Cumhuriyete Türkiye'de Etnik Çatışma*, ed. Erik Jan Zürcher, 6th ed. (Istanbul: İletişim, 2011), 129.

²⁰⁵ Martin Shaw, *War and Genocide : Organized Killing in Modern Society* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press in association with Blackwell, 2003).

of 1915. Without the war, “the radical sense of endangerment among Turks would not have been as acute” and “there would have been less motivation for a revolutionary solution and political opportunities for negotiation and compromise.”²⁰⁶ Türkyılmaz also stressed the correlation between the Great War and the Armenian Genocide, “the first round of Turko-Russian clashes in the late fall of 1914 ignited the escalation, and the second wave in the spring of 1915 triggered the full-fledged genocide.”²⁰⁷ The deep transformative effect of the war also sheds light on different ways the Ottoman government dealt with Greek and Armenian groups. The ethnic cleansing campaign against the Greeks did not escalate to genocidal levels because it happened before the war. The CUP did not have a free hand to deal with the community. However, in the Armenian case, the ethnic cleansing quickly became a full-scale genocide because the nature of the perceived threat was different and the government had no international restrictions.

Various Dimensions of the Armenian Genocide

The process/machinery of destruction

The tension between the CUP leaders and the Armenians had been increasing in 1914 and during the summer violent and oppressive measures against the Armenians began. First, along the border between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in September and then expanding to surrounding areas with the outbreak of the war, the Special Organization units attacked Armenian villages, especially targeting political and religious leaders of the community. Armenian villages in other parts of Anatolia were also frequently under attack. The claimed reasons for these attacks were tax collection, forced

²⁰⁶ Suny, “Truth in Telling,” 940.

²⁰⁷ Türkyılmaz, “Rethinking Genocide,” 34.

conscriptions, rounding up military deserters, and requisitions. In many cases, the irregular units committed assaults and massacres against the Armenians.²⁰⁸ The Minister of Interior Talat Pasha ordered the dismissal of all Armenian police officers, captains and public workers in late December 1914.²⁰⁹ The ministry controlled closely whether these orders were implemented or not in critical provinces such as Erzurum, Van and Bitlis.²¹⁰ Gradually the Armenians were removed from their official posts either by dismissal or by pressure to resign. The Ottoman army's defeat at the Battle of Sarıkamış in mid-January 1915 changed the way the Armenians were being treated. Propaganda against Armenians, accusing them of stabbing the Ottomans in the back, increased. On February 25, 1915, the Ottoman army started to disarm the Armenian soldiers and then started to kill them. Especially targeted were the Armenians who served in labour battalions. The beginning of deportations intensified the annihilation of the labour battalions after May 1915.²¹¹ Severe travel restrictions were introduced in the summer of 1915 prohibiting Armenians between the ages of 16 and 60 from leaving or entering the Ottoman Empire.²¹²

The deportations of the Armenian citizens of the empire had begun even before the official deportation campaign. The early deportations were accompanied by violent oppression and localized massacres. But these measures, according to Akçam, were strategically motivated. Bloxham argues that these “early” massacres were qualitatively different than the subsequent use of genocidal violence because they were to be read

²⁰⁸ Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 137–140.

²⁰⁹ İzrail, *24 Nisan 1915*, 36–37.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 37.

²¹¹ Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*, 143–144.

²¹² İzrail, *24 Nisan 1915*, 37.

more as a warning against the Armenians to intimidate them.²¹³ The first Armenian deportations happened in Dörtyol in February 1915 in the Cilicia region, and in southern Anatolia bordering the Mediterranean Sea, where the authorities were concerned about a potential British landing at Iskenderun (Alexandretta) and possible Armenian collaboration with the invading forces. In March, deportations took place in Zeytun where the Armenian population was first sent to inner Anatolia and then redirected to Der Zor. Next the CUP rule began the systematic deportations of Armenians living in the entire Çukurova (Cilicia) region towards Der Zor.²¹⁴

On April 24, 1915 the Ministry of Interior, following requests from the Minister of War, Enver Pasha, sent out a circular to 14 provinces and 10 mutasarrifates outlawing the Armenian organizations and committees, including Dashnak, Hunchak and Ramgavar organizations, on the grounds that they had been inciting the Armenian population of the empire to armed revolt against the Ottoman state. The circular ordered the local administrations to close down these organizations, confiscate their documents, and arrest their leaders and other dissident Armenians to be prosecuted at the Court Martial.²¹⁵ In line with these orders, law enforcement authorities in Istanbul undertook a well-planned mass arrest during the evening and night of April 24. Police forces had names, addresses and institutional affiliations of leading members of the community. On that night, the police raided the headquarters of Dashnaksutun party and the offices of *Azadamard* (Fight for Freedom) newspaper. The police also arrested around 200 Armenians in

²¹³ Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide : Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*, 75.

²¹⁴ Akçam, *A Shameful Act : The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*, 145–147.

²¹⁵ İzrail, *24 Nisan 1915*, 42.

Istanbul by going to their homes one by one.²¹⁶ The arrested Armenian community members included people who had been members of the Ottoman parliament, taught at Ottoman universities, worked as public servants, and who were involved in the writing of the new constitution in 1908. They were part of Ottoman public and political life. In order not to raise tensions, police officers told the arrestees and their families that police needed information and assured them that the arrestee would be back home soon. However, the police had already prepared the General Prison (*Hapishane-i Umumi*) for the Armenian leaders.²¹⁷ The following day, imprisoned Armenian intellectuals and notables, 197 people in total, were taken to Haydarpaşa train station where they embarked on a special train prepared for transferring them to inner Anatolia. There were two groups. One group was destined to go to Ayaş and comprised 71 people. The second group included 126 people and was going to Çankırı.²¹⁸ In the days that followed, the number of arrested and deported Armenians from Istanbul reached 250. The government official law enforcement units and Special Organization units killed 174 of these Armenian leaders.²¹⁹

Double-track mechanism

Historians have provided enough evidence pointing at the employment of a double-track mechanism in order to undertake the massacres under the disguise of deportation. The Interior Ministry would first send an official deportation order to the

²¹⁶ Ibid., 43. The number of arrestees in Istanbul would quickly climb to 610.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 51.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 91–93.

²¹⁹ Izrail provides a list of all the arrested Armenians together with their professions and fate. Ibid., 227–233. For biographies of the Armenian intellectuals and leaders, please see T'ēodik and Dora Sakayan, *11 Nisan anıtı = Hushardzan April 11-i = Memorial to April 11* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2010).

provincial authorities, governors and prefects, through official channels of the Ministry. In many cases, the Department of Public Security and Dispatches sent the order. This order was issued in accordance with the temporary deportation law of May 1915. This first official order was followed by an unofficial order, originating from the CUP Central Committee, to the provinces delivered through party channels. This second order consisted of the instructions for the annihilation of the deportees.²²⁰ Upon the receipt of the official deportation order, the local authorities would pass it to security forces, in most cases the gendarme. Meanwhile, the responsible secretary of the party, on some occasions Bahaettin Şakir himself, would deliver the annihilation order to the provincial authorities. The order would be either a document or a verbal instruction by the secretary. The local authorities were expected to follow the instruction, if not they were fired or in some cases murdered.²²¹ The deportation began with the gendarme forcing already rounded up Armenians to march. Theoretically, when the deportees arrived at the provincial border, the gendarme of the next province would take over the convoy. However, in general, it was the Special Organization units that took control and the massacres ensued after this point. As a result of the extermination order and in close coordination with the gendarme, these irregular units carried out the genocide.²²² CUP apologists and subsequent Turkish governments used the legal framework of the deportation as a cover for the real intentions of the Young Turks. However, Dündar demonstrated that the deportations were deadly in themselves and constituted the

²²⁰ Akçam, *A Shameful Act : The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*, 161.

²²¹ Ibid., 161–162.

²²² Ibid., 162.

“definitive solution” to the Armenian “question.”²²³ This statement undermines the notion that the intent of the CUP was to deport and not to exterminate Armenians and shows that the deportations, as undertaken by the Young Turks, were part and parcel of the destructive thrust.

The Timing of the Decision

Akçam argues that the decision for genocide was made most likely in a secret meeting of the CUP Central Committee in late March 1915. The decision most probably coincided with the perils of the Ottoman defense against the British and French offensive at Gallipoli in late March.²²⁴ WATS participants Naimark and Kévorkian agree with Akçam’s statement that March 1915 was the time when the decision for genocide was made.²²⁵ There are differing views on when the CUP opted for more radical measures against the Armenians. Bloxham argues that rather than a decision in late-March, the deportations took a genocidal turn later, in late May 1915, in step with the unfolding of the war in eastern Anatolia.²²⁶ Mann also underlines the “punitive” and repressive, and not exterminatory, function of the deportations from Dörtyol and Zeytun in February and March 1915. The turning point for the CUP policy happened in late April when the Van uprising coincided with the Allied landings at Gallipoli. The subsequent developments lead Mann to argue that a plan for genocide was formulated on 23-25 April 1915 and it

²²³ Fuat Dündar, “Pouring a People into the Desert : The ‘Definitive Solution’ of the Unionists to the Armenian Question,” in *A Question of Genocide : Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 276.

²²⁴ Akçam, *A Shameful Act : The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*, 152–153.

²²⁵ Suny, “Truth in Telling,” 945; Naimark, *Fires of Hatred : Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe*, 29; Raymond H Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 244.

²²⁶ Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide : Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*, 87.

evolved towards a full-scale genocide throughout May. The full-fledged plan for genocide was in force at the beginning of June 1915.²²⁷

Perpetrators

The Armenian genocide was a “statist genocide”²²⁸ or a “state project”²²⁹ The CUP Central Committee’s decision was a result of long deliberation, consideration and careful calculus. The committee members discussed extensively the matter and reached the decision. The Central Committee of the party was largely responsible for the conception of the genocide as a solution to the “Armenian question” and for its subsequent implementation. The majority of government members did not know about the genocide decision. The legislative branch of administration was also left in the dark because the Ottoman parliament had gone to early recess on March 1 following a law on February 11, 1915. The CUP was mostly unchallenged in its implementation of the genocide because it received the authority to pass temporary laws from the parliament before it went to recess. The genocide and all the related actions were undertaken through temporary laws issued by the government.²³⁰

²²⁷ Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 146–151.

²²⁸ Ibid., 156.

²²⁹ Donald Bloxham and Fatma Müge Göçek, “The Armenian Genocide,” in *The Historiography of Genocide*, ed. Dan Stone (Basingstoke [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 355. However, It is important not to isolate the state as an agent. The intrinsic overlap of interests of many social groups and classes culminated in the genocide. The state is absolutely not an abstract category carrying out its own agenda. The genocidal responsibility was much wider and encompassed many members of the society. The “destruction as construction” thesis, Kevorkian, and other studies pointing at the genocide making possible the emergence of the Turkish Republic reveal the deep connections between the state and the society.

²³⁰ Akçam, *A Shameful Act : The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*, 157.

The execution of the genocide happened under the cover of the official deportation orders.²³¹ The Ministries of Interior, War and Justice constituted the nexus that coordinated and supervised the extermination of the Armenians within the Ittihadist government. The CUP and its Central Committee had almost absolute control of the political regime where Talat, the Minister of Interior, and Enver, the Minister of War, were dominating the government and the party. These two ministries organized and coordinated the genocide. Talat and his ministry were the main state mechanism that implemented the genocide by issuing the majority of genocide orders. The Interior Ministry's Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants was directly involved in the perpetration of genocide.²³² Nevertheless, the regular administrative agents and bureaucrats were not fully trusted to carry out this crucial task. The CUP employed its own emissaries for the supervision of the entire process of genocide. It is important to note that the Central Committee of the CUP had been heavily involved in the perpetration of the genocide.²³³ Many commentators point out the convergence between the CUP as the ruling party and the state apparatus. The cadres of the CUP were quickly assigned to key posts and they played important roles in the process. However, "this was not a united state launching genocide. But its radical core would exercise a mixture of ministerial and party powers to enforce its will."²³⁴

The Special Organization (*Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*) played a particular role in the perpetration of the Armenian genocide.²³⁵ The irregular paramilitary units, under the

²³¹ Ibid., 153–156.

²³² Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 157.

²³³ Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide*, 219.

²³⁴ Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 163.

²³⁵²³⁵ The history of the Special Organization requires more study as there wide ranging views about its emergence and its evolution. Naimark maintains that the CUP, to be more specific Enver

orders and supervision of the CUP Central Committee, executed the genocidal plan. These units were responsible for the massacres, looting, torture, and sexual violence committed against the Armenians. According to Akçam, the decision to form the Special Organization units in eastern Anatolia was dated August 2, 1914, at the same meeting when the CUP Central Committee agreed on empire-wide general mobilization. These units had two main tasks, one external and one internal. The external task was to incite and organize uprisings among Muslim and Turkic groups in Egypt, the Caucasus, Iran and India against the British and Russians. This task was closely connected with the military efforts of the empire and was part of the war strategies. Internally, the task of these units was to exterminate domestic threats, possible fifth column activities. The CUP's perceived threat was the Armenian population of the empire. The Ministry of War housed the Special Organization's executive commission consisting of representatives of the CUP Central Committee, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of War. The executive commission was to coordinate the formation and training of these irregular units that would, first and foremost, engage in operations in Russia and Iran. Erzurum, because of its strategic position, was chosen as an operational center and Bahaettin Şakir for the committee located here. The irregular para-military units were part of the Third Army and their activities closely controlled by Bahaettin Şakir.²³⁶

With the beginning of the efforts to form irregular units in August 1914, the authorities tapped into three human sources: Kurdish, Chechen, and Circassian tribes,

Pasa, established the Special Organization as a reply to the empire's internal and external security issues. Before the Armenian genocide, the Special Organization executed the forced expulsion of the Ottoman Greeks from Anatolia starting from 1913 onwards. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred : Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe*, 27.

²³⁶ Akçam, *A Shameful Act : The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*, 130–134.

convicts serving time in prisons, and recent Muslim and Turkic emigrants from the Balkans and the Caucasus. Local party secretaries were given the task of forming these units and organizing their training in Istanbul or in the provinces.²³⁷ In total, 12,000 were enlisted into the Special Organization units.²³⁸ According to Mann, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* units consisted of between 20,000 and 30,000 men.²³⁹ Newly formed units began their duties in Russia and against the Armenians in September 1914.²⁴⁰ During these initial activities the Special Organization units had some military successes externally, but then faced military setbacks against the Russians. Their interior operations against Armenians were continuing. However, as a result of a lack of discipline, they began to attack Muslim villages as well that led to unrest among the population.²⁴¹ The regular army was also uneasy about these irregular units, which were closely tied to the civilian wing of the CUP, led by Talat Pasha, rather than its military wing, led by Enver Pasha. The rising tension between these wings paved the way for the reorganization of the Special Organization, or at least a branch of it. Late February or early March 1915, in a meeting in Erzurum chaired by Bahaettin Şakir, it was decided that the Special Organization units were to be supervised by the party. Furthermore, the main task of the reorganized Special Organization became the implementation of the policy against the Armenians, which took a genocidal turn starting in March 1915. Bahaettin Şakir was entrusted with the task of

²³⁷ Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 166; Akçam, *A Shameful Act : The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*, 134–137.

²³⁸ Naimark, *Fires of Hatred : Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe*, 28.

²³⁹ Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 164.

²⁴⁰ Akçam, *A Shameful Act : The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*, 137.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 139.

coordinating and supervising this task in the field.²⁴² Reorganized and controlled only by the party, the Special Organization units executed the Armenian genocide.

The role played by the regular army units seems to be more complicated and there are various views in the literature. The majority of the sources argue that the involvement of the regular units were minimal. Instead the gendarme, irregular units, and bands (*çete*) carried out most of the killings. The regular army units were heavily involved in Armenian massacres along the Russian front and in Cilicia. Their participation was more contingent along the Baghdad Railway. Nevertheless, regular army units were not the main state agent mobilized for the killings.²⁴³

Two phases of massacres or physical annihilation

The genocide unfolded in two temporal windows and two geographies. The first phase, between the spring of 1915 and fall of 1916, witnessed the annihilation of the majority of the genocide's victims during deportations throughout Anatolia. The massacres of male Armenians who had been conscripted to the Ottoman army had begun earlier. The second wave of massacres was localized in Der Zor, current day Syria and Iraq. As the percentage of Armenian deportees in the concentration camps in this region exceeded 10% of the overall Muslim population, the authorities ordered further killings in order to reduce the Armenian population to "acceptable" ratios.²⁴⁴ Mann also subscribes to the two-phase perspective.²⁴⁵

²⁴² Ibid., 151–152.

²⁴³ Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 163.

²⁴⁴ Taner Akçam, "Demographic Policy and the Annihilation of the Armenians," in *The Young Turks' Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012).

²⁴⁵ Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 152.

Multiple Forms of Exterminatory Policies

Assimilation as an Integral Part of the Genocide

In addition to physical destruction, the Armenian Genocide took other forms of destruction for the Armenians. One form that has recently begun to receive increased scholarly and popular attention is the fate of Armenian women and children who physically survived the genocide through forced assimilation. Forced assimilation, intermingled with systematic acts of sexual violence such as rape, abduction, sexual slavery and forced marriage for women, constitute a distinctive characteristic of the Armenian case.²⁴⁶ Those acts highlight the gendered aspects of the genocide and its connections with dehumanization. Generally the sexual violence against and forced assimilation of women and children followed the extermination of the male population through massacres. The elimination of men made women and children further vulnerable to widespread abuse and attacks.²⁴⁷

A broad range of agents including army officers, public servants, local notables, and ordinary people committed or were complicit in the perpetration of acts of sexual

²⁴⁶ Uğur Ümit Üngör, “The Armenian Genocide: A Multi-Dimensional Process of Destruction,” *Global Dialogue* 15, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2013), <http://www.worlddialogue.org/content.php?id=551>.

²⁴⁷ Bjørnlund argues that these gendered moments of the Armenian genocide constituted two interconnected gendercides, Matthias Bjørnlund, “‘A Fate Worse Than Dying’: Sexual Violence during the Armenian Genocide,” in *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe’s Twentieth Century*, ed. Dagmar Herzog, *Genders and Sexualities in History* (Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009), 16–58, http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780230234291_2. For a broad discussion on gendercide, please see Adam Jones, *Gendercide and Genocide* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004); Elisa Von Joeden-Forgey, “Gender and Genocide,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

violence towards the women and children during deportations.²⁴⁸ As a result, between 100,000 and 200,000 women and children, about 5 to 10 percent of the whole Ottoman Armenian population, were incorporated into Muslim households and went through forced assimilation.²⁴⁹ Sarafian has identified four main trajectories of forced assimilation: 1- “Voluntary” conversion of individuals in the initial stages of the 1915 persecutions; 2- Selection of individual Armenians by individual Muslim hosts for absorption into Muslim households; 3- Distribution of Armenians to Muslim families by government agencies; 4- The use of Ottoman government-sponsored orphanages as a direct means of assimilating Armenian children.²⁵⁰ Akçam lists the same methods of assimilation: “religious conversion, a temporary policy of dispersed settlement, the reassignment of children from Christianity to Islam, and the forced marriage or concubinage of young Christian women and adolescent girls with Muslim men.”²⁵¹ Young female children constituted the largest group who were assimilated into Muslim households.²⁵²

Genocide scholars argue that the forced assimilation amounted to a forced renunciation of one’s identity as a genocidal process²⁵³ and it belonged to the same

²⁴⁸ Katharine Derderian, “Common Fate, Different Experience: Gender-Specific Aspects of the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 19, no. 1 (2005): 7.

²⁴⁹ Bjørnlund, “A Fate Worse Than Dying,” 34.

²⁵⁰ Ara Sarafian, “The Absorption of Armenian Women and Children into Muslim Households as a Structural Component of the Armenian Genocide,” in *In God’s Name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack (New York: Berghahn, 2001), 210–211.

²⁵¹ Taner Akçam, “Assimilation: The Conversion and Forced Marriage of Christian Children,” in *The Young Turks’ Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 287–340.

²⁵² Derderian, “Common Fate, Different Experience,” 9.

²⁵³ Üngör, “The Armenian Genocide: A Multi-Dimensional Process of Destruction.”

genocidal calculus as the massacres.²⁵⁴ Subjected to simultaneous selective repression and discriminatory recognition, Islamized Armenians' experiences have long been ignored as they defied straightforward ethno-religious identity compartmentalization and also complicated victim-survivor characterizations.²⁵⁵ Attesting to "the gendered and age-conscious" perpetration of the genocide that sought the extermination of Armenianness as an ethno-religious and patrilineal identity by massacring men and by assimilating women and children into Turkishness, this aspect of the genocide needs to be studied more.²⁵⁶

Situated at the intersection of gender, group reproduction and ethnicity, sexual violence, forced assimilation and survival through relinquishing one's identity came to be one of the major genocidal acts Armenian women and children had to endure. In the post-war era, the forcibly assimilated Armenian population became a valuable source for Armenian and Turkish sides that laid claims to the same land to establish their nation-states. Within the political climate of national self-determination, both sides were trying to increase the population numbers of their respective ethno-religious communities. Demographics was of key importance to legitimate territorial claims. Hence both parties were trying to claim as many Armenian converts as their own.²⁵⁷ Sarafian notes that between the end of the Great War and the establishment of the Turkish republic, some 20,000 Armenian women and children were returned to their ethno-religious

²⁵⁴ Sarafian, "The Absorption of Armenian Women and Children into Muslim Households as a Structural Component of the Armenian Genocide," 209–221.

²⁵⁵ Ayşe Gül Altınay, "Susunluk Katmanları Aralanırken: Müslümanlaş(tırıl)mış Ermeniler Nerede?," in *Torunlar* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2009), 207–31.

²⁵⁶ Lerna Ekmekcioglu, "A Climate for Abduction, a Climate for Redemption: The Politics of Inclusion during and after the Armenian Genocide," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55, no. 03 (July 2013): 522–53.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

community.²⁵⁸ Nevertheless the majority of assimilated Armenian women and children were not able to return.²⁵⁹

Dispossession of Armenians and Confiscation of Armenian property

In 2010 the Turkish public “discovered” yet another well-kept secret about the Armenian genocide. Journalist Nevzat Onaran’s work on confiscated Armenian properties revealed that the republic’s presidential residence in Ankara, *Çankaya Köşkü*, originally belonged to an Armenian family, the Kasabians.²⁶⁰ The family had been subjected to deportations, and their estates as well as properties were seized. On May 30, 1921, the Ankara municipality assigned the residence to Mustafa Kemal’s use as leader of the national struggle. This seizure and plunder of Armenian wealth quickly fell prey to hegemonic oblivion and denial.²⁶¹ Aside from the symbolic heart of the Turkish republic, countless movable and immovable Armenian properties were confiscated and transferred to Turks and Muslims during and after the genocide. Studies on the confiscation of Armenian property constitute a recent but quickly expanding field of analysis within Armenian genocide scholarship. These studies are limited in number and face

²⁵⁸ Sarafian, “The Absorption of Armenian Women and Children into Muslim Households as a Structural Component of the Armenian Genocide,” 217.

²⁵⁹ The last decade or so witnessed an emerging number of books explaining the discoveries of Armenian ancestors in contemporary Turkish families. A growing number of people learn that one or sometimes both of their grandparents or great-grandparents were born Armenian but then had to convert to Islam and become Turk. These narratives complicate an already complicated reality about the Armenian genocide. While these grandparents are survivors of genocide in physical terms, they had to relinquish many constitutive components of their Armenianness. Would they be still considered as Armenians, and hence survivors? Or were they to be considered as ethnically dead subjects even though they are alive? Ayşe Gül Altınay, “Gendered Silences, Gendered Memories: New Memory Work on Islamized Armenians in Turkey,” *Eurozine*, 2014, <https://research.sabanciuniv.edu/26102/1/Eurozine-GenderedSilencesGenderedMemories.pdf>.

²⁶⁰ Nevzat Onaran, *Emvâl-i metrûke olayı: Osmanlı’da ve Cumhuriyet’te Ermeni ve Rum mallarının Türkleştirilmesi* (Sultanahmet, İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2010).

²⁶¹ Laure Marchand and Guillaume Perrier, *Türkiye ve Ermeni Hayaleti: Soykırımın İzinde Adımlar*, trans. Renan Akman (İstanbul: İletişim, 2014), 189–197.

considerable challenges in accessing crucial archival data in Turkey. Nevertheless, they shed light on a previously neglected aspect of the genocide.

The physical extermination of the Armenian population constitutes the major component of the genocidal process. However, focusing solely on this aspect narrows down the scope of a much more complex and multi-layered dynamic of destruction. The literature on the genocide slowly approaches agreement on the fact that confiscation of Armenian property and the expropriation of the Armenians were equally destructive components of the genocide. Seizure of the “Armenian economy”, including Armenian merchants, industrialists, factory owners, agricultural producers, bankers, artisans and middlemen, was directly tied to Turkish demographic engineering.²⁶² It belongs to a set of strategies and policies, including politicide, displacement, sexual violence and forced assimilation, which sought to eliminate the Armenian existence in Anatolia. This growing literature emphasizes the genocidal intent of this process because it attests to the fact that the perpetrators of the genocide perceived the expropriation as a means of reducing the Armenians’ possibility of survival.²⁶³ The literature also agrees on the ideological origin of the confiscation policy. Corollary to the ethnic homogenization of Anatolia, expropriation of the Armenians aimed at “Turkifying” the economy or creating a national economy based on the dominance of Turkish and Muslim groups. It consisted broadly of wide scale transfer of property and wealth from Armenians to the majority groups. The elimination of Armenian ownership of businesses meant the elimination of competition

²⁶² Bedross Der Matossian, “The Taboo within the Taboo: The Fate of ‘Armenian Capital’ at the End of the Ottoman Empire,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies. Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey*, October 6, 2011, para. 2–4, <https://ejts.revues.org/4411>.

²⁶³ Taner Akçam, “The Question of Confiscated Armenian Property,” in *The Young Turks’ Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012).

for Turkish and Muslim business owners. Confiscation and colonization of Armenian property contributed to the rise of the Turkish national bourgeoisie.²⁶⁴

Seizure of Armenian property attests to the crucial role of exterminating Armenian economic presence in order to establish Turkish-Muslim presence.²⁶⁵

Expropriation is also important evidence, it suggests that the genocide, rather than being a momentary aberration or temporary collapse of legal order, was actually a constitutive element of late imperial and republican “legality”. The CUP rulers perpetrated the genocide in general and property confiscation specifically with a series of laws, decrees and instructions regulating, sanctifying and legitimizing destruction policies and acts. Hilmar Kaiser highlights the importance of Talat Pasha and other officials’ orders in perpetrating the confiscation, and argues that the legality of laws and policies on Armenian property was completely fictional.²⁶⁶ The successive laws were only to cover up the illegality of policies against Armenians and their property.²⁶⁷ The legality of the genocide and its economic destruction component was based on making what was illegal, legal, and what was unjust, just.

The legal framework for body on *Emval-i Metruke* (Abandoned Property), comprised mainly of the Abandoned Properties Law of May 17, 1915; the government’s decision on May 30, 1915; the guidelines handed down on June 10, 1915; the temporary law passed on September 26, 1915; and the instructions on how to implement this law, dated November 8, 1915. The legal framework established specialized commissions on

²⁶⁴ Uğur Ümit Üngör and Mehmet Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property* (London; New York: Continuum, 2011), 80.

²⁶⁵ Taner Akçam and Ümit Kurt, *Kanunların Ruhü: Emval-i Metruke Kanunlarında Soykırımın İzini Sürmek* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012), 11–12.

²⁶⁶ Kaiser, “1915-1916 Ermeni Soykırımı Sırasında Ermeni Mülkleri, Osmanlı Hukuku ve Miliyet Politikaları,” 125.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 140.

the abandoned properties, *Emval-i Metruke İdare Komisyonları* (the Abandoned Property Commissions) and *Tasfiye Komisyonları* (the Liquidation Commissions).²⁶⁸ The Ottoman administrative structure and institutions were involved in the confiscation and transfer of Armenian properties. Many government ministries, provincial and local authorities and village elders were involved in the wide scale operation of “Turkifying and Islamizing” the economy.²⁶⁹

The wealth derived from confiscated Armenian property was used for a number of purposes: “to satisfy the needs of the Muslim refugees, to create a Muslim bourgeois class, to satisfy the military necessities during the war, to cover the government’s expenses of deporting the Armenians, to satisfy various government necessities, and finally to establish irregular militias.”²⁷⁰ The abandoned property laws and regulations prohibited deported Armenians from controlling properties they left behind while maintaining their proprietary rights over these properties. The laws also stipulated that the state would return the properties to their Armenian owners upon their return or would pay the owners the value of their properties if these were liquidated while they were away. However, except during the brief Armistice period, no arrangements were made to return property or to pay their price after the actual spoliation of property.²⁷¹

The republican legal framework, in an attempt to finish what its predecessor had begun, established a complex legal system sealing the expropriation of Armenians. The main goal of this system was not to return any single property or pay any money to

²⁶⁸ Akçam and Kurt, *Kanunların Ruhu: Emval-I Metruke Kanunlarında Soykırımın İzini Sürmek*, 32–45.

²⁶⁹ Kaiser, “1915-1916 Ermeni Soykırımı Sırasında Ermeni Mülkleri, Osmanlı Hukuku ve Miliyet Politikaları,” 155.

²⁷⁰ Matossian, “The Taboo within the Taboo,” para. 27.

²⁷¹ Akçam and Kurt, *Kanunların Ruhu: Emval-I Metruke Kanunlarında Soykırımın İzini Sürmek*, 21–22.

Armenians. The republic, to reach that goal, did its best to keep surviving Armenians and their inheritors outside Turkey and to prevent them from claiming what was still legally their property.²⁷² The institutional and ideological continuities between successive phases are evident. Der Matossian argues that while the Ittihadist policies had constituted the confiscation phase, the republican policies corresponded to appropriation.²⁷³ The confiscation and distribution of Armenian property transformed the relations between central and local elites. Through its control over the genocide and property distribution, the CUP was able to renegotiate the terms of power dynamics with local loci of power and to build a wide coalition by garnering local elites' loyalty. The local notables who received significant amounts of Armenian property and businesses not only supported the genocidal policy but also actively participated in it. This wider coalition or, in other words, the new Turkish urban and rural middle class, constituted the backbone of CUP power after the First World War and during the Republican period. The economic usurpation of Armenian property created a strong and long-lasting political power bloc that is still practically ruling Turkey.²⁷⁴

This bloc, held together by plunder among other things, was the main driving force behind the “national resistance” movement that emerged following the First World War. The defeat in the war and the Mudros Armistice created the conditions for Armenians and Greeks who were expelled from Anatolia to return to their homes and claim their properties. Britain and France were supportive of the restitution of their properties. Those who benefitted from the seizure of Armenian and Greek properties were not content with this news. The prospect of having to hand back properties and to

²⁷² Ibid., 26.

²⁷³ Matossian, “The Taboo within the Taboo,” para. 11.

²⁷⁴ Üngör and Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction*, 167.

lose wealth they acquired paved the way for their involvement in national movement and local defence organizations. It is not surprising that these organizations were strongest in locations previously densely populated by Armenian and Greek citizens of the Ottoman Empire. Beneficiaries of property transfer were the first to react against Armenians and Greeks. In regions such as Cilicia, Adana and its environs in southern Anatolia, and İzmir/Smyrna, in western Anatolia, they embarked on armed struggle.²⁷⁵ A similar pattern was observable in the Antep region, in south-eastern Anatolia. In Antep, the local Muslim population had not reacted heavily against the invading British army, however with the arrival of returning Armenians and actualization of property restitutions, the Muslim population took up arms. It is not a farfetched argument to state that the local involvement in and support for the Turkish national struggle was closely tied to defending economic gains made during the genocide rather than to a popular and unconditional commitment to national struggle or to a fight against British or French imperialism.²⁷⁶ To sum up, the process of confiscation and colonization of Armenian property was part and parcel of the formation of the Turkish national state. The economic foundation of the state was established, to a great extent, as a result of the expropriation of the Armenians. Üngör and Polatel's statement is to the point, "economic destruction served and precipitated economic construction."²⁷⁷ The elimination of the Armenian economic wealth meant the building of the Turkish one.

²⁷⁵ Fikret Başkaya, *Batıllaşma, çağdaşlaşma, kalkınma paradigmanın iflası: resmi ideolojinin eleştirisine giriş* (İstanbul: Doz, 1991), 38.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.; Bülent Tanör, *Türkiye'de Yerel Kongre İktidarlari, 1918-1920* (İstanbul: Yenigün, 1998).

²⁷⁷ Üngör and Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction*, 168.

Cultural Destruction

A growing literature on the Armenian genocide underlines that rather than being an event happening in a single moment, the genocide has a longer arc. The genocidal process continued well after the mass murder of Ottoman Armenians. Systematic and continued attacks on Armenian cultural heritage have represented the cultural component of genocidal process. More in the realm of symbolic violence but equally destructive of Armenian group identity, this component entails the erasure of Armenians from history and the removal of referents marking their legacy.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's statement is a clear example of how he justified and sanctioned the ongoing assault on Armenian presence in Turkey. In 1923, during a speech to Muslim merchants from Adana, he stated,

Our friend mentioned that Armenians and others who controlled our Adana invaded workshops and acted as if they are the owners of this country. Doubtlessly, this is the highest injustice and audacity (chutzpah). Armenians have no rights in this fertile country. The land is yours; it belongs to the Turks. This homeland was Turkish in history; hence it is Turkish and will be Turkish forever. ... In the end, the homeland belongs to its authentic owners. Armenians and others have no rights here. These fertile lands are deep and essential Turkish homeland.²⁷⁸

The national leader's categorical justification of Armenian expropriation and absolute erasure of Armenians from history inscribed the Turks as the "native" and "authentic owners" of Anatolia. The Turkish state and large segments of society have not missed any opportunity to follow their leader in obliterating Armenians and their legacy. Hence Armenians were denied a past as well as a present in Turkey.

²⁷⁸ Quoted in Hür, Ayşe, "Mustafa Kemal'in İttihatçılığı ve 1915'e Dair Tavrı," *Radikal*, May 12, 2013, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/ayse-hur/mustafa-kemalin-ittihatciligi-ve-1915e-dair-tavri-1133108/>. My translation.

Eradication of Armenian material culture, especially Armenian architectural heritage, constitutes a relatively less studied aspect of the genocide, due mostly to Turkish official denial which causes the channeling of energies into “proving” corporeal annihilation of Armenians. Sustained attacks on Armenian cultural patrimony in Turkey provide further evidence that Armenian identity has been targeted. Armenian built heritage has been suffering from deliberate attacks, destructive neglect and systematic conversion since 1915. Armenian churches, schools and monasteries were specifically targeted because they were not only markers of the “living presence” of Armenians in Anatolia and their “difference” undermining Muslim homogeneity of the land, but also they were perceived to profane a territory now claimed exclusively for the Turks and Muslims. Armenians, one of the autochthonous communities of Anatolia, have a recorded history in the regions going back to the sixth century BCE. They came under Ottoman domination in the fifteenth century.²⁷⁹ Armenian material culture has been a significant component of Armenian identity and communal life. As such, built environment and cultural artefacts have been significant carriers of cultural continuity for Armenians.

Until the last period of Ottoman rule, the Armenian material culture did not face a major threat and there were not many cases of direct attacks; however this relatively less endangered presence was replaced with a genocidal policy incorporating “cultural cleansing.”²⁸⁰ Official and officially sanctioned agents attacked Armenian heritage. The strategy was simple: remove the Armenians and destroy identifiably Armenian religious and secular buildings. The sheer majority of Armenian churches, schools, and

²⁷⁹ Peter Balakian, “Raphael Lemkin, Cultural Destruction, and the Armenian Genocide,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 27, no. 1 (2013): 63.

²⁸⁰ Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 53.

monasteries that existed before the Great War have ceased to exist as “Armenian” institutions and buildings, either as a result of outright destruction, or conversion.²⁸¹ The destruction of Armenian sacral buildings began simultaneously with massacres. In some instances, such as the demolition of the Sivas Armenian Cathedral, Armenian forced labour units were employed to bring down the building. Such acts of symbolic violence clearly indicated the perpetrators’ determination to obliterate Armenian presence in Turkey,²⁸² hence obliterating Armenian cultural heritage in Anatolia and perpetuating Armenian cultural genocide.

The destruction of Armenian heritage took a variety of forms including deliberate destruction, vandalism, neglect, forced conversion, exposure to natural elements, earthquakes, treasure seekers looking for “Armenian gold”, and theft. A brief survey by Hofmann reveals that some Armenian sacral sites were used as military artillery training targets and blasted with dynamites; some were converted to mosques; some were turned into warehouses and stables.²⁸³ Some religious buildings were encased in military zones, extracting them from communal life completely.²⁸⁴ Active interference with the preservation of used Armenian religious buildings together with intentional neglect of heritage claimed a significant number of Armenian buildings. In 1974, a UNESCO report marked 913 Armenian historical sites in Turkey. Out of these 913, 464 were razed completely after 1923. Of the remainder, 252 became ruins. Only 197 sites were in usable

²⁸¹ Balakian, “Raphael Lemkin, Cultural Destruction, and the Armenian Genocide,” 63.

²⁸² Raymond Kévorkian, “Le Sort Du Patrimoine Arménien En Turquie: Processus de Spoliation et de ‘gestion’ Des Biens Culturels” (The presence of the past: Legal dimensions of Armenian-Turkish Relations, Berkeley, Calif., 2011), <http://www.keghart.com/R-Kevorkian-patrimoine>.

²⁸³ Tessa Hofmann, *Armenians in Turkey Today: A Critical Assessment of the Situation of the Armenian Minority in the Turkish Republic* (Bruxelles: Forum of Armenian Associations of Europe, 2003), 39–40.

²⁸⁴ Marchand and Perrier, *Türkiye ve Ermeni Hayaleti: Soykırımın İzinde Adımlar*, 112.

shape after serious reconstruction.²⁸⁵ To make matters more complicated, today Armenians are the owners of only 6 churches in Anatolia while many belong to Muslims and Turks.²⁸⁶ In the 1990s, “destructive restoration” appeared as a notable threat to Armenian cultural heritage. Quasi-restorative projects such as the one of the Church of Ani had more to do with pillaging and resource transfer than with preservation of Armenian heritage.²⁸⁷

Simultaneously with the eradication of Armenian built cultural heritage, another part of that cultural heritage, toponyms, were targeted. The affinity between physical and discursive destruction processes is unmistakable.²⁸⁸ An obvious indicator of the relationship between political power and naming, systematic and ideological replacement of place names has contributed to the imagining of a Turkish national geography purged of non-Muslim and non-Turkish components.²⁸⁹ Corollary to the “demographic engineering”, “toponymical engineering” aimed at establishing Turkish dominance at the expense of other ethno-religious identities.²⁹⁰ Inscribing the nation’s presence made possible by the physical annihilation of communities excluded from the body politic, changed toponyms ensured that the cultural presence of these groups also disappeared from mental and actual maps. Pointing at the continuity between, and interdependence of, destruction and construction inherent in the formation of Turkish nation-state and

²⁸⁵ Hofmann, *Armenians in Turkey Today*, 42.

²⁸⁶ Marchand and Perrier, *Türkiye ve Ermeni Hayaleti: Soykırımın İzinde Adımlar*, 112.

²⁸⁷ Hofmann, *Armenians in Turkey Today*, 41.

²⁸⁸ Sevan Nişanyan, *Hayali Coğrafyalar: Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye’de Değiştirilen Yeradları* (İstanbul: TESEV, 2011), 25.

²⁸⁹ Nişanyan, *Hayali Coğrafyalar: Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye’de Değiştirilen Yeradları*.

²⁹⁰ Kerem Öktem, “The Nation’s Imprint: Demographic Engineering and the Change of Toponyms in Republican Turkey,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, no. 7 (2008), <http://ejts.revues.org/2243>.

national homeland as a homogenous population and territory, the change of toponyms has been part of the genocidal process in Turkey.

The state-led nomenclature drive, spearheaded by military and civilian bureaucratic elites, starting from the 1910s and extending to the post-1980 military coup period, changed human as well as physical geographical names. Armenian, Greek, Assyrian, Arabic and Kurdish toponyms were replaced with “Turkish” ones. The first wave of the operation started following Enver Pasha’s decree on January 6, 1916. The decree reads, “It has been decided that province, district, town, village, mountain and river names in languages belonging to non-Muslim communities such as Armenian, Greek and Bulgarian shall be replaced with Turkish ones. I would ask your help in implementing this decision as quickly as possible at this opportune/suitable moment (*şu müsaid zamanımız*).”²⁹¹ Benefitting from the suitable moment during the Great War, the Unionist leadership began to change toponyms in the same way they were exterminating and expelling Armenians, Assyrians and other minority communities. By 1928 many Armenian, Greek and Kurdish toponyms were changed, not as a result of widespread and systematic change in this period, but more through spontaneous endeavours of military and civil elites.²⁹² Nevertheless, the Turkification of toponyms had sustained political and ideological support.

The early republican period, under the single-party rule of the Republican People’s Party, laid the groundwork for toponymical Turkification but did not witness a major concentrated effort to undertake the endeavour. One of the initiatives in this period

²⁹¹ Quoted in Nişanyan, *Hayali Coğrafyalar: Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye’de Değiştirilen Yeradları*, 41. My translation.

²⁹² Ibid., 42; Öktem, “The Nation’s Imprint: Demographic Engineering and the Change of Toponyms in Republican Turkey,” para. 19–26.

was the ban on the use of historical region names such as Armenia, Kurdistan and Lazistan.²⁹³ These names, which were in use during the Ottoman period, were used by Ottoman elites.²⁹⁴ The names however, became reminders of “alien” heritages that had no place in Turkish land. Hence the production and import of maps with such nomenclature was banned. The major change in toponyms happened during the 1960s, following the military’s intervention in politics, and under the supervision of the “Expert Commission for Name Change” established in 1957. By 1968, almost one third of village names had been changed.²⁹⁵ The spatial concentration of villages that received new names attests to the ethno-nationalist ideological and political goals of the campaign. Regions inhabited primarily by the Kurds and with strong Armenian, Greek and Lazuri heritage in the past were the main target of name changes.²⁹⁶ At this stage, the aim was the total erasure of signifiers pointing to the country’s multi-religious background and ethnicity and the imposition of a single ethno-religious identity over the geography.²⁹⁷ The Turkish state

²⁹³ Öktem, “The Nation’s Imprint: Demographic Engineering and the Change of Toponyms in Republican Turkey,” para. 31.

²⁹⁴ Hür, Ayşe, “Tez Zamanda Yer Isimleri Değiştirile!,” *Taraf*, March 1, 2009, <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/ayse-hur/tez-zamanda-yer-isimleri-degistirile/4295/>. Lucian Sahakyan argues that “Kurdistan” and “Anatolia” were toponyms introduced during the reign of Abdul Hamid II in order to suppress “Armenia” as the historical name of the region. Furthermore, the use of “Armenia” in Ottoman official documents was prohibited starting from 1880. Lusine Sahakyan, *Turkification of Toponyms in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey* (Montreal: Arod Books, 2010), 12.

²⁹⁵ Öktem, “The Nation’s Imprint: Demographic Engineering and the Change of Toponyms in Republican Turkey,” para. 40.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., para. 44. At this stage, there was no significant Armenian or Greek presence in Anatolia. Demographic engineering initiated before the Great War removed almost all non-Muslim native inhabitants from Anatolia. In case of Kurdish place names, the state was clearly pursuing an assimilationist agenda against the Kurdish identity. Turkey’s attempts at denying and obliterating Kurdishness with a range of violent means paved the way for armed conflict and civil war after the 1980 military coup. Another wave of toponym changes in Kurdistan accompanied attempts at suppressing Kurds with corporeal violence and imposing Turkish-Islamic official ideology. Ibid., para. 56–62.

²⁹⁷ Nişanyan, *Hayali Coğrafyalar: Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye’de Değiştirilen Yeradları*, 58–60.

managed to achieve this goal to a great extent and, especially in the case of Armenian and Greek cases, irrevocably obliterated a major component of their cultural heritage in Turkey.

III. The Armenian Genocide Denied

In November 2014, the Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM) surveyed 1,508 people in Turkey in order to understand the population's views regarding possible policy options Turkey had in response to Armenian genocide claims that the country might face in 2015. The findings of the survey attested to the persistence of genocide denial and, even when some acknowledgement of the genocide is evident, the persistence of the view that no apology was necessary or if an apology was offered, no further steps needed to be taken. The findings also highlighted some of the main arguments used to deny the genocide. The respondents stated that the Turkish government,

- Should apologize for the Armenians who lost their lives in 1915 and admit that what had happened was a genocide: 9.1%
- Should apologize for the Armenians who lost their lives in 1915 but should take no further steps: 9.1%
- Should express its regret over the Armenians who lost their lives in 1915 but should not apologize: 12%
- Should express that not all who lost their lives in 1915 were Armenians, and express its regret for all the Ottoman citizens who perished in that period: 23.5%
- Should take no steps: 21.3%
- No idea/No response: 25%.²⁹⁸

The survey also probed the influence of political party affiliation on the population's views. The answers were broken down along the lines of five political parties represented

²⁹⁸ Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies, "Turks Regretful over the Armenian Tragedy of 1915 but Refuse to Qualify It as a Genocide," Public Opinion Surveys of Turkish Foreign Policy 2015, 2015, <http://www.edam.org.tr/en/File?id=2162>.

in the Turkish National Assembly.²⁹⁹ Other than the constituents of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), 24.4% of whom supported genocide recognition, the constituents of other major parties reported recognition rates less than 9.1% average. The survey outcomes showed that the national front against genocide denial was pretty strong. One hundred years after the genocide, after almost all perpetrators, survivors and bystanders had passed away, and Turkey was able to establish and maintain a sovereign nation-state from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, only nine percent of the population recognized that late-Ottoman policies against the Armenians constituted genocide. Even though there was some sense of regret with regard to Armenian losses, the population continued to refuse to name the events as what they were. Or to put it differently, the majority of those who were sympathetic towards Armenian losses preferred to adopt an emotional rather than an ethico-political response. For what was actually being denied was historical responsibility for the annihilation of the Armenians and injustices committed against them.

The survey outcomes were in complete resonance with the official discourse the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had announced earlier in that year. On April 23, 2014, one day before the 99th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, the Prime Minister released a “message on the events of 1915”.³⁰⁰ In the text, which was published on the Office of the Prime Minister’s website, a prime minister of Turkey, for the first time, stated, “we wish that the Armenians who lost their lives in the context of the early twentieth century rest in peace, and we convey our condolences to their

²⁹⁹ These parties were: the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP), the main opposition party Republican People’s Party (CHP), the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), and the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP).

³⁰⁰ The statement was published in nine languages: Turkish, English, French, German, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Eastern and Western Armenian languages.

grandchildren.”³⁰¹ Acknowledging the uniqueness of April 24 for the Armenians, the message continued that the Armenian suffering was one of the many sufferings all the Ottoman communities had gone through during the last period of the empire. Rather than competing sufferings, the statement continued, a “conscientious, fair and humanistic” perspective would encompass and include all. “It is a duty of humanity to acknowledge that Armenians remember suffering experienced in that period, just like every other citizen of the Ottoman Empire.” The Prime Minister adopted the language of universal duty to remember and also advocated that expressing different and sometimes conflicting opinions about the “events of 1915” was part of freedom of expression, democracy, and modernity. However, the statement was quick to set the limits to freedoms.

The Republic of Turkey will continue to approach every idea with dignity in line with the universal values of law. Nevertheless, using the events of 1915 as an excuse for hostility against Turkey and turning this issue into a matter of political conflict is inadmissible. The incidents of the First World War are our shared pain. To evaluate this painful period of history through a perspective of just memory is a humane and scholarly responsibility.³⁰²

Only within the parameters of “just memory”³⁰³ was Turkey ready to engage with the memory of the Armenian suffering. In other words, the Prime Minister invited Armenians

³⁰¹ For the unofficial translation of the published Prime Minister’s statement, please see, “The Message of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on the Events of 1915,” *Republic of Turkey The Office of the Prime Minister*, accessed April 6, 2016, http://www.basbakanlik.gov.tr/Forms/_Article/pg_Article.aspx?Id=e11bde56-a0b7-4ea6-8a9a-954c68157df9. For the Turkish original of the message, please see “Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başbakanı Sayın Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’ın 1915 Olaylarına İlişkin Mesajı,” *T.C. Başbakanlık*, accessed April 6, 2016, http://www.basbakanlik.gov.tr/Forms/_Article/pg_Article.aspx?Id=974ccd3b-fb77-499a-ab6a-7c5d2a1e79c9.

³⁰² “TheMessage of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on the Events of 1915.”

³⁰³ “Just memory” as an operational concept guiding the new re-configuration of the Turkish official perspective on the Armenian genocide was first formulated by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu in 2009 as part of the diplomatic rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia resulting in the now-defunct protocols. “Just memory” and the broader politics of memory will be analyzed in detail later.

to bury the hatchet and stop holding grudges over the past.³⁰⁴ The statement also introduced the idea of scholarly responsibility in staving off political and legal responsibilities attached to this past and interpellated historiography to be the arbiter. The logical outcome of this was the reiteration of the proposal of establishing a joint historical commission consisting of Turkish, Armenian and international scholars studying in related archives to discover the historical truth. Hence, the Prime Minister laid out the future vision, “it is our hope and belief that the peoples of an ancient and unique geography, who share similar customs and manners will be able to talk to each other about the past with maturity and to remember together their losses in a decent manner.”³⁰⁵ The Prime Minister then extended condolences to descendants of Armenians, as quoted above.

This statement, expressed by the second highest office in Turkey, sparked public debate over this previously silenced period of the country’s history. A quick survey of Turkey’s newspapers’ front pages on 24 April 2014 reveals a range of reactions to the PM’s unexpected statement and also shows the unstable political field within which the past was discussed. Pro-government *Akşam* expressed its support with the headline, “1915 Revolution”. Other newspapers closer to the government, such as *Sabah*, *Star*, *Habertürk*, *Yeni Şafak*, were also supportive of the PM’s message. Mainstream, liberal or democrat newspapers were also sympathetic to the statement and marked that it was a

³⁰⁴ To reinforce this message and to reach out to Western audience, Ahmet Davutoğlu published an op-ed at *The Guardian*. The title of the piece summarized what the government wanted to do with the memory of the Armenian genocide. Ahmet Davutoglu, “Turks and Armenians – We Must Follow Erdoğan’s Lead and Bury Our Common Pain,” *The Guardian*, May 2, 2014, sec. Opinion, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/02/turks-armenians-erdogan-condolences-1915-armenian-massacre>.

³⁰⁵ “The Message of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on the Events of 1915.”

historical first. Another group of newspapers, catering to nationalist, Islamist and leftist-nationalist views, converged in their attack against the PM for opening the doors for Armenian genocide “claims” and making Turkey vulnerable. Some newspapers chose not to carry the statement on their front pages at all for different reasons. Overall, newspapers that were supportive of or sympathetic to the PM’s action chose to emphasize specific concepts used in the statement, condolences and shared pain of Ottoman populations.

Undeniably, the PM’s statement marked a deep shift in Turkey’s engagement with genocidal events. Acknowledgment of Armenian suffering, expressed by a Turkish PM in his official capacity, was a major event in its own right. No other prime minister in the history of the Republic had made such a statement. From this perspective, Erdoğan’s message was historical. It was a well-calculated political move to speak to international and domestic audiences simultaneously. However, the sense that the PM’s statement was something extraordinary, something unthinkable, even in the 2000s showed how powerful and entrenched the denialist nexus was. This statement would not have been given had civil society not put pressure on the politicians.³⁰⁶ The PM’s statement could also be taken as the beginning of a conversation on the genocide, as the Turkish-Armenian newspaper AGOS cautiously did.³⁰⁷ It could be the starting point of a different discourse on the genocide, as the statement acknowledged previously delegitimized and dismissed perspectives critical of dominant denialist position.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ Amberin Zaman, “Turkish Civil Society Paves Way for Erdogan’s Armenian Opening,” *Al-Monitor*, April 25, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/04/turkey-armenia-genocide-reconciliation-erdogan-credibility.html>.

³⁰⁷ “Agos’un Sözü: Taziye Son Değil Başlangıç Olsun,” *Agos*, April 30, 2014, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/7018/agosun-sozu-taziye-son-degil-baslangic-olsun>.

³⁰⁸ Taner Akçam, “Approaching 2015: How to Assess Erdoğan’s Statement on the Armenian Genocide?,” *E-International Relations*, June 14, 2014, <http://www.e->

However, the way the PM's message conceived the ethico-political and legal component of the issue did not leave too much room for hope. The perspective presented in the PM's statement was not new. The message followed the so-called "just memory" formulation, developed by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu in 2009-2010, that posited Armenian and Turkish memories of 1915 and the First World War as two sides to be reconciled in a single narrative. Both "just memory," to be discussed in greater length, and the PM's message marked a significant departure from Turkey's official genocide denial narrative, aggressively defended and disseminated in the 1980s and 1990s. Instead of categorically rejecting Armenian suffering, these interventions in the historiography and collective memory of the massacres sought to incorporate this suffering into a broader context of Ottoman suffering, albeit with a series of conditions. Nevertheless, the new memory perspective, embodied in these two interventions, did not replace discourses of aggressive denial.³⁰⁹ The message also failed to assign responsibility for the atrocities and did not propose a way of restoring justice.³¹⁰

ir.info/2014/06/04/approaching-2015-how-to-assess-erdogans-statement-on-the-armenian-genocide/.

³⁰⁹ Akçam, "Approaching 2015."

³¹⁰ Prime Minister Erdoğan had previously and repeatedly refused Turkish responsibility for genocide. "My ancestors have never committed genocide. This is, in my opinion, not possible... Those people who speak of genocide, I don't know what documentation they base it on." "Leveraging Turkey-Armenia Protocols, Erdogan Presses Advantage During DC Visit," *Asbarez.com*, December 8, 2009, <http://asbarez.com/74403/leveraging-turkey-armenia-protocols-erdogan-presses-advantage-during-dc-visit/>. For the Turkish report on the statement the Prime Minister made while answering questions at the end of a speech he delivered at the Johns Hopkins University, please see "Erdoğan Ermeni Açılımına Kapalı: 'Benim Ecdadım Soykırım Yapmaz,'" *Radikal*, accessed July 7, 2016, http://www.radikal.com.tr/dunya/erdogan_ermen_i_acilimina_kapali_benim_ecdadim_soykirim_yapmaz-968108/. He maintained the same position in 2015. "The Armenian claims on the 1915 events, and especially the numbers put forward, are all baseless and groundless. I say, we're ready to open our military archives. We have no fear, no worries on this subject. Our ancestors did not persecute." AP, "Turkey's Erdogan Denies Ancestors Committed Genocide," *The Times of Israel*, accessed July 7, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/turkeys-erdogan-denies-ancestors-committed-genocide/>.

Hence the PM's message reiterated a more sophisticated, emotionally appealing and inclusive position, and repeated some of the age-old arguments in order to present a better-packaged denial. The coexistence of these older and newer approaches contributed to and reflected the dominant characteristics of the politics of memory in Turkey as it unfolded in the post-2000s. The coming-to-memory of the Armenian genocide was to follow a polyvalent, multi-vectorial and unstable trajectory.

Major Denialist Themes and Arguments

Armenian Treachery: "They Stabbed Us in the Back"

One of the central themes of denial that still has a dominant memory in collective memory is the claim of Armenian treachery or betrayal before and during the First World War. The activities of Armenian committees aiming at Armenian autonomy and independence were and still are presented as justifications for the wholesale destruction of the Ottoman Armenians. This line of reasoning argues that what happened to Armenians was their own making because some Armenians joined forces with the Russian army to realize their goals of establishing an independent Armenian nation-state in Eastern Anatolia. Ottoman officials began to push forth this narrative of Armenian "disloyalty, exploitation, and imminent general rebellion at a time when the fatherland was struggling for survival" simultaneously with the massacres against the Armenians.³¹¹

Talat Pasha, the Minister of the Interior and the main perpetrator of the extermination of the Armenians, took pains to justify and rationalize the Ottoman policies against the Armenians in his memoirs which he wrote in Berlin before his assassination

³¹¹ Richard G. Hovannisian, "The Armenian Genocide and Patterns of Denial," in *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1986), 112–113.

by Sogomon Tehlerian on March 15, 1921. Talat Pasha blamed the Armenians for betraying the Ottoman Empire where they were treated justly and flourished as a community. This “nankörlük” (ingratitude) on the Armenians’ part and their attempts at carving up some parts of the Ottoman land for themselves were presented as the reason for what they had suffered.³¹² The argument about the good treatment of the Armenians, even when the government was aware that they were pursuing a separatist agenda, and their betrayal of the Ottoman Empire, echoed in all subsequent denialist narratives. These narratives, under the guise of situating the “Armenian Question” in its proper context, present the history since the 1878 Berlin Treaty as a continuum of successive Armenian rebellions to undermine Ottoman rule and to gain independence with the support of Western powers.³¹³

The ‘Eastern Question’ and External Provocations

It is also a common thread in denialist narratives to situate the Armenians’ “betrayal” within the broader contexts of the “Eastern Question” which came to be the short-hand form of imperialist struggles over creating zones of influence in the weakening Ottoman Empire and territorial carving up of the empire. Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian independence followed this model of nationalist separatist movements backed by Western powers. The denialist narrative emphasizes that Western imperialist powers, and especially Russia, provoked the Ottoman Armenians to engage in subversive

³¹² Alpay Kabacalı, ed., *Talât Paşa’nın Anıları*, 3rd edition (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006), 57.

³¹³ Enver Ziya Karal, *Question Armenian (1878-1923)*, trans. Şekip Engineri (Ankara: Gündüz, 1975); Salahi Ramadan Sonyel, *The Ottoman Armenians: Victims of Great Power Diplomacy* (London: K. Rustem & Brother, 1987); *Armenian Claims and Historical Facts*. (Ankara: Center for Strategic Research, 2007), http://www.mfa.gov.tr/data/DISPOLITIKA/ErmeniIddialari/Ermeni_ingilizce_Soru_CevapKitap_cigi.pdf.

activities against their own imperial government with the aim of using them to undermine Ottoman sovereignty. This trope is mobilized to blame the Armenians for letting themselves be instrumentalized in line with imperialist “plots”.³¹⁴

The Role of the Armenian Revolutionary Committees

The denialist narratives spend considerable time and effort in documenting and “proving” the disloyalty of the Armenians. The most significant part of this agenda concentrates on the Armenian committees, mostly the Dashnaks and the Hinchaks, and their “incitements” to rebellion against the Ottoman government. They are also accused of attacking the Ottoman army during the war. These committees’ “illegal” activities against the state forced the administration to undertake necessary measures to stop them.³¹⁵ The main objective of the official narrative is to argue that the massacres of the Armenians do not constitute genocide. This is the constant theme of the official narrative throughout time. In order to prove this point, the Turkish state and its semi-official agents have undertaken a contestation of the historical truth. This historiographic campaign, which intensified after the 1980s, has varied over time. Certain arguments were revised, some discarded, and new ones introduced in response to changing contexts.

³¹⁴ Kabacalı, *Talât Paşa'nın Anıları*; Karal, *Question Armenian (1878-1923)*; Sonyel, *The Ottoman Armenians*; Yusuf Halaçoğlu, “Realities behind the Relocation,” in *The Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period*, ed. Türkkaya Ataöv (Ankara: The Turkish Historical Society for The Council of Culture, Arts and Publications of The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2001).

³¹⁵ Kabacalı, *Talât Paşa'nın Anıları*; Karal, *Question Armenian (1878-1923)*; Sonyel, *The Ottoman Armenians*; Halaçoğlu, “Realities behind the Relocation”; Yılmaz Öztuna, “The Political Milieu of the Armenian Question,” in *The Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period*, ed. Türkkaya Ataöv (Ankara: The Turkish Historical Society for The Council of Culture, Arts and Publications of The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2001).

Civil War or Inter-Communal Warfare

The trope of Armenian “treachery” and rebellions has come to be represented as a “civil war” between the Ottoman state and the Armenians. “The Armenian question assumed a new character upon Turkish participation in World War I. In the opinion of the Armenians, World War I was a war of deliverance from Ottoman sovereignty. In cooperation with the Allied Powers they opened a civil war front against the Turks.”³¹⁶ According to this view, the Armenians as a national group were engaged in a war against their own state through the committees and armed units. This line of argument also resonated with the “mutual killing” argument which claimed that both sides, Armenians and Muslims, massacred each other. “Mutual killing” has become an important ground for rejecting genocide. This trope has become especially widespread since 1985 when a statement signed by 69 Turkish and American scholars appeared in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.³¹⁷ These scholars argued that the events of 1915 constitute a topic of legitimate scholarly debate and that there was a lack of consensus. They also refuted the claims of genocide while acknowledging Armenians losses. Their take on the nature of “conflict” at the time and the reason behind the losses were as follows: “the weight of evidence so far uncovered points in the direct of serious inter communal warfare (perpetrated by Muslim and Christian irregular forces), complicated by disease, famine, suffering and massacres in Anatolia and adjoining areas during the First World War.”³¹⁸

³¹⁶ Karal, *Question Armenian (1878-1923)*, 15.

³¹⁷ Vahakn N Dadrian, *The Key Elements in the Turkish Denial of the Armenian Genocide: A Case Study of Distortion and Falsification* (Toronto: Zoryan Institute, 1999), 7–8. Vahakn N. Dadrian.

³¹⁸ “Attention Members of the U.S. House of Representatives,” May 19, 1985, <http://www.tallarmeniantale.com/69historians.htm#dec>. The signatories of this letter were: Rifaat

Deportation/Relocation/Forced Migration

The denial narrative argues that the CUP government took a decision to deport the Armenians and claims that the deportation law itself and documents pertaining to the execution of the relocation do not include any reference to massacres.

The removal of the Armenians from certain regions to others was a measure dictated by imperative military necessity. It must be realized that Turkey, at the time, was locked in a life-and-death struggle with its external enemies, and the relocations were dictated by the security needs of the state. Moreover, every belligerent state, threatened by the ethnic minorities of its enemies within its boundaries, has to neutralize them; e.g. American citizens of German or Japanese origin were interned during the Second World War. The whole affair was spontaneous and the result of extreme provocation by the Armenian revolutionaries, and certainly not to the extent of ‘genocide’ as claimed by the Turcophobes.³¹⁹

Hence, the argument goes, the Ottoman state was using its sovereign rights to forcefully relocate a distinct group of its own population seen as a threat to the war effort and even to the existence of the state. The argument further states that the government took all necessary measures to ensure the security of the deportees, to provide for their needs and to protect their properties. However, Talat Pasha in his memoirs portrayed a somewhat different picture. He stated that the deportation took the form of a “facia” (disaster) at the hands of some “unscrupulous” and “dishonest” people. He also acknowledges that these

Abou-El-Haj, Sarah Moment Atis, Karl Barbir, Ilhan Basgoz, Daniel G. Bates, Luke Bates, Gustav Bayerie, Andras G.E. Bodrogligetti, Kathleen Burrill, Timothy Childs, Shafiga Daulat, Roderic Davison, Walter Denny, Alan Duben, Ellen Ervin, Caesar Farah, Carter Findley, Michael Finefrock, Alan Fisher, Cornell Fischer, Peter Golden, Tom Goodrich, Andrew Gould, William Griswold, Tibor Halasi-Kun, William Hickman, J. C. Hurewitz, John Hymn, Halil Inalcik, Ralph Jaeckel, Ronald Jennings, James Kelly, Kerim Key, Metin Kunt, Frederick Latimer, Avigdor Levy, Bernard Lewis, Heath W. Lowry, Justin McCarthy, Jon Mandaville, Michael Meeker, Rhoads Murphey, Thomas Naff, Pierre Oberling, William Ochsenwald, Robert Olson, William Peachy, Donald Quataert, Howard Reed, Dankwart Rustow, Ezel Kural Shaw, Stanford Shaw, Elaine Smith, Grace M. Smith, John Masson Smith, Jr., Svat Soucek, Robert Stash, June Starr, James Stewart-Robinson, Philip Stoddard, Frank Tachau, Metin Tamkoc, David Thomas, Margaret L. Venzke, Warren S. Walker, Donald Webster, Walter Welker, John Woods, Madeline Zilfi.

³¹⁹ Sonyel, *The Ottoman Armenians*, 300.

people attempted to “reap personal benefit” from the situation and were instrumental in many “murders”.³²⁰ Nevertheless, he still maintains his view that it was the Armenians who caused all these events.³²¹

Lack of Genocidal Intent

One of the key denialist arguments has been the lack of genocidal intent in the CUP government’s treatment of Armenians. According to this argument, in order for a massacre to constitute genocide according to the UNGC, the special intent to destroy a specific group must be present. The Turkish side claims that the special intent (*dolus specialis*) was not present in the Armenian case. Former ambassador Gündüz Aktan made this case during a presentation at the U.S. House Committee on International Relations on September 14, 2000. Aktan maintained,

What determines genocide is not necessarily the number of casualties or the cruelty of the persecution but the "intent to destroy" a group. Historically the "intent to destroy a race" has emerged only as the culmination of racism, as in the case of anti-Semitism and the Shoah. Turks have never harbored any anti-Armenianism. Killing, even of civilians, in a war waged for territory, is not genocide. The victims of genocide must be totally innocent. In other words, they must not fight for something tangible like land, but be killed by the victimizer simply because of their membership in a specific group. Obviously, both Turks and Armenians fought for land upon which to build their independent states.³²²

Providing a highly reductionist reading of genocidal intent and repeating the point of mutual killings of two nationalisms fighting over the same territory, Aktan justified the genocidal massacres against Armenians. Other commentators using the lack of intent argument highlighted the law of deportation and official orders demanding local

³²⁰ Kabacalı, *Talât Paşa'nın Anıları*, 71–72.

³²¹ Ibid., 73.

³²² Gündüz Aktan, “Presentation by Ambassador Gündüz Aktan at the House Committee on International Relations on September 14, 2000,” *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, September 14, 2000, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/presentation-by-ambassador-gunduz-aktan-at-the-house-committee-on-international-relations-on-september-14_-2000_.en.mfa.

administrations and law enforcement units to “protect” the Armenian deportees as evidence to support the claim that the Ottoman government had absolutely no intention of destroying Armenians. It is accepted that there were Armenian casualties, but these losses happened because of inter-communal clashes or civil war, famine, exposure, disease, and lack of proper transportation.

Historical Unfolding of the Denial

The denial of the atrocities committed against the Armenians began in the immediate aftermath of genocidal events. The main themes of this denial had crystallized long before the Turkish-Muslim side concentrated its efforts to genocide denial per se. It is true that “genocide” creates a contemporary tension, however, the crux of the problem is not completely related to the concept. We do not need “genocide” in order to situate policies against Armenians within a framework of justice. The concept is also not a precondition to acknowledge and recognize atrocities, expropriation and injustices that the CUP government and its cadres in collaboration with local power holders and special units committed against the Armenians during the late Ottoman period. Hence, even though “genocide denial” has become a short-hand form, actually Turkish-Muslim attitudes towards the past consist of not taking responsibility for one’s acts, justifying the injustice inflicted, blaming the victim, and perpetuating the injustice and inequality caused by the genocide through denial. In other words, Turkey has been denying its responsibility in the annihilation of the Ottoman Armenians. So the denialist narrative has long concentrated on genocide, but actually it tries to whitewash both past and present policies.

In line with these considerations, it is not surprising to see that the general denialist framework and the majority of its tropes emerged as early as 1916, during the genocide itself. These earlier arguments were incorporated in Turkey's subsequent genocide denial narrative. Even though the official narrative and methods to disseminate have undergone modifications and revisions throughout time, the backbone of hegemonic denial remains the same. The following will highlight some important moments of genocide denial and point to some potential periodization. Later the account will summarize major denialist tropes and finish with discussing some recent perspectives explaining the reasons behind denial.

The Young Turk leadership knew it would be held accountable for wartime policies against non-Muslim populations of the empire. Britain, France and Russia had issued a joint declaration on May 24, 1915, which was delivered to the CUP government on May 29 by the US Embassy in Istanbul. The declaration mentioned Kurdish and Turkish atrocities against the Armenians and continued, "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 responsible [for] these crimes all members of the Ottoman government and those of their agents who are implicated [involved] in such massacres."³²³ On May 27, the Ottoman government passed the Deportation Law as the legal framework of the Armenian displacement. The law justified deportations on the grounds of security of the army. In addition, the government took measures to respond to the Allied ultimatum and other accounts in circulation in the West regarding the

³²³ "France, Great Britain, and Russia Joint Declaration, 1915," accessed June 27, 2016, <https://www.facinghistory.org/france-great-britain-and-russia-joint-declaration-1915>.

Armenian massacres. The government began to disseminate its own narrative on the events.

One of the earliest of such accounts defending the CUP policies and justifying the acts against the Armenians was presented in 1916 in *Vérité sur le mouvement révolutionnaire arménien et les mesures gouvernementales*. The account highlighted the Armenian insurgencies as the main cause for the “deportation” of the Armenians. The deportation decision was taken in order to prevent the Armenians in the war zone from creating difficulties for the imperial government and army; to remove the possibility of Armenian bands massacring Muslim population; and to ensure the army’s communication and logistic lines.³²⁴ The account also admitted that Armenians were “sometimes” victims of abuse and violence. Even though these acts were deplorable, they were inevitable because of powerful Muslim indignation towards Armenians who threatened, by their revolts and betrayal, the existence of the empire.³²⁵ As the armed forces were involved in the war effort, violence against the Armenians could not be stopped, but necessary measures to ensure their security were taken.³²⁶ Behind the shield of war, the CUP did not feel too much pressure. However, this was to change with the end of the war for the Ottomans on October 30, 1918, when the Armistice of Mudros was signed.

The Post-War Interim Period

The end of the Great War and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire created a complex political environment regarding the Armenian genocide. While some

³²⁴ *Vérité sur le mouvement révolutionnaire arménien et les mesures gouvernementales*. (Constantinople: publisher not identified, 1916), 14.

³²⁵ Ibid., 15.

³²⁶ Ibid.

components of this political climate made the public discussion of atrocities against the Armenians possible, other events interrupted this public dialogue and brought forth a denialist thrust. Faced with defeat, the CUP government resigned. This marked the end of a long single-party and authoritarian rule established by the inner circles of the CUP's central committee. Previously repressed political figures and parties made a comeback in the public sphere with deep resentment and fierce criticism of the CUP and its leaders. The anti-Unionist sentiments were quite strong in the Ottoman capital, especially the decision to enter into the war, and wartime atrocities were at the centre of contestation. Atrocities against the Armenians proved to be especially crucial for the critique of the CUP rule.

On the one hand, the Ottoman public was openly debating the atrocities committed against the Armenians and other non-Muslim populations. There were demands for investigating these events and punishing those responsible. The press and the Ottoman parliament were important venues where the demands for justice were raised.³²⁷ It was significant that Turkish-Muslim figures were among those engaged in an open critique of the CUP's wartime policies against minorities. The Ottoman government, under pressure from the Allied powers and with the anticipation of favourable peace conditions, established extraordinary military tribunals to try those responsible for the genocidal acts. This period and these trials were as close as the Ottoman society came to recognizing atrocities against the Armenians and other minorities.

³²⁷ Ayhan Aktar, "Debating the Armenian Massacres in the Last Ottoman Parliament, November – December 1918," *History Workshop Journal* 64, no. 1 (2007): 240–70.

On the other hand, the period between 1919 and 1922 marked a severe political crisis for the Turk and Muslim communities of Anatolia as the Allied powers were preparing for the dismemberment of the fallen empire. This threat to national sovereignty and perceived victimization of the Turkish-Muslim side paved the way for the emergence of a strong resistance to recognition of injustice against the Armenians, and for the petrification of negative responses to demands for justice. The trials withered away and the issue of Turkish-Muslim responsibility in the atrocities was not discussed further, let alone recognized. Based on the existing denialist arguments, a nationalist *doxa* on the atrocities emerged and has become the single most important factor in the shaping of collective memory of the genocide in Turkey.

The historical unfolding of this dual movement began immediately with the end of the war. The Mudros Armistice marked the end of the war for the Empire with a complete defeat. The empire lost a considerable amount of territory and was left mainly with Anatolia. The future of Ottoman political sovereignty and territorial integrity was uncertain. These issues were to be decided during the Paris Peace Conference, which opened in January 1919. While sovereignty and territorial integrity were of key importance for the Ottoman side, the Allied powers were intent on dividing up the empire in line with the secret agreements they had concluded during the war. The idea of punishing the Ottomans was also current among the Allied powers and the most legitimate ground to proceed with that intention was to prosecute wartime atrocities against the Armenians and other minorities.³²⁸

³²⁸ Akçam, *A Shameful Act : The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*, 207–213.

Following the armistice, on November 1, 1918, the leading members of the Committee of Union and Progress, Talat Paşa, Enver Paşa, Cemal Paşa, Dr. Nazım, Dr. Bahaettin Şakir, Bedri (former police chief of İstanbul), Azmi (former governor of Beirut), and Haydar İbrahim (a representative in İstanbul of the government of Azerbaijan), left the Ottoman capital because of concerns that the Allies would prosecute them for their involvement in World War I and their policies against the Armenians.³²⁹ During this post-war period many of the CUP leaders, most significantly Talat Paşa, published memoirs that focused more on justifying the massacres than narrating their life stories. These defensive accounts came to constitute the CUP denial that operated through an amalgamation of silencing and subversion.

The CUP first identified Western European interventions in the domestic affairs of the empire and Armenian sedition as the instigators of the violence. The ensuing CUP collective violence against the Armenians was first dismissed as punishment and then reduced to the same level as Muslim suffering in the east. Talat Pasha in particular developed the narrative of the denial of destructive intent. Claiming that the Armenians once living in peace were provoked by the Great Powers—thereby building upon the initial denial of origins—he then articulated the elements of the second CUP denial: he generalized the destructive ideas and activities of some Armenian revolutionary parties to the entire Armenian populace and then absolved the CUP of all blame by arguing the collective violence was in fact the particular violence of a few individuals [*sic.*].³³⁰

Exiled CUP leaders hence were still shaping the narrative on the Armenian massacres. In the meantime, the CUP members continued to have a significant control over domestic politics.³³¹

³²⁹ Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Rôle of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement, 1905-1926* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 72.

³³⁰ Fatma Müge Göçek, *Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present, and Collective Violence against the Armenians, 1789-2009* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 256.

³³¹ On November 5, 1918, the remaining members of the CUP dissolved the party. However, the CUP's control over the country's political system and public opinion was far from over. The

To complicate the already complex picture, starting with May 1919, the Ottoman Empire was going through a political struggle between Istanbul, where the Sultan and the government were seated, and Anatolia, where the growing Turkish national movement, led by Mustafa Kemal, was located. Turkish national self-defence organizations had been established after the armistice, and their major goal was to prevent the partition of Anatolia among the Allied powers and the establishment of Armenian or Kurdish nation-states in the region. Another motivation behind the rise of the national defence movement, which was seldom acknowledged and publicly articulated, was the fact that many local Muslim-Turkish agents had helped themselves to Armenian and Greek property during the war and they were motivated to protect their gains after it.³³² It was not a coincidence that the initial local organizations to defend the rights of inhabitants emerged in eastern Anatolia and the Thrace, regions that had significant Armenian and Greek populations before the Great War. The occupation of western Anatolia by the Greeks in mid-May 1919 tipped the balance of power in favour of the national movement that was launched as armed resistance against the invasion. The national movement was also fighting against the Armenian forces in the eastern Anatolia. The wartime atrocities against the Armenians and other non-Muslim minorities made their way to public discussion in this environment.

parliament was still dominated by CUP deputies and the civil and military bureaucracy was clearly controlled by CUP members. The Committee also had a wide network in the remaining Ottoman territory. Post-war organization of a possible defence of national sovereignty was based on this network. Before the end of the Great War, the Committee took necessary measures to stage a national struggle in Anatolia, if need be. On November 9, 1918, the members found a new party, *Teceddüt Fırkası* (Renovation Party). However, the party distanced itself from the CUP and argued that it was not a continuation of the latter. Another group of former Unionists found the *Osmanlı Hürriyetperver Avam Fırkası* (Ottoman Liberal People's Party). Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor*, 71–73.

³³² Tanör, *Türkiye'de Yerel Kongre İktidarları, 1918-1920*, 52.

Until the emergence of the chasm between these two loci of power, they were on the same page on the prosecution of genocide perpetrators, for very pragmatic reasons. Both parties perceived prosecution as a concession to the Allied pressure and calculated that trying those involved in the crimes would lead to favourable conditions in the final peace treaty. However, when it was clear that the Allied powers would proceed with their plans to dismember the imperial territory regardless of the outcome of the trials, political responses began to change. Even though the Istanbul government was still pursuing the cause, the Anatolian movement started to put pressure to stop the prosecution. When the trials established to prosecute genocide perpetrators began to try important figures of the national movement, the fate of the trials was sealed.

Debating the Armenian Massacres in the Ottoman Parliament

Atrocities against the Armenians and the Ottoman responsibility were a common theme in the Istanbul press in the aftermath of the Armistice. There were detailed reports about crimes committed against the Armenians and these reports were accusatory of the CUP leaders. Demands for inquiries and prosecution of the responsible parties were common. Lists of people who were under suspicion of being involved in the genocide were published.³³³ Mass murder against the Armenians, the employment of special organizations for massacres and looting, and the question of responsibility were also publicly documented and debated in the media.³³⁴

³³³ Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*, 246–247.

³³⁴ Vahakn N Dadrian and Taner Akçam, eds., *Tehcir ve Taktik: divan-ı harb-i örfî zabıtları : İttihad ve Terakki'nin yargılanması, 1919-1922* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2008), 15–20.

The Ottoman parliament also discussed the atrocities against subaltern populations of the empire with a specific emphasis on policies against the Armenians. Heated debates took place during the session on November 4, 1918 in relation to attempts at holding the CUP accountable for a series of crimes. One of the articles of the motion brought by the Deputy Fuat Bey focused on the treatment of Armenians and accused the CUP government of “creating administrative chaos within the country and facilitating attacks of certain gangs against security of life, property and chastity [of the people] and thus contributing to the atrocities these gangs brought about.”³³⁵ In the same session, deputies Emanuel Emanuelidis, Vangel, and Tokinidis brought forth a motion regarding wartime CUP policies against non-Muslim citizens. The motion listed eight criminal acts of state, two of which were directly related to the Armenian massacres.³³⁶ The first one related to the general scale of the crimes. “A population of one million people guilty of nothing except belonging to the Armenian nation was massacred and exterminated, including even women and children.” The second one was “[Armenian] deputies Zohrab

³³⁵ Aktar, “Debating the Armenian Massacres in the Last Ottoman Parliament, November – December 1918,” 251.

³³⁶ Ibid., 251–252.

The remaining six articles of the motion were:

Two hundred and fifty thousand people of the Greek minority, which has been a true agent of civilization in this country for at least forty centuries, were thrown out of the Ottoman territory and their properties were confiscated.

Before the war five hundred and fifty thousand Greek people were also massacred and exterminated along the coasts and inland districts of the Black Sea, Dardanelles, Marmara and the Prince’s Islands, and their properties too were confiscated and usurped.

By prohibiting non-Muslims from engaging in any commercial activity and by leaving trade to the monopoly of certain influential people, almost the entire nation was robbed.

The treatment deemed proper for noble Arab people has constituted the main reason for recent disasters.

The lives of the two hundred and fifty thousand people [who were mainly non-Muslims] of the Labour Battalions constituted by way of mobilization were wasted as a result of starvation and deprivation.

Entering the World War without any reason and leaving a section of the country to the Bulgarians in order to attain this ominous honour.

Efendi and Varteks Efendi were murdered.” Deputies asked the new government whether it would take any action against responsible parties. The Minister of Interior, Fethi Bey, responded to the deputies’ motion. First of all, he highlighted that Turkish citizens of the empire suffered as much as, if not more than, the subaltern groups. Then he expressed the new government’s agenda regarding the past atrocities.

The approach of the government will be to grant freedom and perfect equality to all segments of society without making any distinction as to race or religion. Apart from this, it is the intention of the government to cure every single injustice done up until now, as far as the means allow, to make possible the return to their homes of those sent into exile, and to compensate for their material loss as far as possible. And activities have started to be carried out in this regard. But it is also our common duty to make sure that such an event does not recur, that nobody dares to commit such deeds and that officers or any other person who attempted to perpetuate such actions are prosecuted.³³⁷

Armenian deputies Matyos Nalbantyan, Artin Boşgezenyan, Medetyan, Dikran Barsamyan, Onnik and Agop Efendi put forward a motion demanding the Deportation Law and the Law on Abandoned Property be repealed. Allowing the return of deported Armenians to their homeland and restoring their property rights were among the demands tabled by the deputies.³³⁸ The debate started to become heated with the involvement of other deputies. Mehmet Emin Bey agreed with the subaltern deputies that perpetrators of the Armenian deportations had to be punished. He also acknowledged that Ottoman officials massacred the Armenians. However, he argued, the casualty figures were exaggerated and, more crucially, these massacres did not come out of nowhere. After mentioning pre-war activities of the Armenian revolutionary parties, Mehmet Emin Bey claimed that “nothing had happened ‘without cause!’”³³⁹

³³⁷ Ibid., 253.

³³⁸ Ibid., 254–255.

³³⁹ Ibid., 256.

Debates in that session moved towards the question of responsibility for the crimes. While some deputies argued that all those who supported the CUP movement were responsible of the atrocities, other deputies, Turkish-Muslims, objected that such a statement amounted to accusing the entire nation.³⁴⁰ The issue of whether a national community could be held responsible for genocidal crimes was strictly tied to Turkish national identity. The response of one of the Turkish deputies to national responsibility showed what was at stake: “Although we have not refrained from cursing the oppressors and expressing sympathy for the oppressed ... there are those who desire to attribute this calamity to Turkdom as a whole.... I reject this in the name of the high moral character of my nation.”³⁴¹ He also added that tolerance was an important characteristic of Turkish people and that they had suffered a great deal. For him, the Turkish people were denied “mercy” because of the actions of the genocide perpetrators.³⁴² His speech was supported by many of the deputies.

The Armenian deputy Nalbantyan Efendi, after touching upon the power asymmetry between Turkish-Muslim population and the Armenians, raised a clear demand for justice.

Both world opinion and the victims will demand an accounting and compensation, and the Turks will have to provide it. The Turks, who claim that their hands are clean, must give an accounting, they must punish those who deserve punishment ... without regard for the station or the numbers involved, they must return the rights to those who lost them. Only afterward will they be able to stand true before humanity and the world. Otherwise, how will we ever be able to bring a complaint against any people?³⁴³

³⁴⁰ Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*, 252.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 257.

³⁴² Ibid., 257–258.

³⁴³ Ibid., 260.

In response to Nalbantyan Efendi's statement, İlyas Sami Efendi argued Armenians were themselves to be blamed for the deportation.³⁴⁴ In other words, he repeated the existing argument about the Armenians' disloyalty towards the Empire and their subversive activities as the main reasons for the policies against them.

These discussions demonstrated that although there was a will to come to terms with the CUP's wartime policies and their legacies, including the Armenian atrocities, there was also unease among Turkish-Muslim deputies regarding the range of responsibility for the atrocities. There was major controversy about who the perpetrators of the genocide were. All involved parties agreed on the responsibility of the CUP leaders, however many refrained from confronting the mass scale involvement in the atrocities. Accepting guilt was hard enough, accepting the guilt as a national community was even harder because it had the potential to undermine the Turkish national identity based on "tolerance" and "just" governance. Debates during this immediate post-war moment also revealed the circulation of the argument blaming Armenians for betrayal. The only tangible result that emerged from these debates was the establishment of the parliamentary inquiry by the Fifth Department that started to investigate the actions of the members of wartime governments. The inquiries took place between November 9, 1918 and December 14, 1918, however there was no final decision.³⁴⁵ When the Sultan dissolved the parliament in December 1918, the Fifth Department passed the testimonies and documents it collected to the extraordinary military court.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 262–263.

Prosecuting the Perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide

The Ottoman government that replaced the CUP was more effective in terms of inquiring into genocide perpetration and prosecuting the perpetrators than parliamentary efforts. On November 24, 1918, the government announced the establishment of the *Tedkik-i Seyyiat* (The Commission to Investigate Criminal Acts) with the agenda of investigating wartime crimes. In early December the government founded supplementary commissions that were assigned the task of travelling in Anatolia and collecting grievances of local populations. These commissions gathered documents, testimonies, and statements in 28 provinces under investigation during two months. In January, the commission decided that enough evidence had been collected to make a case and start trials. It submitted the documents to the extraordinary military court established in December 1918.

The first extraordinary military court was established in Istanbul to be followed by others in different localities with a record of wartime atrocities. These courts were established under the terms of martial law in force since April 1909. The prosecution process had a slow start for several reasons. According to a law passed in 1913, in order to try civil servants, permission was required from higher offices. There was also a lack of enthusiasm to prosecute members of the previous governments and administrations. In December the courts were given permission to try wartime cabinet members and civil servants. In March 1919, the new government led by Damat Ferid Paşa brought new regulations, greatly increasing the pace of the prosecution process. The number of arrested wartime cabinet members, high-ranking military officers, members of

parliament, and members of the CUP increased. In total, there were at least sixty-three cases and twelve of these were documented.³⁴⁶

The first trial began in Istanbul on February 5, 1919. It dealt with wartime crimes against the Armenian population in the Yozgat region. The prefect of Boğazlıyan, Kemal Bey was found guilty in April 1919 and sentenced to death. The execution took place in Istanbul on April 10, 1919. His funeral ceremony became a demonstration against the occupation. The British Foreign Office correctly grasped the true nature of the popular reaction to the execution, “not one Turk in a thousand can conceive that there might be a Turk who deserves to be hanged for the killing of Christians.”³⁴⁷

While there were many trials, three of them were of particular importance. These three cases were directly related to the central responsibility in the perpetration of the genocide.

1. CUP Central Committee members and members of the Special Organization
2. Members of wartime cabinets
3. CUP party secretaries and delegates.

The first trial began on April 28, 1919, and continued until May 17. The occupation of Izmir by the Greek forces paved the way for the interruption of the proceedings. British forces took 67 in custody to Malta, including twelve former cabinet members. The indictment against CUP leaders and Special Organization administrators marked an important point in alleging responsibility for the genocide. The trial concerning the Committee’s secretaries and delegates opened on June 21, 1919 and ended on January 8,

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 282–288.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 294.

1920. During this trial a significant amount of evidence and documents were collected to become an important archive on the genocide.³⁴⁸

The trial process slowed down in the later part of 1919 due to the growing nationalist movement in Anatolia and its struggle against Greek occupation. The resistance against the invading forces echoed in Istanbul in the form of reactions against the prosecution process. The nationalist movement was increasing its influence in the imperial centre as well. There were negotiations between Istanbul and Ankara. In October 1919 new parliamentary elections were held. The nationalist representatives coming from Anatolia constituted the sheer majority in the parliament that opened on January 12, 1920. As a result of this nationalist dominance the parliament was hardly in pursuit of prosecutions. Instead, the deputies were more interested in topics such as “the onerous peace conditions and the injustice being done to Turkey, the Entente Powers’ failure to implement Wilson’s Fourteen Points, the occupation of Anatolia, the murder of Turks, the efforts to establish Armenian and Kurdish states and the need for a national resistance movement”.³⁴⁹ This heightened level of perceived threat to national sovereignty further undermined attempts at coming to terms with the genocidal actions. The British, reacting to the intensified national resistance in Istanbul, decided to occupy the capital fully on March 16, 1920 and to arrest leading national figures in the city in order to stop the national movement. With parliament going to recess and the appointment of Damat Ferid Paşa, a struggle for political power between Istanbul and Ankara started.

As the national movement was gaining the upper hand in this power struggle, its approach to the prosecution of genocide perpetrators came to be determining. This

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 288–289.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 296–299.

process was not a priority for Ankara even though it was trying to distance itself from the Unionists in the aftermath of WWI. Nationalists were pragmatic about the trials. They perceived the trials as a form of compromise to the Allied powers in negotiating relatively less harsh conditions in the peace treaty at the end of the Paris Peace Conference. Hence, instead of taking a concrete stand, the leaders of the national movement chose to stay somewhat ambivalent.

National movement leaders saw atrocities against Armenians through the lens of their announced goal of building a Turkish nation-state within the boundaries established at the Mudros Armistice. They saw the territory delimited by these boundaries as integral and belonging to the Turkish-Muslim population of the now-almost-defunct empire. Their main sensitivities were about sovereignty and independence. As a result, they assessed responses to wartime atrocities within this framework. Alongside the emphasis on sovereignty, there were two other important aspects of the national movement. Firstly, the movement was based on and sustained by the Unionist elements. The establishment of national resistance organizations in Anatolia was initiated during the Great War by the Unionist government. The network and infrastructure making the resistance possible relied on the Unionist factors. There was a clear continuity in terms of political and military cadres undertaking the national movement. Mustafa Kemal himself was a member of the CUP and never resigned from the party until the end of his life. Some Unionist members of the national movement had been among the perpetrators of the genocide, but they were playing indispensable roles in the national movement. The national movement continuously tried to distinguish itself from the Unionist wartime governments and their policies, especially atrocities committed against the minorities.

However, the composition of the movement and its ideals were clearly Unionist.³⁵⁰ So, the prosecutions of the Unionists for their wartime policies put pressure on the national movement.

The second aspect was the continuing struggle over Anatolia between the national government and the Armenian state founded in May 1918 in the Caucasus. The Armenians established their republic in Eastern Armenia. There were plans to establish an Armenian state in Western Armenia (in the six Ottoman provinces in Anatolia). These plans were internationally recognized in the Sevres Treaty. The national movement saw the establishment of an Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia as a major threat to national existence and sovereignty.

The 1920-23 struggle against British and French occupation and Greek and Armenian territorial claims - later known as the Turkish War of Independence - was, to a great extent, an attempt to establish an independent Turkish national state based on the principles of the National Pact, which called for the preservation of the six eastern provinces of Anatolia. The Armenians, in accordance with promises made by the Allied Powers, claimed these provinces as their own, and indeed the Istanbul government had been willing to negotiate over them. The nationalists' approach to the question of genocide, therefore, was governed solely by the determination to maintain control of those areas.³⁵¹

As was the case with the Greeks after May 1919, the national movement was waging war against the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia between 1919 and late 1922.³⁵² Turkish, Greek and Armenian forces were engaged in military operations and massacres against each other in Anatolia. This bloody atmosphere pushed the genocide to the background and made it irrelevant. For the national movement, the massacres committed by the Armenians were much more immediate. Any time the question of the genocide came up

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 303–306.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 332–333.

³⁵² Ibid., 317–336.

the national movement argued that the Armenians were murdering Muslims.³⁵³ The theme of Armenians massacring Muslims established continuity between World War I and the national movement period.

Mustafa Kemal himself had varying views about the wartime atrocities. He stated that the policies against the Armenians constituted a “massacre” and that a small group of Unionists committed these atrocities. He was also supportive of the idea of punishing those who were responsible, especially when he was speaking to foreign press. On April 24, 1920, during a speech in the assembly, he referred to the genocide as a “shameful act belonging to the past”. However, he also reiterated the existing topic of blaming the Armenians and Western powers for the atrocities, “whatever happened to the non-Muslim communities living in our country, it is the result of partition politics that they themselves, swept away by foreign intrigues and abusing their privileges, pursued in a most brutal manner.”³⁵⁴

In line with these considerations, it was the national movement that put an effective end to the prosecution of wartime crimes against the Armenians. The Treaty of Sevres, August 10, 1920, demonstrated that no matter what stand the Ottoman side took regarding the crimes, the Allied powers were determined to partition Anatolia and to pave the way for the establishment of Armenian, Greek and Kurdish states in Anatolia. So, prosecuting the Unionists for their policies lost its practical value in negotiating favourable peace conditions. Instead of following an appeasement policy, the national movement embarked upon armed resistance to “protect” the national homeland. In other words, the prosecution of atrocities was strictly related to the plans to carve up Anatolia

³⁵³ Ibid., 335–336.

³⁵⁴ Quoted in Ibid., 344–346.

and to undermine Turkish sovereignty and independence. Another factor was that the Istanbul government instrumentally used the martial courts in Istanbul in its struggle against the national movement. The courts, which were established to try wartime criminals, began to try the leaders of the national movement. The national movement, in response, took a defensive position and began to block the prosecution process. The blockade led to the withering away of the prosecution of wartime atrocities against the Armenians in 1922. In addition, the national movement adopted a series of motions restoring the honour of those executed for their involvement in the genocide. The national movement was clearly undoing the trial process and establishing a hegemonic position regarding the genocide. The military successes of the national movement against the Greeks and the Armenians and its establishment of itself as the sole legitimate political power in Turkey led to the obliteration of the question of genocide. The Treaty of Sevres was overruled and during the Lausanne Peace Conference (1922-23) the genocide was effectively a non-issue for the Turkish side.³⁵⁵

With the Treaty of Lausanne all hopes of establishing the truth about genocide, of recognition of Ottoman crimes, of restoring justice and of compensating Armenian losses faded away. Instead, the Turkish nationalists' "victory" helped them to impose their own version of history. İsmet İnönü, Turkey's main representative at the Lausanne Peace Conference, voiced what would become the backbone of Turkish denial in the following years.

Since both the Turkish government and nation were forced to take punitive measures and to respond fully, but always and without exception only after their patience was exhausted, the responsibility for the disasters that befell the Armenian community within the Turkish Empire belongs entirely to the Armenian community itself.... For as long as the Christian elements did not

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 349–364.

abuse the generosity of the country in which they lived for centuries in comfort and plenty, the Turks never denied them their rights.³⁵⁶

The Turkish side managed to officially inscribe the view that the Armenians were the sole agent to blame for their own extermination. The Treaty of Lausanne brought a general amnesty for all military and political crimes in Turkey between August 1, 1914, and November 20, 1922. Many of those who had been tried for crimes against the Armenians were rehabilitated and furthermore they were given important posts among the nationalist cadres.³⁵⁷ The CUP leaders Talat, Enver, and Cemal, who were the masterminds of the genocide, were posthumously included among the national heroes.³⁵⁸ That was the end of an opportunity for Turkey to come into terms with its genocidal past and to establish justice for the Armenians. The convoluted historical trajectory of post-Ottoman empire political reconfiguration amounted to the sustained denial of the Armenian genocide and Turkish-Muslim responsibility for it.

Mustafa Kemal on the Armenian Genocide: The Establishment of Kemalist Hegemony over Historical Memory and Repressive Silence Regarding the Armenian Genocide

The Lausanne Treaty marked the establishment of the official narrative on Ottoman atrocities against the Armenians. With the treaty a thick curtain of oblivion was thrown on the wartime crimes and genocidal policies of the CUP government. Disavowal

³⁵⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 366.

³⁵⁷ Göçek, *Denial of violence*, 359.

³⁵⁸ “First, in Talat’s case, the Turkish national assembly protested in 1921 that the assassin [Soghomon] Tehlirian was acquitted after a two-month trial, largely as a consequence of the efforts of the German ambassador. After the death of Mustafa Kemal and the ascendance to power of former CUP and SO member İsmet İnönü, who had now become the president of the republic, Talat’s remains were brought to Turkey in 1943 and buried with a state ceremony. In Cemal’s case, his coffin arrived in Erzurum in 1922, and he was duly given a proper burial as a martyr. In 1996, Enver’s remains were likewise brought back to Turkey, and the bodies of all three CUP leaders were then transported to a special monument in İstanbul constructed for ‘the martyrs of the Turkish nation-state’.” *Ibid.*, 267.

through popular and loud silence, censorship, aggressive suppression and justification became the main republican responses to the genocide. Mustafa Kemal [later Atatürk (the father of the Turks)], the "founder" of the Turkish Republic and its first president, was himself one of the leading perpetrators of this denial by silence through his historical Speech that he delivered in 36 hours from 15 to 20 October 1927.³⁵⁹

Determining Republican historiographical frames and establishing the Turkish nationalist hegemony over history writing, the Speech tells the story of the national struggle starting from May 19, 1919, the day Mustafa Kemal landed in Samsun, under his "leadership".³⁶⁰ A perfect example of ego-documents, the Speech demonstrates how the national leader's auto-biography became the foundational myth of the Republic and the modern Turkish nation.³⁶¹ The text aims to represent the new Turkish republic as a new beginning and denies all continuities with its predecessor, the Ottoman Empire. The categorical break with the imperial past and the strict purge of the Ittihadists from national history are among the major tenets of the new blank slate.³⁶²

³⁵⁹ Mustafa Kemal delivered the speech during the Congress of the Republican People's Party, the single party of the early republican era except for two brief experiments with multi-party politics. Erik Jan Zürcher, "The Politician as Historian, Historians in Politics: On the Nutuk (Speech) of Mustafa Kemal Pasha," in *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building : From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London: New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010). For the role of the Speech in Turkish politics, please see Taha Parla, *Türkiye 'de Siyasal Kültürün Resmî Kaynakları: Vol. 1: Atatürk'ün Nutuk'u* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1991). For a treatise on the relations between writing national history, building myths, and narrating the self, please see Hülya Adak, "National Myths and Self-Narrations: Mustafa Kemal's Nutuk and Halide Edib's Memoirs and The Turkish Ordeal," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2–3 (March 20, 2003): 509–27.

³⁶⁰ Fatma Müge Göçek, "Defining the Parameters of a Post-Nationalist Turkish Historiography through the Case of the Anatolian Armenians," in *Turkey beyond Nationalism : Towards Post-Nationalist Identities*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 88–89.

³⁶¹ Hülya Adak, "Ötekileştiremediğimiz Kendimizin Keşfi: 20. Yüzyıl Otobiyografik Anlatıları ve Ermeni Tehciri," in *İmparatorluğun Çöküş Döneminde Osmanlı Ermenileri: Bilimsel Sorumluluk ve Demokrasi Sorunları* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 327.

³⁶² Ibid.

The Speech is a major example of national identity building through interpreting history from a certain point of view, revising existing frames of analysis and imposing new ones, and selecting what is to be included and excluded from national history. As such it is the most authoritative account on the parameters of how the Armenians were to be remembered in the republican Turkey.³⁶³ The Speech drew numerous reactions and responses by opposition figures. However, even in their challenge against Mustafa Kemal's version of events and his authority to claim monopoly over national history, none of these figures revised the narrative on the Armenians. The historical bloc of Turkish elites, even though undermined in terms of political authority, was unified and unequivocal when it came to the Armenians and atrocities committed against them.³⁶⁴

The Speech opens with Mustafa Kemal's diagnosis of national predicament as of 1919 and a list of culprits that includes the CUP leadership and 'Christian communities' undermining the empire for their own agendas. It specifically draws attention to the Armenian and Greek efforts among these detrimental factors.³⁶⁵ Then comes the only reference to Armenian "deportations" in the text within the context of the national struggle movement's attempts at dealing with imperial breakdown:

To institute an impartial inquiry for the purpose of discovering the motives, the instigators, and the agitators implicated in the 'cruelties and murders' (*mezalim ve cinayat*) committed in the Eastern Provinces so that the guilty ones might be punished without delay; to do their utmost to remove misunderstandings that existed between the different elements in the country and to restore the good relations that had formerly existed between them.³⁶⁶

³⁶³ Fatma Ülgen, "Reading Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on the Armenian Genocide of 1915," *Patterns of Prejudice* 44, no. 4 (2010): 385.

³⁶⁴ Adak, "Ötekileştiremediğimiz Kendimizin Keşfi: 20. Yüzyıl Otobiyografik Anlatıları ve Ermeni Tehciri," 328.

³⁶⁵ Ülgen, "Reading Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on the Armenian Genocide of 1915," 385.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 385–386.

Pointing at instigators and agitators, and hence depicting the atrocities as "aberrations," the text argues that the wider population was not involved in the perpetration of crimes. Evoking the prior "good relations" between various communities and the possibility of restoring them, the text minimizes the scale of the disruption the events of 1915 caused. Mustafa Kemal continues by focusing on the local branch of the national movement and its attempts to protect Turkish rights in public opinion by proving "facts" about the unfolding of events. Reference to the protection of Armenian properties constitutes an obvious distortion of historical realities. Finally, the text maintains that the reports of massacres in the Eastern Provinces, especially in Erzurum, were part and parcel of orchestrated attempts at carving out the region from the Ottoman Empire.

This account of Armenian "deportations" and the unintended killings they involved continues the existing justifications and denialist arguments laid out by the leading CUP leaders during and after the Great War. It marks the canonization of these arguments by Mustafa Kemal within the context of the new republic. It constitutes a hegemonic narrative aimed at exonerating the perpetrators of atrocities. Mustafa Kemal, instead of recognizing the atrocities and attributing the responsibility to previous leaders, which would have been in line with the discursive formation of a new national community based on a break with the past, chose to trivialize and justify these events. The Speech, hence, is an attempt at whitewashing the Turkish nation.³⁶⁷ Being the founding myth of modern Turkey, it completely obliterates historical crimes committed against the Armenians, justifies them, and excludes them from the history of the nation.

³⁶⁷ Adak, "Ötekileştiremediğimiz Kendimizin Keşfi: 20. Yüzyıl Otobiyografik Anlatıları ve Ermeni Tehciri," 328.

In addition to the exoneration of the nation, Mustafa Kemal consecrates another major frame within which the nation would remember the Armenians. These frames aim at turning historical memory upside down by downplaying the atrocities committed against the Armenians and inflating the atrocities the Armenians committed against the Muslim population of Anatolia. In order to achieve this, Mustafa Kemal foregrounds the acts committed by Armenians in southern Anatolia, especially around Maraş, and eastern Anatolia in the aftermath of the war.³⁶⁸ These postwar atrocities committed by Armenians, juxtaposed with Armenian subversive activities prior and during the war, determine the general framework in which the Armenians have been perceived and remembered throughout the republican period. As a result, Mustafa Kemal canonized blaming the Armenians and demonizing them as part and parcel of the national history writing, which paved the way for distrust, prejudice, racialism and discrimination against Armenians.

In addition to trivializing, explaining and justifying the genocide through The Speech, Mustafa Kemal was also responsible for writing the Armenians out of history. During a 1923 address to Adana traders, in response to a Muslim artisan who approached him and complained that Armenians had the upper hand in all matters of trade, Mustafa Kemal said,

Armenians ... acted as if they were the owners of this country. Without a doubt, there couldn't be greater injustice and audacity than this. Armenians have no rights in this prosperous country. The country is yours; it belongs to the Turks. This country belonged to the Turks throughout history; thus, it is the land of the Turks and it will belong to the Turks forever.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁸ Ülgen, "Reading Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on the Armenian Genocide of 1915," 387–388.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 390.

Hence Mustafa Kemal radically erased the Armenians from the history of Anatolia altogether. Articulating this view, the uncontested leader of the nation made perpetuation of genocide denial, through denying the Armenians their role in the history of the Ottoman-Turkish body politic and geography, a constitutive element of the emerging Kemalist collective memory. This erasure, at one level, was strictly tied to the issue of legitimizing the expropriation of Armenians. As such, the erasure was a cover up for colonial confiscation of Armenian properties and their transfer to Turkish-Muslims as a part of Turkifying the economy and creating a national bourgeoisie. At another level, Republican elites, following Mustafa Kemal's model, embarked upon an attempt at removing the Armenian existence from the history of Anatolia and also from modern collective memory.

Kemalist Usable Past

The new Republic was looking for a “usable past”³⁷⁰ that would act as a bonding agent that would help the elites mould a nation that was not quite there yet. The immediate Ottoman past was gone, but a new alternative was yet to emerge. The empty, homogeneous and simultaneous time of progress and modern nation-state, repressing various past and contemporary episodes of catastrophe, facilitated the horizontal imagination of nation.³⁷¹ However, nations need depth as well and this depth takes the shape of a past manifested in genealogies of national community harkening back to a time immemorial.

³⁷⁰ Jeffrey K. Olick, “From Usable Past to the Return of the Repressed,” *Hedgehog Review* 9, no. 2 (2007): 19–31.

³⁷¹ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso Books, 2006), 24–26.

As part of their social engineering move, the Kemalist leadership of Mustafa Kemal's Republican People's Party (CHP) paid close attention to the creation of a national history perfectly in line with the new values, norms, and aspirations.³⁷² This new history argued that there was a rupture rather than continuity between the empire and the republic. The Ottoman past was deemed to be incompatible with the Kemalist present and future. Actually, the imperial past functioned as the constitutive outside of the republican identity. The new history has to legitimize the Republican regime, the Kemalist rule, and its secular modern vision.

Along with the construction of an official historiography through the centrally controlled Turkish History Institution and its dissemination through ideological state apparatuses,³⁷³ the Kemalist leadership started a major memory campaign visible in monuments,³⁷⁴ museums,³⁷⁵ official commemorations,³⁷⁶ and architecture.³⁷⁷ Seismic shifts were happening in public memory as well as in the public sphere where the invention of secular traditions went hand in hand with the reorganization of space to

³⁷² Büşra Ersanlı Behar, *İktidar ve tarih: Türkiye'de "resmi tarih" tezinin oluşumu, 1929-1937* (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: AFA Yayıncılık, 1992); Etienne Copeaux, *Tarih ders kitaplarında (1931-1993) Türk tarih tezinden Türk-İslam sentezine*, trans. Ali Berkay (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998).

³⁷³ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (notes towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, ed. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001).

³⁷⁴ Michael E. Meeker, "Once There Was, Once There Wasn't : National Monuments and Interpersonal Exchange," in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 157–91; Ü. Aylin Tekiner, *Atatürk heykelleri: kült, estetik, siyaset* (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: İletişim, 2010); Faik Gur, "Sculpting the Nation in Early Republican Turkey," *Historical Research* 86, no. 232 (May 1, 2013): 342–72.

³⁷⁵ Aslı Gür, "Stories in Three Dimensions : Narratives of Nation and the Anatolian Civilizations Museum," in *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, ed. Esra Özyürek (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 40–69.

³⁷⁶ Srirupa Roy, "Seeing a State: National Commemorations and the Public Sphere in India and Turkey," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48, no. 1 (2006): 200–232.

³⁷⁷ Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).

reflect the Kemalist national identity. The republic was conceived as a clean slate and a new beginning, hence it had to have a new capital free from the shackles of the Ottoman past. Thus Ankara was chosen as the embodiment of the Republican ethos. Modern urban planning and ‘national architecture’ were put in motion in order to create a built environment representing the achievements of Turkish civilization. Urban planning has since been a crucial aspect of constructing Turkish national identity.³⁷⁸

Public squares were a key element of this comprehensive construction process.³⁷⁹ The republic inscribed itself on urban geography through public squares, first in Ankara then in other cities. Kemalist logic of space opted for sterile squares located at city centre. In many of them, an empty square surrounded a monument memorializing republican symbols and moments that interpellated them as members of Turkish national public. Squares, in this perspective, were carefully curated and meticulously maintained public spaces where republican subjects were to perform their Turkishness and hence achieve their subjectification within the parameters of Kemalist national imagination.

The temporal, spatial and ideological outlook of the young republic represented a rational, secular, modern, proud, self-confident and innocent national community where national population, culture and political entity perfectly coincided. Looking enthusiastically to the future with a staunch belief in progress; foregrounding carefully calculated and built spaces conveying a sense of control and potency; and having a combination of six tenets – Nationalism, Statism, Secularism (or more correctly Laicism as the republican leadership adopted the French approach to the question of religion in

³⁷⁸ Amy Mills, *Streets of Memory: Landscape, Tolerance, and National Identity in Istanbul* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010).

³⁷⁹ Alev Cinar, “Cities, Squares and Statues: The Use of Public Space in the Making of the Nation,” in *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places, and Time* (Minneapolis, Minn.; Bristol: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

public life), Republicanism, Populism, and Revolutionism³⁸⁰ – as the foundational ideology, the Republic was the ultimate fantasy of the nation.³⁸¹ Here was the perfect mirror of the new Turkey upon which the nation could project itself and, in return, could ensure itself of its wholeness.

National Trauma

Lurking behind these polished surfaces, harmoniously arranged new spaces and a present full of potential thrusting forward, however, there was another past threatening to break down the narcissistic mirror of the nation, to undermine the sense of national victory and pride, and to hold the nation back. This past was much darker, problematic, and difficult to deal with because it was shaped by successive traumas of imperial amputation through military defeats and national revolts; the anxiety of losing independence and sovereignty at the end; and the sense of despair embodied in the figure of millions of Muslim refugees fleeing towards the empire.

Corollary to and resonating with national trauma, the post-Ottoman society was unable to mourn the loss of the empire.³⁸² Those surviving the empire did not have time and emotional space to bury their dead properly, literally and figuratively, and to grieve

³⁸⁰ Taha Parla, *Kemalist tek-parti ideolojisi ve CHP'nin altı oku*, vol. 3, 3 vols., Türkiye'de siyasal kültürün resmî kaynakları (İstanbul: İletişim, 1991).

³⁸¹ Meltem Ahiska, *Occidentalism in Turkey: Questions of Modernity and National Identity in Turkish Radio Broadcasting* (London; New York; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010); Levent Köker, *Modernleşme, Kemalizm ve demokrasi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1990).

³⁸² The loss of empire entails the abolition of the Sultanate and Caliphate under the early Republican regime. There is not much information on whether the post-imperial society managed to come to terms with the loss of these two significant positions embodied in the person of the Sultan. There was no significant royalist movement that attempted to restore absolute monarchy in Turkey. The Sultan was the leader of the house of Osman and the empire; the pillar of Ottoman cosmology; and the leader and protector of Islam as the Caliph. Although the Caliph, as the leader of worldwide Islam, was not commanding the same power as it once did after the Prophet, the Muslim community had serious religious and emotional investment in and affinities with the post. It is not too far fetched to assume that the loss of these two points of reference would have significant reverberations.

for not only the lost homelands, but also the sense of supremacy attached to being the dominant imperial group. First, there was the struggle against invading Western countries and returning Greeks and Armenians. Second, under the new republic, national identity was discursively built, to a great extent, on renouncing the Ottoman past and obliterating as many reminders of that past as possible.

The sense of imminent danger against independence and sovereignty was intense, and the Ottoman society, at least the majority, was in a state of disbelief and crisis. The Balkan Wars inflicted a major blow to the empire, in territorial, economic, and demographic terms. The Great War was cataclysmic in its immediate impacts and its afterlife (Boyar). Western invasion in Anatolia along zone lines (decided through secret agreements during the wartime) and the returning Greeks and Armenians, fuelled the national liberation struggle that amounted to a full-scale war against the Greek and Armenian forces. One more time, society was facing the abyss between death and life. Fear and anxiety were immense and tangible: the Turkish National Anthem, adopted on March 12, 1921, starts with a commandment, “Fear not!”

The pinnacle of this catastrophic period and a major impetus for national struggle was the Sevres Treaty (August 10, 1920) that declared the actual death of the empire. Even though the treaty was never ratified and put into force due to victorious armed struggle, the Sevres Treaty stayed in the national psyche as the quintessential marker of Turkish victimization. Exemplifying a “culture of defeat,”³⁸³ the Treaty has since been one of the most durable elements of public memory in Turkey.

³⁸³ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003). Recently, the culture of defeat framework made its appearance in Ottoman studies, though the key event was the Balkan Wars. Eyal Ginio, *The Ottoman Culture of Defeat: The Balkan Wars and Their Aftermath*, 2016.

The Sevres Treaty has actually become a syndrome³⁸⁴ closely connected with and conditioning widespread suspicious and reactionary views of the West as imperialist and against Turkish unity; perception of non-Turkish (Turkish defined as ethnically Turk, religiously Muslim, belonging to Sunni sect, and until very recently secular) as potential threats to national security and unity paving the way for systematic stigmatization, marginalization and discrimination against them; and a penchant for antagonistic understanding of the world where Turkish people have no one to trust except each other. In this view, the late Ottoman Empire and the republic have been under siege, and this is still valid for the present.

Governing the Difficult Past

The Kemalist historiography and memorialization were attempts at replacing the haunting reminders of Ottoman demise with a quasi-mythic narrative of national revival. Another component of these attempts was canonizing and concretizing the Atatürk cult that was already in the making at a popular level. The nation-in-the making saw Mustafa Kemal as its saviour and entrusted him with a sacred aura. The memorial order built around his cult clearly fetishized Atatürk and was mythical and highly ritualized.³⁸⁵ According to this view, he arrived in the midst of crisis, united the nation around the holy goal of defending national territories, fought against all imperialists, and led the whole nation towards survival. He has become an imago, an image of national unity and wholeness while the nation was not there yet completely, society was severely

³⁸⁴ Fatma Müge Göçek, "Why Is There Still a Sevres Syndrome? An Analysis of Turkey's Uneasy Association with the West," in *The Transformation of Turkey Redefining State and Society from the Ottoman Empire to the Modern Era* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

³⁸⁵ Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).

fragmented, and older identities coexisted side by side with the national one. His death initiated an eternal mourning for Turkey,³⁸⁶ and his mausoleum became a site of memory.³⁸⁷ The cult of Atatürk made significant comebacks when groups such as Kurds and Islamists challenged the hegemonic national identity.

The trauma of imperial loss, strong belief in Turkish victimization, and the narrative of national revival and unity, while providing necessary images, tropes and discourses to build national identity, have paved the way for strong disavowals of past atrocities against subaltern ethno-religious groups and also for masking deep streams of continuing aggression against non-conforming groups, such as Kurds and Alevites. Actually, disavowal of past atrocities was among the conditions of possibility of republican ethno-religious and political aggression. Legitimizing the atrocities against Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians also legitimated the aggression against the Kurds.

The Armenian Genocide as a Condition of Possibility of the Nation State and Disavowal

The interplay of disavowal and aggression is most visible, destructive and actual in the case of Armenian genocide denial. Although the emergence and evolution of Armenian and Kurdish catastrophes are intertwined and cannot be understood separately, the Armenian genocide had a distinct characteristic. The Armenian genocide “was conceived as a necessary condition for the construction of a Turkish nation-state – the supreme objective of the Young Turks. The two phenomena, in other words, are

³⁸⁶ Nazlı Ökten, “An Endless Death and an Eternal Mourning: November 10 in Turkey,” in *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, ed. Esra Özyürek, 1st ed (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2007).

³⁸⁷ Christopher Samuel Wilson, *Beyond Anıtkabir: The Funerary Architecture of Atatürk: The Construction and Maintenance of National Memory*, Ashgate Studies in Architecture Series (Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013).

indissolubly linked: we cannot understand the one if we ignore the other.”³⁸⁸ Hence, the Armenian genocide is among the conditions that made the building of Turkish nation and its nation-state possible. It is “a foundational violence in the constitution of the Turkish republic.”³⁸⁹ Memories of the annihilation of Armenians, confiscation of their property, and eradication of their culture were to be governed in order to prevent them from being used as a threat to national unity.

Together with the violent expulsion of the Ottoman Greeks before World War I and population exchange between Turkey and Greece after the proclamation of the republic, the genocide of Assyrians, and violent assimilationist policies regarding the Kurds, the Armenian genocide made it possible for the Unionists and their descendants led by Mustafa Kemal to imagine a political entity belonging to a homogeneous Turkish population and to craft a national identity. The violent foundation of the Turkish nation-state produced further violence against subaltern citizens of Turkey during Mustafa Kemal’s leadership and beyond. “During the 1930s and 1940s, the non-Muslims continued to be the primary targets of collective violence as they were forcefully deported in the 1930s, unfairly drafted into military service in 1941–42, unjustly taxed in 1942–43, subjected to pogroms in large cities in 1955, and forcefully extradited from the republic in 1964.”³⁹⁰ Perhaps the Armenian Genocide was not necessarily committed to building a Turkish nation-state per se, but it definitely made that state possible in the last analysis. Also, the regime of impunity established with regard to the genocide paved the way for more destructive violence against subaltern groups.

³⁸⁸ Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 1.

³⁸⁹ Göçek, *Denial of violence*, 19.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 340.

The dominant periodization of the unfolding of Republican denial conceives the five decades between the Treaty of Lausanne and the late 1970s as a period of silence, where there was reluctance to talk about the genocidal events. Major accounts of the history of denial presented official and popular attitudes to be more about forgetting than active denying. The issue was completely left out of curricula, there were minimal written sources on the genocidal episode, and it was not completely discussed. In other words, this perspective underlines that there was no strong, organized and aggressive denial policy, which would come into being after 1980. This periodization has some explanatory power but the picture was much more complex. The official narrative was already established, but there were no serious efforts to disseminate it. The strong impression was that the Kemalist elites wanted the country to forget the past atrocities. Silence was not only a top-down policy imposed by the central elites. Instead, social and official dynamics fed into each other and created a regime of wilful silencing. It is also not possible to use a repressive model to understand the non-existence of the genocide in public discourses. There were no significant domestic dissident voices challenging the official position. On the contrary, massacres and expropriations were accepted and normalized by the general public. Because the genocide itself was committed as a result of a complicated network of alliances and interests and by a multitude of agents not reducible to the political power, the silence was also sustained by a national front.

Censorship

The 1920s and 1930s witnessed the establishment of full-fledged oblivion of the destruction of Armenians in Turkey. The Kemalist regime operationalized state-censorship in order to prevent accounts of the genocide from “infiltrating” into the

country. The state specifically prevented entry of accounts of Armenian survivors' memories to Turkey, and destroyed the copies that made their way into the country. The borders were tightly sealed against these "dangerous" materials. However, the state did not attempt to prevent their production and circulation abroad.³⁹¹

Closer study shows that between 1925 and 1949, the single-party regime banned publications originating abroad. Only one book published in Turkey faced censorship. On August 26, 1925, *Salname-i Şarki* (Eastern Yearbook) by Alfred Rizu, a British citizen residing in Istanbul, was banned on the grounds that it provided information about Armenia.³⁹² The second and last case of domestic censorship was exercised against *Aztarar* newspaper, which was published in Istanbul in Armenian, on January 27, 1937.³⁹³ This record shows that there was almost no domestic challenge to the national narrative on the atrocities, and none among the members of the dominant group.

Different explanations for this are possible. Either the authoritarian single-party rule managed to silence and suppress all possible sources of dissent about the genocidal past or dissenting individuals or groups were practicing self-censorship to protect themselves, or there was no challenge against the official position. Some commentators argued that the Kemalist memory was monolithic and was able to assert its hegemony over the entire Republican memory landscape: "the new memory of the nation did not permit cracks, nuances, shades, sublets, or any difference for that matter. Like the new

³⁹¹ Uğur Ümit Üngör, "The Calm after the Storm: The Politics of Memory," in *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 220–221.

³⁹² Deniz Güner, "Tek Parti Döneminde Basın Yayın Yoluyla Yapılan Bölücülük Propagandasına Uygulanan Sansür," *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* XIV, no. 29 (Autumn 2014): 231.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 233.

identity, it was total, absolute, and unitary.”³⁹⁴ However, the official repression and push for amnesia coexisted with genocide memories readily available at the popular level among the witnesses and perpetrators of the genocide.

Large numbers of Turks and Kurds have vivid memories of the genocide, recoverable most effectively through oral history projects.³⁹⁵ These testimonies, collected very recently, reveal that large segments of society, especially Kurds, knew about violence against Armenians, their involvement in it, and its consequences. These memories were successfully passed to the children and grandchildren of those who lived through the events. Most probably confined to the private sphere because of official disavowal and repression, the existence of these memories requires significant revision of memory studies on the republican landscape of genocide memory.

The understanding of seemingly mutually exclusive denial and remembrance fails to explain their co-existence. Paying more attention to this co-existence would provide deeper insights about republican politics of memory and identity formation processes. For the memory of violence was multi-vectorial and present among dominant as well as subaltern groups. The fact that Kurds have retained memories of the state violence against Armenians, with which they had a multi-layered involvement, ranging from perpetrators, witnesses, bystanders and protectors, problematizes the strict distinction between perpetrators and victims, as the Kurds would fall victim to violent assimilation of the Kemalist regime starting less than a decade after the Armenian genocide.

³⁹⁴ Üngör, “The Calm after the Storm: The Politics of Memory,” 223–224.

³⁹⁵ Uğur Ümit Üngör, “Lost in Commemoration: The Armenian Genocide in Memory and Identity,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 48, no. 2 (March 15, 2014): 147–66, doi:10.1080/0031322X.2014.902210; Gülçiçek Günel Tekin, *Beni yıkamadan gömün: Kürtler Ermeni soykırımını anlatıyor* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2013); Adnan Çelik and Namık Kemal Dinç, *Yüz yıllık Ah!: toplumsal hafızanın izinde 1915 Diyarbakır* (İstanbul: İsmail Beşikçi Vakfı, 2015).

Furthermore, the fact that society remembered what was being repressed by the regime does not necessarily mean that society was recognizing the genocide. In other words, remembering cannot be situated as the binary opposite of denial, as they do not inhabit the same register. There is a significant difference between remembering the violence and recognizing the genocide.

Hence, the memory landscape was more complicated and multi-layered. The presence of genocide memories did not lead to recognition, as most of those remembering the atrocities, Turkish and Kurdish alike, were able to justify them. To a great extent this ability to justify was related to the lack of engagement by the cultural establishment in Turkey. As Quataert and Zürcher quotes earlier demonstrated, the historiography of the Ottoman Empire did not engage with the history of atrocities against the Armenians. In addition to historians, the rest of the cultural establishment and political organizations did not raise the issue of injustices and atrocities committed against the Ottoman Armenians. Instead many of them deliberately partook in denial by silence or non-engagement. The atrocities against Armenians constituted an open secret where many members of society knew about the treatment of Armenians, but very few challenged the status quo sustaining Turkish superiority and privileges. Scholars of genocide memory in the field of cultural production have shown that literature in Turkey was to a great extent, silent about the genocide, during the republican era. There was not a single work produced that engaged with the genocide. This shows that the cultural establishment in Turkey was largely complicit in the reproduction of denial through self-censorship and silence. In many literary works, the authors actually showed animosity against subaltern groups.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁶ Erol Köroğlu, “Suskunluğun Farklı Kırılma Noktaları Olarak Türk Edebiyatında Unutma ve Hatırlama Örnekleri,” in *İmparatorluğun Çöküş Döneminde Osmanlı Ermenileri: Bilimsel*

However, the same studies unearthed works by some of the major writers that included references to atrocities, confiscation of Armenian properties, and their distribution to Muslims. Major writers such as Nazım Hikmet,³⁹⁷ Kemal Tahir,³⁹⁸ and Yaşar Kemal had referred to the atrocities, but these references did not echo among the members of the establishment in Turkey who shared similar sensibilities with the mentioned authors. Members of the dominant group, cutting across political divisions, showed a remarkable unity in not incorporating memories of the genocide into the collective memory of Turkey, if not in justifying the genocide.³⁹⁹ At moments when the genocide memories had the potential to make a disturbing comeback internationally or domestically, the national front, built almost instantaneously as a reflex, was ready to suppress them through aggression and violence. In addition, there were two instances in which Turkey forcefully fought against reminders of the genocide. These two instances reveal not only that Turkey was not so passive about denial, but also that it was ready to inflict further symbolic violence against the Armenians living in Turkey in case the atrocities were brought up internationally.

Assassinating Memory and Forced Self-Negation

The first instance of suppression happened in the mid-1930s, and was related to Franz Werfel's *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, which narrated the story of a successful Armenian resistance against annihilation. Werfel published his novel in 1933 and next

Sorumluluk ve Demokrasi Sorunları, 23-25 Eylül 2005, ed. Fahri Aral (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2011), 383–91.

³⁹⁷ Serdar Korucu, “Nazım Hikmet’in Tanıklığıyla Ermeni Katliamları,” *Agos*, January 13, 2015, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/10225/nazim-hikmetin-tanikligiyla-ermeni-katliamlari>.

³⁹⁸ Köroğlu, “Suskunluğun Farklı Kırılma Noktaları Olarak Türk Edebiyatında Unutma ve Hatırlama Örnekleri.”

³⁹⁹ Belge, Murat, “Edebiyatta Ermeni Sorunu,” *Birikim*, February 2006, <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim-yazi/6169/edebiyatta-ermeni-sorunu#.V5mWqZMrLsk>.

year Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer bought the screen rights to produce a major movie. Upon the arrival of the news about the production, the Turkish government pressured the production company and, after a long process of intense lobbying and negotiations in the US, managed to stop the project.⁴⁰⁰ In addition, the Armenian community in Istanbul burned Werfel's book and his picture, denouncing him and the content of the novel.⁴⁰¹ There was a strong reaction against these events in the public sphere. In the midst of escalating tension, the leaders of the Armenian community gathered in the Taksim Square to lay wreaths at the Republican Monument and to renounce international commemorations organized by Armenians.⁴⁰²

The second major challenge to Turkey's position regarding the genocide happened in April 1965. Armenians living in Turkey and abroad had been commemorating genocide victims at religious services organized each year on April 24 since 1916.⁴⁰³ For the first time in 1965, at the 50th anniversary of the massacres, they launched a political campaign in which they claimed that Turks and Muslims committed genocide against them and demanded recognition of it. When the news that Armenians in Armenia and the diaspora were preparing to hold public demonstrations, meetings and commemorations demanding the recognition of the genocide reached Turkey, ruling elites, intellectuals and journalists quickly responded by rehashing arguments established in the aftermath of the genocide. Throughout April 1965, the Turkish media was flooded

⁴⁰⁰ Edward Minassian, "The Forty Years of Musa Dag: The Film That Was Denied," *Journal of Armenian Studies* 3, no. 1–2 (1986): 121–32.

⁴⁰¹ Ayda Erbal and Talin Suciyan, "Erbal and Suciyan: One Hundred Years of Abandonment," *Armenian Weekly*, April 29, 2011, <http://armenianweekly.com/2011/04/29/erbal-and-suciyan-one-hundred-years-of-abandonment/>.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Aris Nalcı and Serdar Korucu, *1965: 2015'ten 50 Yıl Önce 1915'ten 50 Yıl Sonra* (Propaganda Yayınları, 2014), 11.

with accounts claiming that it was the Armenians who massacred Muslims, and that the Ottoman Empire merely defended itself against separatist Armenian betrayers. Many commentators argued that Armenian genocide claims were part of an imperialist plot against Turkey orchestrated and carried out by Western powers in a similar fashion during WWI.

Another major theme in the media responses to genocide commemorations was forgetting. Columnists stated that during the war, both Armenians and Turks suffered immensely, however this painful episode of the past had been forgotten and should remain so.⁴⁰⁴ The idea that the Turks suffered as much as the Armenians was inserted as a relativizing element to repress injustices committed against Armenians. The authors demanded that the past should be forgotten. This oblivion was organized and imposed by the party that benefitted from the destruction of Armenians. Veteran columnist and celebrated public figure Burhan Felek reiterated that the past should be left alone.⁴⁰⁵ The Treaty of Lausanne, coming as a result of Turkish nationalists' victory at the end of the Independence War, sealed the fate of genocide memory. The victors' interpretation of history came to monopolize the representation of the event. Forgetting the event meant sustaining the status quo based on this monopoly over history.

Some members of the Armenian community in Turkey made statements to the same effect. The Spiritual Leader of Catholic Armenians in Turkey, Catholicos Bogos

⁴⁰⁴ "Half a century ago, against as a result of incitements from the Dashnaktsutyun (the Armenian Revolutionary Federation) and the Hunchakian Revolutionary Party, upsetting events happened between Armenians and Turks. Turks had painful days as did the Armenians. However, these events have become history with all sins and sorrows. There is no point in turning those pages and digging up the ashes." Ecvet Güresin, *Milliyet*, April 10, 1965 quoted in Ibid., 25.

⁴⁰⁵ "Armenians called this event a massacre and Turks self-defence. However, after the Lausanne Treaty the topic was over and faded slowly." *Cumhuriyet*, April 17, 1965 quoted in Ibid., 37.

Kireçyan, made a statement on April 9, 1965.⁴⁰⁶ Both religious and also secular members of the community voiced similar points. Berç Turan, former Senator in the Turkish Senate, published an article on Turkish-Armenian relations in *Cumhuriyet* providing a similar account.⁴⁰⁷ Armenians of Turkey, under covert and overt pressure, clearly distanced themselves from the campaign initiated by Armenians abroad. Denialists used their denunciation to argue that the campaign was unfounded and that the claims of genocide were invalid. Denialists clearly divided Armenians into two categories, “good” and “bad” Armenians. “Our” Armenians, Armenians living in Turkey, were agreeable and loyal to the Turkish state. Some members of the diaspora were also considered within this category of good Armenians, those who were not pursuing the genocide “agenda.” However, the majority of Armenians living abroad or in Armenia were stigmatized as “bad” Armenians trying to undermine the Turkish republic and lending themselves to imperialist interventions against Turkey. This framing of Armenians is still in circulation.

The insistence on silence, unjust as it was, also had an aggressive and threatening tint to it. The Republican People’s Party deputy Hasan Erdoğan clearly voiced this tendency and implicitly threatened the Armenians.

The Armenian committees that are trying to hold demonstrations to mark the 50th anniversary of atrocities against Armenians (!) should remember that today [April 24th] is also the 50th anniversary of them killing Turks after forcing them into mosques. There is a living memory of thousands of Turks, including women, children, and seniors, being burned, put into ovens, bayoneted cruelly, without mercy and shamelessly in Erzurum, Van, Kars, and Adana regions.

⁴⁰⁶ We, as the spiritual office, do not assent the invoking of old memories. It is possible that we [Turks and Armenians] had memories that offended the other party. However, these memories have become history. *Hürriyet*, April 9, 1965, quoted in *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴⁰⁷ No matter how the historical events that took place 50 years ago are interpreted; whether as measures a state took in order to preserve its internal security; as a result of a false policy; as a punishment of a revolt of the subjects provoked by other states trying to destroy the Ottoman Empire, these events, saddening for both parties, are history now. “Türk-Ermeni Münasebetleri,” *Cumhuriyet*, April 25, 1965 quoted in *Ibid.*, 75–76.

However, we [Turks], following the dear Atatürk's notices, buried these memories and wanted to forget them. Now we see that members of the Armenian Dashnak Committee want to take action again with unprecedented recklessness and impudence. There is indignation among the Turkish population living in regions where Armenians committed massacres.⁴⁰⁸

The MP's discourse included "excellent" examples of blaming, counterattack and competing victimization that were and still are used in order to avoid responsibility in the destruction of Armenians. He stigmatized and despised Armenians' demand for justice and recognition. The graphic description of the events helped demonize the Armenians in the past as well as in 1965. The MP, by invoking indignation among the Turkish population, implicitly threatened Armenians, especially those living in Turkey, as they were the ones living within a Turkish-Muslim majority.

Turkish reactions demonstrated a pressure to keep the commemorations within the confines of a "religious" frame. Armenians holding religious memorial services for their losses were acceptable, but when they embarked on a political genocide recognition campaign they "crossed the line".⁴⁰⁹ For Turkish people the genocide had already been forgotten outside the Armenian community. Constraining commemorations to churches was another method of repressing the memories of massacres and rendering them

⁴⁰⁸ Bugün Türklerin Ermenilere yaptıkları zulümlerin (!) 50 inci yıldönümünün münasebetiyle nümayiş yapmak isteyen Ermeni Komitecileri, unutmazınlar ki aynı tarih Ermenilerin Türkleri camilere doldurup hunharca katledişlerinin de 50 inci yılına rastlamaktadır. Rus ihtilâlini fırsat bilerek Erzurum'da, Van'da Kars'ta ve Adana bölgesinde on binlerce Türk'ün kadın, çocuk, yaşlı demeden gruplar halinde yakıldıkları, fırınlara atıldıkları, insafsızca, hayasızca ve gaddarca süngülendikleri hala acı hatıralarıyla gönüllerde yatmaktadır. Fakat biz, Aziz Atatürk'ün ikazlarıyla bütün bu acı hatıraları tarihe gömmüş ve unutmak istemiştik. Şimdi görüyoruz ki Ermeni Taşnak Komitesi mensupları tarihte emsaline rastlanmayan bir cüretkarlık ve yüzsüzlükle yeniden harekete geçmek istemişlerdir. Utanmadan, sıkılmadan Türk mezaliminden bahsedenlerin bu hareketini karşısında Anadolu'da Ermeni katliamına maruz kalmış bölgelerin halkı infial duymaktadır. *Ulus* quoted Hasan Erdoğan, April 22, 1965, quoted in *Ibid.*, 50–51.

⁴⁰⁹ Armenians used to commemorate their losses behind church walls. Now, it looks as though they want to put their dead ones in exhibition at political morgues. They want to remember an already forgotten event, as Beirut American University political history professor Torikyan admits, to the world and to young Turkish generations who only have feelings of friendship towards Armenians. *Anadolu Ajansı*, quoted in *Ibid.*, 41.

invisible. Religious ceremonies for the dead were deemed to be safe because it was easy to compartmentalize them as practices of mourning devoid of political connotations.

International campaigns for genocide recognition placed the loyalty of Armenians in Turkey into question.⁴¹⁰ Politicians and journalists, implicitly and explicitly, called them to declare their fidelity to the Turkish state and nation. Religious and secular members of the community began to denounce the campaign and to declare their loyalty to the Turkish Republic and nation. The Patriarch of İstanbul Şinorhk Kalustyan's statement on April 10, 1965, read,

Commemorating the dead is the right and duty of all. However, these demonstrations of respect to the dead should not pave the way for planting and growing of seeds of animosity in nations' hearts. The Armenian community, who lived under the Republic and was raised in line with Atatürk's principles, has always proven that it consists of sincere, constructive, and loyal citizens during the last forty years. Hence it is not going to approve any initiative that is against the country's interests.⁴¹¹

Turkish commentators framed these denunciations to claim that it was wrong to embark on a genocide recognition campaign.⁴¹² It was concluded that the Armenian community in Turkey was also not in favour of digging up the "mutually painful" memories of the past.

⁴¹⁰ Erbal and Suciyan argue that Republican nationalist policies regarding the minorities undermined Armenians relationship with their community. "The price levied on the Armenians was extremely high and included not only a clear disengagement from a quest of justice for themselves, but also a clear—albeit forced—disengagement from their relatives in the diaspora. The never-spoken cost for Istanbul Armenians was the complete negation of their political identity and history." Erbal and Suciyan, "One Hundred Years of Abandonment."

⁴¹¹ Ölülerini anmak bütün insanların hakkı ve görevidir. Ancak, bu saygı gösterileri milletlerin kalplerinde husumet tohumlarının ekilip filizlenmesine imkan ve vesile vermemelidir. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti devrinde yaşamış ve Atatürk ilkeleri ile büyümüş olan Türkiye'deki Ermeni topluluğu, geçen kırk yıl içinde samimi, yapıcı ve sadık vatandaş olduğunu daima ispat etmiştir. Bu sebeple bu memleketin menfaatlerine aykırı herhangi bir hareketi de asla tasvip etmeyecektir. Quoted in Nalcı and Korucu, 1965, 23.

⁴¹² The events of the past were not one-sided. All are free to commemorate their losses. However, this should not go hand in hand with politics. Armenians in Turkey share this view. M. Ali Yalçın, *Haber*, quoted in *Ibid.*, 28.

As a further step in showing their loyalty to the Turkish nation, 30 members of Istanbul's Armenian community paid a visit to the Republic Monument in Taksim on April 24 to protest commemorations held abroad. The big wreath laid at the feet of Atatürk's sculpture had the following message, "Dear Atatürk, in your presence, we offer our feelings of gratitude and siblinghood."⁴¹³ These members of the community not only distanced themselves from the recognition campaign, but also denied wrongdoings in the past. Again and again, as a response to official and social pressures, they had to be actively involved in their own silencing. The 50th anniversary commemorations did not bring an immediate change to international public views regarding the genocide, but the Armenians demonstrated that they were ready to struggle for the recognition. In Turkey, after 1965, hegemonic silence was restored. However, in the second half of the 1970s the Turkish state and public were to encounter genocide once again, this time in a more violent way.

These two challenges to denial have received relatively little attention in the literature. As these instances were not taken into consideration, the characteristic of the Kemalist position has been represented as silent, while in reality the denialist discourses were pronounced loud and clear and showed the intensity of the resistance against recognition. This shows that these discourses continued to exist at the official and popular levels during the "silent" period. Moreover, the aggressive responses to Armenian demands for genocide recognition and memorialization especially complicated the line of argument explaining denial only through state and official actors. Figures such as columnists and MPs were not state agents, and their actions were not governed by the state itself. Instead, the quick emergence and aggressive machination of denial in this

⁴¹³ "Aziz Atatürk, huzurunda, Türk Milletine şükran ve kardeşlik hislerimizi arzederiz." Ibid., 74.

instance showed that it was a constitutive and normal component of Turkishness, the social contract that sustains Turkish dominance in the body politic. These instances reveal that the symbolic violence against the Armenian community in Turkey was a constant and an outcome of post-colonial power asymmetries in Turkey. The Armenian citizens of the republic were interpellated to deny their own identity and their own past as proof of their loyalty to the Turkish nation. They were called to perform their identity right. They had to cohere with a national identity that claimed to be a civil and inclusive one, but that, simultaneously, violently reminded them of their difference and excluded them from the nation. Seen from the Turkish point of view, the Armenians were never seen as full members of the Turkish nation. Instead, they were placed in a liminal space and constantly faced simultaneous inclusion and exclusion. In instances where international pressure over Turkey increased or when Turkey was in a situation of conflict, the Armenians, as was the case with other non-Muslim minorities, were used as hostages or leverage. In light of these considerations, denial became largely the natural order of things in Turkey. Symbolic violence unleashed to suppress genocide memories and demands for justice was a cornerstone of asymmetrical power relations in Turkey. The state was and has continued to be an instrument of maintaining this fundamental hierarchy between dominant and subaltern groups; however, it is necessary to see that genocide denial has been part and parcel of the grammar of inter-ethnic relations in post-genocide Turkey. These two moments deserve to be studied more closely and better integrated into the literature on genocide memory.

Post-1980s, Remembering to Deny

There was no significant change in Turkey's denialist engagement after 1965 until the late 1970s and early 1980s. The post-1980 period witnessed a radical transformation in Turkey's relation to the genocidal past. The catalyst for this change came from outside of Turkey. In 1975 a new phenomenon emerged. Two Armenian organizations, the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) and the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide (JCOAG), began to undertake assassinations against Turkish diplomats assigned abroad. These organizations killed more than 30 Turkish Foreign Affairs diplomats or their family members over almost two decades. The aim of these acts was to bring the Armenian genocide and Turkey's denial to the attention of the international community. The organizations demanded that Turkey recognize the genocide; however, even though their actions brought the issue to the forefront, they failed to push Turkey to recognition.

On the contrary, these assaults made Turkey initiate an aggressive genocide denial campaign that saw the official narrative, first established by the CUP, to be recalled and to be disseminated through intensive lobbying, publishing and advertising.⁴¹⁴ Presenting the Armenian attacks as yet another instance of Armenian hostility and violence against the Turks, and accusing Western countries of encouraging these assassinations, the military regime and "its academic-political-security complex"⁴¹⁵ adopted a siege

⁴¹⁴ Some of the major components of this campaign were: "(1) centralising control over the official narrative, (2) publishing defences of the official narrative, (3) marshalling evidence to support the official narrative, (4) teaching the official narrative to Turkish students and (5) gaining international support for the official narrative." Erbal and Suciyan, "One Hundred Years of Abandonment."

⁴¹⁵ Doğan Gürpınar, "The Manufacturing of Denial: The Making of the Turkish 'official Thesis' on the Armenian Genocide between 1974 and 1990," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 18, no. 3 (May 3, 2016): 217–40.

mentality and launched an offensive against Armenian demands for recognition. At this turning point, Turkey's politics of genocide framed the issue as a threat to national security and mobilized a centralized and institutionalized counter-initiative to undermine, discredit and ultimately deny what came to be coded as the "so-called Armenian genocide" or "Armenian allegations".⁴¹⁶ Not surprisingly, the state apparatus was at the forefront of this organized effort, however, the wider population endorsed the official reaction and policies.

National newspapers and influential columnists, in response to assassinations against Turkish diplomats, began to shape public opinion and introduced the "Armenian question" to the wider public. A defining characteristic of their involvement was that they framed the issue as a question of national security and that they introduced highly militarized and aggressive discourses depicting Armenians once again as enemies of the nation. A crucial component of this opinion was that the reason behind the assaults was to divide Turkey and establish an independent Armenian state in eastern Anatolia.⁴¹⁷ These

⁴¹⁶ As part of this centralization of denial thrust, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the Directorate General of Intelligence and Research (*İstihbarat ve Araştırma Genel Müdürlüğü* İAGM) in 1981. This organization was established in close cooperation with the National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu*, MGK). Dixon, "Defending the Nation?," 471.

⁴¹⁷ One of the contemporary champions of the genocide recognition campaign, Cengiz Çandar, published a series of articles on the Armenian attacks against Turkish diplomats. The title of the series was telling: Armenian Terror: The Crusades of the 20th Century. The first installment of the series declared that Armenians' real goal was to establish the Armenian state. Cengiz Çandar, "20.yüzyılın Haçlı Seferi: Ermeni terörü: Asıl hedef, Türkiye'yi parçalayıp bağımsız bir Ermeni devleti kurmak," *Cumhuriyet*, 1983, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19798>. In another installment Çandar argued that ASALA was used by intelligence agencies of several countries, that it had close ties with the CIA, and that Zionism and Armenian nationalism were twins. Cengiz Çandar, "20.yüzyılın Haçlı Seferi:Ermeni terörü:ASALA'yı çeşitli ülkelerin rejimleri ve istihbarat örgütleri yönlendiriyor," *Cumhuriyet*, 1983, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19784>; Cengiz Çandar, "20.yüzyılın Haçlı Seferi:Ermeni terörü:Taşnak soğuk savaş döneminde CIA ile yakın ilişkiler kurdu," *Cumhuriyet*, June 3, 1983, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19788>; Cengiz Çandar, "20.yüzyılın Haçlı Seferi:Ermeni terörü:İkiz kardeşler:Siyonizm ve Ermeni Milliyetçiliği," *Cumhuriyet*, May 2, 1983, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19789>.

journalists argued that Turkey's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence were at stake. Hence these public opinion leaders claimed that the Armenian political organizations continued to pursue the agenda of an independent Armenia from the late Ottoman period to the post-1980s.⁴¹⁸ Another point of agreement was that the Armenian organizations were being mobilized by imperialist powers, i.e. the US, France and the United Kingdom.⁴¹⁹ Some commentators pointed to Greek involvement in the "Armenian Question".⁴²⁰ Claims about Armenian involvement in the Kurdish guerilla organization PKK's attacks against Turkish targets also emerged during this time⁴²¹ and echoed in the 1990s as well.⁴²² Some of the early commentators demanded that government officials, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, begin speaking against Armenian claims of genocide.⁴²³ As a result, columnists started to publicize denialist arguments, in resonance with the official attempts to disseminate the Turkish narrative on the genocide.⁴²⁴ Further

⁴¹⁸ Ertuğrul Özkök, "Bu Oyuna Dikkat," *Hürriyet*, May 1, 1988, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11498/19990/001510723006.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>; Erol Özkoray, "Dünden bugüne Ermeni terörizmi," *Hürriyet*, May 20, 1988, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19577>.

⁴¹⁹ Beşir Hamitoğulları, "Fransa, Ermenileri Neden Koruyor?," *Milliyet*, January 10, 1981, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/20074>; Uğur Mumcu, "Ermeni mandacıları...", *Cumhuriyet*, September 13, 1984, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19909>; İlhan Selçuk, "Kucak politikası tükeniyor mu?," *Cumhuriyet*, September 19, 1984, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/20078>.

⁴²⁰ "Ermeni sorunu," *Maya*, accessed November 9, 2015, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/20106>.

⁴²¹ "İlginç bir iddia:Eruh ve Şemdinli olaylarına ASALA da katıldı," *Milliyet*, February 25, 1985, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/20139>.

⁴²² Uğur Mumcu, "Taşnaksutyun," *Cumhuriyet*, October 18, 1992, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/20081>.

⁴²³ Felek maintained that Turkish silence in the face Armenian genocide claims could be construed as Turkey's recognition of these claims. He suggested that the Turkish state should start telling the world that what had happened was a civil war between Turks and Armenians. Burhan Felek, "Artık susmamak lazım!...", *Milliyet*, April 30, 1981, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19626>.

⁴²⁴ Nadir Nadi Abaloğlu, "Bir anlasak," September 21, 1984, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/20089>; Oktay Akbal, "Geçmiş, bugüne gelir mi?," *Cumhuriyet*, February 9, 1984, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/20115>.

attesting to the articulation of denialist discourses, some of the columnists published interviews with scholars who were justifying the genocide to enlighten the public.⁴²⁵ Some called for the establishment of a joint historical studies commission consisting of Turkish and Armenian scholars.⁴²⁶

The media vilification of the Republic of Armenia and Armenians as a threat to Turkish national security and sovereignty continued in full force during the 1990s as well.⁴²⁷ The term “Armenian” was more and more used as an insult in common parlance as a result of aggressive media stigmatization. “*Ermeni dölü*” (Armenian seed), “*Ermeni piçi*” (Armenian bastard), “*Ermeni dönmesi*” (Armenian convert) have all been used to denigrate and demonize.⁴²⁸ The usage of the word “Armenian” as an insult reached its peak when the Minister of Interior, Meral Akşener, called Abdullah Öcalan, the founder and leader of the PKK, an Armenian seed.⁴²⁹ Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink highlighted the inherent and widespread anti-Armenian sentiment when he asked why

⁴²⁵ For two examples, please see Ali Sirmen, “Ermeni terörizmi ve görevimiz:Aydınlarımıza hemen yapılacak işler düşüyor,” *Cumhuriyet*, February 8, 1982, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19858>; Emin Çölaşan, “Ermeniler bizi, içimizden vurmak için örgütlendi...,” *Hürriyet*, April 26, 1987, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19576>.

⁴²⁶ Talat Halman, “Bir Çağrı,” *Milliyet*, April 8, 1985, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11498/20198/001510665006.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

⁴²⁷ Ali Balcı, “1990’lar Basınında ‘Ermenistan Tehdidi’nin’ İnşası: Milliyet Gazetesi Örneği,” *Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi* 6, no. 2 (2011), doi:10.17550/aid.98516.

⁴²⁸ Bertrand Buchwalter, “Portrait de La Communauté Arménienne d’Istanbul,” in *Les Relations Turco-Arméniennes : Quelles Perspectives ?*, La Turquie Aujourd’hui (İstanbul: Institut français d’études anatoliennes, 2014), 19–43, <http://books.openedition.org/ifeagd/499>; Günay Özdoğan et al., eds., *Türkiye’de Ermeniler: Cemaat-Birey-Yurttaş*, 1. baskı. (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2009), 420–421.

⁴²⁹ Buchwalter, “Portrait de La Communauté Arménienne d’Istanbul.” The minister’s statement received public outcry and negative reactions from intellectual. As a result, the minister had to publicly apologize for using the term.

Öcalan was called “Armenian seed” and not “Kurdish seed”.⁴³⁰ It was clear that the denial campaign was feeding into and resonating with the re-popularization of the image of Armenians as a fifth column and a threat to national security. Public stigmatization increased the pressure over the Armenian citizens of the republic, and they were repeatedly called to prove their loyalty to the Turkish body politic.⁴³¹

Turkish officials took decisive steps to up the ante in official genocide denial. These steps culminated in a centrally organized and highly institutionalized operation attempting to create a hegemonic discourse on the Armenian genocide. The policy of silence or deliberate refusal to talk that had been the dominant mode of governing the difficult past since the late 1920s was now replaced with a policy of aggressive speech. Turkish ruling elites inaugurated an aggressive campaign to disavow genocide claims raised by diaspora Armenians and their “imperialist” accomplices. References to the Armenian genocide boomed in public, official and scholarly discourses. Post-1980 Turkey began to recall the genocidal events, to justify and legitimate them. In other words, Turkey had begun to remember to deny.

The genocide campaign, developed under the supervision of the military junta governing Turkey since September 1980, first of all consolidated its arguments that would be used to refute genocide claims. To this end, some of the arguments first developed during the genocide itself were recalled, and new ones were developed to serve contemporary purposes. The official set of genocide denial arguments in this period included the following:

⁴³⁰ Hrant Dink, Apo’ya neden “Kürt dölü” değil de “Ermeni dölü” deniyor?, interview by Arda Uskan, October 2, 2005, <http://web.archive.org/web/20070927203957/http://www7.vatanim.com.tr/root.vatan?exec=yazardetay&tarih=&Newsid=61569&Categoryid=4&wid=94>.

⁴³¹ Özdoğan et al., *Türkiye’de Ermeniler: Cemaat-Birey-Yurttaş*, 422.

The charge of genocide was baseless; claims of genocide were based on the false propaganda by Armenians; Armenians had constituted a small minority of the population in the Ottoman Empire; Armenians were well treated under Ottoman rule; Armenians had collaborated with the Ottoman Empire's enemies during WWI and rebelled to gain independence; and Armenians had committed massacres and atrocities against Ottoman citizens, using terrorist methods that were again being used in attacks on Turkish diplomats.⁴³²

The common point of all these arguments was that they exonerated the dominant group from any wrongdoing or crime. The official narrative did not mention any Turkish-Muslim responsibility and blamed the Armenians. In addition, by connecting the past Armenian revolutionary activities with the political violence of the ASALA and JCOAG, the official narrative petrified the image of "bad" Armenians and generalized it to include all Armenians, regardless of whether they supported these organizations' agendas or actions.

The new campaign was mainly based on publishing accounts that presented the above arguments against genocide claims. So, an unprecedented publication movement began in Turkey. The number of denialist works quickly expanded. While only one official or semi-official book was published on the topic between 1976 and 1980, the number climbed to 21 between 1981 and 1985.⁴³³ The majority of these accounts and books were written by retired diplomats and bureaucrats funded by state institutions such as ministries. An important aspect of the publication frenzy was its reliance on evidence in order to support the defence and counter-claims raised in these accounts. Accordingly, the new campaign was accompanied by a mobilization of state archives to provide evidence supporting the official narrative. To propagate the official narrative domestically, arguments against the genocide claims were introduced in school curricula

⁴³² Dixon, "Defending the Nation?," 471.

⁴³³ Ibid., 472.

at secondary levels. At the level of post-secondary education, courses on the Armenian “question” began to be offered and post-graduate research on the topic was encouraged.

Internationally, the new campaign had several goals. First of all, it was seeking to neutralize international claims of genocide. To meet this goal, the state elites operationalized the notion of historiography’s impartiality and objectivity. They argued that making judgments about historical events should be left to historians. As a step showcasing Turkey’s commitment to impartial historical research and analysis, Turkish state archives were gradually opened to select researchers in the second half of the 1980s. Another aspect of the international campaign was the use of lobbying activities, especially in the US, in order to gain supporters of the Turkish narrative. Turkey also founded the Institute of Turkish Studies in Washington with the mandate to support research activities favourable to the official position.⁴³⁴

In the post-2000 period, especially until the Islamist Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) established its hegemony, the major components and strategies of the denialist campaign remained the same. Some changes were made in order to better respond to changing international and domestic political landscapes. These changes included the founding of the Committee to Coordinate the Struggle against Baseless Genocide Claims (*Asılsız Soykırım İddiaları ile Mücadele Koordinasyon Kurulu*, ASİMKK) in 2001; the establishment of a semi-autonomous think tank, the Institute for Armenian Research (*Ermeni Araştırmaları Enstitüsü*, ERAREN), to undertake scholarly activities such as publishing books, a journal, and organizing conferences; increasing the number of denialist publications and the number of involved state agencies in the effort.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 471–474.

An important discerning characteristic feature of this campaign was that the state called for the active cooperation of non-official actors such as media outlets, opinion leaders and, finally, of ordinary citizens. While some scholars refused to take part in the denial campaign,⁴³⁵ many of those interpellated subjects willingly assumed their new role and participated in the new discursive formation process. Denying the genocide actively and publicly has become an essential pillar of Turkish national identity,⁴³⁶ and a huge portion of the citizens willingly and deliberately participated in the campaign to deny the genocide. What has ensued is a boom in domestic discourses on the events of 1915.⁴³⁷ Official, semi-official and popular agents have begun to produce narratives, ever expanding in number, scope and detail, in order to “prove” why the events of 1915 do not constitute genocide. Spanning a multitude of genres and media, the popular mobilization has flooded the public sphere with a myriad of denialist products in the last three decades. The explosion of the denialist discourse has populated the public sphere and claimed monopoly over what it is plausible to state on the events of 1915. A new “truth regime” has been established and has been officially and popularly endorsed. This “national front” has been quick to stigmatize any form of objection to and dissidence from the official narrative as betrayal.

One of the most surprising complicities in the persisting denial was the disengagement of the leftist movement in Turkey with the Armenian genocide. With very

⁴³⁵ Göçek, *Denial of violence*.

⁴³⁶ Ayşe Hür, “Türk Milli Kimliğinin Kurucu Unsuru Olarak Ermeni Tabusu,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil, vol. 9: Dönemler ve Zihniyetler (İstanbul: İletişim, 2009), 1121–48.

⁴³⁷ A particular characteristic of this domestic literature on what it calls “the Armenian Question (Ermeni Sorunu),” a term intentionally blaming the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire, is its skewed use of “situating the Armenian massacres in their historical context” as a way of normalizing and justifying these policies.

few exceptions, almost none of the parties, organizations and groups recognized the genocide or demanded official recognition. Neither during the 1960s and 1970s, during its peak in the revolutionary struggle against the state, nor in the post-1980 coup d'état era, did the left raise the genocide, its impact on the formation of Turkish capital and the bourgeois class, or its colonial nature, as an issue. The deafening silence of the left in Turkey about the Armenian Genocide has only recently begun to be discussed.⁴³⁸

Emergence of More Sophisticated Denial Practices under the AKP Rule

The AKP's continued dominance in politics since 2002 paved the way for serious changes in Turkey's engagement with the Armenian genocide. As discussed at the beginning of this section, the party led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan showed its ability to step out of the box and shift some of the established denial strategies. Ushering a more nuanced and deliberately polyvalent politics of memory, the AKP governments created an atmosphere where Turkey's position regarding the genocide was perceived to be changing positively. At the least, it became more cunning and able to operate with contradictions. Instead of age-old binaries, new denialist discourses and practices aimed to incorporate both sides of the equation. This approach fed into the denialist argument

⁴³⁸ Taner Akçam, *Türkiye'de Sol, Ermeni Soykırımı'yla Yüzleşmekte Niye Geç Kaldı?*, 100 Yıl Sonra: Ermeni Soykırımının Tanınması (Berlin, 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLQQcC5FbD4>; Kadriye Karcı, *Türkiye'de Solun Ermeni Soykırımı Algısı*, Türk ve Kürt Solunda Ermeni Soykırımı Algısı (Berlin, 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLm0WNNYwvSMo8CN-CbpF8e2Rdae9bLuQP&v=6wxG0puYB0U>; "Solun Tarihi ve Ermenileri Görmemek!," *Evrensel Kültür Dergisi*, April 2, 2015, <http://www.evrenselkultur.com/2015/04/solun-tarihi-ve-ermenileri-gormemek/>; Yetvart Danzikyan, "1915, Sol İçin Piyasası Olan Bir Mesele Değildi," *Agos*, May 2, 2015, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/11454/1915-sol-icin-piyasasi-olan-bir-mesele-degildi>; Muzaffer Kaya, "Ermeni Soykırımı ve Sol Tarih Yazımı Üzerine," *Hayal Gücü İktidara*, accessed July 15, 2016, <http://www.hayalgucuiktidara.org/icerikler/Ermeni-Soyk%C4%B1r%C4%B1m%C4%B1-ve-Sol-Tarih-yazimi-uzerine.html>; Agop Ekmekciyan, "Ermeni Soykırımında Sol Hareketlerin Yaklaşımı," *Kaypakaya Partizan*, June 22, 2015, <http://www.kaypakayahaber.com/kose-yazisi/ermeni-soykiriminda-sol-hareketlerin-yaklasimi>.

positing that there have been two sides to the story of genocide, but the Turkish side's views were dismissed unjustly. Now, the Turkish side was taking steps to include these stories in an ultimate attempt at relativizing the genocide. Nevertheless, many domestic and international observers admitted that critical discourses on the genocide were relatively freer to express themselves. The prosecution of those recognizing the genocide dwindled after about 2005 with Turkey's EU candidacy. However, denial arguments remained in circulation to be selectively mobilized. The way they were mobilized became much more sophisticated, but their main purpose was still to justify the genocide. In this regard, the AKP continued the strategy of remembering the genocide to deny it. The prevention of the dissident conference in 2005 was a major point. So were the trials of intellectuals recognizing the genocide under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code. More and more publications came to fill the public sphere and more and more activities took place. However, the Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink was assassinated in 2007 and the persecution is still not over. Other Armenians have been killed in the last decade with almost impunity for their murderers. In these regards, the AKP has continued the denial in its full force.

One of the fields where the AKP's denialist politics were crystal clear was national education. Because Turkey has a centrally administered education system, the state has almost total control over the curriculum and textbooks used in teaching. After 2001, new high school history textbooks put forth a more nuanced justification for the deportations and placed more emphasis on Armenian acts of violence against the Turks before, during and after the First World War. In this period, textbooks took up the question of genocide directly. The UNGC has been introduced to students in order to

present the genocide concept and to “prove” that it would not be applied to the Armenian case.

With this move, the state addressed the whole contestation on history openly for a domestic audience in order to rework the terms of hegemonic denial. Remodelled in line with Turkey’s international denial campaign, national education aimed to equip youth with up to date information about genocide claims and how to refute them. Growing international pressure and dissenting domestic voices pushed the state to ensure that youth had a clear grasp of the contestation. The latest pedagogic endeavour clearly targets the mobilization of the younger generations to actively participate in genocide denial. The current textbooks feed into structural racism and popular discrimination towards Armenians. Through the use of specific representational frames and tropes and discursive strategies, the textbooks reproduce racist and discriminatory conventions sustaining genocide denial at official and popular levels. These conventions determine to a great extent how Armenians and their extermination are being remembered collectively in Turkey.⁴³⁹

A recent survey of history textbooks used at primary and secondary schools revealed that the AKP’s hegemonic “New Turkey” project has not brought any significant change in the ways Armenians and the genocide are represented. The image of Armenians as “traitors” was reproduced. Armenians and the “Armenian Question” were construed as one of the most significant threats to Turkish national security. The new hegemonic project regurgitated claims about Armenians being manipulated by hostile

⁴³⁹ Jennifer M. Dixon, “Education and National Narratives: Changing Representations of the Armenian Genocide in History Textbooks in Turkey,” *The International Journal for Education Law and Policy*, no. Special Issue on “Legitimation and Stability of Political Systems: The Contribution of National Narratives” (2010): 116–117.

foreign powers in a joint effort to destroy the Turkish state and carve up Turkey. The Armenian genocide, in these textbooks, was a lie operationalized in order to reach that political goal. Students were introduced to this threat in eighth grade and asked to actively participate in the campaign as part of their responsibilities or duties towards their country. Obviously, the government was teaching the genocide in order to strengthen national pact and to mobilize younger generations for its “struggle”. Such a “pedagogic” approach inculcated in youth the sense that denying the genocide was a major aspect of defending the country against the “enemy,” which is Armenian.⁴⁴⁰

The “enemy” designation for Armenians clearly delineated the inside and outside of Turkishness. Armenians in general and Armenians living in Turkey specifically were clearly marginalized and excluded from national identity and, more importantly, from ethno-religiously defined Turkish citizenship *de facto*. Turkish nationalism did not, and still does not, allow the inclusion of Armenians into the national community and body politic even if they have been citizens of the empire first and then of the republic. The double standard imposed on Armenians by Turkey has been that while they were expected to be loyal citizens, they have constantly been reminded of their “difference” and “marginality”. They were always perceived as potential betrayers, and their activities were closely supervised or subjected to close surveillance.⁴⁴¹

⁴⁴⁰ Taner Akçam, “Yeni Türkiye’nin Ders Kitapları (I),” *Taraf.com.tr*, September 15, 2014, <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/taner-akcam/yeni-turkiyenin-ders-kitaplari-i/30814/>.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

Chapter 2 - The Coming to Memory of the Armenian Genocide in Turkey since the 1980s

The previous chapter highlighted the persistence of genocide denial in both official and popular levels. The aggressive denialist campaign, involved in an almost obsessive invocation of the genocide to justify it, has resonated with population-wide approaches to the genocide ranging from disinterest to active denial. Some of the lines of argument justifying the Ottoman government's treatment of Armenians, have been pretty much alive and in circulation in the post-1980s Turkey. The complicated relationship between Turkish national identity and the Armenian genocide has been one of the major reasons behind this enduring denial by justification. However, this period has also witnessed the emergence of dissenting voices that are critical of the official narrative on the genocide. These voices, despite not unanimously recognizing the massacres as genocide, have made possible the coming to memory of the Armenian genocide. Comprising public discourse and discussions about the treatment of Ottoman Armenians, the coming to memory of the genocide has coexisted with an aggressive and widespread denialist movement. How can one explain the emergence of counter-memory discourses challenging the denial in the last 25 years? What factors made this coming to memory possible? What explains the co-existence of discourses of denial with discourses that are acknowledging historical wrongs committed against the Armenians?

There are four main factors that made the coming to memory of the Armenian genocide possible in post-1990s Turkey. The first one has been the erosion of Kemalist hegemony over collective memory. Since the 1980s, Kemalist tenets of modern Turkey

have come under serious questioning by previously suppressed groups, mainly the conservative rightists and political Islamists, and the Kurds. Building coalitions with secular and left-liberal/democrat oppositional groups challenging the Kemalist regime, Islamist and Kurdish movements challenged Kemalist historiography. These challenges have opened new ways of relating to the past and interpreting it. The second factor has been the increased public interest in inter-ethnic relations and conflicts that paved the way for the emergence of critiques of Turkish ethno-nationalism. Within this critical perspective the state came to be seen as an instrument of violence suppressing minority groups and attempting to assimilate them on behalf of the dominant collective identity. The third factor has been the rise of demands for democratization, civilianization of politics and public life, as well as recognition of human rights. The last factor has been the international pressure put on Turkey by genocide recognition and affirmation campaigns culminating in the increased number of countries and other institutions officially recognizing the genocide and asking Turkey to do so. In addition to sovereign states, supra-national organizations such as the European Union have been at the forefront of this movement.

As a result of these factors, the Armenian genocide has been increasingly discussed in Turkey since the 1980s. This coming to memory of the genocide has been recoverable in four major breakthrough fields that are marked by some specific turning point dates. The first one is the emergence of post-nationalist and post-Kemalist historiography and its dissemination into the wider public through columnists, opinion leaders and activists. The second field has been civil society initiatives that a variety of agents of memory undertook in order to inscribe the memory of the Armenian genocide

back into the broader collective memory of the country. The third field has been cultural products discovering and constituting Armenians and Armenian culture as a new site of collective memory. The fourth field, more complicated than the first three, has been legal prosecutions against public intellectuals challenging or criticizing the official narrative on the Armenian massacres. Highlighting a nationalist backlash against the agents of memory advocating coming to terms with Turkey's problematic past, these high profile legal cases have been evidentiary sites demonstrating Turkey's troubles with its own past and present.

This synopsis reveals that the coming to memory of the Armenian genocide unfolds within an unstable political field where, instead of a clear and sustained will based on broad consensus to critically engage with the past, the past has become an important part of power struggles fought in the present to determine the future of Turkey. Deep cultural and sociological transformations leading to political struggles between Kemalist elites and previously suppressed elites point to an identity crisis. However, these political struggles also imply that all involved agents have their own vested interests and political calculations while engaging with the politics of memory.¹ Not surprisingly, these agents employ selective frames of remembrance about the genocide. It is obvious that the agents of memory would engage with initiatives attempting to come to terms with the genocide as long as such an action will help them further their own agendas, to strengthen their claims on power, and to enhance their own socio-cultural and political position. It is also important to note that all of the agents who have been instrumental in making the atrocities against the Armenians more visible during the post-

¹ This is not to say that there have to be other, nobler, motivations for these agents' actions. Most probably sheer pragmatic, even Machiavellian, political calculations would make the return of the genocide possible. The same goes for its official recognition.

1980s were involved in its denial, intentionally or unintentionally, beforehand.² Genocide denial in the name of performing one's national or religious identity's right has been a widespread response, and many agents have been active defenders of national and religious identifications and thus of denial. Hence, the coming to memory of the genocide in Turkey follows a more indirect and complicated trajectory than the popular narrative of linear and straightforward movement from denial to recognition or from silence to discourse suggests.

I. Factors Making the Coming to Memory of the Armenian Genocide Possible in the post-1980s Turkey

The Erosion of Kemalist hegemony over collective memory

The first and most determining factor in the coming-to-memory of the Armenian genocide has been the ongoing erosion of Kemalist hegemony over the interpretation of the past and collective memory in Turkey. That erosion has paved the way and corroborated the identity crisis that Turkey has undergone since the 1980s.³ The melting away of Kemalist modernist certainties and the emergence of often competing fluid modes of being modern heightened the sense of getting caught in the middle of what had

² This involvement was in the sense that they were part and parcel of the society-wide reproduction of denial through non-recognition. This non-recognition took the forms of strategic silence, self-censorship, and non-engagement. As we shall see below, complex re-articulations of national identity as a result of challenges coming from myriad groups paved the way for constitution of a new regime of truth in this period, in Foucauldian sense. Discourses of state criminality, inter-communal violence, and coming to terms with the past shifted discourses of "truth," or what comes to be counted as truth, and the ways of speaking this truth. Accordingly, new subject positions and new nodes of power/knowledge are in the making. These subject positions are constituted through these new modalities of power/knowledge. Again as I try to demonstrate below, there is an incitement to speech in contemporary Turkey regarding the Armenian massacres and identity, at large. Proliferation of speech acts is a way of governing the "truth" of the Armenian annihilation.

³ Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, eds., *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 1997).

gone before and what was yet to come. In this transitional and transformative moment, the centre lost much of its ability to hold and had to watch things fall apart. The cultural realm has been at the center of these deep changes.⁴ Another episode of culture struggles⁵ fought to define Turkish national identity has opened, and a major transformation in the center-periphery configuration⁶, one of the major axes of Turkish political culture, was initiated.

One of the major challenges to the Kemalist hegemony was the Turkish population's relationship to its past. Kemalist leadership, immediately after establishing the republic, embarked upon a comprehensive project of writing the history of the nation from its perspective. Epitomized in Mustafa Kemal's *Nutuk (The Speech)* in 1927, the political regime put considerable effort into dominating the history writing in Turkey and determining the frames of remembrance, especially of the imperial past, through the "official history thesis".⁷ The official historiographic narrative has been canonized and institutionalized, among other channels, through the establishment of the Turkish Historical Society in 1931 with the purposes of centralizing and controlling historical scholarship.⁸ With the loosening of the grasp of Kemalist frames over the population's

⁴ Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Saktanber, eds., *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey* (London: New York: I.B.Tauris, 2002).

⁵ Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Turkish Dynamics: Bridge across Troubled Lands* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁶ Şerif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?," *Daedalus* 102, no. 1 (1973): 169–90.

⁷ Büşra Ersanlı Behar, *İktidar ve tarih: Türkiye'de "resmi tarih" tezinin oluşumu, 1929-1937* (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: AFA Yayıncılık, 1992). For another nuanced analysis of the Kemalist approaches to Kemalist historical scholarship, please see Doğan Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation, 1860-1950* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁸ The Society has been an important agent of official genocide denial. For an account of the society's role, please see Taner Akçam, "Anatomy of a Crime: The Turkish Historical Society's Manipulation of Archival Documents," *Journal of Genocide Research* 7, no. 2 (June 1, 2005): 255–77.

relations with the past, new modes of historical imagination and counter-hegemonic frames began to emerge.

In 1923, the newly founded Turkish Republic committed to a modernist future by erasing the memory of its immediate Ottoman past. Now, almost eighty years after the establishment of the Republic, the grandchildren of the founders have a different relationship with history. New generations utilize every effort to remember, record, and reconcile the imagined earlier periods. The multiple and personalized representations of the past with which they engage allow contemporary Turkish citizens to create alternative identities for themselves and for their communities. As opposed to its futuristic and homogenizing character at the turn of the twentieth century, Turkish nationalism today utilizes memories and generates diverse narratives for the nation as well as the minority groups.⁹

Slow dissolution of monoglossic Kemalist memory led to the emergence of a plural and heteroglossic collective memory field. Though heavily shaped by nostalgic affinities and in many instances uncritically commodified, new modes of individual and public remembrance expanded to previously repressed events.

The loosening grasp of Kemalist political imagination and power over collective memory seemed to open formerly non-existent spaces and possibilities of confronting the past mass crimes and injustices.

Interest in the recent past has meant that particular historical events have come under renewed scrutiny in the present. These include the Armenian genocide of 1915, the “War of Independence” (1919-1923), the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey in 1923, the attacks against Jews in Thrace in 1934, the massacre of the Alevi/Kurds of Dersim in the 1930s (known as Dersim ’38), the conscription of non-Muslim soldiers into labor battalions during World War II, the pogroms against non-Muslims on 6-7 September 1955, the 1960, 1971, and 1980 military coups, the massacre of Alevis in Maraş in 1978, the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state from 1984, the Marmara earthquake of 1999, and the murder of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in 2007, among others.¹⁰

⁹ Esra Özyürek, “Introduction: The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey” *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, ed. Esra Özyürek. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007. 2

¹⁰ Leyla Neyzi, “Oral History and Memory Studies in Turkey” *Turkey’s Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*. Celia Kerkaske, Kerem Oktem, Philip Robins, eds. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

More and more critical interest fell on violent episodes of Turkish past and challenged the confines of Kemalist frames of remembrance. There is more room for competing and conflicting memories in the public sphere and dissident voices about the past atrocities can express themselves openly, in relative terms of course.

The emergence of post-Kemalist historiography and collective memory frameworks was made possible by a deep identity crisis Turkey underwent starting in the late 1980s. The crisis of Kemalist national identity and memory came as a result of convergence of various and distinct challenges to the Kemalist hegemony: the rise of the Islamist and conservative political movement, undermining militant secularism of Kemalism, which has since become the largest political movement; the politicization of Kurdish identity and its challenges to the homogeneous Turkish identity, which was met with large-scale state violence culminating in a civil war between the Turkish army and Kurdish guerilla groups; and the demands of other marginalized groups, such as Alevis and non-Muslim minorities. These challenges put Kemalist tenets of the nation in question and caused the emergence of new terms and a grammar of collective identification and the politics of memory. The successive failures of Kemalism in terms of building inclusive policies meeting subaltern groups' demands for recognition and representation paved the way for the outbreak of a series of culture wars in a country that has been defined by almost constant identity crisis since its inception.¹¹

The identity crisis that began in the late 1980s saw clashes between dominant Kemalist and subaltern elites about shaping cultural and political framework of Turkey. The crisis was about determining political configuration and cultural dispositions in the present moment; however, it has quickly extended towards determining the ways in

¹¹ Y. Colak, "Collective Memory and Cultural Pluralism in Turkey" 589.

which the past was to be understood. The conflict over the present allocation of resources and articulation of power relations included a conflict over the meaning and significance of the national past. “Late 1980s and 1990s Turkey witnessed the rediscovery of various pasts to construct new identities, or counter-memories, such as Kurdish, Islamic, Balkan.”¹² Involved parties engaged in fierce struggle over the past in an unstable political field shaped by the ever-changing agendas and vested interests of these groups.

The contestation over the national past also highlighted some of the characteristics of that past. While commenting on the perpetuity of denial and its relationship to national identity, Akçam wrote, “the history of Turkey – especially around the turn of the 20th century – has been a history of traumas.”¹³ Deep fissures of Kemalist national phantasm, stemming from national traumas experienced as wounds of memory,¹⁴ were made visible by contestation over national memory. Traumas of the nation, starting with those preceding the republic, began to surface as new avenues for a post-Kemalist retrospection emerged.¹⁵ Not surprisingly, the resurfacing of traumas has followed convoluted trajectories rather than linear ones, with frequent relapses.

To a great extent, the trajectories of past traumas and contemporary transformation have been related to determining characteristics of post-1980 and post-Kemalist cultural realms. Overdetermined, inhabited by contradictory dynamics simultaneously, shaped by differentiation and fragmentation, offering unprecedented

¹² Colak, 589.

¹³ Taner Akçam, “A Theoretical Approach to Understanding Turkish National Identity,” 40

¹⁴ Barbara Gabriel, “The Wounds of Memory: Mavis Gallant’s ‘Baum, Gabriel (1935-),’ National Trauma, and Post-War French Cinema,” *Essays on Canadian Writing*, no. 80 (2003): 189–216.

¹⁵ Mehtap Söyler, “Memory, Collective Trauma, and Coming to Terms with the Past: A Post-Kemalist Treatise on Democracy and Social Peace in Turkey,” in *Concerning Peace: New Perspectives on Utopia*, ed. S. Spetschinsky and K. Gregor (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 167–87.

possibilities and strong limitations, the post-1980's cultural atmosphere has been rich, tense and, at times, violently conflictual.

On the one hand, the period was framed by repression; state violence made itself nakedly felt, a great many people were put in prison; social opposition was suppressed by force, the 1970s radical left was wiped out and prohibition left its stamp on cultural life. But on the other hand, the 1980s were years when another strategy of power went into effect, if not for the first time, then for the first time in such a way that it pressed its imprint into the culture as a whole; one less familiar to Turkey, a more liberal, more comprehensive, more inclusive strategy of power, aiming to encircle by speech rather than silence, to transform rather than prohibit, internalize rather than destroy, tame rather than suppress. It was a period of denial, censorship, and silencing; but also one of promise, provoking desire as never before.¹⁶

This dual characteristic of the 1980s has had significant effects on identity politics and subaltern and marginalized groups in Turkey.

From the point of view of institutional, political and humanitarian ends, it was one of the most severe periods in Turkey's recent history, but at the same time a softer, freer era of cultural pluralism when people were relieved of their political responsibilities and began for the first time to speak in the cultural marketplace for their own selves, rather than in the name of some political mission. On the one hand, a politics of silence prohibited the use of the word 'Kurd'; on the other hand, Turkey's most famous arabesk pop singer in the 1980s was 'The Emperor' İbrahim Tatlıses, a Kurdish construction worker who rose to stardom to enjoy all the opportunities wealth in the big city could offer. Turkey's famed transsexual singer Bülent Ersoy was banned for eight years, prohibited from singing in public; but popular news magazines stubbornly plastered their covers with homosexuals and transsexuals and invited them to confess all to the public.¹⁷

These seemingly mutually exclusive, even conflictual, attitudes and practices towards subaltern groups have been normalized in Turkey during the last three decades or so. The coexistence of these vectors may be a way for the population to deal with otherwise too debilitating and destructive tendencies and tensions present in contemporary Turkey. Simultaneously silencing and talking about marginalized subjects; creating areas

¹⁶ Nurdan Gurbilek, "Introduction: Cultural Climate, Personal History," in *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window* (London; New York: Zed Books, 2011).

¹⁷ Ibid.

inhabited simultaneously by the law and its arbitrary neglect; and establishing moral gray zones where disavowal and acknowledgment coexist, constitute the contemporary climate of cultural and memory politics. The coming-to-memory of the Armenian genocide has been taking place in this unstable climate.

Challenges by the Conservatives and Political Islamists

The first factor challenging Kemalist monopoly over history and memory has been the rise of an alternative interpretative framework for understanding the Ottoman and Turkish history. Labeled as neo-Ottomanism by some, this new framework, in broad terms, sought to rehabilitate the Ottoman past and revalue it as a legitimate component of Turkish history.¹⁸ Such an endeavor has challenged the Kemalist monism and emphasis on homogeneity of the national body politic and has introduced the idea of pluralism – political, cultural and judicial – as a viable option for contemporary Turkey to deal with ethno-religious differences threatening to divide the country.

Emerging at the juncture of deep socio-economic transformations, ideological repositioning and elite reconfiguration in the post-1980 Turkey, neo-Ottomanism has been an active revision of the national past as well as an attempt at redefining Turkish national identity in the present. In its retrospective mode, neo-Ottomanism “looks back to an invented Ottoman-Islamic past as a Turk-made epoch.... By identifying the reimagined Ottoman imperial project and culture as Turkish, neo-Ottomanists seek to

¹⁸ Until very recently the dominant view on the Kemalist approach to the Ottoman past has been described as one of complete dismissal. However, new studies propose a more nuanced analysis that pays more attention into areas where the Kemalist elites, rather than disavowing the imperial past, chose to appropriate some aspects, after revising them, into their historical narratives. Nicholas Danforth, “Know Your Neo-Ottomanisms,” *The Afternoon Map*, October 23, 2013, <http://www.midafternoonmap.com/2013/10/know-your-neo-ottomanisms.html>.

ethnicize the Ottoman state as the ‘glorious’ achievement of the Muslim Turks.”¹⁹ In other words, neo-Ottomanism has a double movement. It ethnicizes Islamhood and the imperial past and it Islamizes ethnicity and Turkishness.

Initially formulated during the influential political leadership of Turgut Özal (the Motherland Party, centre right), the former prime minister and the president, neo-Ottomanism has been on the rise under the leadership of Tansu Çiller (the True Path Party, centre right) and Necmettin Erbakan (the Welfare Party, Islamist-conservative).²⁰ The active re-interpretation of the past with conservative, nationalist and Islamist sensitivities has been one of the backbones of the political and cultural transformation in Turkey. Neo-Ottomanist discourses have also been an integral part of the platform of the Justice and Development Party (AKP, conservative, moderate Islamist²¹).²² The

¹⁹ M. Hakan Yavuz, “Turkish Identity and Foreign Policy in Flux: The Rise of Neo-Ottomanism” 7, no. 12 (March 1, 1998): 23.

²⁰ Ibid., 19–20.

²¹ The location of the AKP in the political spectrum has been a point of contention since the beginning of the party. The AKP, which emerged as an offshoot of Islamist political movement, moderated its message on political Islam and secularism, pursued reformist and pro-Western policies, and called its platform “conservative democracy”. *Herşey Türkiye İçin: AKP Seçim Beyannamesi* (Ankara: AKP, 2002); Yalçın Akdoğan, *Muhafazakar demokrasi* (Ankara: AKP, 2003). The AKP’s distancing from its political Islamist roots and move towards centre-right received mixed reactions, however the overall atmosphere was not unsympathetic. Ergun Özbudun, “From Political Islam to Conservative Democracy: The Case of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey,” *South European Society and Politics* 11, no. 3–4 (December 1, 2006): 543–57; Ahmet Insel, “The AKP and Normalizing Democracy in Turkey,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2 (2003): 293–308; Ali Carkoglu, “Turkey’s November 2002 Elections: A New Beginning?,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 6, no. 4 (December 2002): 30–41.

²² One may argue that in terms of economic transformation the AKP led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan completes what was launched by Turgut Özal. For a comparative account on these two significant political figures within the context of rising political Islam, please see Heper M, “Islam, Conservatism, and Democracy in Turkey: Comparing Turgut Özal and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan,” *Insight Turk. Insight Turkey* 15, no. 2 (2013): 141–56. For a discussion of the rise of political Islam and neo-Ottomanism in relationship to the rise to prominence of a new entrepreneurial middle class disillusioned with the failures of Kemalist developmentalism, please see Haldun Gülalp, “Modernization Policies and Islamist Politics in Turkey,” in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 1997), 52–63. For a critique of the AKP’s neo-

reinterpretation of the past in line with the concerns and needs of the present allowed the AKP to build alliances with diverse and previously uninterested, if not hostile, socio-political actors. Emerging configuration and reconfigurations of political actors signaled the establishment of a counter-hegemonic bloc with regards to Turkey's past. Problematic and divisive aspects of the Turkish history have been incorporated into political and public deliberation and negotiations. The Armenian genocide and protracted conflict with the Kurds have been among the most significant components of this new historical consciousness.

In addition to being an attempt at reformulating national identity and history, neo-Ottomanism has been a discernible reason for Turkey's heightened interest and involvement in contexts that were ruled by the Ottoman Empires, such as the Balkans, the Arabian Peninsula, and Caucasus. A shared Ottoman-Muslim past was the factor uniting populations inhabiting the post-Ottoman spaces, and it also gave Turkey the possibility to reconnect with those populations with an eye to increasing its soft power in the region.²³ The foreign policy implications of the new historical orientation paved the way for Turkey to seek to engage with the young Republic of Armenia, which gained its independence as a sovereign state in 1991 following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Ottomanism, especially as it applies to foreign policy, along the lines that the party pursues a heavily Islamicized agenda rather than adopting more secular and encompassing policies of the Ottoman Empire, please see Soner Cagaptay, "The AKP's Foreign Policy: The Misnomer of 'Neo-Ottomanism,'" *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, April 24, 2009, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-akps-foreign-policy-the-misnomer-of-neo-ottomanism>.

²³ Yavuz, "Turkish Identity and Foreign Policy in Flux," 24.

The attempts at resolving the conflicts between Turkey and Armenia constitute another factor pushing the genocide into public discussion.²⁴

Along with the political leaders at the higher echelons of the state administration, neo-Ottomanism's main career has been a new and diversified elite who came to prominence in the 1980s and 1990s. These new elites have been involved in a struggle with the Kemalist hegemonic bloc and it managed to undermine the grasp of that bloc.

This more diverse elite, in turn, is reshaping Turkish discourse on national identity and foreign policy. The fragmentation of the Kemalist secular bloc and the re-Islamicization of Turkish national identity have been occurring simultaneously as a result of the expansion of mass communications, higher education, and the promotion of an official 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis' as a new state-fostered ideology to de-politicize Turkish society and achieve a new societal consensus.²⁵

The emergence of this new elite, combined with the rise of Islamic-conservative capital to prominence, broadened the scope of national discourses on identity and introduced venues for critical and dissenting counter-hegemonic memory discourses.

The continuous political dominance of political Islam since the 1990s, albeit with some major setbacks such as the removal of the democratically-elected Welfare Party

²⁴ Nora Fisher Onar, "Neo Ottomanism, Historical Legacies and Turkish Foreign Policy," *EDAM Discussion Paper Series*, October 2009, http://trends.gmfus.org/doc/Discussion%20Paper%20Series_Fisher.pdf.

²⁵ Yavuz, 29-30. For a view on the historical convergence of Islamism and Turkish nationalism paving the way for "Turkish-Islamic synthesis," please see Gokhan Cetinsaya, "Rethinking Nationalism and Islam: Some Preliminary Notes on the Roots of 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis' in Modern Turkish Political Thought," *The Muslim World* 89, no. 3-4 (October 1, 1999): 350-76. The "Turkish-Islamic synthesis" was first formulated by the "Hearth of Intellectuals" circles in the 1970s. The synthesis was then adopted and disseminated by the military junta after the September 12, 1980 coup as a means of protecting the state and keeping the nation united. For more information, please see Etienne Copeaux, *Tarih ders kitaplarında (1931-1993) Türk tarih tezinden Türk-İslam sentezine*, trans. Ali Berkay (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998); Bozkurt Güvenç, *Türk-İslam sentezi* (İstanbul: Sarmal Yayınevi, 1991); Erkan Akin and Omer Karasapan, "The 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis,'" *Middle East Report*, no. 153 (August 1988): 18; Umit Kurt, "The Doctrine of 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis' as Official Ideology of the September 12 and the 'Intellectuals' Hearth -Aydınlar Ocağı' as the Ideological Apparatus of the State," *European Journal of Economic and Political Studies* 3, no. 2 (Winter 2010): 113-28.

from power in 1997 by the Kemalist military and civil elites on the grounds of defending the secular identity of the country, culminated in the electoral victory of the AKP in 2002. Since then the AKP, being the strongest political actor, has continued and remodeled neo-Ottomanism.²⁶ Continuing the existing trend of re-uniting Turkish and Islamic sources of national history, the AKP re-inscribed the Ottoman past into the broader Turkish history and Islamicized ethnic history. The re-unification of pre-Islamic and Islamic components of Turkish history establishes a harmonious continuum and makes a seamless retrospective move possible. A crystal clear, and cheesy, popular mobilization of this ethno-religious history reaching back more than 2,000 years happened when, in January 2015, president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan welcomed his Palestinian counterpart Mahmoud Abbas in front of sixteen warriors carrying historical

²⁶ The reformulation of the policies dubbed neo-Ottomanism has been attributed to the current Prime Minister of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoğlu, who is also a professor of political science and international relations, as the main intellectual figure. His highly influential 2001 book, *Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position*, has been one of the cornerstones of the AKP's transformative vision on national identity and its foreign policy orientation. A determining characteristic of this vision has been that Turkey should return to its origins and make peace with its past that was a period of success, prosperity and power. By reconnecting with the long chain of Turkish-Muslim statecraft that reached its peak during the Ottoman Empire, contemporary Turkey would discover its inherent strengths and build a "New Turkey". This rejuvenated Turkish-Islamic state would rekindle connections with post-Ottoman countries that share the imperial past. This policy of increased presence in the post-Ottoman context ties in with the second significant component of the AKP's vision. This second component has been "zero-problems" with Turkey's neighbors, with many of which Turkey shares the imperial past. By re-establishing friendly relations, ironing out conflicts, and building alliances based on mutual interests, the AKP's foreign policy has been an attempt at creating a base for soft power and becoming a regional power in the Middle East. There are a good number of scholarly and public views representing Davutoğlu's perspective as neo-Ottomanist. However, he rejects this term. "Yeni Osmanlılar Sözü İyi Niyetli Değil," *Sabah*, accessed March 21, 2016, http://www.sabah.com.tr/siyaset/2009/12/04/yeni_osmanlilar_sozu_iyi_niyetli_degil. Some view Davutoğlu's intellectual and political vision as pan-Islamist. Behlul Ozkan, "Turkey's Imperial Fantasy," *The New York Times*, August 28, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/29/opinion/ahmet-davutoglu-and-turkeys-imperial-fantasy.html>.

costumes representing sixteen political entities established by Turks in history.²⁷

President Erdoğan walked down the stairs of the new presidential residence by passing through the warriors ordered from the earliest to the latest, signifying the emergence of the “new Turkey” that the AKP had been trying to build.

²⁷ “Erdoğan’s Guards: Now Clad in Chain Mail,” *The Japan Times Online*, January 13, 2015, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/01/13/world/politics-diplomacy-world/erdogans-guards-now-clad-in-chain-mail/>.

Illustration 1 - President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan welcomes the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas
(Credit: AFP-JIJI)

An unmistakable connotation of the picture above was Turkey's attempts at asserting itself as a regional power ready to engage with enduring conflicts of the Middle East. The background setup reinforced the idea that Turkey's inherited political and historical legacy could not be ignored. Drawing considerable domestic and foreign attention and

adding fuel to allegations that the Turkish president was bidding to become a new sultan, this act, aimed at transforming national identity and collective memory, exemplified a significant stream of the AKP's engagement with the past.²⁸

In many respects, the AKP has been a catalyst for positive change, and in others, it has been a regressive factor. The Janus-faced characteristic of the AKP, together with the country's ever changing political climate and its readiness to polarize along deep fault lines, paved the way for a new sort of politics of memory in Turkey. The defining characteristic of this politics of memory has been its convoluted trajectory. As the party has been pragmatically vying for the support of a diverse population, it has pursued policies and undertaken actions that seem contradictory at first sight. However, events since 2002 have proven that this ability to pursue multi-vectorial and contradictory agendas has given the party its hegemonic position and its ability to shape national discourses on the past.

Many of the commentators agree that since the AKP first came into power in 2002, successive AKP governments challenged some of the most deeply entrenched assumptions and state-sanctioned narratives on the country's history.²⁹ The AKP's transformative politics have challenged some of the entrenched components of the

²⁸ Onur Ant, "Erdogan Revives Memories of Turkic Empires in New State Ceremony," *Bloomberg.com*, January 12, 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-01-12/erdogan-revives-memories-of-turkic-empires-in-new-state-ceremony>; Emre Kızılkaya, "What's the Meaning of Erdoğan's 16 Warriors?," *Hürriyet Daily News*, January 13, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/comment-whats-the-meaning-of-erdogans-16-warriors.aspx?pageID=238&nID=76911&NewsCatID=338>; "Abbas Welcomed at Turkish Presidential Palace by Erdoğan – and 16 Warriors," *The Guardian*, January 12, 2015, sec. World news, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/12/abbas-erdogan-16-warriors-turkish-presidential-palace>.

²⁹ Onur Bakiner, "Is Turkey Coming to Terms with Its Past? Politics of Memory and Majoritarian Conservatism," *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 5 (September 1, 2013): 691–708; Bilgin Ayata and Serra Hakyemez, "The AKP's Engagement with Turkey's Past Crimes: An Analysis of PM Erdoğan's 'Dersim Apology,'" *Dialectical Anthropology* 37, no. 1 (March 23, 2013): 131–43; Onar, "Neo Ottomanism, Historical Legacies and Turkish Foreign Policy."

country's history. This transformative orientation and the policies regarding the past opened some new avenues and circumstantial alliances between conservative Islamists and liberals.

However, the term "liberal" as a name for circles engaging a critique of Kemalism is not a good fit. First of all, liberal in Turkish discourses is a pejorative term. Instead of delineating adherents of a philosophical tradition and political ideology, liberal in popular culture and media means turncoat, spineless, and henchman. Hence, public figures have been averse to be described as liberal. Another significant reason for the label liberal not working is the idiosyncratic trajectory of liberalism and liberal democracy in Turkey. Liberalism does not have a distinct and long historical trajectory in Turkey. Also Turkey still faces significant challenges in consolidating its liberal democracy. Thus, liberalism and liberal have long been empty signifiers. Many of the intellectuals, activists and opinion leaders grouped together as liberals actually come from a leftist background. Most of them were members of the leftist dissident groups, active in the 1960s and 1970s. Again, many of them had been ambivalent about Kemalism and might be called left-Kemalists during the political activism. In the post-1980 coup period many of them distanced themselves from the left and went through a revisionist phase. To reflect this characteristic left-liberal has been used.³⁰

However, the last two decades witnessed the emergence of a new term in public life; democratness (*demokratlık*) and its flagbearers, democrats. Democratness emerged in the 1990s as a response to under-democratic characteristics of the Turkish political field, which was arguably controlled by the military and civil bureaucracy, or the state in

³⁰ Onar, "Neo Ottomanism, Historical Legacies and Turkish Foreign Policy"; Murat Belge, "Liberal, Liberalizm," *Taraf.com.tr*, May 22, 2010, <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/murat-belge/liberal-liberalizm/11383/>.

general. Being a democrat was closely related to being against tutelage and supporting civil politics and democracy, understood as the rule of popular will. Rather than denoting specific political positions or visions, democratness, first and foremost, has been presented as the normalization of democracy in Turkey and the free expression of national choice.³¹ The AKP's "conservative democracy" vision was highly influential in the formation of new axes of alliances and conflicts. The party's moderate views on Islam, support for pluralism, neo-liberal pro-market economic policies, and willingness to tackle the remnants of the old regime created a gravitational field, and actors critical of Kemalist tutelage, unitary nation-state, and militant secularism subscribed to the notion of democratness. This broad coalition of diverse political actors has shaped intellectual and political discourses in the last two decades.³² There have been some recurring figures who functioned as initiators of dialogue between diverse agendas and as disseminators of democratization framework to the public. In her analysis of the democrat as a social type, Eylem Akdeniz highlights three important figures: Etyen Mahçupyan, Ali Bayramoğlu, and Kürşat Bumin.³³

³¹ Doğan Gürpınar, *Düne veda: Türkiye'de liberalizm ve demokrasi (1980-2010)* (Istanbul: Etkileşim, 2013).

³² Halil M. Karaveli, "An Unfulfilled Promise of Enlightenment: Kemalism and Its Liberal Critics," *Turkish Studies* 11, no. 1 (March 1, 2010): 85–102; Nora Onar, "Kemalists, Islamists, and Liberals: Shifting Patterns of Confrontation and Consensus, 2002–06," *Turkish Studies* 8, no. 2 (June 1, 2007): 273–88. Nevertheless, this broad coalition and AKP leadership have come under criticism lately. Questions arise whether the new hegemonic bloc in Turkish politics would fulfill democratic normalization. Yüksel Taşkın, "Hegemonizing Conservative Democracy and the Problems of Democratization in Turkey: Conservatism Without Democrats?," *Turkish Studies* 14, no. 2 (June 1, 2013): 292–310. The performance of the coalition of democrats in creating a more inclusive democratic regime, egalitarian definition of citizenship, and political solutions to inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts of Turkey has not been too impressive, especially in the last couple of years.

³³ Eylem Akdeniz, "The Democrat as a Social Type : The Case of Turkey in the 1990s" (Thesis, Bilkent University, 2011), <http://repository.bilkent.edu.tr/xmlui/handle/11693/16713>.

These alliances were fragile, on an issue-by-issue basis, and interest-driven. Involved parties have different and, to some extent, contesting visions regarding what kind of a social contract would emerge in the aftermath of a Kemalist one.

Liberals, it seems, problematize the official line on matters like the Armenian question as part of a bid to come to terms with the collapse of Ottoman multiculturalism; the AKP, meanwhile, is receptive to improving relations with Armenia as part of a multi-pronged strategy to assert Turkey's presence in former Ottoman territories. Their fragile coalition is arrayed against an equally counterintuitive coalition of defenders of the status quo from elements within Islamist, Kemalist, and ultranationalist camps.³⁴

Involved parties, framing their momentary alliance as democratic transition or democratization by deconstructing military and bureaucratic tutelage, joined in a highly selective fight against the remnants of the old regime. As a result, all the agents were on the lookout for usable pasts that would justify their bid to power and bring popular support. Hence, the democrats shared the AKP's policy of allowing Turkey's deep ambiguities to stay alive in order to create an unstable, multi-vectorial, and dynamic memory politics atmosphere. Multi-party and multi-issue negotiations had both made coming to terms with the country's past possible but, at the same time, subjected that coming to terms to political pragmatism and arbitrariness.

It was not surprising that the AKP's politics of memory comprised a multitude of revisionisms, negotiations and compromises, and functioned as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the AKP's challenge of Kemalist hegemony over the interpretation of the past, accompanied by institutional reforms in the EU-candidacy process, led to a considerable increase in public discussion about the thorny aspects of the country's past. Subjects which were formerly taboo came to be revisited and unorthodox voices were able to express themselves more freely, in relative terms. On the other hand, the AKP's

³⁴ Onar, "Neo Ottomanism, Historical Legacies and Turkish Foreign Policy."

engagement with the past aims at the establishment of a new interpretational framework and a truth regime better fitting the transforming identity of the country in the last three decades. Alongside the broadening of public discussion about taboo subjects and increased recognition of Turkey's minority groups and their rights, violations of these groups' rights, persecutions, oppression, and use of sheer violence against these groups reveal that the AKP continues a longer trend in Turkey.³⁵

The emerging historical narrative selectively discloses and suppresses certain aspects of the country's past. As Ayata and Hakyemez argue, the AKP is adamant in its quest to reveal the "sins" of the Kemalist regime and its elites in the party's political struggle to further strengthen its hegemony.³⁶ However, the memories of the crimes committed by Islamic and nationalist constituencies of the party are carefully repressed. Bakiner also highlights similar selective tendencies shaping the AKP's engagement with the past and maintains that the framework sustained by the governing party is far more similar to the Kemalist framework in terms of its support for a new state-centric, oppressive and monolithic interpretation of history.³⁷ Hence the dismembering of the Kemalist memory would not necessarily lead to the emergence of a plural and inclusive memory where it would be possible to come to terms with the past episodes of mass violence.

The AKP's constitutive ambivalence and strategy to pursue seemingly contradictory policies regarding the past have defined the party's engagement with the memory of the Armenian genocide. Other involved parties, even many of the agents of memory, have had a similar approach to the memory politics. A number of events and

³⁵ Ayata and Hakyemez, "The AKP's Engagement with Turkey's Past Crimes."

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Bakiner, "Is Turkey Coming to Terms with Its Past?"

declarations made by the leaders of the party reveal the multi-vectorial approach of the party. As a result of this equivocal strategy, the party has been able to swing between denial and limited recognition. In this way the party has been able to cater to both nationalist and Islamist groups with strong investment in denial and liberal or democrat circles advocating coming to terms with the past.

One of the earliest moments was the 2005 conference³⁸ organized by scholars who were critical of the official narrative. At first, the AKP, or at least some of its influential leaders, was vehemently against the conference. During his speech in the National Assembly, the AKP Minister of Justice, Cemil Çiçek, accused the organizers of being traitors and stabbing the Turkish nation in its back. The government claimed that the organizers could not guarantee the security of the conference and safety of attendees. However, when the government encountered a tidal wave of domestic and international reaction, it had to change its course of action. A crucial consideration in that decision was that the negotiations for full EU membership were about to begin that year and the EU was univocal in its condemnation of the ban on the conference and political repression involved. The AKP could not afford to jeopardize its fragile alliances with left-liberal and democrat groups. This episode demonstrated that while perpetuating the genocide denial, the AKP was pragmatic about allowing dissident memory events as long as they did not pose a serious threat to their hegemony.

The second moment emerged when a group of ultranationalist lawyers began to take public figures such as Orhan Pamuk, Elif Shafak, and Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink to court on the grounds of their dissident views on the Armenian massacres.

³⁸ The conference, “Ottoman Armenians during the Decline of the Empire: Issues of Scientific Responsibility and Democracy,” is discussed in detail below.

Using the notorious Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, the lawyers, led by Kemal Keriñsiz, alleged that these figures had denigrated Turkishness by acknowledging the Armenian genocide. The AKP government was mostly silent about these trials. However, when Elif Şafak was acquitted at the court in September 2006, Prime Minister Erdoğan declared that he was content with the court decision.³⁹ However, at the same time the party, in line with the minister Çiçek's guidance, refused to repeal Article 301.⁴⁰ A revised version of the article was promulgated in May 2008, following Hrant Dink's assassination after he had been found guilty of denigrating Turkishness under Article 301.⁴¹

The third moment of the AKP's ambivalence occurred on January 19, 2007, when a seventeen-year-old youth shot dead Hrant Dink outside the office of his newspaper, AGOS, in broad daylight. Hrant Dink had been a significant agent of memory who had made the Armenian genocide visible in Turkey. By holding in tension conflicting approaches and walking a tightrope with serious risks, he advocated for possibilities of coming to terms with the past. He took a great risk in Turkey in order to express his ideas on how to mend the social fabric in Turkey that had been torn a century ago. He addressed some of the fundamental power asymmetries in Turkey. While doing so, he

³⁹ "Başbakan Erdoğan: 'Elif Şafak'ın Beraat Etmesi Memnuniyet Verici,'" *Cihan Haber Ajansı*, September 21, 2006, <https://www.cihan.com.tr/tr/basbakan-erdogan-elif-safakin-beraat-etmesi-memnuniyet-verici-479557.htm>.

⁴⁰ "Hükümetin 301 İnadı," *Radikal*, September 19, 2006, http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/hukümetin_301_inadi-792090/. It is important to note that the main opposition party, CHP, was also against repealing Article 301. The leader of the party, Deniz Baykal, argued that Turkey should not yield under pressure from the European Union, which demanded the removal of the article. "Baykal'dan 301'inci Madde Tepkisi," *Sabah*, September 20, 2006, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2006/09/20/siy98.html>.

⁴¹ Yurdağül Şimşek, "TCK 301 Nihayet Değişti," *Radikal*, May 1, 2008, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=254504>. Opposition parties CHP and MHP were against the revised version on the grounds that the crime of insulting Turkishness would go unpunished if the suggested changes were made.

took a highly vulnerable position and adopted a minor – rather than a major and dominating – voice. He attempted to move age-old racialized prejudices, inequalities and discrimination. He sought ways of building a Turkey that recognizes the equal footing of all its constitutive communities – a Turkey where all citizens are free to express their thoughts and free to live as who they are.

Hrant Dink had been the target of a popular stigmatization and lynching campaign from 2004. In February 2004, Dink wrote an article in *Agos* based on a report that claimed that Sabiha Gökçen, Atatürk’s adopted daughter and Turkey’s first female combat pilot, was Armenian by birth. Hripsime Sebilciyan Gazalyan, an Armenian originally from Gaziantep living in Armenia, claimed that Gökçen was her aunt and her name at birth was Hatun Sebilciyan. Gazalyan argued that Hatun Sebilciyan was at an orphanage when Atatürk adopted her.⁴² The mainstream newspaper *Hürriyet* reported the claims about Gökçen’s identity on February 21, 2004.⁴³ A wide range of actors from mainstream newspapers to the General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces took part in the campaign.⁴⁴ Protestors accused Dink of defaming Gökçen, a Turkish national hero, by claiming that she was Armenian and, sure enough, he was prosecuted for “insulting

⁴² “Biography: Hrant Dink (1954-2007),” *Hrant Dink Foundation*, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.hrantdink.org/?HrantDink=10&Lang=&Home&Lang=en>.

⁴³ Ersin Kalkan, “Sabiha Gökçen Mi Hatun Sebilciyan Mı,” *Hürriyet*, February 21, 2004, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/sabiha-gokcen-mi-hatun-sebilciyan-mi-204239>.

⁴⁴ “Türk Medyası Hrant Dink’i Nasıl öldürdü?,” *t24.com.tr*, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/turk-medyasi-hrant-dinki-nasil-oldurdu/190920>; “Dink Cinayetinde Hürriyet’in Günahı Var Mıydı?,” accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.gazeteciler.com/medya-kosesi/dink-cinayetinde-hurriyetin-gunahi-var-miydi-46963h.html>; Hüseyin Tekin, “Sabiha Gökçen Tartışmasında Kim Ne Yazdı,” *Hürriyet*, February 28, 2004, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/remove/>; “Genelkurmay: Gökçen Türk Kadını Sembolü,” *Bianet - Bagimsiz Iletisim Agi*, February 23, 2004, <http://www.bianet.org/kadin/siyaset/30301-genelkurmay-gokcen-turk-kadini-sembolu>; Kemal Gökteş, “Hrant Dink’in Basında Hedef Haline Getirilen Bir Siyasi Figüre Dönüştürülmesi,” n.d., <http://www.nefretsoylemi.org/resimler/201001227578546405.pdf>; “Biography: Hrant Dink (1954-2007).”

Turkishness.”⁴⁵ The idea that Gökçen might not be an ethnic Turk did not fit in the ethno-religious boundaries of the Turkish national identity, and the reactions showed deep racist and discriminatory undercurrents in Turkish society at large. While the AKP government did not support Dink’s accusers,⁴⁶ it did little to protect him before his death. The government did little to shed light on the wide network of civilians and bureaucrats that executed the murder, or bring them to justice.⁴⁷ The trial has been ongoing since 2007. It has taken a number of twists and turns as the power struggles in Turkey have changed course several times since then.⁴⁸ Even though AKP representatives still claim that they will not let the case go unsolved,⁴⁹ the party has contributed to the regime of impunity and immunity from which those who were responsible benefitted.⁵⁰

The fourth moment came in July 2010 and continued in August. While the Hrant Dink murder case was being stalled, the Ministry of Justice refused to permit the prosecution of Arat Dink, Hrant Dink’s son, and Sarkis Seropyan under Article 301 for Hrant Dink’s statements about the Armenian genocide.⁵¹ The ministry argued that defending the genocide claims fell within the limits of freedom of expression. The

⁴⁵ Thomas De Waal, *Great Catastrophe: Armenians and Turks in the Shadow of Genocide* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 189–190.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁴⁷ Laure Marchand and Guillaume Perrier, *Türkiye ve Ermeni Hayaleti: Soykırımın İzinde Adımlar*, trans. Renan Akman (İstanbul: İletişim, 2014), 243.

⁴⁸ Yetivart Danzikyan, “Başbakan, Dink Cinayetiyle İlgili Neden Ağız Değiştirdi?,” *Agos*, July 29, 2014, <http://www.Agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/7691/basbakan-dink-cinayetiyle-ilgili-neden-agiz-degistirdi>.

⁴⁹ “AK Partili Kuzu: ‘Biz Olduğumuz Sürece Kimse Hrant Dink Davasını Kapatamaz,’” *Milliyet Haber*, October 16, 2015, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/ak-partili-kuzu-biz-oldugumuz-surece-istanbul-yerelhaber-1015889/>.

⁵⁰ Fethiye Çetin, “Fourth-Year Report on Hrant Dink’s Murder,” 2011, http://www.hrantdink.org/img/Hrant_Dink_Murder_Case-Four_Years_After.pdf.

⁵¹ Hrant Dink’s statement was published in AGOS and the court found Arat Dink and Sarkis Seropyan guilty in October 2007 because they were part of the newspaper’s editorial team. The revised version of Article 301 stated that prosecution under the article required the permission of the Justice Ministry.

ministry's statement also stated that the criticism, no matter how harsh it was, could not constitute a crime in a democratic and pluralist setting.⁵² This statement should have been a major turning point for the memory of the Armenian genocide in Turkey and could have become a test case, however the public did not apply that kind of pressure to push the genocide agenda. Ayşe Günaysu questioned the public silence about this moment,

now that the threat of prosecution no longer prevails, the ball is in the court of the Turkish public and intellectuals when it comes to the issue of referring to the extermination of the Ottoman Armenians and Assyrians in 1915-16. Now we will see where the real pressure comes from: the government/state apparatus, or the racist/nationalist spirit deeply rooted in the Turkish society. When I say racist/nationalist spirit, I don't only mean the ultra-nationalists or the strong Kemalist current (the children of the victorious "anti-imperialist" republic), but also the followers of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis who constitute the backbone—and the founding spirit—of the AKP movement.⁵³

The following month, further attesting to the AKP's equivocal politics of memory, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted a controversial defense to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in the case that the Dink family brought against Turkey. The defense accused Hrant Dink of denigrating Turkishness and propagating hate speech. It also claimed that the authorities could not be held responsible for protecting Dink's life, as he had never demanded official protection.⁵⁴ There was public outcry demanding the government withdraw its defence.⁵⁵ The government did not

⁵² "Adalet Bakanlığı: Soykırımı Savunmak Da İfade Özgürlüğü," *Bianet - Bağımsız İletişim Ağı*, July 23, 2010, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/ifade-ozgurlugu/123661-adalet-bakanligi-soykirimi-savunmak-da-ifade-ozgurlugu>.

⁵³ Ayşe Günaysu, "A Turkey Classic: Grotesque Co-Existence of Make-Believe Liberalism and Fascism," *Armenian Weekly*, August 23, 2010, <http://armenianweekly.com/2010/08/23/gunaysu-a-turkey-classic-grotesque-co-existence-of-make-believe-liberalism-and-fascism/>.

⁵⁴ Erhan Üstündağ, "Government's Defence: Turkish-Armenian Journalist Dink Blamed at ECHR," *Bianet*, August 16, 2010, <http://www.bianet.org/english/minorities/124161-turkish-armenian-journalist-dink-blamed-at-echr>.

⁵⁵ "'Hrant'ın Arkadaşları': O Savunmayı Derhal Geri Çekin," *Bianet - Bağımsız İletişim Ağı*, August 17, 2010, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/ifade-ozgurlugu/124191-hrant-in-arkadaslari-o-savunmayi-derhal-geri-cekin>. In an interesting twist of events, the lawyer and ex-bar president Turgut Kazan claimed that some "liberals" knew about the defence four months before it was

do so, but Ahmet Davutoğlu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Sadullah Ergin, the Minister of Justice, expressed discomfort with the defence, implying that they did not have control over it.⁵⁶ President Abdullah Gül stated, “Unfortunately, Hrant Dink died

submitted. Kazan claimed that these figures, some of whom were part of the Friends of Hrant group, chose to remain silent about it. Cengiz Çandar, who was directly referred to in this allegation, refuted the claim. “‘O Savunma 4 Aydır Biliniyordu,’” *Birgun.net*, August 24, 2010, <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/o-savunma-4-aydir-biliniyordu-54840.html>; “Cengiz Çandar Dink Savunmasından Haberdar Mıydı?,” *Medya Tava*, September 25, 2012, http://test.medyatava.com/haber/cengiz-candar-dink-savunmasindan-haberdar-miydi-video_53719; Mustafa Kuleli, “Liberal Yazarlar Dink Savunmasından Haberdar Mıydı?,” September 30, 2010, <http://www.mustafakuleli.net/kategori/kose-yazilari/17090/liberal-yazarlar-dink-savunmasindan-haberdar-miydi>; Mustafa Kuleli, “Liberal Yazarlar Dink Savunmasından Haberdar Mıydı? - 2,” October 1, 2010, <http://www.mustafakuleli.net/kategori/kose-yazilari/17091/liberal-yazarlar-dink-savunmasindan-haberdar-miydi---2>.

⁵⁶ Tolga Korkut and Burçin Belge, “ECHR Convicts Turkey in Hrant Dink Case - PM Erdoğan Protects MIT,” *Bianet*, August 24, 2010, <https://www.bianet.org/english/minorities/124335-echr-convicts-turkey-in-hrant-dink-case-pm-erdogan-protects-mit>. Some AKP deputies were also critical of the defence. Tarık Işık, “‘AİHM Savunmaya İtibar Etmesin,’” *Radikal*, August 15, 2010, http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/aihm_savunmaya_itibar_etmesin-1013676/. On August 18, 2010, the Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, told a reporter that as an intellectual and a minister, submitting defences about the freedom of expression to the ECHR was very discomfoting for him. Having to deal with cases about this fundamental freedom, according to the minister, was the hardest part. He implied that as Turkey’s domestic legal system still had problems, these court cases continued. He stated that there was a problem about the limitations of fundamental freedoms in Turkey. When he spoke about Hrant Dink, the minister mentioned that the defence against Dink was unacceptable. He said he met Dink personally and that he was very “sympathetic.” Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, “Davutoğlu: Bu İmzalar Ağır Geliyor,” *Milliyet Haber*, August 18, 2010, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/davutoglu-bu-imzalar-agir-geliyor/asli-aydintasbas/siyaset/yazardetayarsiv/30.08.2010/1277860/default.htm>. The minister made strategical use of techniques of delegating responsibility for racism and hatred-filled defence text. He admitted that there were things that were not working and seemingly took responsibility for those, but in reality he effectively did away with responsibility. His representation of Hrant Dink and the way he conceived the relationship between him and Dink were also a perfect example of “house Armenian” perspective common to many members of the dominant group in Turkey. The Turkish-Armenians, as long as they were obedient and were not creating trouble, were “our Armenians”. Emrah Göker, “Ahmet Davutoğlu: Mysterium ÷ Ministerium,” *Birgun.net*, August 21, 2010, <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/ahmet-davutoglu-mysterium-ministerium-8127.html>.

Turkish-Armenian columnists Ohannes Kılıçdağı expressed a similar critique of the AKP’s attitudes towards non-Muslims and demands for full equality, fair representation, and political subjecthood for Turkish-Armenians. Ohannes Kılıçdağı, “AKP ve Müslüman Olmayanlar,” *Agos*, October 28, 2013, <http://www.Agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/9229/akp-ve-musluman-olmayanlar>.

because the necessary precautions had not been taken.”⁵⁷ In September 2010, the European Court of Human Rights judged that the Turkish authorities failed to protect the life and freedom of expression of Hrant Dink.⁵⁸

The fifth moment is the emergence of a new concept marking a new era of memory struggles. The end of the 2000s saw a shift in the AKP’s approach to Armenia and the Armenian genocide. As part of the zero-problem-with-Turkey’s-neighbors strategy, the AKP was seeking ways to normalize relations with Armenia and the Armenian diaspora. The track two diplomacy resulted in the now defunct protocols between Armenia and Turkey in 2009. During that period the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu initiated a new concept, just memory, which summarized the AKP’s future memory strategy. Just memory marked a shift in the denialist discourse; a new paradigm in Turkey’s official engagement with its past. It advocated justice and fairness for all memories of the First World War that all the involved parties had. Davutoğlu demanded an inclusive and mutually respectful common memory regarding 1915, “everybody has his own memory, but nobody should impose his memory as a one-sided memory on the other side.”⁵⁹ To build that common memory of Turks and Armenians, the former needed to be empathetical towards Armenians’ experiences and suffering. The latter, in return, had to respect the memories of the Turks.⁶⁰ In his address on the Turkish

⁵⁷ Burçin Belge, “President Gül Admits State’s Responsibility for Dink Murder,” *Bianet - Bagimsiz Iletisim Agi*, August 17, 2010, <http://www.bianet.org/english/minorities/124177-president-gul-admits-state-s-responsibility-for-dink-murder>.

⁵⁸ *Affaire Dink c. Turkey* (European Court of Human Rights 2010).

⁵⁹ “A Conversation with Ahmet Davutoglu,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 14, 2010, <http://www.cfr.org/turkey/conversation-ahmet-davutoglu/p34743>.

⁶⁰ Murat Yetkin, “Davutoğlu: Ermeni Diasporasıyla Temas Istiyoruz,” *Radikal*, March 26, 2010, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/murat-yetkin/davutoglu-ermeni-diasporasiyla-temas-istiyoruz-987815/>.

foreign policy at the Brookings Institution, the minister provided the broader framework within which the just memory concept belonged.

We are ready to share our pains. 1915 is a symbolic year for Armenians, yes, but we need to know 1915 is the year of Gallipoli, as well, where only in one front in Çanakkale 250,000 Turks were killed, and one of them was my grandfather. In Yemen, in the Balkans, this is like [...] an organic society was divided, like you are taking the body out of the context. I don't want to justify any mistake. If there are mistakes, we need to share. We need to discuss and share these. But if you ignore nine centuries and just focus on time when there was no political order anywhere in Ottoman territories, then we may face problem.⁶¹

As such, just memory perspective did not strictly deny Armenian suffering. Instead, the minister presented it as an attempt to leave denial behind, “before there was one-sided – maybe from our side as well – we were denying – I mean, denying – nothing happened – no, something happened. But something happened to us as well, to all of us. Now it is time to restore. Therefore, it is a just memory. Ready to discuss everything.”⁶² The admission of official denial has been unprecedented, however the core message was not. The new approach selectively and conditionally recognized some portions of Armenian suffering, which could be incorporated into the new historiography the AKP sought to build.

In this all-inclusive realm of memory, all the involved parties could share each other's pain. Horrendous things had happened to the Armenians, but they were not the only one suffering. Millions of Turks, Bosnians, Albanians, Abkhazians, Chechens, and Georgians went through similar sufferings due to displacement and wars.⁶³ Davutoğlu's reference to Gallipoli and other late-Ottoman disastrous war efforts was to paint a picture

⁶¹ “Perspectives on Turkish Foreign Policy: An Address by H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey” (The Brookings Institution, November 29, 2010), http://www.brookings.edu/~media/events/2010/11/29-turkey/20101129_turkey.pdf.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

of the Ottoman-Turkish community facing the imminent threat of fall. A sense of being in the throes of death and fighting for survival permeated this depiction. The minister highlighted the successive traumatic events that had shaken, destabilized and disoriented Ottoman society since the Balkan Wars. The stress on the commonality of human suffering and the shared sense of trauma constituted the emotional economy of the AKP's more sophisticated genocide denial. For the new concept relativized the Armenians' experiences of genocide by equating them with wartime losses of Turks and Muslims. Thus it equated a deliberate policy of extermination the Ottoman government used against its own civilian citizens with military and civilian losses during the wars the empire fought.⁶⁴

The sixth moment followed the footsteps of the just memory. In line with the discourse of including all the suffering related to the Turkish-Armenian conflict, the AKP government intensified its commemorative efforts aimed at remembering its bureaucrats assassinated by Armenian organizations in the 1970s and 1980s. Commemorative monuments in Portugal and Canada emerged together with the plaque in Vienna. The latest of such government initiatives took place on September 20, 2012, in Ottawa. On that day the Turkish Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, together with his Canadian counterpart John Baird, unveiled a commemorative monument in honour of Colonel Atilla Altıkat who was assassinated on August 23, 1982, allegedly by Armenian groups.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ For a detailed critique of the just memory concept please see, Taner Akçam, "What Davutoglu Fails to Understand," *Armenian Weekly*, May 19, 2010, <http://armenianweekly.com/2010/05/19/akcam-davutoglu/>.

⁶⁵ "Ottawa unveils monument to slain Turkish diplomat." *The Globe and Mail*, September 20, 2012. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-unveils-monument-to-slain-turkish-diplomat/article4557798/>

Illustration 2 - Monument to the Fallen Diplomats
(Credit: Esen Egemen Ozbek)

Even though the dedication text of the monument did not directly mention Armenian groups, the monument was an act of denial juxtaposing Turkish losses with the Armenian losses.⁶⁶

Illustration 3 - The Dedication of the Monument
(Credit: Esen Egemen Ozbek)

The monument was to institutionalize, embody and politicize memories of the assassinated diplomats as martyrs of the Turkish nation. As such, it has been a claim on the memorial territory lost to Armenian genocide memories.

⁶⁶ The story of the monument has a longer backdrop. The monument is seen as a step in normalizing the relations between Turkey and Canada that were interrupted following the official recognition of the Armenian genocide by Canada in 2006. After that move Turkey temporarily withdrew its ambassador to Canada.

Challenges Posed by the Kurds

The second factor behind the erosion of Kemalist ideology and hegemony over the national past is the challenge posed by the Kurdish political movement and the armed insurgency of the *Partia Karkeren Kurdistan* (Kurdistan's Workers Party, PKK) against the Turkish state, which started in 1984. This protracted civil war, which claimed about 40,000 lives, was yet another instance of Kemalist refusal to recognize the Kurds as a distinct national community and ethnic identity.⁶⁷ While the Kurdish reaction against systemic and structural racism and discrimination was fomenting in the 1970s, the elites were mainly in disavowal mode. The 1980 coup attempted to suppress the Kurdish movement through political violence and especially torture. However, this strategy had the opposite effect, and the PKK, supported by some segments of the Kurdish movement and population, upped its ante and began deadly attacks against civil and military bureaucracy in southeastern Turkey.

The war determined the language and grammar of politics during the 1990s and also challenged Kemalist collective memory. Furthermore, the war showed that the Kemalist definition of national identity and its assimilationist strategies were untenable. The challenge posed by the Kurdish movement and the PKK has slowly dissociated small but influential groups of opposition from Kemalist ideology. Ethnic or ethno-religious conflict began to receive much more scholarly and critical attention. Dissident groups, mostly active in leftist circles during the 1960s and 1970s, began to pay more attention to interethnic relations rather than inter-class relations. The war was instrumental in re-

⁶⁷ Earlier instances of this violent state suppression of Kurdish identity include the Sheikh Said revolt in 1925, the Ağrı revolt between 1926 and 1930, and Dersim massacres in 1937 and 1938.

channeling oppositional energies. The critique of Kemalism and Turkish nationalism was accompanied by a new discourse, that of human rights.

Human rights activist and Armenian genocide commemoration organizer Ayşe Günaysu underlined the importance of the PKK's resistance in terms of transforming the opposition in Turkey, at least some sections of it⁶⁸, and creating sensitivity to state violence targeting ethno-religious minority groups. Günaysu argued that the PKK's struggle embodied a clear and decisive break with the official ideology, Kemalism and Turkish nationalism. As such, she states, it "revolutionized" the opposition in Turkey. The war between the PKK and Turkish army revealed that in Turkey ethnicity, or ethno-religious conflict, trumps social class in almost all cases, and that the socialist opposition's class-centred perspective would fail to explain the genocide against Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians. The primacy of ethnic conflict introduced some strands of the socialist left to racism and nationalism in Turkey as issues that require immediate attention.

The gradual shift of oppositional discourses from class conflict to ethnic conflict resonated with and fed into the ascendancy of human rights discourses as an important and legitimate framework to confront past and ongoing state violence and to critically engage with the past. Coupled with gradual engagement with the European Union and attempts at further democratization and civilianization of politics in Turkey, human rights activism has become the main area in which the politics of memory has unfolded since the late 1980s. The contemporary ethno-religious conflict between the Turks and Kurds and state violence highlighted other violent episodes of suppression that included the Armenian genocide. Growing popular interest in ethno-religious conflicts in Turkey

⁶⁸ Ayşe Günaysu, Email interview with the author, October 8, 2012.

resulted in an exploration of the genocide in more critical terms. Demands for coming to terms with past state violence began to make references to the Armenian case. These references contributed to the emergence and expansion of national discourses on mass violence against subaltern groups in Turkey. These discourses, engaging with the past instances of violence, formed a new framework of understanding the past in terms of inter-ethnic relations and the role of the state in those relations. Hence they helped the formation of new vectors of memory.

It has been repeatedly stated that Kurdish intellectuals, activists, politicians, political organizations, and population in general have been more open to engage with genocide memories in comparison to their Turkish counterparts. Recent accounts on coming to terms with the genocidal past praised Kurdish political leaders for setting a “moral example” to Turkey.⁶⁹ Some other accounts underline that Kurdish engagement with genocide memories pricks Turkish conscience.⁷⁰ Strengthening the Kurdish political movement placed more pressure on denial in Turkey as it problematized the violent history of inter-ethnic relations during the formation of the nation-state and its aftermath. For some, the convergence of Armenian and Kurdish suffering as a result of centrally administered violence against these two subaltern groups made an empowering alliance on the genocide possible between the two groups.⁷¹ Intellectuals and activists such as Recep Maraşlı began to explore the historical relations between Armenian and Kurdish

⁶⁹ Uzey Bulut, “Armenian Genocide: Kurdish Leaders Set Moral Example to Turkey by Facing Their Crimes,” *International Business Times*, April 23, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/armenian-genocide-kurdish-leaders-set-moral-example-turkey-by-facing-their-crimes-1498053>.

⁷⁰ Laure Marchand and Guillaume Perrier, *Turkey and the Armenian Ghost: On the Trail of the Genocide* (Montreal & Kingston; London; Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s Press - MQUP, 2015).

⁷¹ Bilgin Ayata, “Searching for Alternative Approaches to Reconciliation: A Plea for Armenian-Kurdish Dialogue,” *Armenian Weekly*, April 2008.

movements at a relatively early moment. His book, *Armenian National Democratic Movement and the Genocide of 1915*, was published in 2008 and constituted an important engagement with the genocidal past from the Kurdish perspective.⁷²

It is possible to understand the Kurdish role in the politics of memory in contemporary Turkey in two realms. The first realm was related to keeping the memories of the atrocities alive and transmitting them to younger generations. In this respect, the memories of genocide remained alive and in circulation among the Kurdish population of Turkey. These memories were particularly vivid in eastern Anatolia. In recent years Turkey witnessed a return of these memories into public discourse through oral history studies. Gülçiçek Günel Tekin's *Bury Me Without Washing: Kurds Narrating the Armenian Genocide* (2013)⁷³ and *One Hundred Years of Sorrow: Remembrance of 1915 in Diyarbakır* (2015)⁷⁴ by Adnan Çelik and Namık Kemal Dinç, are two of the important compilations of Kurdish memories of the genocide. Some leading Kurdish leaders included memories pertaining to the genocide in their memoirs.⁷⁵

The second realm where Kurdish subjects have been influential was memory interventions. Kurdish politicians and political organizations in Turkey made recurrent public statements about the genocide recalling the atrocities, called on the Turkish state to recognize the genocide, and apologized for Kurdish involvement in the genocide perpetration. A list of interventions, not necessarily comprehensive, attests to the Kurdish role in bringing forth the genocide issue:

⁷² Recep Maraşlı, *Ermeni ulusal demokratik hareketi ve 1915 soykırımı* (Kadıköy-İstanbul: Pêrî Yayınları, 2008).

⁷³ Gülçiçek Günel Tekin, *Beni yıkamadan gömün: Kürtler Ermeni soykırımını anlatıyor* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2013).

⁷⁴ Adnan Çelik and Namık Kemal Dinç, *Yüz yıllık Ah!: toplumsal hafızanın izinde 1915 Diyarbakır* (İstanbul: İsmail Beşikçi Vakfı, 2015).

⁷⁵ Fatma Müge Göçek, "Kürtler ve 1915," *Kürt Tarihi*, June 2015.

- In December 2008 the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) MP Osman Özçelik mentioned Armenian massacres in the Turkish parliament and stated that Turkey should apologize.⁷⁶
- In October 2011, the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) MP Altan Tan underlined that the Armenian massacres constituted genocide and he wanted this to be on the record.⁷⁷
- On April 25, 2012, the BDP MP Sırrı Süreyya Önder announced that the party would propose a law declaring April 24 as a day for mourning and sharing the pain. Önder attended DurDe's genocide commemoration as well.⁷⁸
- The vice-president of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Ahmet Türk apologized on behalf of his ancestors who had been deceived by the CUP and used in the annihilation of Armenians.⁷⁹ Türk's statement was important, but it came too close to acquitting Kurds of their responsibility in the genocide.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ "TBMM Bütçe Görüşmesinde Gerginlik," *Cumhuriyet.com.tr*, December 8, 2008, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/29838/TBMM_butce_gorusmesinde_gerginlik_.html; "DTP'li Özçelik'ten Ermeni İddialarına Destek," *Hurriyet.com.tr*, December 8, 2008, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dtpli-ozcelikten-ermeni-iddialarina-destek-10617020>; "Armenian Apology Causes Brawl in Turkish Parliament," *Asbarez.com*, December 30, 2008, <http://asbarez.com/59850/armenian-apology-causes-brawl-in-turkish-parliament/>; Allen Yekikian, "The Kurdish Struggle Against Genocide," *Armenian Youth Federation - Western Region*, July 9, 2009, <http://ayfwest.org/news/the-kurdish-struggle-against-genocide/>.

⁷⁷ "Altan Tan: 1915'te Ermeni Soykırımı Oldu," *t24.com.tr*, October 17, 2011, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/altan-tan-1915te-ermeni-soykirimi-oldu/175419>.

⁷⁸ "BDP'den 24 Nisan İçin 'Ulusal Yas' Teklifi," *Radikal*, April 25, 2012, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=1086027&CategoryID=78>.

⁷⁹ Ahmet Türk / IMC TV "Azı Karar Çoğu Zarar" [01.02.2013], 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxhjN2Kgu6g>; "Kurdish Leader Apologizes for Role in Genocide," *Asbarez.com*, February 4, 2013, <http://asbarez.com/108106/kurdish-leader-apologizes-for-role-in-genocide/>.

⁸⁰ Tamar Nalcı, "Ahmet Türk'ün Inkârı," *Agos*, February 9, 2013, <http://www.Agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/4217/ahmet-turkun-inkri>.

- On September 12, 2013, the Sur Municipality in Diyarbakir unveiled a monument, The Monument of Common Conscience, memorializing the sufferings of Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, Yezidis, and Alevi. The Mayor of Sur, Abdullah Demirbaş, acknowledged Kurdish involvement in genocide perpetration and apologized for it, “we Kurds, in the name of our ancestors, apologize for the massacres and deportations of the Armenians and Assyrians in 1915” and he continued, “we will continue our struggle to secure atonement and compensation for them.”⁸¹
- On April 24, 2014, the BDP, in a press release, demanded that Turkey recognize the genocide and come to terms with the past. The statement maintained that as the past went unaccounted for, subsequent episodes of political mass violence against other subaltern groups became possible.⁸²
- In October 2014, the former mayor of Diyarbakır, Osman Baydemir, called on Turkey to recognize and apologize for the genocide in an interview he gave to an Armenian news portal during his visit to Yerevan, Armenia. Baydemir stated that after recognition and apology, the legal framework for reparations to the Armenians must be established as well as allowing the descendants of genocide victims and survivors to come back to their ancestral lands.⁸³

⁸¹ Gulisor Akkum, “Kurdish Leaders Apologize for 1915 During Monument Inauguration in Diyarbakir,” *Armenian Weekly*, September 12, 2013, <http://armenianweekly.com/2013/09/12/kurdish-leaders-apologize-for-genocide-during-monument-inauguration-in-diyarbakir/>.

⁸² “BDP’den Soykırım Açıklaması: Ermeni Halkından özür Dilenmeli,” *İMC TV*, April 24, 2014, <http://www.imctv.com.tr/bdpden-soykirim-aciklamasi-ermeni-halkindan-ozur-dilenmeli/>; “BDP: Ermeni Halkından özür Dilenmeli,” *Marksist.org*, April 24, 2014, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/haberler/14593-bdp-ermeni-halkindan-ozur-dilenmeli>.

⁸³ “Osman Baydemir’in Hayali Erivan’da Gerçekleşti,” *News.am*, (October 30, 2014), <http://news.am/tur/news/236664.html>.

- In November 2014, Sabahat Tuncel, an MP of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), proposed a draft law in the Turkish National Assembly to get the president of the Turkish Republic to formally apologize to Armenians for the Armenian Genocide, to open the archives, and to designate April 24 as a day of genocide commemoration.⁸⁴
- Around the same time, Selahattin Demirtaş, HDP co-chair and ex-presidential candidate, reiterated the party's demands for coming to terms with the past. In an interview with Armenian news portal Civil.net, Demirtaş called on the Turkish state to officially recognize the genocide. He also underlined that once the coming to terms with the past process officially was under way, Kurds, Armenians, and Turks would be in a better position to confront their role towards and in the genocide.⁸⁵
- In January 2015, Demirtaş repeated that he recognized the genocide without question or hesitation and demanded the recognition of the Armenian genocide on CNN Turk during an interview.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ "Turkish MP of Kurdish Descent Submits to Parliament Draft Law on Armenian Genocide Recognition," *Hayern Aysor*, November 26, 2014, <http://en.hayernaysor.am/%d6%84%d6%80%d5%a4%d5%a1%d5%af%d5%a1%d5%b6-%d5%ae%d5%a1%d5%a3%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%b4%d5%b8%d5%be-%d5%a9%d5%b8%d6%82%d6%80%d6%84-%d5%ba%d5%a1%d5%bf%d5%a3%d5%a1%d5%b4%d5%a1%d5%be%d5%b8%d6%80%d5%a8-%d5%b0/>; "HDP'den Olay Yaratacak 'Ermeni' Teklifi!," *Milliyet.com.tr*, November 26, 2014, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/hdp-den-olay-yaratacak-ermeni-/siyaset/detay/1975521/default.htm>; Ragıp Zarakolu, "Tam Zamanı," *Özgür Gündem*, January 25, 2015, <http://ozgur-gundem.org/yazi/124942/tam-zamani>.

⁸⁵ Selahattin Demirtaş, Turkey Must Face the Armenian Genocide, interview by Aline Ozinian, December 23, 2014, <http://civilnet.am/2014/12/23/selahattin-demirtas-kurds-armenian-genocide-1915-democracy-turkey-english/>.

⁸⁶ Haber Ekpres, *Selahattin Demirtaş : Ermeni Soykırımı Var*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQ4Ex7ul9Eg>; "Kurdish Leader: We Recognize Armenian Genocide without Question," *Horizon Weekly*, January 19, 2015,

- On April 21, 2016, Garo Paylan, HDP's Armenian-Turkish MP, took the floor at parliament and introduced an alternative historiographical account on 1908-1915 challenging the Kemalist dogma. He detailed the fate of the Armenian leaders who had been arrested on April 24, 1915. Then he briefly recounted the atrocities against the Armenians. Paylan problematized the denial while other MPs attempted to interfere with and respond to his account. Paylan demanded an investigation commission to unearth the fate of the Armenian leaders.⁸⁷
- On April 24, 2016, HDP Co-Chair Figen Yüksekdağ apologized for the Armenian Genocide at her party's group meeting at the national assembly.⁸⁸

These interventions show that many members of the Kurdish movement in the last decade or so have openly engaged with the genocidal history in Turkey. They have tried to bring the Armenian Genocide into public discourse and attempted to write back the genocide into the shared history of different ethno-religious communities. These interventions are commendable; however, some other members of the Kurdish movement questioned why the community had waited more than 90 years to come to terms with the genocide. One of the crucial factors behind the delayed engagement with the genocide was the acknowledgment of Kurdish responsibility in the perpetration of the genocide. Kurdish intellectuals, public figures and politicians, while recognizing the genocide, were not keen to accept that the Kurds were among the perpetrators. Taking this responsibility proved to be difficult and many Kurdish accounts on the genocidal past deflect the

<http://www.horizonweekly.ca/news/details/59890>; Bulut, "Armenian Genocide: Kurdish Leaders Set Moral Example to Turkey by Facing Their Crimes."

⁸⁷ Armenian Society, *Garo Paylan Speech in Turkish Parliament (English Subtitles)*, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHDclz4TNNY>.

⁸⁸ "HDP Eş Genel Başkanı Yüksekdağ: Soykırımın 101. Yılında Ermeni Halkından özür Diliyoruz," *t24.com.tr*, accessed July 22, 2016, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/hdp-es-genel-baskani-yuksekdag-soykirimin-101-yilinda-ermen-halkindan-ozur-diliyoruz,337889>.

responsibility by claiming that the CUP deceived the Kurds and used them to annihilate Armenians. The Kurds at the time did not have an organized political entity or state, the argument goes, so accordingly they were not included in the decision-making mechanism regarding the genocidal process.⁸⁹ Hence, historical responsibility stayed with the CUP and Turks while the Kurds were instruments of extermination. Recently, revisions of this dominant perspective shaping the Kurdish engagement with the genocide have emerged and began to question the long silence among the Kurds about the genocide. As the Kurdish movement expands its critical questioning of its own record, the public discussion of the genocide becomes more visible and mature as the ongoing dialogue sheds light on previously under-studied aspects of the genocidal process.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Orhan Miroğlu, “1915, Inkâr ve Kürtler,” *Taraf.com.tr*, April 25, 2011, <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/orhan-miroglu/1915-inkar-ve-kurtler/15979/>; Recep Maraşlı, *Kürt Solunda Ermeni Soykırımı Algısı*, 2014, <http://akebi.de/ku%CC%88rt-solunda-ermeni-soykirimi-algisi-recep-marasli/>; Toros Sarian, “The Kurds and the Armenian Genocide,” *MassisPost*, July 28, 2011, <http://massispost.com/2011/07/the-kurds-and-the-armenian-genocide/>.

⁹⁰ Namık Kemal Dinç, ed., *Onlar Gittiler Biz Barışı Yitirdik: Ermeni Soykırımı ve Kürtler* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2016); Sait Çetinoğlu, “Soykırımı Yüzünden Özur Dileme Kanun Talebi,” *Devrimci Karadeniz*, December 1, 2014, <http://devrimcikaradeniz.com/soykirimi-yuzunden-ozur-dileme-kanun-teklifi/>; Ezgi Bilgin, “1915: Yüzleşmeyi Utanç Sağlayacak,” *Post Dergi*, April 24, 2016, <http://postdergi.com/1915-yuzlesmeyi-utanç-saglayacak/>; Burçin Gerçek, “What Do People Mean in Turkey by Armenian Genocide Recognition?,” *Repair Future*, November 3, 2014, <http://repairfuture.net/index.php/en/armenian-genocide-recognition-and-reparations-standpoint-of-turkey/what-do-people-mean-in-turkey-by-armenian-genocide-recognition-armenian>; Namık Kemal Dinç, “Ermeniler 1915’i Nasıl Hatırlıyorsa, Kürtler de Aynı Şekilde Hatırlıyorlar,” accessed July 22, 2016, <http://zanenstitu.org/ermeniler-1915i-nasil-hatirliyorsa-kurtler-de-ayni-sekilde-hatirliyorlar/>; Emre Can Dağlıoğlu, “1915: Sorumluluk, ‘Kürtler’, ‘Ermeniler,’” *Azad Alik*, April 27, 2016, <https://azadalik.wordpress.com/2016/04/26/1915-sorumluluk-kurtler-ermeniler/>; Harut Sassounian, “Turkey Was First Country to Recognize the Armenian Genocide...in 1918,” *Armenian Weekly*, January 19, 2016, <http://armenianweekly.com/2016/01/19/turkey-1918/>; Bilgin Ayata, “Critical Interventions: Kurdish Intellectuals Confronting the Armenian Genocide,” *Armenian Weekly*, April 29, 2009, <http://armenianweekly.com/2009/04/29/kurdish-intellectuals-confronting-the-armenian-genocide/>.

Problematization of State Violence against Subaltern Groups and the Emergence of the Coming to Terms with the past

The second major factor making the return of the Armenian genocide into collective memory possible was the increased problematization of state and mass political violence against the subaltern groups defined along ethno-religious fault lines. The contemporary civil war against the Kurds articulated the violent characteristic of inter-ethnic relations in Turkey and made a retrospection at past episodes of violence unavoidable. This retrospection was articulated in global discourses of coming to terms with the past which, in turn, paved the way for the convergence of past and contemporary victimhoods as the suffering was seen to be inflicted by the same agent, the Turkish state. In this environment the Armenian Genocide began to be conceived and represented as the quintessential example of state violence against subaltern groups and identities in Turkey.

The recognition of past injustices and contemporary politics merged together and became significant aspects of contemporary politics in Turkey. The left, at least some its segments, adopted the unifying perspective shaping its policies. Doğan Tarkan, the leader of the Revolutionary Socialist Workers' Party, explained his party's vision of the genocide and other atrocities,

We supported the bloc because it constituted a Kurdish emancipation movement and we will continue support for the same reason. We will push forward our demand for freedom. We will demand freedom for oppressed people. We will bring forth the struggles against racism and nationalism. We will recognize the Armenian genocide. We were in Taksim on April 24 [2011] for that reason. We will take a stand against the bloody repression of the Kurds. We took to the streets on April 24th for the murdered Kurdish youth in response to the BDP's "bir göz de sen ol" call. We will rise against coups. We will follow up the Ergenekon case. We will defend the dissolution of the Turkish General Staff. We will demand that the Turkish army stop the dirty war in Kurdistan.⁹¹

⁹¹ Biz bloğu Kürt özgürlük hareketi oluşturduğu için destekliyoruz aynı nedenle desteklemeye devam edeceğiz ve her zaman olduğu gibi özgürlük talebimizi en öne çıkaracağız. Ezilen halklara özgürlüğü, ırkçılığa ve milliyetçiliğe karşı mücadeleyi öne çıkaracağız. Ermeni soykırımını

In Tarkan's view, the genocide belonged to a family of state and mass violence incidents against certain groups in Turkey. The recognition of the genocide was part and parcel of the movement to come to terms with past incidents and prevent new ones from happening. In a similar vein, on April 21, 2010, Etha news agency, a leftist or left-liberal leaning national agency closely associated with the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP), announced the İHD's commemoration with a piece entitled, "Armenian intellectuals to be commemorated at Haydarpasa". In this interview, Gülseren Yoleri, the president of İHD's Istanbul branch, explained their commemorative vision in relation to the broader trope of Turkey's coming to terms with its problematic past. Yoleri, after marking April 24th as one of the days in which the Armenians came under grave attack, argued that heightened public discussion of the genocide was part of a broader need for Turkey to come to terms with all the crimes against humanity in its past.⁹²

The frame Yoleri mobilized, crimes against humanity, was highly powerful and unambiguous. She contended that the Armenian genocide was an instance of this criminal history.

Disappearances under custody, unidentified murders, coups d'états, widespread torture, the present warfare, exterminatory policies against the Kurds... For Turkey to progress towards the future with confident and freer steps, it must come to terms with these events now. The Armenian question came to the

tanıyacağız. Bunun için 24 Nisan'da taksim'deydik, Kürtlere karşı süren kanlı bastırma hareketine karşı tutum alacağız, bunun için BDP'li yoldaşlarımızla beraber 'Bir göz de sen ol' platformunun çağrısı üzerine, Kürdistan'da öldürülen Kürt genci için de 24 Nisan'da sokağa çıktık. Darbelere karşı çıkacağız. Ergenekon davasının peşini bırakmayacağız, Genelkurmay'ın dağıtılmasını savunacağız, Türk ordusunun Kürdistan'da kirli savaşa son vermesini isteyeceğiz. Doğan Tarkan, "Ermeni Soykırımı Anmasına Katılmamanın Mazereti Çernobil Olabilir Mi?," *Marksist.org*, April 27, 2011, <http://www.marksist.org/haberler/3547-dogan-tarkan-ermen-soykirimi-anmasına-katılmamanın-mazereti-chernobil-olabilir-mi>.

⁹² "Ermeni Aydınlar Haydarpasa'da Anılacak Haber Detay," *ETHA*, April 21, 2010, <http://www.etha.com.tr/Haber/2010/04/21/politika/turkiyetehcirden-baslayarak-tarihiyle-yuzlesmeli/>.

foreground in this context. This is a movement. We expect that this movement will evolve in a way that would put pressure to come to terms with other crimes against humanity.⁹³

Yöleri's statement about Turkey's problematic past and the need to confront it in a way that includes possibly all the aggressions demonstrated the contemporary climate of the politics of the past. Yöleri was not the sole voice expressing this perspective. Many other members of civil society demanded the convergence of different claims of truth and justice in order to create a unified front and productive synergy to pressure Turkey to acknowledge past and ongoing injustices and atrocities. While Greek, Jewish, Assyrian and Alevite victimizations circulated more widely in public opinion, it was the Armenian and Kurdish sufferings that received the most public attention and ire.

The convergence of sufferings and unification of the front against state violence led to the inclusion of genocide victims among the people who "disappeared under surveillance". The enforced disappearance was a strategy the state employed, especially after the 1980 coup, to suppress opposition and terrorize society.⁹⁴ It has caused a major tear in the social fabric and a deep wound of memory. The campaign for justice was also influential in setting some of the parameters of genocide commemorations in Turkey. The relatives of the disappeared began their weekly silent demonstrations in May 27, 1995.

Dubbed as the Saturday Mothers, they gathered in Galatasaray on Saturdays at noon⁹⁵

⁹³ Gözaltında kayıplar, faili meçhul cinayetler, darbeler, yaygın işkenceler, bugün süre giden savaş, Kürtlere yönelik imha politikaları ... Türkiye'nin geleceğe daha emin, daha özgür adımlarla yürüyebilmesi için bugünden tüm bu olaylarla yüzleşebilmesi şart. Ermeni meselesi bu anlamda böyle bir günde öne çıktı. Bu bir hareket. Bu hareketin diğer insanlık suçlarıyla yüzleşme noktasında baskı oluşturulacak şekilde gelişmesini umuyoruz.

⁹⁴ For more information on the enforced disappearances in Turkey, please see Özgür Sevgi Göral, Ayhan Işık, and Özlem Kaya, *The Unspoken Truth: Enforced Disappearances* (Istanbul: Truth Justice Memory Center, 2013).

⁹⁵ The Saturday Mothers had to stop their demonstrations between 1999 and 2009 because of increased official and police violence. Meltem Ahiska, "Counter-Movement, Space and Politics:

with the portraits of their disappeared relatives to demand that “those missing under custody be found, and those responsible be tried”.⁹⁶ The “Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo” in Argentina were clearly the model for their political action. The activism of the Saturday Mothers makes “a time-space for relocating the ‘missing’ through their social and political stories/histories, names and images; as well as a space for relocating and condemning the so-called unknown perpetrators with their specific names and images”.⁹⁷

On April 24, 2010, the Saturday Mothers, in their 265th demonstrations, carried the portraits of the Armenian community leaders along with those of their disappeared relatives. The Commission against the Enforced Disappearances of the Human Rights Association, which was involved in the Saturday Mothers initiative, read a press release during the traditional sit-down demonstration. This event was distinct from the İHD’s genocide commemoration that was held earlier that day. Nevertheless, the İHD’s involvement both in Saturday Mothers and genocide commemoration initiatives created close ties between these two sets of activities engaging with past atrocities and demanding justice in the present.

The press release called on the government to account for what happened to the 139 Ottoman Armenians who disappeared after their arrest 95 years ago. The text continued, “in order to restitute justice, listen to the voice of the relatives of the disappeared, come to terms with the past, and apologize to the relatives. Take mass graves under protection, ensure that historical truth is properly researched and revealed.

How the Saturday Mothers of Turkey Make Enforced Disappearances Visible,” in *Space and the Memories of Violence: Landscapes of Erasure, Disappearance and Exception*, ed. Estela Schindel and Pamela Colombo (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 171.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

We, the relatives of the disappeared and human rights defenders, did not forget the disappeared Armenians and will not let them be forgotten, even against those policies attempting to weaken collective memory and distort historical facts.”⁹⁸ The group also highlighted the continuity of enforced disappearance strategy from the later Ottoman period to contemporary Turkey.

In this geography, enforced disappearance policies against dissenters and those with distinct identities were carried out by the Committee of Union and Progress and its Secret Organization, back then. Now the Special Warfare Department and the Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Agency (JITEM) are responsible for the disappearances.⁹⁹

With this statement the group underlined the continuity of a certain mentality and the state’s repertoire of politically motivated violence. In this framing, the past and contemporary victimizations converged on the basis of a common perpetrator.

Rediscovery of Armenian victims of violence and their inclusion with other victims was not limited to ethno-religious categories. In April 2011, public efforts were made to add the names of Armenian journalists murdered after their arrest on April 24, 1915 into murdered journalist lists in Turkey. Based on Necati Abay and Bülent Tellan’s research and Agos editor-in-chief Rober Koptaş’s piece, the Turkish Journalists’ Association (*Türkiye Gazeteciler Cemiyeti*, TGC) was requested to include these

⁹⁸ “Adaletin sağlanması için kayıp yakınlarının sesine kulak verin, tarihle yüzleşin, kayıp yakınlarından özür dileyin. Toplu mezarları koruma altına alın, gerçeklerin araştırılmasını ve ortaya çıkarılmasını sağlayın. 24 Nisan 1915’in 95’inci yılında kayıp yakınları ve insan hakları savunucuları olarak toplumsal belleği zayıf tutma politikalarına, tarihi gerçekleri çarpıtanlara inat, onları unutmamak, unutturmayacağız. “1915 Olayları Türkiye’de de Protesto Edildi,” *Radikal*, April 24, 2010, http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/1915_olaylari_turkiyede_de_protesto_edildi-993283/.

⁹⁹ “[Cumartesi Anneleri] Bu coğrafyada muhaliflere ve farklı kimlikte olanlara karşı gözetiminde kaybedilme politikalarının o dönemde İttihat ve Terakki ve gizli örgütü Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa eliyle, şimdi de Özel Harp Dairesi ve JİTEM eliyle yürütüldüğünü vurguladı.” Tolga Korkut, “95 Yıl Sonra 24 Nisan Cumartesi İnsanları 1915’in Kaybedilen Ermenileri İçin Toplandı,” *Bianet*, April 24, 2010, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/121545-cumartesi-insanlari-1915-in-kaybedilen-ermenileri-icin-toplandi>.

Armenian journalists in its canonical list symbolizing freedom of expression and its violent repression in Turkey. This request was another intervention to the limits of recognized victimhood in Turkey. Also the demand for inclusion of Armenian journalists was an attempt at inscribing the Armenians back into the national narrative and identity for the list of murdered journalists was another marker of the boundary between those who are inside and those who are outside the national identity.¹⁰⁰

The convergence of victimization and the campaign for recognition poses both advantages and some probable disadvantages in terms of memory work in Turkey. On the one hand, such a convergence is ethically and politically meaningful because conceiving these sufferings within a unified framework of analysis and action provides the opportunity to see their common denominators. Much of this victimization took place as

¹⁰⁰ Ali Bayramoğlu stressed this point in his piece, “Hangi cinayetler, hangi ölümler bizim,” *Text, Yeni Şafak*, (February 17, 2011), <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/alibayramoglu/hangi-cinayetler-hangi-oluler-bizim8230-26151>.

As of May 2012, TGC included 2 Ottoman Armenian journalists in its list, the other association, Progressive Journalist Association, had nine names in its own list. Berrin Karakaş, “Hangi ölü Gazeteciler Hak Ediyor Listelerinizi?,” *Radikal*, May 10, 2012, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/berrin-karakas/hangi-olu-gazeteciler-hak-ediyor-listelerinizi-1087492/>.

For the unfolding of this public campaign in 2010 and 2011, please see Necati Abay, “24 Nisan 1915 İstanbul Ermeni Tehcirinde Ermeni Gazeteci ve Yazarlar Da Öldürüldü,” *Blogcu*, April 22, 2011, <http://tutuklugazeteci.blogcu.com/necati-abay-24-nisan-1915-istanbul-ermeni-tehcirinde-ermeni-gaz/10242279>; Kent Yaşam, “TGC’nin öldürülen Gazeteciler Anısına Yarışma,” *Kent Yaşam*, March 17, 2010, <http://www.kentyasam.com/tgcnin-oldurulen-gazeteciler-anisina-yarisma-hbrdy-23138.html>; “Öldürülen Gazeteciler Anısına ödül,” *Www.haberturk.com*, March 17, 2010, <http://www.haberturk.com/medya/haber/501420-oldurulen-gazeteciler-anisina-odul>; “Tarihimizde Kaç Basın şehidi Var?,” *Internethaber*, March 20, 2010, <http://www.internethaber.com/tarihimizde-kac-basin-sehidi-var-238513h.htm>; Rober Koptaş, “Türkiye’de Kaç Gazeteci öldürüldü?,” *Hayat, Olduğu Gibi*, February 11, 2011, <http://hayatoldugugibi.blogspot.com/2011/02/turkiyede-kac-gazeteci-olduruldu.html>; Ragıp Zarakolu, “24 Temmuz’da Ermeni Gazetecilere Ne Zaman Yer Verilecek?,” *Bianet - Bagimsiz İletişim Ağı*, accessed October 2, 2015, <http://www.bianet.org/biamag/diger/123691-24-temmuz-da-ermeni-gazetecilere-ne-zaman-yer-verilecek>; “Öldürülen Ermeniler TGC Listesine Girsin,” *Milliyet Haber*, April 19, 2011, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/-oldurulen-ermeniler-tgc-listesine-girsin-/gundem/gundemdetay/20.04.2011/1379940/default.htm>; Emel Gülcan, “Öldürülen Gazeteciler Günü Yanıt Veremediğimiz Soru: Kaç Gazeteci Öldürüldü?,” *Bianet - Bagimsiz İletişim Ağı*, April 6, 2012, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/ifade-ozgurlugu/137445-yanit-veremedigimiz-soru-kac-gazeteci-olduruldu>.

a part of the transition from empire to nation-state and subsequent nation-building processes. The rise of Turkish ethno-nationalism aimed at building a homogeneous national community out of a heterogeneous population through assimilation, and deportations and massacres laid the foundation of a political culture extremely suspicious of, and at moments, hostile to differences.

In the face of such a widespread negative perception of subaltern identities and their sufferings, distinguishing between different instances of aggression and placing them on a hierarchical scale of victimhood would undermine any hope of creating an equal society in Turkey. It would also reproduce the colonial power relations between Turks, as the dominant group, and the subaltern groups, that do not belong to the Turkish nation on religious and ethnic grounds based on the hegemonic definition. Admitting some victimization as legitimate instances of state or mass violence deserving recognition and hence moral and political action while leaving others outside or minimizing their import would undermine the overall effectiveness of the memory work. Doing so brings forth the question of arbitrariness as opposed to the ideal of principle. When the decision of which injustice is canonized is made only on everyday political struggles, the possibility of creating and sticking with unwavering principles, even as an ideal, diminishes significantly.

On the other hand, grouping all historically distinct and unique episodes of violence within the same category on the grounds that they were all committed by the same perpetrator may constitute a problematic situation. Cases of politically motivated official and mass violence, though at first glance seeming to create easily distinguishable categories of victims, perpetrators, bystanders and rescuers, in reality host a considerable

fluidity of these positions. There is always a certain amount of intermingling or transition between these positions. Also, a group that fulfills one of these roles may fulfill another role at another instance. This non-fixity of historical role is most visible between perpetrators and victims.¹⁰¹ In the Armenian case, the perpetrators were a diverse group including Kurds. The Kurds played key roles in the extermination of the Armenians during the late Ottoman and interim periods. Many Kurdish notables established or fortified their power and economic bases in the regions they cohabitated with the Armenians as a result of massacring the latter group and confiscating their properties.¹⁰² Many Kurds had little time, however, to enjoy the benefits of the genocide. The Turkish nation-state targeted the Kurds after the establishment of the republic in order to violently assimilate them into Turkishness. Since the mid-1920s Kurds have been the biggest victim of state violence denying Kurdish identity and aiming at obliterating it.¹⁰³ The denial of Kurdish identity and the denial of the extermination of Armenian identity created a very complicated situation which finds an apt expression in the following popular idiom, “in this country, Armenians have desperately been trying to prove that they were killed and gone, while its Kurds are desperately trying to prove that they exist; that they are alive.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ For fluidity of these positions, please see Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers : Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Diane Enns, *The Violence of Victimhood* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012).

¹⁰² Many contemporary memoirs, oral history narratives, and other cultural products the Kurds contributed include stories of violence against the Armenians and Assyrians.

¹⁰³ For an analysis of the Kurdish transition from perpetrators to victims with an emphasis on the Armenian genocide, please see Vicken Cheterian, “Kurds: From Perpetrator to Victim,” in *Open Wounds : Armenians, Turks and a Century of Genocide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 263–78.

¹⁰⁴ Yavuz Baydar, “Turkey Should Acknowledge The Armenian Genocide,” *Al-Monitor*, April 25, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/04/armenian-genocide-1915-turkey-defiant.html>.

Hence, juxtaposing Armenian and Kurdish victimization within the same framework of political campaign to pressure the Turkish state and society for recognition puts tension on the politics of memory. In order for these two sufferings to meaningfully converge, historical differences between the cases and the structures of responsibilities in the violence should be fully acknowledged, documented, and accounted for. Some members of the Kurdish community have been doing just that. They were very straightforward in terms of acknowledging their ancestors' role in the extermination of the Armenians in the last decade. One can observe a significant rapprochement between the Armenians and the Kurds.¹⁰⁵

Minority Discourses and Turkification

Another factor making the Armenian genocide's return to public discourse possible was the emergence of minorities and minority discourses in Turkey as a topic of scholarly, public, and popular interest in the 1990s. A combination of political shifts, ideological repositioning, moral reconfiguration, intellectual interaction and networking, and institutionalization contributed to a sharp increase in the interest in non-Muslim minorities, especially Greeks, Armenians, and Jews. Resonating with discourses of democratization or democratic transition, multiculturalism, and minority rights, the status of minority communities and their position vis-à-vis the majority became a fashionable issue. It was fashionable in the sense that being aware of repression of minorities and

¹⁰⁵ For possibilities of a dialogue over responsibility and reconciliation between these two communities, please see Ayata, "Searching for Alternative Approaches to Reconciliation: A Plea for Armenian-Kurdish Dialogue." As a follow up piece, Bilgin Ayata, "Kurdish Intellectuals Confronting the Armenian Genocide," *Armenian Weekly*, April 29, 2009, <http://armenianweekly.com/2009/04/29/kurdish-intellectuals-confronting-the-armenian-genocide/>. A more recent report can be found here, Bulut, "Armenian Genocide: Kurdish Leaders Set Moral Example to Turkey by Facing Their Crimes."

protesting against discrimination became an important yardstick of one's politically progressive credentials and cultural competence.

Bali identified some of the catalyzing processes and factors in this process through the following list that is worth quoting at length:

- a) The translations and copyrighted works centered on minorities issues (especially those related to Armenians) published by the Belge publishing house founded in 1977 by Ayşenur-Ragıp Zarakolu.
- b) Publications against the official history in two journals: *Tarih ve Toplum* (*History and Society*), published by the İletişim publishing house, founded by a group led by Prof. Dr. Murat Belge, since 1983 and *Toplumsal Tarih* (*Social History*), published by the Economic and Social History Foundation of Turkey, which was founded by a group of leftist intellectuals and scholars in 1991, since 1994.
- c) Works by Yelda Özcan, a member of the Commission to Watch Minority Rights, founded in 1994, at the Human Rights Association Istanbul Branch.
- d) The success of Hrant Dink, who was the editor-in-chief of the *Agos* newspaper (established in 1996), in becoming a public figure and making the “minority issue” a public issue.
- e) The interest of university students and media in minority cultures.
- f) As part of Turkey's bid for EU membership, some of the burning issues of the minorities, including the discriminatory implementation of the Waqf Law, became an agenda item in the media.
- g) Publications and exhibitions about Armenians by the Bir Zamanlar publication house established by Osman Köker.
- h) The adoption of the view by left and liberal intellectual community and journalists that the Armenian massacres constituted a premeditated genocide as a result of the *Agos* newspaper's activities aiming at intellectual and media elites and advocating that the 1915 Armenian deportation was a genocide.¹⁰⁶

The increased interest in non-Muslim minorities challenged the “official historiography” on ethnic relations in the Ottoman and republican contexts. Questioning the narrative trope of minorities living in harmony with the majority without discrimination, the new “unofficial historiography” focused on “Turkification” of ethno-religious minorities during the Republican era. Being part of what Göçek conceptualized as “post-nationalist

¹⁰⁶ Rıfat N Bali, “Azınlıkları Türkleştirme Meselesi”: *ne idi? ne değildi?*, 2014, 17–19.

historiography”, this new intellectual and political stream claimed that during the republican era, the Turkish state pursued a systematic attempt to assimilate minorities into Turkishness or to force them to leave the country.¹⁰⁷ Bali summarized how Turkification is being conceived in contemporary Turkey,

The goal of the Deportation Law, that the Committee of Union and Progress passed on May 27, 1915 and that resulted in the Armenian genocide, was the homogenization of Anatolia by cleansing its Armenian and Greek populations. This CUP policy of Turkification, or the cleansing the republic of its minorities, continued in a systematic fashion during the republican years. To put it differently, the Unionist mentality dominated the republican era and manifested itself through a series of events.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. Bali argued that this front misuses the term Turkification. He stated that while the official Turkification policies were in place during the single-party era (1923-1946), many policies regarding the minorities since then could not be subscribed under this umbrella term. Bali highlighted that the Turkification policies of the single-party era were part of a contract in which republican elites demanded non-Muslim minorities to replace their own communal identities with the Turkish national identity in return for an equal membership in the nation as citizens. Behind this drive to de-Christianize Turkey, according to Bali, were the collective memories of minorities’ collaboration with the invading forces during the Armistice and National Struggle periods Ibid., 97. The historical truth of this collaboration could not be discarded. The established popular image of the minorities has been that of traitor Ibid., 142. Nevertheless, Bali did not take into consideration the treatment of Armenian, Greek, and Assyrian minorities during the late Ottoman period. The violent expulsion of the Greeks and the genocide of Armenians and Assyrians before and during the First World War tore the Ottoman social fabric.

Bali argued that these memories led to official and popular distrust against minorities and the ruling elites, in an attempt to break these groups’ communal ties, requiring them to identify with Turkishness and be loyal to the nation-state. However, the state and ruling elites did not fulfill their own end of the bargain and did not accept non-Muslim minorities as members of Turkish body politic Ibid., 30–31. Hence, even though the single-party Turkification policies were justifiable in principle, the state violated the terms of the social contract. (For a detailed analysis of the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of Armenian and Greek citizens of Turkey, please see Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, “Paradoks Cumhuriyeti: Milletler Cemiyeti’nin Azınlıkları Koruma Rejimi ve Yeni Türkiye’nin üvey Vatandaşları,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 132 (2015): 50–77.) However, Bali underlined that the supporters of unofficial history discarded this fact and extrapolated the early assimilationist policies to argue that the state had been pursuing a master plan of demographic homogenization during the entire republican era Bali, *Azınlıkları Türkleştirme Meselesi*, 60. The use of Turkification as a blanket term to cover all policies regarding the minorities glossed over important historical and political distinctions. Episodes of anti-minority violence in the aftermath of single-party rule should be seen as the minorities being used as trumps in international relations. Bali also underlined that in these episodes the state and ruling elites treated the minorities as hostages Ibid., 164.

¹⁰⁸ İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti’nin 27 Mayıs 1915 tarihinde kabul ettiği ve Osmanlı Ermenilerinin soykırıma tâbi tutulmasıyla sonuçlanan Tehcir Kanunu’nun amacı Anadolu’yu Ermeni ve Rum

This depiction put the matter in a nutshell and points at the place of the genocide within this unofficial historiography. The genocide constituted the milestone of demographic homogenization through ethnic cleansing.

The Turkification argument was popular among leftist, liberal, Kurdish and Armenian intellectuals, scholars and activists, in clear contrast to Kemalist, nationalist, and Islamist groups.¹⁰⁹ However, in time the configuration has changed and leftist, liberal, Kurdish, Armenian and Islamist circles approached each other with regard to their position vis-à-vis the past violence against non-Muslim groups on the grounds that the state victimized and has been victimizing almost all the involved parties. The historiographic intervention Bali made about the fallacy of using the singular label of Turkification for events that took place in completely different contexts notwithstanding, dissident groups in Turkey adopted the genocide as a legitimate issue within the framework of Turkification at this period. Thus, the genocide was seen as a member of a family of events organized by the state under the control of an overarching mentality of ethno-religious cleansing. Some of the factors creating this wholesale reaction to the state, for Bali, included the revanchist sentiments of scholars who were expelled from their faculty posts and subjected to violence in the aftermath of the September 12, 1980 military coup; the revelation of the “deep state”¹¹⁰ in Turkey and of its role in

nüfusundan arındırarak homojenleştirme idi. İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti’nin bu Türkleştirme, başka bir deyimle Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’ni azınlıklardan arındırma siyaseti, Cumhuriyet yıllarında da sistemli bir şekilde devam etti. Daha başka bir deyimle İttihatçı zihniyet, Cumhuriyet yıllarında da egemen oldu ve varlığını bir dizi olaylarla belli etti. Bali, *Azınlıkları Türkleştirme Meselesi*, 62.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 167.

¹¹⁰ The “deep state” refers to a clandestine organization that consists of military, security, intelligence, and judicial sectors and their civilian allies among politicians and media members. The organization aims at protecting the “invisible integrity/unity” of the Turkish republic,

destabilizing and overthrowing democratically elected civilian governments, carrying out political assassinations, perpetuation of political tutelage, and disseminating propaganda; the coming out of Turkish Armenian community and its self-expression through media such as the Aras publishing house and *Agos* newspaper, which benefitted from the support of public figures sympathetic to Armenian suffering and critical of the state's attitude toward the genocide; the negative view of the Turkish military forces among leftist and liberal intelligentsia; the reflex of opposing official history; the one-sided interpretation of Turkification; polarization of the intellectual field between Islamist, leftist and liberal front and the Kemalist and nationalist one; and the dominance of leftist and liberal scholars who write regular columns at newspapers or columnists working as faculty members.¹¹¹

territory, and nation. To that end, the deep state is prepared to undertake illegal operations against perceived threats if deemed necessary. Working behind the veil like a shadow government and being unaccountable, the organization was seen as the main ruler of the country. For a detailed analysis of the deep state please see, Mehtap Söyler, *The Turkish Deep State: State Consolidation, Civil-Military Relations and Democracy*, 2015.

The “deep state” functioned as a bridge connecting the Unionist period and contemporary Turkey in terms of the state's ruling mentality and the existence of a clandestine group operating out of sight and carrying out activities to secure the survival of the state. For an example of this continuity perspective please see, Serkan Kaya, “The Rise and Decline of the Turkish ‘Deep State’: The Ergenekon Case,” *Insight Turkey* 11, no. 4 (2009): 99–113.

The discovery of the “deep state” and critical perspective on Turkish military and security forces brought together Islamist, leftist and liberal groups in a loosely united front to curb the power of the “deep state.” This agenda was dubbed as democratization and civilianization of politics in Turkey.

¹¹¹ Bali, *Azınlıkları Türkleştirme Meselesi*, 167–184. The last factor, the dominance of leftist and liberal intelligentsia is worth further elaboration because the scholars listed have significant clout and hence are able to influence political decision making processes and public opinion. These groups, until very recently, constituted a tightly knit network shaping the discursive frames of public discussion on minority issues and state policies. They are also important in terms of educating a new generation of students who would continue working on these issues, such as the present writer. The scholars Prof. Ayhan Aktar, Assoc. Prof. Ferhat Kentel, Assoc. Prof. Halil Berktaş, Prof. Murat Belge, Prof. Baskın Oran, Prof. Ahmet İnsel, Prof. Cemil Koçak, Prof. Mehmet Altan, Prof. Eser Karakaş, and Prof. Şahin Alpay write at a variety of newspapers. Columnists Cengiz Çandar, Ali Bayramoğlu, and Kürşat Bumin have teaching posts.

The following lengthy quote from Associate Professor İhsan Yılmaz exemplified attitudes against the state, and especially the “deep state”, and their impact on the Armenian genocide’s entry into public discourse.

The state has always denied that there was any Armenian massacre ordered by the state. I am not a historian and have not studied the 1915 incidents in detail. But whenever I -- as an ordinary Turk -- think about the issue, the Turkish state's treatment of its other citizens instantly comes to mind and my mind starts drawing parallels. I know very well that this is not a scientific technique or instrument utilized by historians, but not every Turk has to be a historian, and they still have feelings, ideas and opinions on certain matters.

Yes, whenever I start thinking about the Armenian issue and the incidents of 1915, the state's treatment of Kurds in southeastern Turkey comes to mind. Banning their mother tongue is a prime example. Could there be any bigger torture than that? Then I remember thousands of young people -- leftist, rightist, Kurdish -- who were continuously tortured in Turkish prisons just after the 1980 coup. Then I remember how Turkey had to pay many thousands of dollars in compensation on many occasions to our citizens of Kurdish background just because some of our soldiers made them eat cow dung. Then I think that if some of our administrators and bureaucrats could do all of these things to our citizens in this age and time, then like-minded Ottoman politicians, administrators and bureaucrats would find it suitable to react to Armenian hostilities -- encouraged by the great powers and Russia -- by simply deciding to exile them to Syria without taking enough precautions about health and safety issues. Moreover, some "Ottoman Ergenekonians" could easily target these civilians.

My conscience and my reading of modern Turkey, including the Ergenekon case, convince me that the Ergenekon-like ultra-patriots who thought the country was in danger - and it was indeed in danger - could easily massacre Armenian civilians and that they would not really need any legislation or document signed by a minister to do that. I find it funny when our nationalist historians try to prove that there are not any documents signed by the Ottoman authorities to order the Armenian massacre. Did today's Ergenekonians need such a document to make Kurdish villagers eat cow dung or to kill many people?¹¹²

The state-led Turkification argument Yılmaz made above, which was shared by many others, reduced the responsibility to only institutionalized power and missed the involvement of segments of society in violent episodes targeting the minorities. The

¹¹² İhsan Yılmaz, “The Armenian Apology Campaign and the Ottoman Ergenekon,” *Today's Zaman*, December 28, 2008, http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/i-hsan-yilmaz/the-armenian-apology-campaign-and-the-ottoman-ergenekon_162470.html.

Turkish population and Muslim businesspeople helped themselves to non-Muslims' properties and wealth during the confiscation through the Wealth Tax of 1942. It also missed the emotional build-up based on the treason of minority groups. These emotions were instrumental in the popular violence and looting against the minorities during the 1934 Thrace events and the pogroms of September 6-7, 1955.¹¹³

To some extent, what paved the way for the Armenian genocide's making a comeback to public discourse was changing perceptions of minorities, especially of non-Muslim groups, conceived of as constitutive elements of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism in Turkey, at last by some circles. The post-1980s witnessed Turkey's integration with global markets and with the "cultural logic of late capitalism".¹¹⁴ A new generation of young, middle class, urban, and well-educated citizens came into prominence in the last three decades, thanks to relatively wider access to education. They have become influential in cultural politics and issues of national identity. These citizens, often subscribing to democratic and leftist agendas, have been critical of Kemalist monism. They sympathized with ethno-religious minorities in Turkey and assumed the role of advocates of these minorities' causes. In addition to acknowledging the history of aggressive, exclusionary, discriminatory, and, at moments, exterminatory, policies, these new intellectuals, public opinion leaders and activists were part of a struggle over national identity. They have frequently collaborated with revolutionary leftists of the past who still have significant political, economic and cultural capital to shape the political

¹¹³ Bali, *Azınlıkları Türkleştirme Meselesi*, 150.

¹¹⁴ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

landscape. These new members of the intelligentsia also resonated with some of the critical positions adopted by “second republicans”.¹¹⁵

As a response to the rise of political Islam and conservative life style following the 1990s, some constituents of the above-mentioned clusters began to embrace non-Muslim minorities as reminders of a secular, modern, and diverse cultural universe that existed in the late imperial Istanbul.¹¹⁶ The new cultural nexus projected fantasies of creating a harmonious, multicultural, westernized and civilized society in collaboration with non-Muslims. In disavowing the cultural and sociological tenets supporting political Islam, the self-fashioned democrats and progressives invested in a make-believe national identity. Expressed through popular idioms such as “cultural mosaic”, “diverse colors of Istanbul/Anatolia” and “siblinghood of people”, the nostalgic and romanticized conceptions of minorities conditioned the coming-to-memory of the genocide and determined its frames and forms of return.

International Recognition of the Armenian Genocide

In addition to the above-mentioned domestic factors, there were three major international factors that helped the Armenian genocide memory to be discussed publicly in Turkey. The first factor was the international genocide recognition and affirmation campaign initiated by the Armenian organizations in 1965, which garnered international support after the 1990s, resulting in a number of sovereign states, sub-state actors, and the recognition of other official, semi-official, and public institutions of the genocide. The second factor was the establishment of the Republic of Armenia, finalizing the

¹¹⁵ For more information on second republicanism in Turkey, please see “İkinci Cumhuriyet,” accessed July 13, 2016, <http://www.ikincicumhuriyet.org/>.

¹¹⁶ Bali, *Azınlıkları Türkleştirme Meselesi*, 118.

Armenian bid for statehood. The third factor was Turkey's engagement with the European Union and candidacy for membership. These international factors have interacted with domestic ones, and in many instances intensified the domestic calls for genocide recognition. However, they also caused a nationalist backlash against the agents of memory active in Turkey in line with Turkey's age-old complexities.

In the Armenian genocide recognition campaign, since its inception in the mid-1960s, Armenian organizations sought to garner the support of sovereign states by convincing them to officially recognize the genocide and to put pressure on Turkey through a variety of international channels. While the 1970s and 1980s witnessed very few countries recognizing the genocide, during the 1990s and 2000s a considerable number of countries and international or supranational organizations passed resolutions to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide, increasing the pressure on the governments in Turkey. So far, 26 countries have recognized the genocide.¹¹⁷ In addition to these sovereign states and supra-national bodies, states and provinces in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States have also recognized the genocide.¹¹⁸ A number of international organizations including the International Center for Transitional Justice recognized the genocide as well.¹¹⁹

Two key processes further galvanized the Armenian genocide recognition campaign and its international adoption. The first of these processes was the

¹¹⁷ "Countries That Recognize the Armenian Genocide," *Armenian-Genocide.org*, accessed July 16, 2016, http://www.armenian-genocide.org/recognition_countries.html.

¹¹⁸ "International Affirmation of the Armenian Genocide: States and Provinces," *Armenian-Genocide.org*, accessed July 16, 2016, http://www.armenian-genocide.org/current_category.8/affirmation_list.html.

¹¹⁹ "International Affirmation of the Armenian Genocide: International Organizations," *Armenian-Genocide.org*, accessed July 16, 2016, http://www.armenian-genocide.org/current_category.5/affirmation_list.html.

establishment of the Republic of Armenia in December 1991. The former Soviet Union member country became the central political entity in the Armenian world. As Armenia became an independent sovereign state, Turkish foreign policy had to adapt. Turkey recognized the Armenian Republic and began to develop relations with this new neighboring country. However, relations broke down because of the Armenia-Azerbaijan war over Nagorno-Karabagh. The Armenian genocide has been, and will continue to be, a crucial part of relations between Turkey and Armenia. The latter made the recognition of the genocide a state policy and mobilized multiple resources to push the issue of historical memory onto the international agenda. The second process was Turkey's engagement with the European Union. Many commentators on the coming-to-memory of the genocide have pointed to the critical importance of Turkey's engagement with the European Union on the politics of memory. Especially crucial was Turkey's acceptance as a candidate for EU membership in December 1999. Following the approval of candidacy status, a group of institutional and legal reforms were passed as part of the integration process between 1999 and 2004. Many of these reforms were related to human rights, the civil control of politics by curbing the power of the army, and cultural and religious freedoms.¹²⁰ In October 2005, formal accession negotiations between Turkey and the EU began and this further transformed Turkish engagement with the past. It is also important to note, as Dixon does, that the European Parliament and some member states presented recognition of the Armenian Genocide as one of the preconditions for Turkey's full membership of the EU during the early stages of

¹²⁰ Jennifer M. Dixon, "Defending the Nation? Maintaining Turkey's Narrative of the Armenian Genocide," *South European Society and Politics* 15, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 474; Ayata and Hakyemez, "The AKP's Engagement with Turkey's Past Crimes."

negotiations.¹²¹ Accordingly, Turkey had to respond to this additional pressure for genocide recognition. From the perspective of domestic actors advocating coming to terms with the past, the connection with the EU has had a positive effect. This connection has strengthened civil society initiatives in Turkey. They have received financial support and know-how and have a chance to embark on joint projects with many sub-organizations of the EU. In addition, European NGOs and think tanks act as significant agents intervening in the politics of memory in Turkey. The engagement with the EU was thus instrumental in challenging some of the taboo subjects in Turkey's history.

Two events in the early 2000s were especially critical in terms of putting international genocide recognition into the agenda of Turkish public and politics. The first event was when the US House of Representatives came closer to passing a resolution recognizing the genocide in September-October 2000,¹²² and the second was when the French Senate passed legislation on January 18, 2001, recognizing the genocide.¹²³ The aborted recognition in the US and the recognition in France ushered in an unprecedented interest among the Turkish public about foreign countries' engagement with the past. These events also brought genocide to the center of public discourse. During the last months of 2000 and first months of 2001, Turkey talked about genocide in order to refute

¹²¹ Dixon, "Defending the Nation?," 474–475.

¹²² The resolution never hit the floor of the House for a combination of reasons: Turkey's threats to cancel defense contracts and to end the leases of US military bases in Turkey; Israel's positive response to Turkey's call to mobilize its lobbying muscles in the States to block a possible vote; and the President Bill Clinton's intervention against the resolution on the grounds that adoption of the resolution would endanger American lives and would alienate Turkey as an ally. Moorad Mooradian, "Reconciliation: A Case Study of the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission" (Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution George Mason University, March 2004), http://scar.gmu.edu/wp_24_mooradian.pdf.

¹²³ Ömer Engin Lütem, "Facts and Comments," *Armenian Studies*, no. 1 (May 2001), <http://www.eraren.org/index.php?Lisan=en&Page=DergiIcerik&IcerikNo=158>.

the genocide claims.¹²⁴ While Turkey was able to block the resolution in the US, it failed to do the same in France. The adoption of the law in the French Senate was a major blow to Turkey as France was one of the first European countries that officially and formally recognized the genocide. Turkey's official reaction was to withdraw its ambassador from France and review bilateral relations. The Turkish government made a declaration repudiating the French law. Responses also expanded into the economic realm, as Turkey canceled military contracts given to French firms and barred French firms from participating in future bids.¹²⁵ At the popular level, the French recognition of the genocide received intense response as the population and opinion leaders lashed out at France in frenzy. However, these reactions were hyperbolic, ephemeral and unorganized. Also public discourse on France's recognition demonstrated the level of ignorance among the public in Turkey about the genocide.¹²⁶ These instances of international recognition put considerable pressure on Turkey to start talking about the genocide and pushed the genocide agenda into Turkish public life.¹²⁷

The international recognition of the Armenian genocide was not limited to states or official bodies and organizations. Scholars and intellectuals joined the genocide affirmation campaign with petitions and declarations demanding the recognition of the genocide in Turkey and abroad. Different organizations or groups of scholars released declarations affirming the Armenian genocide. The intervention by scholars and public

¹²⁴ Taner Akçam, "ABD Kongresi'ndeki Soykırım Tasarısı," *Birikim*, November 2000, <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim-yazi/2880/abd-kongresi-ndeki-soykirim-tasarisi#.V4qph5MrLsk>.

¹²⁵ Chris Morris, "Bitter History of Armenian Genocide Row," *BBC*, January 23, 2001, sec. Europe, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1132336.stm>; Lütem, "Facts and Comments."

¹²⁶ Sedat Laçiner, *Ermeni sorunu, diaspora ve Türk dış politikası Ermeni iddiaları Türkiye'nin dünya ile ilişkilerini nasıl etkiliyor?* (Ankara: Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu, 2008), 309–310.

¹²⁷ Akçam, "ABD Kongresi'ndeki Soykırım Tasarısı."

figures had been instrumental in getting public attention and also brought forth authoritative voices to the field of knowledge that was overdetermined because of the denial. Unfortunately, international scholarly affirmation of the Armenian genocide also carries some risks. First, refuting the denialist perspectives has contributed tremendously to the genocide recognition campaign internationally and in Turkey alike. Nevertheless, refuting denial necessitates engaging with genocide deniers and their skewed perspectives. This necessity to engage was exemplified in major counter-denial works related to the Holocaust.¹²⁸ This engagement has a risky side because it might be construed as giving credibility to the deniers' arguments, which is exactly what the post-1980 Turkish establishment seeks to achieve. Second, as it was the case with foreign sovereign countries and the European bodies' interventions, the Turkish authorities and society in general would perceive these demands for acknowledgement as renewed attempts at interfering with Turkey's sovereignty and independence and undermining Turkey's national security. This possible perception would easily pave the way for popular backlash. As a result of these two potentially problematic trajectories, the parties involved in the recognition campaigns are caught on the horns of a dilemma.

One of the earliest scholarly affirmations of the Armenian genocide took place during the First International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide organized in Tel Aviv by the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide in Jerusalem, directed by Israel Charny, in March 1982.¹²⁹ Considered to be the first comprehensive conference in the field bringing together the Holocaust and genocide concepts and hence advocating new

¹²⁸ Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: The Free Press, 1993); Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

¹²⁹ "Achievements," *Institute on the Holocaust & Genocide in Jerusalem*, November 14, 2015, <http://www.ihgjl.com/ihg-achievements/>.

venues for the scholarship, this event marked an important instance in the field.¹³⁰ More importantly for the coming to memory of the Armenian genocide, the conference included the Armenian case as genocide.¹³¹ Turkish authorities reacted to the inclusion of the Armenian case by putting pressure on the Israeli government with the covert threat that if the conference proceeded as planned, the Jewish population in Turkey might not be safe and secure. As a result, conference organizers had to confront pressure from Israeli and Turkish governments. They did not cave in and the Armenian genocide was discussed as a legitimate case of genocide.¹³² Turkey's attempt at repressing the conference showed how high the stakes were at this point. It also demonstrated, once again, that the Turkish authorities were extremely sensitive to the Armenian genocide being internationally recognized and affirmed.

Corollary to the development of the field of Genocide Studies, the number of scholars aware of Turkey's denial of genocide increased. The increased number led to the emergence of several organizations. One of these, the Association of Genocide Scholars of North America, released a resolution on June 13, 1997. During its conference the association members anonymously accepted the following text.

¹³⁰ Samuel Totten and Paul Robert Bartrop, "Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide (Jerusalem)," *Dictionary of Genocide* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2008), 213.

¹³¹ For the conference proceedings, please see Israel W Charny and Shama Davidson, eds., *The Book of the International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide. Book One. The Conference Program and Crisis* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Institute of the International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide, 1983); Israel W Charny, ed., *Toward the Understanding and Prevention of Genocide: Proceedings of the International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1984).

¹³² Israel W. Charny, "The Turks, Armenians, and Jews," in *The Book of the International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide. Book One. The Conference Program and Crisis*, ed. Israel W Charny and Shama Davidson (Tel Aviv, Israel: Institute of the International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide, 1983), 269–316; Roger W. Smith, Eric Markusen, and Robert Jay Lifton, "Professional Ethics and the Denial of Armenian Genocide," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 9, no. 1 (March 20, 1995): 1–22; Steven Leonard Jacobs, "From Holocaust to Genocide: The Journey Continues," in *Pioneers of Genocide Studies*, ed. Samuel Totten and Steven L. Jacobs (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Books, 2013), 507–17.

That this assembly of the Association of Genocide Scholars in its conference held in Montreal, June 11-13, 1997, reaffirms that the mass murder of over a million Armenians in Turkey in 1915 is a case of genocide which conforms to the statutes of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. It further condemns the denial of the Armenian Genocide by the Turkish government and its official and unofficial agents and supporters.¹³³

The signing of the resolution by a group of experts studying genocide in comparative perspectives and from a variety of disciplinary point of views was an important intervention.¹³⁴

Over 150 scholars and writers released a similar petition for genocide recognition on April 24, 1998. The signatories, while demanding that Turkey recognize the genocide, appealed to the US government to take a sterner position regarding Turkey's denialist maneuvers. This strategy aimed to increase international political pressure on Turkey by its most powerful ally. The petition was also a response to Turkey's intensified official and semi-official attempts to intimidate scholars in the US studying the Armenian genocide and/or problematizing the denial.¹³⁵ The signatories again included many of the leading scholars working on genocide and the Holocaust as well as known authors, to increase the ethical appeal of the petition and to increase its popular reach.¹³⁶

Another public affirmation of the Armenian genocide happened when a group of scholars studying the Holocaust declared that they recognized the Armenian case and

¹³³ "The Armenian Genocide Resolution Unanimously Passed by the Association of Genocide Scholars of North America," *Genocidescholars.org*, June 13, 1997, http://www.genocidescholars.org/sites/default/files/document%09%5Bcurrent-page%3A1%5D/documents/IAGSArmenian%20Genocide%20Resolution%20_0.pdf.

¹³⁴ Roger W. Smith (College of William & Mary; President of AGS); Israel Charny (Hebrew University, Jerusalem); Helen Fein, Past President AGS); Frank Chalk (Concordia University, Montreal); Ben Kiernan (Yale University); Anthony Oberschall (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill); Mark Levene (Warwick University, UK); Rhoda Howard (McMaster University, Canada), Michael Freeman (Essex University, UK), Gunnar Heinsohn (Bremen University, Germany). Ibid.

¹³⁵ Roger W. Smith, "Who Is My Neighbor?," in *Pioneers of Genocide Studies*, ed. Samuel Totten and Steven Leonard Jacobs (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 2013), 186.

¹³⁶ Please see Appendix B for the text of the petition and the list of signatories.

called upon Turkey to do the same. The emphasis on the scholars of the Holocaust is crucial because denialists had used the Holocaust as a historical reference point or yardstick. In this denialist line of argument, the Holocaust was represented as the single perfect case of genocide, and some of its aspects, defined in a highly restricted and manipulated way, were presented as the absolute and sine qua non conditions for a case of mass violence to be recognized as genocide.¹³⁷ The petition by 126 Holocaust scholars was crucial to show that rather than excluding each other, the cases of the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide would be better understood in relation to each other. The petition appeared in the New York Times on June 9, 2000.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Türkaya Ataöv, "The Jewish Holocaust and the Armenians," in *The Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period* (Ankara: The Turkish Historical Society for The Council of Culture, Arts and Publications of The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2001); Gündüz Aktan, "The Armenian Problem and International Law," in *The Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period* (Ankara: The Turkish Historical Society for The Council of Culture, Arts and Publications of The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2001), 264–314.

¹³⁸ "Public Petitions: Statement by 126 Holocaust Scholars, Holders of Academic Chairs, and Directors of Holocaust Research and Studies Centers," *University of Minnesota Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies*, March 7, 2000, <http://chgs.umn.edu/histories/turkishArmenian/publicPetitions.html>.

126 HOLOCAUST SCHOLARS AFFIRM THE INCONTESTABLE FACT OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AND URGE WESTERN DEMOCRACIES TO OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZE IT

At the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches convening at St. Joseph University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 3-7, 2000, one hundred twenty-six Holocaust Scholars, holders of Academic Chairs and Directors of Holocaust Research and Studies Centers, participants of the Conference, signed a statement affirming that the World War I Armenian Genocide is an incontestable historical fact and accordingly urge the governments of Western democracies to likewise recognize it as such. The petitioners, among whom is Nobel Laureate for Peace Elie Wiesel, who was the keynote speaker at the conference, also asked the Western Democracies to urge the Government and Parliament of Turkey to finally come to terms with a dark chapter of Ottoman-Turkish history and to recognize the Armenian Genocide. This would provide an invaluable impetus to the process of the democratization of Turkey.

Below is a partial list of the signatories:

Prof. Yehuda Bauer,
Distinguished Professor
Hebrew University

Director, The International Institute of Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem

Prof. Israel Charny, Director,
Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide, Jerusalem
Professor of Hebrew University

Prof. Ward Churchill, Ethnic Studies
The University of Colorado, Boulder

Prof. Stephen Feinstein, Director,
Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies,
University of Minnesota

Prof. Saul Friedman, Director,
Holocaust and Jewish Studies,
Youngstown State University, Ohio

Prof. Edward Gaffney,
Valparaiso University Law School

Prof. Zev Garber,
Los Angeles Valley College

Prof. Dorota Glowacka
University of King's College,
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dr. Irving Greenberg, President
Jewish Life Network

Prof. Herbert Hirsch,
Virginia Commonwealth University

Prof. Irving L. Horowitz
Hannah Arendt Distinguished Professor
Rutgers University, NJ

Dr. Steven Jacobs, Rabbi,
Temple Ethel Shalom, Huntsville, AL
Assoc. Editor of Encyclopedia of Genocide

Prof. Steven Katz,
Distinguished Professor
Director, Center of Jewish Studies, Boston University

Prof. Richard Libowitz,
Temple University

Dr. Marcia Littell, Stockholm College,
Exec. Director, Scholars' Conference on
the Holocaust and the Churches

Franklin Littell, Emeritus Professor
Temple University

Prof. Hubert G. Locke, Washington Univ.,
Co-founder of the annual Scholars' Conference on the
Holocaust and the Churches

Dr. Elizabeth Maxwell,
Executive Chairman of the International Scholars'
Conference on the Holocaust, London, England

Prof. Erik Markusen,
Southwest State University, MN

Prof. Saul Mendlovitz,
Dag Hammarskjöld Distinguished Professor of
International Law, Rutgers University

Prof. Jack Needle, Director,

Center for Holocaust Studies,
City University of New York

Dr. Philip Rosen, Director,
Holocaust Education Center of the Delaware Valley

Prof. Alan S. Rosenbaum
Department of Philosophy,
Cleveland State University

William L. Shulman, President
Association of Holocaust Organizations,
City University of New York

Prof. Samuel Totten,
The University of Arkansas
Assoc. Editor of Encyclopedia of Genocide

Prof. Elie Wiesel
Andrew W. Mellon Prof. in the Humanities, Boston
University, Founding Chairman of the United States
Holocaust Memorial Council
Nobel Laureate for Peace

I hereby declare that the originals of these one hundred and twenty-six signatures are on file in my office.
All affiliations supplied are for identification purposes only.

Dr. Stephen Feinstein, Director,
Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, University of Minnesota.

PAID FOR BY DESCENDANTS OF SURVIVORS OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AND THE JEWISH HOLOCAUST

Illustration 4 - The Picture of the declaration as it appeared in the the New York Times

One can argue that international genocide recognition had two effects on the politics of memory in Turkey. On the one hand, international recognition provoked adverse reactions within Turkey based on existing symptoms of fears and prejudices about foreign interference. It petrified regressive positions against the acknowledgement of responsibility in the genocide and put large swaths of the population in defence. This aspect of international recognition does not help actors advocating Turkey's coming to terms with its past. Those commenting on the impact of the international recognition of

the genocide on domestic memory politics in Turkey underlined that growing international recognition and increased pressure on Turkey to acknowledge the atrocities contributed to the breaking of the taboo.¹³⁹ Jennifer Dixon also saw the increased international recognition as an important external pressure over the official narrative on the genocide in Turkey.¹⁴⁰ Necef argued that the international recognition moved Turkish intellectuals and political commentators to revisit their position in order to update and fine-tune their arguments.¹⁴¹

As the news of further recognition reached Turkey, the topic of genocide came to the foreground. Nevertheless, Turkish public response to international genocide recognition has been extremely reactionary and defensive. News of recognition caused nationalist backlash and bigotry resonating with age-old fears and prejudices that the population held regarding foreign involvement in Turkey's politics. Paving the way for reflexive responses to what was seen as yet another moment of Turkey being besieged and attacked by foreign powers, international pressure hardened ultra-nationalist positions and added fuel to genocide denial. In this sense, international recognition by other countries caused the denial to become increasingly vocal and aggressive.

On the other hand, international pressure on recognition may influence political calculations of decision-makers by altering costs and benefits attached to certain courses of action. In this capacity, international affirmation helps the agents of memory push some aspects of their agendas and secure some compromises from official bodies. It is also important to note that there has been a dialectical process regarding the Armenian

¹³⁹ Mehmet Necef, "The Turkish Media Debate on the Armenian Massacre," in *Genocide: Cases, Comparisons and Contemporary Debates*, ed. Steven L. B Jensen and Gwynneth Llewellyn (Copenhagen: The Danish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, 2003).

¹⁴⁰ Dixon, "Defending the Nation?," 475.

¹⁴¹ Necef, "The Turkish Media Debate on the Armenian Massacre," 228.

genocide in post-1980 Turkey. The coexistence of denialist and counter-denialist discourses attests to this dialectic. Contributing to the overall drive to remember the genocide in order to deny it, reactions to international pressures unintentionally brought about the opposite. Critical discourses on genocide denial were developed in response to these denialist arguments and were an attempt to come to terms with chauvinistic nationalism inherent in the majority of these arguments. Hence, international recognition and pressures were part and parcel of an already ongoing dialectic between denialist and counter-denialist process.

II. Breakthrough Fields and Dates

The coming to memory of the Armenian genocide in Turkey has occurred through three interrelated fields. In each field there are important events that act as turning points. Marking these events with their dates and building the context around them reveal the unfolding of the coming to memory. The first field was the emergence of a new discourse, critical of the denialist narrative, on the Armenian massacres. Spearheaded by scholars such as Taner Akçam and Fatma Muge Gocek starting in the early 1990s, academic studies employing new interpretative frameworks, focusing on different questions and working with wider archives began to unearth subjugated knowledges. At the same time, scholars belonging to Turkish, Kurdish and Armenian communities engaged in collaborative projects, helping the dialogue of different perspectives. The initially scholarly discourse was disseminated to the broader society through conferences and interviews that crystallized the emerging counter-memory of the genocide. The second field is civil society initiatives problematizing genocide denial, demanding acknowledgment and recognition of Armenian suffering, and campaigning for

memorialization of the massacres. Civil society initiatives intensified after the assassination of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in January 2007. The last field is the field of cultural production that includes, but is not limited to, non-fiction and fiction narratives on the Armenian heritage and culture in Turkey and its destruction during the genocide. Life-story narratives and oral histories constitute a crucial component of this field.

Post-Nationalist and Post-Kemalist Historiography and Its Dissemination to the Public

Scholarly Works and Publications

These spheres include scholarship, and specifically historiography. Since early 1990s, a new scholarship, which historical sociologist Fatma Müge Göçek labels “post-nationalist historiography, has emerged. This new scholarship, even though not necessarily recognizing the genocide, has begun to explore the events of 1915 from a perspective that diverges from Turkey’s official narrative. The main point of the initiatives undertaken was to build a knowledge base and create dialogue between Turkish and Armenian scholars, politicians, public opinion leaders and activists. Accordingly, the second half of the 1990s and 2000s witnessed a considerable increase in the number of domestic publications on the genocide and international conferences bringing together not only scholars but also activists. Fatma Müge Göçek describes this as “postnational critical narrative”, which also includes her contributions.¹⁴²

The nexus of these domestic dissident perspectives and external factors culminated in civil society efforts to challenge the official historiographical narrative on

¹⁴² Please see Appendix C for a list of Fatma Müge Göçek’s works

the Armenian Genocide. In 1992, Taner Akçam's pathbreaking work, *Türk Ulusal Kimliği ve Ermeni Sorunu* (*The Armenian Question and Turkish National Identity*), was published by İletişim publishing house.¹⁴³ Akçam's work was the first study engaging with the Armenian massacres – Akçam did not use the term genocide in this book – and their relationship with Turkish nationalism and national identity.¹⁴⁴ At the time, Akçam was a PhD candidate at the University of Hannover and his committee members included

¹⁴³ Please see Appendix D for a list of Akçam's publications.

¹⁴⁴ Akçam was an active member of leftist student political activism in the 1970s. His bio on his official website reads, "As editor-in-chief of Devrimci Gençlik ("Revolutionary Youth"), the student journal of the Ankara movement of leftist democrats, he received a prison sentence of 8 years, 9 months, and 20 days with an additional 3 years of probation. During his trial, Amnesty International adopted him as a prisoner of conscience. After a year of imprisonment, he escaped Ankara Central Prison and received political asylum in Germany. In 1991, as part of its effort to join the European Union, the Turkish government repealed the laws restricting freedom of expression that were the basis for his prosecution. With his record cleared and the statute of limitations on his prison escape expired, he returned to Turkey but found it impossible to work there on the history of mass violence." "Bio / Özgeçmiş," *Taner Akçam*, n.d., <http://www.tanerakcam.com/biography/>.

After quitting his leftist political activism, he took a researcher position in sociology at the Hamburg Institute for Social Research. In this post, he researched political violence and torture in the Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic. "Faculty Biography: Taner Akçam, Ph.D.," *Clark University*, n.d., <https://www.clarku.edu/faculty/facultybio.cfm?id=722>. In 1990, after the completion of his research project, he began to study the Ottoman military tribunals between 1919 and 1922 trying the wartime Young Turk government and other Ottoman officials. This research agenda became his doctoral project and he earned his degree from the University of Hannover in 1996. The title of his dissertation was *Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide: On the Background of the Military Tribunals in Istanbul between 1919 and 1922*. Hence, Akçam, who had not known until 1988 that the Armenians were living in Turkey, became one of the first scholars from Turkey to study the Armenian genocide outside of the denialist perspective. He marks his presentation at an international conference in April 1995 at Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, as the turning point for him. In this presentation he called the events as genocide for the first time. Taner Akçam, "To Study the Armenian Genocide in Turkey: Caught between a Conspiracy of Silence and Murderous Hatred," in *Advancing Genocide Studies: Personal Accounts and Insights from Scholars in the Field*, ed. Samuel Totten (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 2015); Taner Akçam, "Türkiye'de Ermeni Soykırımı İle Uğraşmak Ya Da Zımnî Suskunluk Anlaşması İle İmhacı Nefret Cenderesine Sıkışmak," in *Ermenilerin Zorla Müslümanlaştırılması: Sessizlik, İnkâr ve Asimilasyon* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2014), 15–48; "Bio / Özgeçmiş."

Turkish-German historian Fikret Adanır and Armenian-American historian Vahakn N. Dadrian.¹⁴⁵

The publication of this work did not have immediate echoes in Turkey, but later, after other shifts took place, the book received wider attention. Historian Ayşe Hür states that even though Akçam's initial salvo was not widely circulated in Turkey, it marked the rise of questions challenging the official narrative on the Armenian massacres. Akçam and other researchers following in his footsteps began to expand the scholarly discourse on the Armenian massacres.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, as much as this narrative emphasizes progress, Akçam remarks that his first book and subsequent engagement was not welcome even among the "progressive", "leftist" or "democrat" circles. In addition to these circles' "conspiracy of silence", meaning that they chose to remain silent about political violence against the Armenians,¹⁴⁷ Akçam was the subject of smear campaigns,

¹⁴⁵ Margaret Lavinia Anderson et al., "Taner Akçam, The Young Turks' Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012)," *Journal of Genocide Research* 15, no. 4 (December 1, 2013): 464–465.

¹⁴⁶ Ayşe Hür, "Türk Milli Kimliğinin Kurucu Unsuru Olarak Ermeni Tabusu," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil, vol. 9: Dönemler ve Zihniyetler (İstanbul: İletişim, 2009), 1122.

¹⁴⁷ Whereas the "murderous hatred" was expected or understandable from his perspective, the deliberate silence of the circles that he thought to be possible allies was more shocking to the author:

"The shared attitudes of these circles was to keep their distance and not deal with the issue at all. I wouldn't be exaggerating here if I were to say that, with few exceptions, everyone in this sector approached the matter with the attitude of 'Where do you get off dumping all this on us? Don't you have anything better to do?' I will never forget that back in 1995, when I gave my first talk on the Armenian Genocide in Istanbul, only about fifteen people showed up, among them Hrant Dink. What's more, the gathering had been widely publicized among all the left-progressive circles in Istanbul. From about that time until the 2005 conference in Yerevan, or possibly up until Hrant's murder in 2007, I was made to feel like a leper within these sectors."

In explaining this disinterest among the progressive circles, Akçam ruled out the factor of avoiding the risk attached to engaging with such a topic because members of these same circles were not refraining from engaging with the conflict with the Kurds, which was an equally risky act. Akçam, "To Study the Armenian Genocide in Turkey: Caught between a Conspiracy of Silence and Murderous Hatred."

stigmatization, intimidation and death threats well into the second half of the 2000s.¹⁴⁸

These negative reactions point to the instability of the political field in which the genocide memory was making its comeback.¹⁴⁹

Despite the popular silence, disinterest and hostility, Akçam was not alone in contributing to the growing knowledge-base in Turkey about the genocide. Publishers and human right activists Ayşe Nur Zarakolu and Ragıp Zarakolu had also begun a publishing campaign focusing on translating key scholarly works on the genocide in Turkish. The Zarakolu couple, with this publication campaign, were the first people who called the events genocide from the outset. They openly challenged the nexus of denial, silence and taboo with their publications. The risk they took was considerable and the Turkish state was quick to try to oppress them through punishment. In retrospect, it is possible to say that the Zarakolu couple was among the leading groups to oppose the taboo.¹⁵⁰

In 1993, the Belge publishing house of the Zarakolus published Yves TERNON's *Les Arméniens, histoire d'un génocide* (originally published in 1977 in French) in

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ As mentioned earlier, the coming to memory was happening as part of wider identity shifts for Turkey that left the country, in the post-1980s, in between what had gone before and what was yet to come. The withdrawal of Kemalist certainties brought an influx of new frameworks vying to shape the emerging national identity. However, even in the midst of deep transformations, the primary reaction regarding the Armenian massacres, in progressive and regressive circles alike, was one of denial.

Even the academic establishment in Turkey was not willing to entertain the critical post-national scholarship emerging in the 1990s. When Akçam attempted to establish a research and documentation center dealing with the interethnic relations between 1876 and 1925, his attempts fell through the cracks between 1993 and 1996. Neither the History Foundation nor the newly-funded private Bilgi University boards backed the project. Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Celal Başlangıç, "Tabu'ya İlk Yumruk!," *Radikal.com.tr*, October 3, 2005, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=165757>; Muriel Mirak-Weissbach, "With Giant Steps into the 100th Year': Ragıp Zarakolu Honored in Berlin," *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, December 19, 2014, <http://www.mirrorspectator.com/2014/12/19/with-giant-steps-into-the-100th-year-ragip-zarakolu-honored-in-berlin/>.

Turkish with the title *Ermeni Tabusu (Armenian Taboo)*.¹⁵¹ This work was the first publication in Turkey that named the Armenian massacres as genocide. The book was immediately banned and the publisher, Ayşe Nur Zarakolu, was prosecuted. She was sentenced to two years' imprisonment and monetary penalty under the 8th article of the Law on the Fight against Terrorism in 1994. The verdict of the 4th State Security Court tied the publication on the Armenian Genocide to the contemporary Kurdish struggle for freedom and rights and punished Zarakolu as publisher for disseminating separatist and terrorist propaganda.¹⁵²

In 1994, while the case about Tervan's book was going on, the Zarakolus published another important work in Turkish translation, Vahakn Dadrian's "Genocide as a Problem of National and International Law: The World War I Armenian Case and Its Contemporary Legal Ramifications".¹⁵³ The Turkish title was *Ulusal ve Uluslararası Hukuk Sorunu Olarak Jenosid/1915 Ermeni Olayı ve Hukuki Sonuçları*. This publication was also immediately banned and the publishers tried under the 312th article of the Turkish Penal Code of inciting racial or religious hatred between peoples. On December 29, 1995, the 5th State Security Court acquitted the publishers of the book. In 1997, when the Supreme Court ratified the court's decision, the legal process came to an end. Bulent Ecevit, Prime Minister at the time, sent an official note to the Supreme Court inquiring how this decision had been ratified. The Supreme Court had to clarify that their decision did not mean the recognition of the genocide, but that the publication of the book would

¹⁵¹ Ragıp Zarakolu, ed., *Sivil Toplumda Türk Ermeni Diyalogu* (Istanbul: Pencere, 2009), 18.

¹⁵² Ibid., 251–253.

¹⁵³ Vahakn N Dadrian, "Genocide as a Problem of National and International Law: The World War I Armenian Case and Its Contemporary Legal Ramifications," *Yale Journal of International Law* 142 (1989): 221–334.

not amount to a criminal act as listed in the 312th article.¹⁵⁴ Since then, the Zarakolus have continued their dissident publication policy and contributed to the growing literature on the Armenian genocide and Armenian history in Turkey.¹⁵⁵

These early publications were followed by a new wave of scholarship, especially in history writing, which has been critical of the official narrative and challenging the denial. Not all of these scholars used the genocide as a unit of analysis or interpretative framework, but their research shed light on different aspects of the late Ottoman inter-ethnic relations and annihilation of the Armenians. Defined in the literature as “post-nationalist historiography”¹⁵⁶ or “liberal historiography”,¹⁵⁷ scholars contributing to this literature include, but are not limited to, Hülya Adak,¹⁵⁸ Fikret Adanır,¹⁵⁹ Ayhan Aktar,¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ Zarakolu, *Sivil Toplumda Türk Ermeni Diyalogu*, 254–255.

¹⁵⁵ Please see Appendix E for a list of works Belge published.

¹⁵⁶ Fatma Müge Göçek, “Defining the Parameters of a Post-Nationalist Turkish Historiography through the Case of the Anatolian Armenians,” in *Turkey beyond Nationalism : Towards Post-Nationalist Identities*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006).

¹⁵⁷ Bedross Der Matossian, “Venturing into the Minefield: Turkish Liberal Historiography and the Armenian Genocide,” in *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, ed. Richard G Hovannisian (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Books, 2007).

¹⁵⁸ Hülya Adak, “The Protected Purging of the Tyranny of Nationalism : Turkish Egodocuments and the Possibilities of Armenian-Turkish Reconciliation,” in *Völkermord an Den Armeniern, Die Türkei Und Europa Völkermord an Den Armeniern, Die Türkei Und Europa = The Armenian Genocide, Turkey and Europe*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser and Elmar Plozza (Zürich: Chronos, 2006); Hülya Adak, “Ötekileştiremediğimiz Kendimizin Keşfi: 20. Yüzyıl Otobiyografik Anlatıları ve Ermeni Tehciri,” in *İmparatorluğun Çöküş Döneminde Osmanlı Ermenileri: Bilimsel Sorumluluk ve Demokrasi Sorunları* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 317–37; Hülya Adak, “Gendering Denial Narratives of the Decade of Terror (1975–85): The Case of Sâmîha Ayverdi/Neşide Kerem Demir and Hatun Sebilciyan/Sabiha Gökçen,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 17, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 327–43.

¹⁵⁹ Fikret Adanır, “Armenian Deportations and Massacres in 1915,” in *Ethnopolitical Warfare : Causes, Consequences, and Possible Solutions*, ed. Daniel Chirot and Martin E. P. Seligman (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2001); Fikret Adanır, “Kıyım, Soykırım ve Tarihçilik,” in *İmparatorluğun Çöküş Döneminde Osmanlı Ermenileri: Bilimsel Sorumluluk ve Demokrasi Sorunları* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 31–42.

¹⁶⁰ Ayhan Aktar, “Son Osmanlı Meclisi ve Ermeni Meselesi: Kasım-Aralık 1918,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 91 (Winter -2002 2001): 142–65.

Ayşe Gül Altınay,¹⁶¹ Seyhan Bayraktar,¹⁶² İsmail Beşikçi,¹⁶³ Melissa Bilal,¹⁶⁴ Zerrin

Özlem Biner,¹⁶⁵ Sait Çetinoğlu,¹⁶⁶ Adnan Çelik and Namık Kemal Dinç,¹⁶⁷ Selim

Deringil,¹⁶⁸ Oya Gözel Durmaz,¹⁶⁹ Fuat Dündar,¹⁷⁰ Lerna Ekmekçioglu,¹⁷¹ Ayda Erbal,¹⁷²

¹⁶¹ Ayşe Gül Altınay, "In Search of Silenced Grandparents: Ottoman Armenian Survivors and Their (Muslim) Grandchildren," in *Der Völkermord an Den Armeniern, Die Türkei Und Europa / The Armenian Genocide, Turkey and Europe*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser and Elmar Plozza (Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 2006), 117–32; Ayşe Gül Altınay, "Suskunluk Katmanları Aralanırken: Müslümanlaş(tırıl)mış Ermeniler Nerede?," in *Torunlar* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2009).

¹⁶² Seyhan Bayraktar, "Der Massenmord an den Armeniern von 1915/16 im Spiegel der türkischen Presser," in *Ideologien zwischen Lüge und Wahrheitsanspruch*, ed. Steffen Greschonig and Christine S. Sing (Deutscher Universitätsverlag, 2004), 111–33, http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-322-81345-9_8; Seyhan Bayraktar, *Politik und Erinnerung: der Diskurs über den Armeniermord in der Türkei zwischen Nationalismus und Europäisierung* (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verl., 2010); Seyhan Bayraktar, "The Grammar of Denial: State, Society, and Turkish–Armenian Relations," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 04 (November 2015): 801–6, doi:10.1017/S0020743815001014.

¹⁶³ İsmail Beşikçi, "Ermeni Soykırımıyla İlgili İki Temel Sorun," in *Öncesi ve Sonrası İle 1915 İnkâr ve Yüzleşme : İnkâr ve Yüzleşme Sempozyumu 24-25 Nisan 2010 : Ankara Düşünceye Özgürlük Girişimi*, ed. Sait Çetinoğlu and Mahmut Konuk (Ankara: Ütopya, 2013).

¹⁶⁴ Melissa Bilal, "The Lost Lullaby and Other Stories about Being an Armenian in Turkey," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 34 (March 2006): 67–92; Melissa Bilal, "Longing for Home at Home: Armenians in Istanbul," *Thamyris/Intersecting: Place, Sex and Race* 13, no. 1 (November 1, 2006): 55–65.

¹⁶⁵ Zerrin Özlem Biner, "Acts of Defacement, Memory of Loss: Ghostly Effects of the 'Armenian Crisis' in Mardin, Southeastern Turkey," *History & Memory* 22, no. 2 (2010): 68–94.

¹⁶⁶ Sait Çetinoğlu, "Ermeni Emval-i Metrukeleri Üzerine," *Birikim*, June 8, 2009; Sait Çetinoğlu, "Foundations of Non-Muslim Communities: The Last Object of Confiscation," *International Criminal Law Review* 14, no. 2 (March 13, 2014): 396–406.

¹⁶⁷ Çelik and Dinç, *Yüz yıllık Ah!*

¹⁶⁸ Selim Deringil, "In Search of a Way Forward: A Response to Ronald Grigor Suny," *Armenian Forum*, 1998; Selim Deringil, "The Study of the Armenian Crisis of the Late Ottoman Empire, Or, 'Seizing the Document by the Throat,'" *New Perspectives on Turkey* 27 (September 2002): 35–59; Selim Deringil, "'The Armenian Question Is Finally Closed': Mass Conversions of Armenians in Anatolia during the Hamidian Massacres of 1895–1897," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 02 (April 2009): 344–71.

¹⁶⁹ Oya Gözel Durmaz, "The Distribution of the Armenian Abandoned Properties in an Ottoman Locality: Kayseri (1915–18)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 51, no. 5 (September 3, 2015): 838–53.

¹⁷⁰ Fuat Dündar, *Modern Türkiye'nin şifresi: İttihat ve Terakki'nin etnisite mühendisliği, 1913-1918* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2008); Fuat Dündar, "Pouring a People into the Desert : The 'Definitive Solution' of the Unionists to the Armenian Question," in *A Question of Genocide : Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Fuat Dündar, *Crime of Numbers: The Role of Statistics in the Armenian Question (1878-1918)* (Transaction Publishers, 2010).

¹⁷¹ Lerna Ekmekcioglu, "A Climate for Abduction, a Climate for Redemption: The Politics of Inclusion during and after the Armenian Genocide," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*

Ayla Göl,¹⁷³ Öykü Gürpınar,¹⁷⁴ Burcu Gürsel,¹⁷⁵ Şükrü Hanioğlu,¹⁷⁶ Ayşe Hür,¹⁷⁷ Nesim Ovadya İzrail,¹⁷⁸ Zeynep Kezer,¹⁷⁹ Erol Köroğlu,¹⁸⁰ Ümit Kurt,¹⁸¹ Nazan Maksudyan,¹⁸² Leyla Neyzi,¹⁸³ Nevzat Onaran,¹⁸⁴ Kerem Öktem,¹⁸⁵ Birsen Örs and Ayşegül

55, no. 03 (July 2013): 522–53; Ekmekçiöğlu, “Paradoks Cumhuriyeti: Milletler Cemiyeti’nin Azınlıkları Koruma Rejimi ve Yeni Türkiye’nin üvey Vatandaşları.”

¹⁷² Ayda Erbal, “Mea Culpas, Negotiations, Apologies: Revisiting the ‘Apology’ of Turkish Intellectuals,” in *Reconciliation, Civil Society, and the Politics of Memory: Transnational Initiatives in the 20th and 21st Century*, ed. Birgit Schwelling (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2012), 51–94; Ayda Erbal and Talin Suciyan, “Erbal and Suciyan: One Hundred Years of Abandonment,” *Armenian Weekly*, April 29, 2011, <http://armenianweekly.com/2011/04/29/erbal-and-suciyan-one-hundred-years-of-abandonment/>; Ayda Erbal, “The Armenian Genocide, AKA the Elephant in the Room,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 04 (November 2015): 783–90.

¹⁷³ Ayla Göl, “Imagining the Turkish Nation through ‘othering’ Armenians,” *Nations and Nationalism* 11, no. 1 (2005): 121–39.

¹⁷⁴ Öykü Gürpınar, “Anadolu’nun Yitirilen Belleği: 1915’ten Günümüze Erzincan’ın Pokr Armıdan Köyü Üzerine Bir Monografi Çalışması,” in *Ermeni Soykırımı’nda Vicdan ve Sorumluluk : Kurtulanlara Dair Yeni Araştırmalar*, ed. Altuğ Yılmaz (İstanbul: Hrant Dink Vakfı Yayınları, 2015), 95–115.

¹⁷⁵ Burcu Gürsel, “The Mythical Interface of Turkish Intellectuals’ Orientation toward the Armenian Genocide,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 04 (November 2015): 791–95.

¹⁷⁶ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁷⁷ Hür, “Türk Milli Kimliğinin Kurucu Unsuru Olarak Ermeni Tabusu”; Ayşe Hür, *Öteki tarih* (İstanbul: Profil, 2012).

¹⁷⁸ Nesim Ovadya İzrail, *24 Nisan 1915: İstanbul, Çankırı, Ayaş, Ankara* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2013).

¹⁷⁹ Zeynep Kezer, “Of Forgotten People and Forgotten Places: Nation-Building and the Dismantling of Ankara’s Non-Muslim Landscapes,” in *On Location: Heritage Cities and Sites*, ed. Fairchild D. Ruggles (New York: Springer, 2012), 169–91.

¹⁸⁰ Erol Köroğlu, “Suskunluğun Farklı Kırılma Noktaları Olarak Türk Edebiyatında Unutma ve Hatırlama Örnekleri,” in *İmparatorluğun Çöküş Döneminde Osmanlı Ermenileri: Bilimsel Sorumluluk ve Demokrasi Sorunları, 23-25 Eylül 2005*, ed. Fahri Aral (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2011), 383–91.

¹⁸¹ Taner Akçam and Ümit Kurt, *Kanunların Ruhu: Emval-i Metruke Kanunlarında Soykırımın İzini Sürmek* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012); Ümit Kurt, “Legal and Official Plunder of Armenian and Jewish Properties in Comparative Perspective: The Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 17, no. 3 (2015): 305–26.

¹⁸² Nazan Maksudyan, “Walls of Silence: Translating the Armenian Genocide into Turkish and Self-Censorship,” *Critique* 37, no. 4 (2009): 635–49.

¹⁸³ Leyla Neyzi, Hranush Kharatyan-Araqelyan, and Samvel Simonyan, *Speaking to One Another: Personal Memories of the Past in Armenia and Turkey : Wish They Hadn’t Left* (Bonn, Germany: Dvv international, 2010).

Komşuoğlu,¹⁸⁶ Günay Göksu Özdoğan, Füsun Üstel, and Ferhat Kentel,¹⁸⁷ Mehmet Polatel,¹⁸⁸ Talin Suciyan,¹⁸⁹ Nesim Şeker,¹⁹⁰ Taner Timur,¹⁹¹ Gülçiçek Günel Tekin,¹⁹² Cihan Tuğal,¹⁹³ Yektan Türkyılmaz,¹⁹⁴ Fatma Ülgen,¹⁹⁵ Uğur Ümit Üngör¹⁹⁶ and Stefanos Yerasimos.¹⁹⁷

¹⁸⁴ Nevzat Onaran, *Emvâl-i metrûke olayı: Osmanlı'da ve Cumhuriyet'te Ermeni ve Rum mallarının Türkleştirilmesi* (Sultanahmet, İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2010).

¹⁸⁵ Kerem Öktem, "The Nation's Imprint: Demographic Engineering and the Change of Toponyms in Republican Turkey," *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, no. 7 (2008), <http://ejts.revues.org/2243>.

¹⁸⁶ Birsan Örs and Ayşegül Komsuoğlu, "Turkey's Armenians: A Research Note on Armenian Identity," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 13, no. 3 (August 16, 2007): 405–29.

¹⁸⁷ Günay Özdoğan et al., eds., *Türkiye'de Ermeniler: Cemaat-Birey-Yurttaş*, 1. baskı. (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2009).

¹⁸⁸ Mehmet Polatel, "İttihat Terakki'den Kemalist Döneme Ermeni Malları," *Toplum ve Kuram*, no. 3 (Spring-Summer 2010): 113–52; Uğur Ümit Üngör and Mehmet Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property* (London; New York: Continuum, 2011); Mehmet Polatel, "Land Disputes and Reform Debates in the Eastern Provinces," in *World War I and the End of the Ottomans: From the Balkan Wars to the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser, Kerem Öktem, and Maurus Reinkowski (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015).

¹⁸⁹ Talin Suciyan, "Toplumsal Anma Pratikleri Şekillenirken İstanbul 24 Nisan 2010," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 199 (July 2010): 14–17; Talin Suciyan, "Toplumsal Anma Pratikleri Şekillenirken, Bölüm II: İstanbul 24 Nisan 2015," *Azad Alik*, June 21, 2015, <https://azadalik.wordpress.com/2015/06/21/toplumsal-anma-pratikleri-sekillenirken-bolum-ii-istanbul-24-nisan-2015/>; Talin Suciyan, *The Armenians in Modern Turkey: Post-Genocide Society, Politics and History*, 2016.

¹⁹⁰ Nesim Şeker, "Demographic Engineering in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Armenians," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 3 (2007): 461–74.

¹⁹¹ Taner Timur, *Türkler ve Ermeniler: 1915 ve sonrası* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2007).

¹⁹² Gülçiçek Günel Tekin, *Kara kefen: Müslümanlaştırılan Ermeni kadınların dramı* (Sultanahmet, İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2008); Tekin, *Beni yıkamadan gömün*.

¹⁹³ Cihan Tuğal, "Memories of Violence, Memoirs of Nation: The 1915 Massacres and the Construction of Armenian Identity," in *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, ed. Esra Özyürek (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007).

¹⁹⁴ Yektan Türkyılmaz, "Rethinking Genocide: Violence and Victimhood in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1915" (Duke University, 2011), <http://hdl.handle.net/10161/5038>; Ayşe Gül Altınay and Yektan Türkyılmaz, "Unraveling Layers of Gendered Silencing: Converted Armenian Survivors of the 1915 Catastrophe," in *Untold Histories of the Middle East: Recovering Voices From the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Amy Singer, Christoph K. Neumann, and Selçuk Akşin Somel (Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁹⁵ Fatma Ülgen, "*Sabiha Gökçen's 80-Year-Old Secret*": *Kemalist Nation Formation and the Ottoman Armenians* (La Jolla: University of California, San Diego, 2010), <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/2mh3z3k6>; Fatma Ülgen, "Reading Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on the Armenian Genocide of 1915," *Patterns of Prejudice* 44, no. 4 (2010): 369–91.

¹⁹⁶ Uğur Ümit Üngör, "Seeing like a Nation-State: Young Turk Social Engineering in Eastern Turkey, 1913–50," *Journal of Genocide Research* 10, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 15–39; Uğur Ümit

Scholarly Workshops

In March 2000, a group of Armenian and Turkish scholars led by Ronald Grigor Suny (University of Chicago) and Fatma Muge Gocek (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor) organized a workshop to bring together Turkish, Armenian and other scholars studying the late Ottoman period. Against a background of adverse reactions from Armenian and Turkish diaspora communities and the refusal of many prominent genocide scholars to attend, the workshop was held at the University of Chicago on March 17-19, 2000.¹⁹⁸ This workshop constituted the first session of what was to become the Workshop on Armenian-Turkish Scholarship (WATS).¹⁹⁹ After the first session, the workshop gained acceptance and legitimacy both in academic and public circles and has become an important venue for scholars to discuss their perspectives on the Armenian massacres and deportations.²⁰⁰

There have been nine workshops so far:

Üngör, “‘Turkey for the Turks’ : Demographic Engineering in Eastern Anatolia, 1914-1945,” in *A Question of Genocide : Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Üngör and Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction*; Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁹⁷ Stefanos Yerasimos, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Ermeni sorunu* (Kavaklıdere, Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi, 2002).

¹⁹⁸ For Taner Akçam’s impressions and observations about this pathbreaking joint conference, please see Taner Akçam, “Ermeniler ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Sonu (Chicago 13-19 Mart 2000): Tarihi Bir Konferans Hakkında Sıradan Gözlemler,” *Kebikeç*, 2000.

¹⁹⁹ For the emergence of this workshop idea and its subsequent development please see Ronald Grigor Suny. “AHR Forum - Truth in Telling: Reconciling Realities in the Genocide of the Ottoman Armenians.” *American Historical Review*, vol. 114, no. 4 (October 2009) and Fatma Muge Gocek. “Dünyanın Bildigi, Türkiye’nin Bilmediği: Ermeni Meselesindeki Bilgi Birikimine Sosyolojik Bir Yaklaşım.” *İmparatorlugin Cokus Doneminde Osmanlı Ermenileri: Bilimsel Sorumluluk ve Demokrasi Sorunları*, 23-25 Eylül 2005. Ed. Fahri Aral. Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2011.

²⁰⁰ For further inquiries, the whole archive of the workshops between 1998 and 2011 is catalogued and held at Michigan University’s Bentley Historical Library. Retrieved on September 14, 2013. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/b/bhlead/umich-bhl-2012175?rgn=main;view=text>

- Workshop I: *Armenians and the End of the Empire*, University of Chicago, March 17-19, 2000;
- Workshop II: *Contextualizing the Armenian Experience in the Ottoman Empire: From the Balkan Wars to the New Turkish Republic*, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, March 8-11, 2002;
- Workshop III: *Vectors of Violence: War, Revolution, and Genocide*, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, March 27-30, 2003;
- Workshop IV: *Ideologies of Revolution, Nation, and Empire: Political Ideas, Parties, and Practices at the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1872-1922*, Salzburg Seminar, Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation, April 14-17, 2005;
- Workshop V: *The Boundaries of Genocide: Intentions, Histories, Peoples*, New York University, May 15-16, 2006;
- Workshop VI: *Revisiting Ideologies and Revolutionary Practice in the Late Ottoman Empire*, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, Switzerland, February 27-March 1, 2008;
- Workshop VII: *From Empire to Nation: The Ottoman Case in Comparative Perspective*, University of California, Berkeley, March 4-6, 2010;
- Workshop VIII: *Ethnic Tensions and Violence at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, International Institute of Social History and NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, October 27-30, 2011;

- Workshop IX: *Critical Approaches to the Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, and Aesthetics*, Sabancı University and the University of Michigan, October 1-4, 2015.²⁰¹

In February 2011, a selection of scholarly contributions to WATS collaboration were published in a volume, *A Question of Genocide*, edited by Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark.²⁰² This volume not only marked the ten years of the WATS process, but also constituted a significant scholarly consensus about the Armenian genocide.

Conferences

International events and conferences continued in the following years. Ragip Zarakolu attended the genocide commemoration event held in Paris and gave a speech. In 1997, the Armenian Diaspora Research Center (ADRC, le Centre de recherches sur la Diaspora Armenienne) organized a meeting for the publication of Franz Werfel's *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* in Turkey by Belge Publishing. Ragip Zarakolu gave a speech at the event. In 1998, there were two events that both took place in April. The Committee for Defending the Armenian Cause organized a colloquium on April 16-18. Along with others, Ragip Zarakolu and historian Fikret Adanir attended the colloquium as presenters. ADRC held a conference on April 17 with the title *From Rupture to Dialogue: 1915-1998*. Taner Akçam, Yelda and Ragip Zarakolu were among the presenters at this event.

²⁰¹ "WATS 2015 - Critical Approaches to the Armenian Genocide: History, Politics and Aesthetics," accessed August 21, 2016, <http://wats2015.sabanciuniv.edu/>.

²⁰² Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark, *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

According to Zarakolu, this conference marked the beginning of an unconditional dialogue process between Armenian, Turkish, and Kurdish intellectuals.²⁰³

The conferences continued in the early 2000s, some of the leading ones included:

- On May 10-11, 2002 the Danish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies organized a conference at Copenhagen University.
- On May 20, 2002 Historian Stefanos Yerasimos gave a speech, “Birinci Dunya Savasi ve Ermeni Sorunu” (“World War I and Armenian Question”) at the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TUBA).
- On October 28-30, 2004 the Institute for Venice and Europe of the Giorgio Cini Foundation organized a conference, Armenians and Turks: A Thousand Years of Relations on San Giorgio Maggiore Island.

The major conference of this period took place in 2005. That year following the previous attempts at dialogue and the expansion of scholarly networks and bodies of knowledge, a dissident conference that obviously challenged the official Turkish narrative was organized in Turkey. While the previous events were important in terms of bringing together scholars, intellectuals and activists, they were mostly ignored in the Turkish public sphere. The conference, “Ottoman Armenians during the Decline of the Empire: Issues of Scientific Responsibility and Democracy”,²⁰⁴ was held on September 23-25, 2005 at İstanbul Bilgi University.

The conference marked one of the turning points in the history of the memory of the Armenian Genocide. The organizers of the conference had intentionally set it up as a challenge to the Turkish official narrative on the historical process and events leading to

²⁰³ Zarakolu, “Giris.” 21.

²⁰⁴ Please see Appendix F for a list of the members of the Organizing and Consulting Committees as well as the Conference Program.

the extermination of the Ottoman Armenians. Accordingly, the conference revealed almost all of the seismic tensions inherent in contemporary Turkey with regards to not only the Armenian massacres but also to Turkish national identity. As such, the conference has since become an historical event in its own right that points to complicated relations between collective memory, public opinion, historiography and politics in Turkey. From its inception, the conference was an intervention to the politics of memory around the Armenian Genocide, and it mobilized powerful and conflicting discourses about scientific and political responsibility, nationhood and historical truth. The controversy caused by the conference involved not only scholars and public intellectuals, but also columnists and politicians. The conference also transcended the boundaries of Turkey and received attention from the Armenian Diaspora, the European Union and the United States. The publication of the proceedings in March 2011 rekindled popular interest in the conference. In addition, the book itself is a historical document contributing to the formation and transformation of the collective memory on the Armenian Genocide.

The idea of organizing a conference on the fate of Ottoman Armenians belonged to Halil Berktaş,²⁰⁵ an influential historian and a leading opponent of the official narrative. In early 2005, with the endorsement of a group of historians, social sciences and humanities scholars, the conference received institutional support of three universities, Boğaziçi University, Sabancı University, and Bilgi University. After the formation of the Preparation Committee and the Advisory Committee, organizers

²⁰⁵ Selim Deringil, "Takdim Veya 'Ermeni Konferansı'nın Kısa Tarihi," in *İmparatorluğun Çöküş Döneminde Osmanlı Ermenileri: Bilimsel Sorumluluk ve Demokrasi Sorunları* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2011), xv.

released the official call for papers on February 23, 2005. The call for papers announced that the conference would be held on May 25, 2005 at Boğaziçi University.

The organization got under way and the committee proceeded to select papers to be presented. However, some columnists, newspapers and agents in the public sphere were quick to express criticism, accusations and even threats against the organizers. Public discussions of the conference demonstrated a swift and broad polarization among the parties involved. The conference started to reveal fault lines –always present but not always visible – in collective memory regarding the annihilation of Armenian presence in Anatolia during the late Ottoman Empire. For the first time, a wide and influential group of scholars and opinion leaders in Turkey acted collectively to assert that the proto-scientific and overdetermined official narrative was not the sole legitimate interpretation of the process in question.²⁰⁶

The growing public tension culminated in the conference being discussed in the National Assembly on May 24, one day before the announced date of the conference. That day three members of parliament – Şükrü Elekdağ, Ramazan Toprak, and Ülkü Gökcalp Güney – openly criticized the conference and its organizers in the General Assembly. All three MPs questioned the scientific value of the conference and accused the organizers of championing the Armenian cause at the expense of the Turkish side of the story. Finally Cemil Çiçek, MP and the Minister of Justice, dismissed the conference and blamed the organizers and participants of “stabbing us in the back”.²⁰⁷ The familiar and dangerous accusation denoting the organizers as traitors caused the Boğaziçi University administration to cancel the conference.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., xxii–xxiii.

²⁰⁷ “Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Genel Kurul Tutanağı, 22. Dönem, 3. Yasama Yılı, 101. Birleşim,” May 24, 2005.

The decision caused frustration, relief and concern for the different parties involved in the discussion. The organizers were quick to express their disappointment. For the opponents of the conference the cancellation was a relief. Some columnists voiced their concern for Turkey's commitment to democracy and freedom of thought/expression. Although they were critical of the conference, they maintained that preventing the conference contradicted basic democratic principles. More importantly, these columnists worried about the possible impact of the prevention on Turkey's road to European Union membership. Joost Lagendijk and other European Union experts on Turkey underlined that hindering the conference undermined the sincerity of Turkish claims for democratization.

As Deringil underlines, the involvement of the European Union determined the course of events after the first prevention of the conference.²⁰⁸ The European Union decided on December 16, 2004 to inaugurate accession negotiations with Turkey starting from October 3, 2005. During the summer, while the uncertainty was looming large, the government encouraged the organizers to hold the conference before October 3. With this unexpected support, the organization committee set a new date for the conference, September 24-25, 2005. This renewed effort ignited diverse reactions in the public; while some seemed to support the conference, others remained in stark opposition. Nevertheless, preparations for the conference gained pace. This time everyone was sure that the conference would be convened at Boğaziçi University as originally planned. However, this did not happen.

Kemal Keriñsiz, leading the Turkish Jurists' Union, in a last minute attempt legally challenged the conference. The Istanbul Fourth Administrative Court ruled that a

²⁰⁸ Deringil, "Takdim Veya 'Ermeni Konferansı'nın Kısa Tarihi," xix.

legal investigation of the conference and its participants was in order. The court order prohibited Boğaziçi University and Sabancı University from hosting the conference before the completion of the investigation. The organizers did not have time to appeal the decision. Interestingly, the organizers received support from the head of the executive branch. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan harshly criticized the court decision and underlined that this ruling could not comply with “civilization, democracy and freedom”.²⁰⁹ The Prime Minister was not the only member of the government to oppose the legal ruling. Cemil Çiçek, who a couple of months previously had accused the organizers of treason, pointed to a loophole in the ruling and guided the organizers to hold the conference at Bilgi University that was not mentioned in the ruling.²¹⁰ It was a strange turn of events. The organizers took this lead and made the necessary arrangements. Finally, the conference started on September 24 amid the protests of a small group throwing eggs and tomatoes at participants and ended without major incident. This conference was a cornerstone in the collective memory of the genocide in Turkey because it raised awareness about the issue and the necessity for collective efforts to face the past. The conference also marked a major collective challenge to uncritical and nationalist historiography in Turkey.²¹¹ Historians and social scientists from Turkey together with intellectuals, journalists, and activists came together to critically study the topic. The media coverage of the conference also pointed to the changing tide in public opinion.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., xx.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ For a detailed survey of the conference process and its reception, please see Didem Turkoglu, “Challenging the National History: Competing Discourses About a Conference” (Masters Thesis, Central European University, 2006), http://www.personal.ceu.hu/students/06/Nationalism_Media/TurkogluMATHesis.pdf.

The conference in 2005 was significant in terms of situating the Armenian genocide at the front and center of the public debates. However before this turning point, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, there was not much public debate about the genocide. Belge publishing house introduced some of the significant historiographical studies to the public, but these studies were not circulated. In addition, as mentioned above, Akçam's books were also ignored or repressed. Revisionist historiography was shaping and becoming a strong literature, but they were limited to scholarly circles. Emerging critical scholarly and historiography studies were not reaching the population, partly because of the petrified racial prejudices, and partly because of the general lack of interest in academic studies. As a result, the new body of knowledge on the genocide was made public through alternative venues.

A major venue consisted of interviews and statements that scholars gave to newspapers, magazines or television programs. Through these public interventions they were at least able to present some of the latest revisions in Ottoman-Turkish historiography and challenge some of the entrenched opinions and beliefs. Many of these interventions did not lead to immediate change and in most cases they were received with antagonism. However, they contributed to the process of introducing alternative interpretative frameworks and acted as landmark events. These interventions include:

- On August 26, 1995 Taner Akçam's interview was published in the weekly magazine *Express*.²¹² Akçam summarized his research findings regarding the

Armenian massacres and highlighted the presence of a deliberate exterminatory

²¹² Taner Akçam, "Acı Olan Utanç Duygusunu Yokluğu," *Express*, August 26, 1995. This interview was later reproduced in *Express's* supplement Yücel Gökçürk, Merve Erol, and Siren İdemen, eds., *Büyük Felaket: 1915 Katliamı ve Ermeni Sorunu* (İstanbul: Re Yayıncılık, 2005).

policy among the Ittihadists. He argued that the Armenians had paid the price for the other Christian subaltern groups that had gained their independence from the empire before them. On September 15, 1995 Akçam gave another interview to a national newspaper, *Milliyet*, in Turkey.²¹³ In this interview he elaborated on the normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia. He underlined that if Turkey recognized injustices committed against the Armenians, possibilities of dialogue would emerge.²¹⁴

- On October 9, 2000 Neşe Düzel's interview with historian Halil Berktaş on the Armenian massacres was published in Turkish daily *Radikal*. In this interview, Berktaş, without using the term genocide, explained that there was a deliberate will to exterminate the Armenians among the ruling Ottoman elites and that the Committee of Union and Progress had a special organization to carry out the planned extermination.²¹⁵ This interview caused a public outcry and nationalist reactions against Berktaş. A columnist at a national newspaper included Berktaş among domestic enemies of Turkey.²¹⁶ Some key figures sustaining the official denial efforts engaged with Berktaş's views and published articles in national

²¹³ Şahin Alpay and Nilüfer Kuyaş, "Ermeni sorunu üzerine araştırmalarıyla tanınan Taner Akçam: Türk-Ermeni ilişkileri iyileşebilir," *Milliyet*, September 15, 1995, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/20339>.

²¹⁴ Akçam's interviews did not echo in the Turkish public and did not generate any substantial reactions or debate. Mithat Kadri Vural, "Cumhuriyet Dönemi'nde Türk kamuoyunda Ermeni sorunu" (Phd Dissertation, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, 2011), 322, https://www.academia.edu/13276994/CUMHUR%C4%B0YET_D%C3%96NEM%C4%B0_ND_E_T%C3%9CRK_KAMUOYUNDA_ERMEN%C4%B0_SORUNU.

²¹⁵ Halil Berktaş, Ermenileri özel örgüt öldürdü, interview by Neşe Düzel, October 9, 2000, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/2000/10/09/insan/erm.shtml>.

²¹⁶ Emin Çölaşan, "Bizi İçimizden Vuranlar," 2000-10-17, *Hürriyet*, accessed July 30, 2016, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/emini-colasan-bizi-icimizden-vuranlar-39190516>.

newspapers.²¹⁷ In response, Halil Berktaş gave a second interview to Alpay Şahin for another major national newspaper to repeat his views regarding the genocide.²¹⁸ In this period some public figures sided with Berktaş and published pieces supporting his perspective.²¹⁹ Denialist figures such as Aktan continued to criticize public figures affirming the genocide and he repeated established denialist arguments.²²⁰

- Veteran historian Mete Tunçay followed Berktaş and gave an interview to Neşe Düzel on December 12, 2000.²²¹ The interview was mainly about the public blame campaign against Berktaş and its broader context: what was the responsibility of a historian when it came to problematic episodes of the nation's history?²²² Should national vulnerabilities and interests guide what the scholar could say or should the scholar pursue and reveal the truth? Tunçay stated that the historian should take the latter road, even though it might mean dealing with

²¹⁷ Gündüz Aktan, "Aydınlara Kısa Yanıtlar," *Radikal*, October 11, 2000; Şükrü Elekdağ, "Tasarlanmış Katliam Yok," *Milliyet*, October 25, 2000, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2000/10/25/entel/ent.html>.

²¹⁸ Halil Berktaş, Serinkanlı olalım, interview by Şahin Alpay, October 20, 2000, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2000/10/20/entel/ent.html>.

²¹⁹ Belge, Murat, "Kimi İkna Edeceğiz," *Radikal*, October 15, 2000; Murat Belge, "Geniş Bir Tartışmaya Doğru," *Radikal*, October 17, 2000. Quickly pieces emerged blaming Belge for being the fifth column in Turkey trying to advance Armenian cause. "Aramızdaki Beşinci Kol," *Türkiye Gazetesi*, October 18, 2000, <http://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/Genel/a82709.aspx>.

²²⁰ Gündüz Aktan, "Suçluyum, Hayır Suçlusun," *Radikal*, October 18, 2000, <http://www.eraren.org/index.php?Lisan=tr&Page=Print&MakaleNo=57&Yer=Makaleler>.

²²¹ Mete Tunçay, Ermeni Sorunuyla İlgili Bir Söyleşi, interview by Neşe Düzel, December 25, 2000, <http://nabukednazar.blogspot.ca/2012/02/ermenii-sorunuyla-ilgili-bir.html>; Mete Tunçay, *Eleştirel tarih yazıları*, ed. H. Bahadır Türk and H. Emrah Beriş (Maltepe, Ankara: Liberte, 2005).

²²² For a critical engagement with the debate Berktaş's views caused and the question of intellectual responsibility, please see Simten Coşar, "Türkiye'de Aydın/Entellektüel Ayrışması Üzerine," *Birikim*, April 2001, http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim-yazi/5493/turkiye-de-aydin-entellektuel-ayrismasi-uzerine#.V55_wpMrLsk.

difficult pasts. His interview also received similar nationalist backlash and reaction.²²³

- On February 3, 2001, after the French parliament officially recognized the Armenian genocide, the topic came to the center of public attention in Turkey through a television program where guests debated the recognition and the Armenian massacres. The title of the program was *Ceviz Kabuğu* and it was a highly popular national live broadcast. The guests included politicians and scholars from Turkey. Taner Akçam participated over the phone from the United States.²²⁴ He stated that Turkey needed to come to terms with the crimes against the Armenians, which constituted genocide. Akçam underlined that regardless which name one used, the treatment of the Armenians was a crime against humanity. Akçam mentioned evidence supporting his views and argued that Turkey should apologize to the Armenians.²²⁵ His views were not received well, unfortunately not surprisingly. One of the guests called him a traitor and more Armenian than Armenians. Another negative reaction came from Semra Özal, the spouse of the then-deceased former President Turgut Özal. She said that Akçam's views and demands offended her as a citizen deeply attached to her nation. She

²²³ It was interesting to see that while Akçam's 1995 interviews expressed a similar, if not a more challenging, perspective, they did not generate a nationalist backlash as was the case with Berktaş's interviews. As Vural underlines, the reason behind this difference in public response would be that Berktaş's interviews came at a time when Turkey was under foreign pressure regarding the Armenian massacres as the French parliament was deliberating on the law recognizing the genocide. Berktaş's views were interpreted within a national security perspective and he was stigmatized as a traitor for giving the French an advantage against the Turkish position. Vural, "Cumhuriyet Dönemi'nde Türk kamuoyunda Ermeni sorunu," 322–323.

²²⁴ One columnist underlined that even though Akçam is a scholar who studied the Armenian deportation, he was not invited to debates until that time. Kürşat Bumin, "Türkler de 'Barbar' Olamaz Mı?," *Yeni Şafak*, February 7, 2001, <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/detayscroll/46616?n=1>.

²²⁵ Armenian Genocide Resource Center, "Angry Bickering On Ankara Television Tackling The Armenian Genocide," February 6, 2001, <http://www.atour.com/~aahgn/news/20010206h.html>.

blamed the producer of the show, Hulki Cevizoğlu, for giving someone like Akçam airtime.²²⁶ Reactions continued after the program as angry citizens wanted to know who Taner Akçam was. As a result, a national newspaper published his profile together with short interviews with Halil Berktaş, Mete Tunçay, and Ömer Laçiner.²²⁷ The authorities got involved when the Turkish Radio and Television Supreme (RTÜK), which oversees radio and television broadcasting, sanctioned Kanal 6 (Channel 6) to a 24-hour broadcast ban on the grounds that Akçam's views affirming the genocide did not comply with historical facts and that they would lend support to the genocide recognition campaign by the Armenians.²²⁸

- In November 2004, Halil Berktaş gave an interview to a weekly magazine, *Nokta*. In this 32-page interview, which was published as a supplement, Berktaş took on the official narrative on the Armenian genocide and provided a new interpretative framework with insights coming from the Holocaust.²²⁹ He was cautious about using the term genocide as he claimed that the term became too politicized and too closely tied to legal frames. He highlighted the broader historical context of the massacres and analyzed the denial in Turkey. Berktaş's interview coincided with a controversy about national identity and citizenship. The tensions were high as the debate touched upon the ethno-religious foundation of Turkishness. In the midst of heightened tensions, *Nokta* published an anonymous editorial that

²²⁶ "Akçam'a Kızdı," *Hürriyet*, (February 5, 2001), <http://webtv.hurriyet.com.tr/embed/?vid=134652&w=300&h=188&autostart=true&vup=false&ss=true&st=smallwidgetplayer>.

²²⁷ Aslı E. Perker, "Ben Tarihin Yalancısıyım," *Sabah Online*, February 11, 2001, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2001/02/11/z08.html>.

²²⁸ Vural, "Cumhuriyet Dönemi'nde Türk kamuoyunda Ermeni sorunu," 323–324.

²²⁹ Halil Berktaş, "1915'te Ne Oldu? Geçmişten Bugüne Ne Kaldı?: Ermeni Trajedisi," *Nokta*, November 22, 2004.

informed its readership that the editor Mustafa Sönmez was no longer working for the magazine and apologized for the Berktaş interview that voiced “the one-sided view of Diaspora Armenians”.²³⁰

- In 2005, the magazine *Express* published a supplement, *Büyük Felaket* (The Great Catastrophe)²³¹ that included testimonies, witness accounts and historians’ accounts regarding the Armenian massacres. Taner Akçam’s 1995 interview with the magazine, Halil Berktaş’s 2004 interview and Stephanos Yerasimos’s 2002 conference presentation were reproduced in this book.

These interviews were more effective in terms of bringing the issue to public attention.

The above-mentioned scholars continued to intervene in national discourse on the genocide through columns and opinion pieces. Their sustained engagement with the public was crucial for keeping the issue as visible as possible. The establishment in Turkey ignored scholarly studies of the genocide as long as they were confined to academic circles. However, when the dissenting ideas began to find their ways into public opinion, the establishment had to engage with these ideas as exemplified in Gündüz Aktan and Şükrü Elekdağ’s public defenses of denial. The reactions to these dissenting perspectives changed depending on the context. When the public felt threatened, especially because of international pressure, the responses were aggressive and hostile. If the level of perceived threat was low, there was general disengagement with the dissident voices.

²³⁰ Altınay and Türkyılmaz, “Unraveling Layers of Gendered Silencing: Converted Armenian Survivors of the 1915 Catastrophe,” 31.

²³¹ Gökürk, Erol, and İdemen, *Büyük Felaket: 1915 Katliamı ve Ermeni Sorunu*.

Civil Society Debates and Initiatives

Following the lead of historians and scholars, important figures of public life began to express their views regarding the atrocities against the Armenians. Armenian-Turkish activist and journalist Hrant Dink contributed immensely to the coming-to-memory of the genocide in Turkey. Armenians who survived the genocide and who continued to live in Turkey have always been repressed and censored. Theirs was a very precarious position because on the one hand, they belonged to a community that had been attacked on the grounds of their identity. On the other hand, they refused to leave their homeland and continued to live with the dominant groups that had committed the genocide and established a hierarchy working at the expense of the Armenians. Yetivart Tovmasyan succinctly expressed what the Armenians living in Turkey face, “for a hundred years, even though we suffered, we tried to live our lives. But we are living with blood on this land.”²³² Living amidst a society that continues to justify the atrocities their ancestors committed against the Armenians and simultaneously attempting to be at home has been an extremely challenging position. The Armenians were kept in limbo between national body politic and citizenship. While they were formally citizens of the republic, they were not considered part of the nation. Instead, they were treated as secondary citizens whose allegiances were always questioned and monitored.²³³ Their differences have been recorded, monitored and governed.²³⁴ In the face of power asymmetries,

²³² Sophia Jones, “‘The Genocide Is Not Forgotten. It’s Impossible To Forget,’” *The Huffington Post*, 59:54 400AD, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/21/armenian-genocide-turkey-anniversary_n_7096362.html.

²³³ Ekmekçioğlu, “Paradoks Cumhuriyeti: Milletler Cemiyeti’nin Azınlıkları Koruma Rejimi ve Yeni Türkiye’nin üvey Vatandaşları.”

²³⁴ As one of the most recent examples of the reminder of difference, the Turkish public accidentally discovered that the Population Directorate had secretly categorized non-Muslim citizens of Turkey on the basis of their ethno-religious identity since the establishment of the republic. Turkish-Armenian newspaper AGOS brought this discriminatory policy to public

abandonment, repression, symbolic and physical violence, the Armenian community turned in upon itself and chose not to express itself to the wider public. Even though the community was not completely isolated, asserting Armenian legacy and loss were not among their priorities, and understandably so. Hence there was little room for them to participate in the politics of memory in Turkey regarding the genocide and its aftermath.

Nevertheless, in the 1990s things started to change. The Armenian community in Turkey began to increase its public presence and visibility, though at high risk. The 1990s witnessed a slow but unmistakable change in the Armenian community's relationship with the other populations in Turkey. Two important channels of public communication emerged during this time. Aras Publication House was founded in 1993 and the weekly *Agos* newspaper was established in April 1996.²³⁵ These two new bilingual – Armenian and Turkish – channels not only increased the number of books or publications about

attention. Code number 1 stood for the Greeks, 2 for the Armenians, 3 for the Jews, 4 for the Assyrians, and 5 for other non-Muslims. İsmail Saymaz, “İşte ‘Soy Kodları’: Rumlar 1, Ermeniler 2, Yahudiler 3,” *Radikal*, August 1, 2013, http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/iste_soy_kodlari_rumlar_1_ermeniler_2_yahudiler_3-1144444/; İsmail Saymaz, “‘Soy Kodu’ Osmanlı’dan, Süryaniler 4 Numara!,” *Radikal*, August 2, 2013, http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/soy_kodu_osmanlidan_suryaniler_4_numara-1144612/; “Nüfus Kayıtlarında ‘Soy Kodu’ İle Fişleme,” *Radikal*, accessed August 6, 2016, http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/nufus_kayitlarinda_soy_kodu_ile_fisleme-1144436/; “Minorities in Turkey Tagged by ‘race Codes,’ Official Document Reveals,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, August 1, 2013, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/minorities-in-turkey-tagged-by-race-codes-official-document-reveals.aspx?pageID=238&nID=51849>; Orhan Kemal Cengiz, “Turkey’s Secret ‘Ancestry Codes’ Track Non-Muslim Minorities,” *Al-Monitor*, August 8, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/08/turkish-ancestry-codes.html>.

²³⁵ Other than AGOS, the Armenian community in Turkey has two main newspapers, *Jamanak* and *Marmara* and the Patriarchate’s newsletter, *Lraper*. Daily *Jamanak* began its publication in 1908 and is published in Armenian only. *Marmara* has been published in Armenian 6 days a week, except Sunday, since 1940. It hosts a section in Turkish on Fridays. “Lraper Ermeni Patrikliği Kilise Bülteni,” *Türkiye Ermenileri Patrikliği*, accessed August 6, 2016, <http://www.turkiyeermenileripatrikligi.org/site/lraper-ermeni-patrikligi-kilise-bulteni-basin/>; “Ermeni Gazeteleri,” *European Stability Initiative*, accessed August 6, 2016, http://www.esiweb.org/index.php%3Fflang%3Dtr%26id%3D322%26debate_ID%3D4%26slide_ID%3D7. For a detailed history of the Armenian publishing in Turkey, please see Hülya Eraslan, *Agos, 1996-2005 : Türkçe-Ermenice Bir Gazetenin Tarihi*, 1. baskı (Ankara: Gazi Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi, 2007).

Armenian memory, but also transformed the national discourse on the Armenians and their history in the country. Stepping out of the protective boundaries the community set for itself in order to survive, and publishing in Turkish, caused tension and debates within the community. Some were concerned that adopting bilingual production would undermine the Armenian language in Turkey as Turkish might replace it.²³⁶ However, these concerns did not stop the initiators from pursuing their agenda.

Established by Mıgırdiç Margosyan, Hrant Dink and Yetvart Tovmasyan, the Aras publication house attracted many established and emerging intellectuals of the Armenian community and quickly became an important venue. As of 2014, Aras had published 150 books, 40 in Armenian and 110 in Turkish.²³⁷ Stretching over a variety of genres and covering a number of issues, Aras aimed to be a bridge over the Turkish-Armenian divide.²³⁸ Tovmasyan, who is still running the publishing house, expressed Aras' goal,

We know about the genocide...We were all affected, one way or another. But the public in Turkey is unaware. It is our duty to teach the public about our history, our literature, and our culture. I'm often asked, 'Where have you Armenians come from?' and I tell them that we've been on these lands for thousands of years. I don't blame them. They don't know about us. They have never been taught the truth.

²³⁶ Karin Karakaşlı, "The Continuing Legacy of Armenian Print Culture in Istanbul: On the Periodical Agos and the Publishing House, Aras" (Port Cities and Printers: Five Centuries of Global Armenian Print A Conference in Honor of Professor Richard Hovannisian, Los Angeles, 2012), modernarmenianhistory.history.ucla.edu/files/KarakasliPaperUCLAPortCities.docx.

²³⁷ Rupen Janbazian, "Tomo of Istanbul," *Armenian Weekly*, December 12, 2014, <http://armenianweekly.com/2014/12/12/tomo-of-istanbul/>. Please see Appendix G for a list of Aras' publications.

²³⁸ "Hakkımızda," *Aras Yayıncılık*, accessed August 6, 2016, <http://www.arasyayincilik.com/tr/hakkimizda>.

Giving the opportunity to the Turkish community to discover Armenian culture seems to be the best way of touching and transforming people in Turkey. As a result, Aras focused more on publishing literary works by Armenian writers than scholarly treatises.²³⁹

If we can teach the general public about our people through our literature, our songs, and our dances, then the peace process will commence much easier. If the Turkish people learn the truth about the past, they will surely demand their government to do the right thing and acknowledge their history. These people have a voice and a vote in this country. It is our duty to educate them properly; they will do the rest.

The publishing house has managed to build a significant archive of Armenian cultural heritage and has become a crucial venue to reinscribe Armenian memories into the public memory of Turkey.

Leaving Aras, Hrant Dink embarked upon a new project in the mid-1990s. Joined by Luiz Bakar, Harutyun Şeşetyan and Anna Turay, Dink established the weekly newspaper *Agos* in 1996 to offer another venue for Armenians to deliberate on their issues and to partake in Turkey's contemporary public life. Sarkis Seropyan, Arus Yumul, Sendi Zurikoğlu, Diran Bakar, Setrak Davuthan and Niver Cazo later joined the founders.²⁴⁰ In a 2001 interview published in national newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, Hrant Dink delineated the connections between the stigmatization campaigns against the Turkish Armenians, who were blamed for being involved in the Kurdish guerrilla organization PKK's operations.

Everything started when the Patriarch Karekin II invited a few friends over. It was the years 1994-1995. There was something that bothered him a lot. Certain false news in the Turkish press was linking Armenians of Turkey with the PKK.

²³⁹ Zeynep Miraç, "Taredartzet Shnorhavor* Aras Yayıncılık!," *Milliyet Sanat*, February 3, 2013, <http://www.milliyetsanat.com/yazar-detay/zeynep-mirac/taredartzet-shnorhavor---p-aras-yayincilik---p-/1321>.

²⁴⁰ Yasemin Koç Gabrielsen, "Agos and Armenian Community: An Inquiry on the Reformulation of Armenian Identity in Turkey" (PhD, Orta Doğu Teknik University, 2015), 18, <http://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/12618575/index.pdf>.

The picture of Ocalan with an Armenian priest published in the front page of Sabah was presented as the proof of this cooperation. The reporting was fabricated, the Patriarch was helpless, and the note he sent to the newspaper had not been published. He asked us what should be done. (...) We all pointed out the following: The fact that the Community was closed to the outside world and therefore was unable to express itself to the greater society was a great handicap. It could not go on like this. This secluded life was unable to save the Community from melting. There should be some kind of opening. The method should be setting up a dialogue with the Turkish press.²⁴¹

The impetus behind the establishment of *Agos* was a reaction to the accusation of betraying the Turkish nation by collaborating with its main enemy. Once again the Armenians had to prove their loyalty to a society that was sure of their disloyalty. At this juncture, the community wanted to change the parameters of the relations between the Armenians and the rest of the society. Given that deliberately being closed to the outer public did not help to remove prejudice, discrimination and racism among the dominant population, reaching out to that population might be more effective. Thus, Dink stated the goals of the newspaper as follows,

- 1- The need to defend the Community point of view when needed, and also introduce the Armenians of Turkey to the national public opinion.
- 2- The younger generation and those who came to Istanbul from Anatolia don't speak Armenian and we can overcome this only with a newspaper in Turkish.
- 3- It's very difficult to raise intellectuals in a Community that uses Armenian only and we need a "kitchen" to open the channels.²⁴²

In a similar vein with Aras publishing house, *Agos* was to act as a bridge. The first issue of the newspaper was published on April 5, 1996.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Quoted in English in Baskin Oran, "The Reconstruction of Armenian Identity in Turkey and the Weekly *Agos*," *The Turkish Yearbook XXXVII* (n.d.): 130. The original interview was in Turkish. The English translation must be Oran's, though this is not indicated in the article.

²⁴² Ibid., 131.

²⁴³ Koç Gabrielsen, "Agos and Armenian Community: An Inquiry on the Reformulation of Armenian Identity in Turkey," 18.

Agos was an autonomous and not-for-profit newspaper trying to maintain its independence. In general, it critically engaged with the Armenian community in Turkey and communities in the diaspora, the Patriarchate, Armenia and the Turkish state. The main objective was to establish and sustain dialogue between the Armenian community and the rest of the population in Turkey.²⁴⁴ The newspaper was a platform where different perspectives about coming to terms with the past were debated with a view to setting the agenda in the present and shaping the future.²⁴⁵ Thanks to its charismatic founder and editor-in-chief Hrant Dink, changing dynamics of the community, and political transformations highlighting concepts such as democracy, human rights, minority rights and national identity, *Agos* has made a lasting impact on discourses of the Armenian genocide and Armenian presence in Turkey. The newspaper has been an important medium channeling successive and dynamic reformulations of the Armenian identity.²⁴⁶

Dink was an advocate of Turkish-Armenian reconciliation and a supporter of Turkey's democratization. He was critical of the official Turkish denial and the Armenian diaspora's campaign for international recognition of the genocide. Dink's cautious language and peaceful attempts towards mutual understanding brought a new perspective

²⁴⁴ Koç Gabrielsen provided a list of most frequently covered topics: being a minority in Turkey; being Armenian in Turkey; feeling different; Armeniaphobia in Turkey; the decline of Armenianness; multiculturalism; identity; constitutional citizenship and democracy; problems of the Armenian community; discrimination, racism and nationalism in Turkey; Armenian language as a tool of self-expression and its current state of decline; Turkey's relations with Armenia and the border problem, Azerbaijan, and the European Union; the Armenian diaspora; the role of the Church and Patriarchate in the Armenian community; the Varlik Vergisi [Capital Tax]; September 6–7 events; studies and research on Armenians and Armenian community; problems faced by Armenian foundations; and community affairs and activities. Ibid., 19.

²⁴⁵ Karakaşlı, "The Continuing Legacy of Armenian Print Culture in Istanbul: On the Periodical *Agos* and the Publishing House, Aras."

²⁴⁶ Koç Gabrielsen, "Agos and Armenian Community: An Inquiry on the Reformulation of Armenian Identity in Turkey."

to the discussions about the Armenian experiences of violence, deportation and death. However, Dink's views were not welcomed in many circles. Some nationalist groups attempted to intimidate him, including filing complaints in courts²⁴⁷ and death threats. In the end, a young nationalist murdered him on January 19, 2007. His murder and funeral became a public protest of unprecedented proportions. On January 23, 2007, around 100,000 people gathered to mourn Dink and to protest the discriminatory policies of the Turkish state, together with the lack of respect for human and minority rights. Many participants carried signs “We are all Hrant, We are all Armenians” and these signs became the symbol of that day. Since then, Dink has become a unifying figure in the politics of memory in Turkey. Dink’s assassination and funeral marked, though very sadly, both aggressive defense mechanisms that Turkish nationalism can mobilize in order to impose its own interpretation of history, and another part of Turkey which is able to empathize, although very late and painfully, with the rightful party. Dink’s legacy has itself become a vehicle of memory that determines the current debates on the memory of genocide.

Khatchig Mouradian problematized these issues on April 25, 2010 in Ankara in his presentation as part of the Ankara Freedom of Thought Initiative’s (Ankara Düşünceye Özgürlük Girişimi) symposium, “1915 with its Before and After: Denial and Coming to Terms.”²⁴⁸ Mouradian, commenting on Hrant Dink’s assassination, argued that the Armenians in Turkey had been abandoned and alone even when, or maybe especially when, they were adopted into public discourses. Dink’s abandonment

²⁴⁷ As discussed above, Dink was prosecuted under the Article 301 of Turkish Penal Code. He was given a six-month suspended sentence in 2006.

²⁴⁸ The symposium was held on April 24-25, 2010. The proceedings of this symposium were published in April 2013, Sait Çetinoğlu and Mahmut Konuk (eds.), *Öncesi ve Sonrası ile 1915: İnkâr ve Yüzleşme* (Ankara: Ütopya, 2013).

continued even after his funeral that witnessed thousands of people marching behind his cascade and shouting, “we are all Hrant Dink, we are all Armenian.”²⁴⁹ To show the impossibility of such identification, Mouradian continued to poke holes in the dominant modes of engaging with Hrant Dink and incorporating him into other political agendas.

Mouradian’s argument was valid to a great extent. There has been no justice for Hrant Dink. His murder has not been solved; the organized nature of the crime has not been revealed. In addition, some public opinion leaders in matters related to “minority rights” entrusted Dink with an aura, that of perfect witness.²⁵⁰ For many public opinion leaders in Turkey, knowing Hrant Dink, being his friend, brought moral, intellectual and political authority and superiority. Being associated with him became a sign of being an ethical and courageous subject in contemporary Turkey.²⁵¹ The popular representation of Dink, woven through discursive strategies, psychological projections and vested interests, made him the moral compass of Turkish society. This obviously fetishistic construction of Dink’s image glossed over serious differences between Dink’s position and his friends.

Very few of the people who have bent backwards to associate themselves with Dink took the same levels of risks he did. In Turkey, risks are unequally distributed between subalterns and dominant groups. Hrant Dink as an Armenian took considerably higher risks than any of the public figures related to the genocide. Like Sevag Şahin

²⁴⁹ Khatchig Mouradian, “Hiç Kimse Hrant Dink Olamaz: 96 Yıllık Yalnızlık Üstüne Bir 4 Yıl Daha Yalnızlık” Öncesi ve Sonrası ile 1915: İnkâr ve Yüzleşme (Ankara: Ütopya, 2013), 233-234.

²⁵⁰ Much of this representation of Hrant Dink as the perfect Armenian victim, or the perfect Armenian, emanated from a politically invested framing of his criticism targeting both Turkish and Armenian nationalism. Turkish intelligentsia has used Dink’s critiques of diaspora Armenians and their approaches to the conflict to delegitimize Armenian diaspora and to stigmatize them.

²⁵¹ For a critique of this sort of instrumentalization of Hrant Dink, please see Etyen Mahçupyan, “Hrant’ın Parazitleri,” *T24*, February 5, 2012, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/etyen-mahcupyan-hrantin-parazitleri/195928>.

Balıkçı, he has already been abandoned. Taking individualized risks and dealing with their consequences created individual and non-shareable identities. To return to Mouradian, he put the problem clearly.

Hence no one can be Hrant Dink. In this respect, no one can be Armenian either. Giving speeches in acclimatized rooms about the importance of a Turkey that comes to terms with its past does not give any Turkish intellectual or activist the right – let alone of *being* Armenian – to “share”, “feel” and “understand” Armenians’ pain or to mourn their extermination.²⁵²

In this perspective, sharing the Armenians’ pain, the dominant discursive frame in Turkey when it comes to engaging with the genocide, becomes impossible and loses its relevance.

The crucial trope has been the dispossession of the Armenians that paved the way for the asymmetry between Armenians and dominant group members. Confiscation of Armenian property and its distribution to the dominant group, Mouradian reminded the audience, was at the heart of the genocide. In addition to physical destruction of the Armenians, their economic destruction was at the foundation of modern Turkey. Accordingly, efforts towards a coming to memory of the Armenian genocide should incorporate this economic aspect as well. Instead of investing in the affective identification, the intelligentsia in Turkey should focus on restituting justice. Thus, “a genuine connection with the Armenians” for Mouradian,

starts with extreme dispossession and humiliation in the deserts of Deir-Zor. It is time for Turkish citizens, in the name of commemorating and developing empathy, to leave their acclimatized rooms, to start walking at Deir-Zor, to recognize the genocide, and to pay reparation.

²⁵² O halde hiç kimse Hrant Dink olamaz ve hiç kimse bu münasebetle Ermeni de olamaz. Geçmişle yüzleşen Türkiye’nin önemi üzerine klimalı odalarda nutuk çekmek, bugün Türkiye’deki bir aydın veya aktiviste – Ermeni olmak şöyle dursun – Ermenilerin acılarını paylaşma, hissetme, ve anlama ve imhalarına yas tutma hakkını vermez. Mouradian, 234.

Mouradian's views brought the questions of structural inequality and justice into sharp relief. Sevan Nişanyan, speaking at the same symposium on a different panel, also highlighted the need for justice, for Hrant Dink and for genocide victims and their descendants.²⁵³ He differed from Mouradian regarding reparations as a way to restitute justice, but underlined the importance of the economic component of the genocide.

For Nişanyan, the current engagement with the genocidal past unfolds within the frameworks and discursive fields of affect, humanitarianism and conscience. This kind of memory work is necessary and productive, however it misses the economic aspect. Taking into consideration the economic effects of the genocide sheds new light on the persistence of denial in Turkey as well.

We are not talking about a past that people disavow because of an abstract belief or out of ignorance or fanaticism. We are talking about a discomfort in coming to terms with a past that has a direct impact on these people, on their family histories; a past that constitutes the foundation of their social esteem.²⁵⁴

In this context, demanding that people living in contemporary Turkey recognize the genocide means asking them to relinquish the economic basis of their current social status and standing. Thus, demanding recognition and reparations is futile, can be alienating, and may undermine co-existence in Turkey. Nevertheless, Turkey needs to come to terms with this haunting past. To achieve that, an apology is a must. An apology, accompanied by other acts aimed at transforming the national identity, could change the country and break the impasse.

²⁵³ Sevan Nişanyan, "Ermeni Tazminatı Meselesi: Tazminat, Türk Vatandaşlarının Vicdanını Zedelememelidir" Öncesi ve Sonrası ile 1915: İnkâr ve Yüzleşme (Ankara: Ütopya, 2013), 261-267.

²⁵⁴ İnsanların soyut bir inanç nedeniyle yahut cehalet nedeniyle yahut fanatizm nedeniyle reddettiği bir geçmişten söz etmiyoruz. İnsanların bizzat şahıslarında, ailelerinin geçmişinde önemli bir rol oynamış olan, kendi sosyal itibarlarının temelini oluşturan bir geçmişle yüzleşme konusundaki sıkıntısından söz ediyoruz. Nişanyan, 263.

An example of such transformative acts, for Nişanyan, is to change the name of the boulevard on which Hrant Dink was murdered from Halaskârgazi²⁵⁵ to Hrant Dink Boulevard. Such a move would definitely symbolize a change in the political culture and imaginaries of Turkey's population. Furthermore, "coming to terms with the past would mean problematizing aggressive racism that has become the foundation of Turkish national identity in last 80 or 70 years."²⁵⁶ In his view, problematizing racism, structural inequality and exclusive formations of national identity are steps towards establishing a shared ownership of the country, or returning the country to Armenians as its legitimate co-owners, and also acknowledging each community's equal rights over it.²⁵⁷

In April 1998, the Association Against Genocide in Frankfurt, Germany, consisting of Turkish and Kurdish citizens of the Turkish Republic, initiated a petition calling on the Turkish National Assembly to recognize the Armenian Genocide. Zarakolu underlines that the petition signified the first event organized by Turkish citizens for the recognition of the genocide. However, around 10,000 signatures collected during the campaign were not accepted and were returned by the Assembly. The Association, representing some portions of people from Turkey, also attended the annual Armenian Genocide commemoration held in the Genocide Memorial in Yerevan on April 24, 1999. On June 17, 2000, the Armenian Diaspora Research Center organized a congress on Turkish Armenian dialogue aimed at bringing together intellectuals from Turkey and Armenia. There were no speakers from the diaspora. Journalist Oral Çalışlar, historian

²⁵⁵ Halaskârgazi, the nation's savior warrior, was one of the titles the Turkish nation gave to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in recognition of his role in saving the nation from extinction.

²⁵⁶ Türkiye'nin bu geçmişle yüzleşmesi demek, seksen seneden beri, Türk Ulusal Kimliğinin temeli haline gelmiş olan saldırgan ırkçılığın sorgulanması demektir. Nişanyan, 265.

²⁵⁷ Nişanyan, 265-6.

Mete Tunçay and Ragıp Zarakolu presented at the congress. Murat Belge could not attend because of health problems and Baskın Oran's presentation was read on his behalf.²⁵⁸

Another channel for genocide memories to enter into circulation in the public sphere was columns and magazine articles written by important public opinion leaders such as Ali Bayramoğlu, Etyen Mahçupyan, Kürşat Bumin, Murat Belge, Ahmet İnsel,²⁵⁹ Cengiz Aktar,²⁶⁰ Baskın Oran, Cengiz Çandar, Oral Çalışlar,²⁶¹ Hasan Cemal,²⁶² Yavuz

²⁵⁸ Zarakolu, *Sivil Toplumda Türk Ermeni Diyalogu*, 21.

²⁵⁹ In addition to his columns, İnsel helped the dialogue expand towards diaspora Armenians as well. In April 2010 Ahmet İnsel and Michel Marian's discussion on the Armenian Taboo in Turkey, *Ermeni Tabusu Üzerine Diyalog (Dialogue on the Armenian Taboo)*, is published by İletişim Publications. Ahmet İnsel and Michel Marian, *Ermeni Tabusu Üzerine Diyalog*, ed. Ariane Bonzon (İstanbul: İletişim, 2010).

The book resonated with public interest and İnsel elaborated further on his dialogue with Marian and his own coming to know about the Armenian Genocide in time. Ahmet İnsel, Ahmet İnsel ile Söyleşi: Milliyetçilik Sorunlu Bir "Onur"dur, interview by İrfan Aktan, May 17, 2010, <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/guncel-yazilar/317/ahmet-insel-ile-soylesi-milliyetcilik-sorunlu-bir-onur-dur#.V5-Ut5MrLsk>; Ahmet İnsel, "Dondurulmuş Bellek Elektrosokla Çözülüyor," interview by Rober Koptaş, May 26, 2010, <http://www.norzartok.org/%E2%80%9Ccdondurulmus-bellek-elektrosokla-cozulmuyor%E2%80%9D/>.

²⁶⁰ Cengiz Aktar, "Hafıza Geri Geliyor," *Erkan's Field Diary*, April 25, 2011, <http://erkansaka.net/cengiz-aktar-hafiza-geri-geliyor/>.

²⁶¹ Oral Çalışlar, "Saat 1915'te durdu," *Cumhuriyet Dergi*, November 28, 1999, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/20326>; Oral Çalışlar, "Talat Paşa'nın Defterinde Ermeni Tehciri...", *Radikal*, January 17, 2009, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/oral-calislars/talat-pasanin-defterinde-ermeni-tehciri-917393/>.

²⁶² Hasan Cemal's genocide affirmation received much public attention because he is the grandson of Cemal Pasha, one of the wartime leaders of the CUP and one of the genocide perpetrators. Hasan Cemal went to Yerevan and visited the Tsitsernakaberd Armenian Genocide Memorial in September 2008. Then he shared his experiences in Yerevan and demanded Turkish public to respect the pain of others. Hasan Cemal, "Gelin önce Birbirimizin Acılarına Saygı Gösterelim!," *Milliyet Haber*, September 5, 2008, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/sevgili-hrant-la-soykirim-aniti-nda-basbasa---/hasan-cemal/siyaset/yazardetayarsiv/06.09.2008/987430/default.htm>.

Cemal declared that he shared the pain of Armenians in a column he published on April 24, 2010. Hasan Cemal, "Ermenilerin 24 Nisan Acısını Paylaşıyorum!," *Milliyet Haber*, April 24, 2010, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/ermenilerin-24-nisan-acisini-paylasiyorum-/hasan-cemal/siyaset/siyasetyazardetay/24.04.2010/1229159/default.htm>.

In 2012, he published his personal history of engagement with the Armenian massacres and recognized the genocide in the title of his book *1915: Armenian Genocide*. The Hrant Dink Foundation published the book in English in 2015. In Turkey, the book received positive and negative public attention. While some of other members of democrat intellectual circles praised the book, the Turkish Foreign Affairs' website, which housed official narrative on the genocide,

Baydar²⁶³ and Orhan Kemal Cengiz.²⁶⁴ Some of these figures held posts in academia and were in close contact with scholars studying the Armenian Genocide. As mentioned above, these figures came from left-liberal or conservative-liberal backgrounds and they gathered around concepts such as democracy or democratness. These figures were able to address a variety of constituencies and they assumed the role of forming the political-moral compass of society. Furthermore, human rights activists such as Ayşe Günaysu and Eren Keskin also gave interviews and published opinion pieces in Turkish and Armenian media to inform the public. Overall, even though the introduction of genocide perspectives received nationalist backlash in the short-term, in the long run scholarly discourses and their popularized representations through journalistic accounts ensured that the history of the genocide as it had unfolded were told.

In the late 2000s conservative circles also began to talk about the Armenian Genocide and their position vis-à-vis the memories of atrocities. International relations scholar Gökhan Bacık invited conservative subjects to distinguish between the Ottomans and the Ittihadists and argued that it was the latter who committed the genocide and not

added a review of Hasan Cemal's book criticizing it for factual mistakes and partial perspective. Yücel Güçlü, "Hasan Cemal, 1915: Ermeni Soykırımı," *T.C. Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 2013, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/data/DISPOLITIKA/2016/21_-yucel-guclu_-ermen-soykirimi.pdf. This official response showed that Cemal's intervention was impossible to ignore.

Among the positive responses, Ruşen Çakır's stood out as he questioned whether Hasan Cemal was the bravest of all intellectuals or columnists in Turkey, as he was the only one who took the risk to publish such a book with that title. Çakır pointed at the self-censorship among intellectuals and columnists in Turkey and argued that while engaging with the Armenian genocide was trendy when the government was also seeking a change in its mode of engagement, when the government left its quest unfinished the public engagement with the genocide also dwindled. Çakır raised the question of intellectual responsibility. Ruşen Çakır, "En Cesurumuz Hasan Cemal Mi?," *Gazete Vatan*, November 27, 2012, <http://www.gazetevatan.com/rusen-cakir-495485-yazar-yazisi-en-cesurumuz-hasan-cemal-mi/>.

²⁶³ Yavuz Baydar, "April 24, 2010: Another Turning Point," *Today's Zaman*, April 26, 2010, http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/yavuz-baydar/april-24-2010-another-turning-point_208485.html; Baydar, "Turkey Should Acknowledge The Armenian Genocide."

²⁶⁴ Orhan Kemal Cengiz, "Soykırım Mıydı?," *Radikal*, December 23, 2011, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/orhan-kemal-cengiz/soykirim-miydi-1073328/>.

the former. He claimed that the Ittihadists were against the Ottoman conventions and practices of governing differences. Hence, the responsibility for the genocide belonged to leaders such as Enver, Talat and Cemal and not to the Ottoman Empire.²⁶⁵ Bacık's intervention was significant in the sense that it attempted to expand the public discussion to include an influential component of the population. His input echoed in conservative circles. An increasing number of contributions trying to come to terms with the Armenian Genocide emerged.²⁶⁶ One of the most recent products emerging from conservative intellectuals' engagement with the Armenian Genocide was the special issue of *Derin Tarih* magazine, which compiled a series of contributions marking the hundredth anniversary of the genocide.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Gökhan Bacık, "Muhafazakâr Akla çağrı," *Dünya Bülteni*, April 29, 2009, <http://www.dunyabulteni.net/yazar/gokhan-bacik/9815/muhafazakar-akla-cagri>.

²⁶⁶ Kürşat Bumin, "Ermeni meselesine ilişkin iki soru," Text, *Yeni Şafak*, (January 25, 2012), <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/kursatbumin/ermeni-meselesine-iliskin-iki-soru-30771>; Kürşat Bumin, "'Muhafazakâr Akıl' ve 'Tehcir,'" *Timeturk*, January 28, 2012, <http://www.timeturk.com/tr/makale/kursat-bumin/muhafazakar-akil-ve-tehcir.html>; Cengiz Çandar, "Dünden Bugüne; İttihatçılardan Ergenekonculara...", *Hürriyet*, January 10, 2009, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunden-bugune-ittihatcilardan-ergenekonculara-10753071>; Bahadır Çelebi, "Muhafazakar Vicdanlara çağrı," *Altüst Dergisi*, August 26, 2011, <http://www.altust.org/2011/08/muhafazakar-vicdanlara-cagri/>; Tuncay Yılmaz, "Muhafazakâr Aydınların Ermeni Sorunu'na Yaklaşımı Değişiyor Mu?," *Gelibolu'yu Anlamak*, April 4, 2010, http://www.geliboluyuanlamak.com/276_muhafazakar-aydinlarin-ermeni-sorunu-na-yaklasimi-degisiyor-mu-tuncay-yilmazer.html; Ahmet Turan Alkan, "Ganimet Mi Saymıştık Bir Nevi?...," *Haksöz Haber*, March 13, 2010, <http://www.haksozhaber.net/ganimet-mi-saymistik-bir-nevi-15250yy.htm>; Derin Düşünce Fikir Platformu, ed., *Ermeniler ve Türkler* (Derin Düşünce Fikir Platformu, 2010), <http://www.derindusunce.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/ermeniler-ve-turkler.pdf>; Rasim Ozan Kutahyalı, "How I Faced the Armenian Genocide," *Al-Monitor*, April 22, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/04/genocide-armenia-turkey-anniversary-dink-metz-yeghern.html>; Gökhan Bacık, "Ermeni Açılımı," *Düzce Yerel Haber*, April 25, 2014, <http://www.duzceyerelhaber.com/her-araf-haberleri/26217-gokhan-bacik-ermeni-acilimi>.

²⁶⁷ "100. Yılında Ermeni Tehciri - 1915'de Ne Oldu?," *Derin Tarih*, April 2015. For a critical review of this special issue of the magazine, please see Doğan Gürpınar, "Adil Hafıza ile Klasik İnkarcılık Arasında Bir 1915 Okuması: Derin Tarih," *Azad Alik*, October 19, 2015, <https://azadalik.wordpress.com/2015/10/19/adil-hafiza-ile-klasik-inkarcilik-arasinda-bir-1915-okumasi-derin-tarih/>.

This discourse evolved into a suggestion for a framework to come to terms with the past in line with the Islamic tradition and normative cultural formations of the country. In early April 2013, then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in a meeting with public figures and opinion leaders, stated that it was time to build a united and inclusive Turkey that would incorporate all the components of the population as first class citizens rather than discriminating against some. Mostly referring to the ongoing rapprochement with the Kurdish movement, but also presented as a foundation for social peace, the prime minister announced that it was time to forgive each other. He used a specific term, *helalleşmek* (forgiving each other for any injury or hurt done knowingly or unknowingly; make amends for all that has passed), in order to frame this proposal.²⁶⁸ In the same month, *Taraf* newspaper asked a variety of public figures whether *helalleşmek* could constitute a viable framework for Turkish-Armenian reconciliation.²⁶⁹ Armenian-Turkish columnist Markar Esayan was positive about the concept and stated that even though the current generations were not responsible for the crimes, it was their duty to find a way to forgive each other.²⁷⁰ However, another Armenian-Turkish columnist, Yetvart Danzikyan, repeatedly underlined that *helalleşmek* implied and perpetuated the power asymmetry between the dominant group and the Armenians. He also argued that this perspective could not replace the process of formal apology, as the latter comprised

²⁶⁸ “Erdoğan: Artık Helalleşmenin, Kucaklaşmanın, Bayramlaşmanın Zamanı,” *İlke Haber*, April 4, 2013, <http://www.ilkehaber.com/haber/erdogan-artik-helallesmenin-kucaklasmanin-bayramlasmanin-zamani-25810.htm>.

²⁶⁹ Serkan Ayazoglu and Bülent Onur Şahin, “’Yüzleşmeyi Başarabiliriz,” *Düzce Yerel Haber*, April 26, 2013, <http://www.duzceyerelhaber.com/turkiyeden-dunyadan-haberleri/13255-yuzlesmeyi-basarabiliriz>. Contributors were: Adalet Ağaoğlu, Cihan Aktaş, Engin Cirmen, Nevzat Çiçek, Yetvart Danzikyan, Abdurrahman Dilipak, Bülent Şahin Erdeğer, and Gülay Göktürk.

²⁷⁰ Markar Esayan, “1915 ve Helalleşme,” *Markar Esayan*, April 22, 2013, <http://www.markaresayan.com/?p=1973>.

assuming responsibility for the injustice, identifying and naming the injustice, and demanding forgiveness. *Helalleşmek*, for Danzikyan, was the opposite of this. It was an attempt to drop the subject and protect the supremacy of the dominant group in relation to the subaltern group.²⁷¹ Other critical voices also emphasized that ending the denial was the pre-condition for *helalleşmek*.²⁷²

The key word in the civic interventions introduced above was democracy and being “democrat.”²⁷³ Some proponents of the democratization perspective maintained

²⁷¹ Yetvart Danzikyan, “‘Helalleşme’ Kavramı üzerine,” *Agos*, April 26, 2013, <http://www.Agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/9066/helallesme-kavrami-uzerine>; Yetvart Danzikyan, “Apology, Confrontation, Mourning...,” *Repair*, September 16, 2014, <http://www.repairfuture.net/index.php/en/forgiveness-reconciliation-dialoguestandpoint-of-turkey/apology-confrontation-mourning>.

²⁷² “İnkâr Bitsin, Helalleşelim...,” *İlke Haber*, April 24, 2013, <http://www.ilkehaber.com/haber/inkar-bitsin-helalleselim-25991.htm>.

²⁷³ The frames of democratization are undeniably among the crucial transformations in Turkey that have the potential to lead to genocide recognition, however the way these frames are mobilized have so far provided only limited hope. A possible way of addressing the limitations of the democratization perspectives would be to pair them with another perspective, a perspective of justice. For frames of justice adopt, in general, a victim-centered approach and prioritize their demands. Rather than ascribing the recognition of injustice to Turkey’s political transformation agenda, those emphasizing justice ask for truth, recognition, and redress in their own right. The demand for recognition is straightforward and an end in itself. It also emphasizes equality in principle and in law, a just and fair attribution of responsibilities in the genocide, and acknowledgment of Armenians as the genuine and sole owner of the pain. Power asymmetry between involved parties emanating from the genocide itself, intersectionality of different forms of exclusion, discrimination, and domination in relation to being an Armenian, the politics of recognition constitute critical perspectives brought forth by this frame. Instead of conceiving the political field as divided between those who deny the genocide and who attempt at coming to terms with it, the proponents of the justice frame pay much closer attention to interactions between these two positions and deconstruct this division to demonstrate that there are strong continuities between them even though there are undeniable breaks as well. This point of view is much more sensitive to power relations, issues of representation, and truth regimes. Rather than jumping on the bandwagon of Turkey finally facing its past position, the supporters of justice frame question why the genocide has become an issue of interest in the contemporary context.

In the short run, demands of justice would further alienate the Turkish population because the process includes the condemnation of their ancestors and many of their national figures. Such a condemnation will not pave the way for peace and reconciliation between Turks and Armenians in the short term. On the contrary, it may even further alienate and polarize the Turkish side. The invocation of criminal discourses and categories has the potential to petrify communal identities and the conflict between them through overgeneralized, essentialized, and naturalized

that coming to terms with the Armenian genocide would make Turkey a more democratic country. It would also make it more civilized. This stance conceived the genocide recognition campaign and memory work as steps in the struggle to democratize Turkey. Open and unhindered discussion of the Armenian genocide, and other taboo topics of national history, would strengthen civil society, the engine of democratization in the face of the “authoritarian state”, move the country closer to European civilizational conventions, and save Turkey’s image abroad. If Turkey managed to come to terms with its genocidal past, it was argued, it would be free of the historical burden and stigma of this haunting past. Hence, in this line of argument, Turkey needed to remember the genocide to forget it eternally. The campaign for re-inscribing the genocide into collective memory has been instrumentalized as a necessary step in Turkey’s democratization. What is at stake is Turkey’s progress towards a better version of itself and not what the victims and their descendants need.

As the discourses of democracy put the stress on the democratization of Turkey, agents belonging to the dominant community have been steering the conversation on the genocide in line with the parameters of political transformation they envisioned. These public figures acted as gatekeepers of political field and decided which claims were plausible and which were not, for the sake of democracy. Some demands were too “radical” and thus not legitimate and permissible. One had to be cautious about the demands and claims. The fragile state of democracy in Turkey required special care because the culture of democracy was not mature enough to handle unmediated confrontations. There must be mediators, who were impartial, post-national, and

perceptions. Nevertheless, it is morally and politically problematic to instrumentalize the genocide recognition cause for other political agendas and to manipulate the victims’ demands to fit with Turkey’s needs.

righteous. These figures were to broker the Turkish-Armenian reconciliation within transparent and objective terms, read in terms that they themselves defined and that furthered their interests. The monopoly to define what was democracy, what was the right way to attain it, and where the engagement with the genocide sat in this configuration, generated major political capital for many democrats of Turkey. Challenging their authority, problematizing their ethno-religious and class privilege, revealing their vested interests, asking them to take responsibility for their actions, and holding them accountable were presented as attacking the forces of democracy and quickly stigmatized.

Turkey's democratization discourses were tied to a great extent to the strong state argument that has potentially problematic effects on the coming to memory of the genocide. Dissident voices engaged with the controversial and violent history of ethno-religious relations in Turkey as participants in an oppositional thrust against the "authoritarian state". Since the 1980 military coup, there has been growing criticism and political reaction against the authoritarian character and practices of the state in Turkey. During the post-1980 transformation period, civil society organizations, political parties, leftist, liberal, conservative and democrat groups, which pursued their own agendas, converged in their opposition to what they saw as the omni-presence of the state.²⁷⁴

Intensified in moments of crisis and clashes such as those of February 28, 1997, the anti-authoritarian front opposed mostly the Kemalist, militantly laicist, and unitary policies of

²⁷⁴ Metin Heper in his study on the state tradition argued that Turkey had a strong state tradition that complicates establishment and development of democratic institutions, mindsets, and policies. His views have been among the key components of the "authoritarian state" argument. Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Beverly, North Humberside: Eothen Press, 1985). For critical reviews of Heper's "strong state" concept please see, Aykut Kansu, "Yeni Bir Yorum Denemesi ve Otoriter Dünya Görüşü," *Birikim*, November 1999, <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim-yazi/5430/yeni-bir-yorum-denemesi-ve-otoriter-dunya-gorusu#.V6dFcpMrLsk>; Demet Dinler, "Türkiye'de Güçlü Devlet Geleneği Tezinin Eleştirisi," *Praksis*, 2011.

the state. This dissenting front invoked past episodes of official and state-sanctioned violence against subaltern groups in Turkey in order to fortify their position, to claim moral higher ground, and to gain the upper hand in the struggle over public opinion.²⁷⁵ The problem with the state criticism was that by locating the historical responsibility only with the state, it absolved the population from the responsibility of the past atrocities and contemporary denial.

Marking the Armenian Genocide Anniversary in Turkey

The Commission against Racism and Discrimination of the Human Rights Association's Istanbul Branch started to regularly mark the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in Turkey on April 24, 2005. These commemorative events, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, were the immediate precursors of the public commemorations that were to begin in April 2010. What was crucial about the commission's intervention was that from the very beginning it named the events as genocide and demanded official recognition.²⁷⁶ Even though the events were held indoor and open to a select few attendees, each year the commission's press releases represented an unequivocal perspective on the genocide. The commission members and the association came under heavy criticism and received threats, but they were able to set a yardstick about public discourse on genocide. Relying on a long history of dealing with the Turkish state's human rights violations, especially against the Kurdish population, the commission and the association were able to resist the pressures. Nevertheless, these

²⁷⁵ Rıfat N Bali, "Toplumsal Bellek ve Varlık Vergisi," in *Hatırladıklarıyla ve Unuttuklarıyla Türkiye'nin Toplumsal Hafızası*, ed. Esra Özyürek (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 87–126.

²⁷⁶ Gerçek, "What Do People Mean in Turkey by Armenian Genocide Recognition?"

pioneers were abandoned in the public realm, as other civil society initiatives were not keen on supporting their agenda.

The Apology Campaign

In December 2008, a new and unprecedented civil society initiative brought the Armenian Genocide into public sphere with much heated debate. This was the *I Apologize* campaign initiated by Ahmet İnsel, Baskın Oran, Cengiz Aktar and Ali Bayramoğlu, who created an apology text and published it online for supporters to sign. The four initiators were backed by about 200 intellectuals.²⁷⁷ “My conscience does not accept the insensitivity shown to, and the denial of, the Great Catastrophe that the Ottoman Armenians were subjected to in 1915. I reject this injustice and for my share, I empathize with the feelings and pain of my Armenian brothers and sisters. I apologize to them.”²⁷⁸ The initiators were planning to publish the text online in January 2009 but the text went live on December 14, 2008 for participants to sign online.²⁷⁹ More than 30,000 people signed the text in two months, including the present author. As of this writing 32,454 people have signed the text. For many, this campaign marked a major crack in the wall of genocide denial in Turkey and an important moment of coming to terms with the past. The campaign received mixed reaction domestically and internationally. It was an important indicator of the fault lines in Turkey regarding the issue.

²⁷⁷ Asli Aydinbas, “Should Turkey Apologize To The Armenians?,” *Forbes*, December 26, 2008, http://web.archive.org/web/20130526064826/http://www.forbes.com/2008/12/24/Turkey-Armenians-genocide-oped-cx_aa_1226aydinbas.html.

²⁷⁸ The text is available in Arabic, Armenian, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Kurdish, Persian, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

²⁷⁹ <http://www.ozurdiliyoruz.com/default.aspx> Retrieved on September 29, 2013. The text is available in the following languages: Arabic, Armenian, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Kurdish, Persian, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. <http://www.ozurdiliyoruz.com/foreign.aspx>

The campaign initiators framed it as an individual response to the historical responsibility that emanated from conscience. The subject of this apology was the individual. The initiators underlined that the majority of the Turkish population did not know the historical facts pertaining to the fate of the Ottoman Armenians. The campaign was a way of introducing the idea that historical truth was different from that which Turkish society had believed since 1915.²⁸⁰ The text did not use the term genocide; instead it employed the Turkish translation of the Armenian term referring to the genocide, *Medz Yeghern*. The text did not apologize for the annihilation of the Armenians; it was an apology about the denial of the injustice. The authors deliberately chose to bypass the genocide conundrum, as that would have politicized this conscientious act. The campaign was the culmination of a critical historiographic body of knowledge, scholars' initiatives such as the 2005 conference, and the public response to Hrant Dink's assassination. It was the product of changing attitudes, at least among some citizens, regarding the Armenian massacres.²⁸¹

As such, this campaign constitutes a major civil society initiative acknowledging that there is a past wrong against the Armenians that needs apology. In this respect the campaign is an important collective memory project undertaken by memory agents. It accentuates, even though not perfectly, the necessity for the public in Turkey to engage with a problematic past that has been long denied, silenced and, worse, legitimized again and again. The number of signatories attests to the fact that there is some will, albeit

²⁸⁰ "Aydınlardan Kampanya: Ermenilerden Özür Diliyorum," *Radikal*, December 4, 2008, http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/aydinlardan_kampanya_ermenilerden_ozur_diliyorum-911398/.

²⁸¹ Ahmet Insel, "Bu Hareket Beşeriyet Namına Bir Cinayetti: Ermenilerden Özür Dileme Girişiminin Değerlendirilmesi," *Birikim*, February 2009, <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim-yazi/3463/bu-hareket-beseriyet-namina-bir-cinayetti-ermenilerden-ozur-dileme-girisiminin-degerlendirilmesi#.V6ELYpMrLsk>.

minuscule, to deal with this aspect of history. Nevertheless, it is important to note that as part of the backlash against the *I Apologize* campaign, two counter-initiatives went online immediately after the original initiative was launched. “I am expecting an apology” and “We do not apologize” quickly drew a large number of signatories in a couple of days after their launch. These websites were <http://www.ozurbekliyorum.com> and <http://www.ozurdilemiyoruz.biz>. The latter website is still online and as of this writing has 88,317 signatures. The former website is not active anymore, but according to Erbal it had 201,142 signatures as of September 19, 2011.²⁸² The support given to these initiatives dwarfed the support for the original campaign and clearly showed once more where public opinion was in relation to the annihilation of Armenians. The text published by “I expect an apology” campaign adopted one of the denialist arguments in circulation. It read, “I think that all Armenians and their advocates should apologize for the atrocities the Ottoman peoples were subjected to by the Armenians. I declare that I will not overlook these atrocities and I am expecting an apology on behalf of all the Turkish world and the descendants of the Ottomans.”²⁸³ The text inviting signature on the “We do not apologize” website read, “The history is lived, written, and it gave its verdict. There is no guilt we should be ashamed of and there are no guilty on whose behalf we should apologize. Those who dare to initiate this dirty campaign should be aware that no one can

²⁸² Erbal, “Mea Culpas, Negotiations, Apologies: Revisiting the ‘Apology’ of Turkish Intellectuals,” 64.

²⁸³ “Ozur diliyorum” a karsi “Ozur bekliyorum” u baslattilar. Radikal, December 17, 2008, http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/ozur_diliyoruma_karsi_ozur_bekliyorumu_baslattilar-913117 Retrieved on September 30, 2013.

speak on behalf of the Turkish nation and judge it by hiding behind the title of intellectual.”²⁸⁴

The campaign received wide public attention. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan dismissed the apology campaign. He underlined that Turkey had nothing to apologize for. He stated, “maybe they committed genocide and are apologizing for that, but the Turkish Republic does not have a problem like that.”²⁸⁵ Some of the signatories criticized the prime minister for these views.²⁸⁶ Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), stated, “there is neither a crime to be ashamed of nor a criminal on whose behalf we have to apologize. No one has the right to denigrate, accuse, or demand apology for our ancestor’s legacy.”²⁸⁷ While some members of the parliament such as Dengir Mir Mehmet Fırat (AKP – Adana) and Seval Bayındır (DTP – Şırnak) supported the campaign, the general tendency among the nation’s representatives was negative.²⁸⁸ The majority of responses expressed similar denialist points of view and blamed the campaign initiators and signatories with betraying the

²⁸⁴ Original emphasis. <http://www.ozurdilemiyoruz.biz/imzalayanlar.php> Retrieved on September 30, 2013.

²⁸⁵ “Kusura Bakmasınlar özür Dilemiyorum,” *Hürriyet*, December 18, 2008, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/kusura-bakmasinlar-ozur-dilemiyorum-10592628>; Robert Tait, “Turkish PM Dismisses Apology for Alleged Armenian Genocide,” *The Guardian*, December 18, 2008, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/dec/18/armenian-genocide-apology-turkish-rebuttal>.

²⁸⁶ Bawer Çakır, “Özür Dileyenlerden Başbakan’a: İmzalar Vicdanımızın Sesidir,” *Bianet*, December 17, 2008, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/azinliklar/111416-ozur-dileyenlerden-basbakan-a-imzalar-vicdanimizin-sesidir>.

²⁸⁷ “Ortada utanacağımız bir suç ve adına özür dileyeceğimiz bir suçlu yoktur. Hiç kimsenin, mirasçısı olduğumuz ecdat yadigarını aşağılama, suçlu gibi tanımlama ve özür talep etmeye hakkı ve haddi değildir.” Yusuf Ziya Erarslan, “Özür dilemesi gereken Ermenistan’dır,” *İhlas Haber Ajansı*, December 7, 2008, <http://www.ihb.com.tr/haber-ozur-dilemesi-gereken-ermenistandir-45937/>.

²⁸⁸ “Fırat’a Göre Özür Dilemeliyiz,” *Mesaj Haber*, December 17, 2008, http://www.mesajhaber.com/haber.php?haber_id=4242.

Turkish nation.²⁸⁹ Some of the figures who signed the apology text elaborated on their reason for supporting the campaign,²⁹⁰ and other public figures who support the emergence of critical historiography on the Armenian Genocide contributed their reasons for not signing the document.²⁹¹ The campaign resonated with Armenians living in France as a hundred of them responded to the apology initiative with a thank you campaign.²⁹²

Esra Özyürek, a professor of anthropology and the editor of *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, highlighted the significance of this campaign for the coming-to-memory of the Armenian Genocide in contemporary Turkey. “To those long frustrated by Turkey's intractability on the issue, this campaign may appear an inadequate gesture. But it has immense value, educating many Turks about the violence done to Armenians for the first time and enabling those who are ready to come to terms with it.”²⁹³ She stated that even though the campaign deliberately did not use the term genocide and the number

²⁸⁹ Türk Eğitim-Sen Genel Merkezi, “Ermeni Sevdalıları İşbaşında,” *Türk Eğitim Sendikası*, December 16, 2008, http://eski.turkegitimsen.org.tr/haber_goster.php?haber_id=1259; Namık Kemal Zeybek, “Özür Dilemek,” *Radikal*, December 20, 2008, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/namik-kemal-zeybek/ozur-dilemek-913520/>; Erhan Yılmaz, “‘Ermenilerden özür diliyoruz’ kampanyasına tepki,” *İhlas Haber Ajansı*, December 16, 2008, <http://www.ihb.com.tr/haber-ermenilerden-ozur-diliyoruz-kampanyasina-tepki-46897/>; Selda Öztürk Kay, “Türkiye’nin Gerçek Aydınlarından Sözcü Aydınların Kampanyasına Büyük Tepki,” *Toplumsal Düşünce Derneği*, December 10, 2010, <http://toplumsaldd.blogspot.com/2010/12/normal-0-21-false-false-false.html>; Özcan Yeniçeri, “Özür Dilemek Mi?,” *Yeni Çağ Gazetesi*, December 8, 2008, <http://www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/ozur-dilemek-mi-6266yy.htm>.

²⁹⁰ Yasemin Çongar, “Özür Diliyorum, çünkü...,” *Nasname*, accessed August 2, 2016, <http://www.nasname.com/a/ozur-diliyorum--cunku-->.

²⁹¹ Ayşe Hür, “I Apologize for Not Apologizing,” *Armenian Weekly*, April 20, 2009, <http://armenianweekly.com/2009/04/20/i-apologize-for-not-apologizing/>.

²⁹² “Ermenilerden ‘Özür Diliyorum’ İçin Teşekkür Kampanyası,” *Radikal*, January 15, 2009, http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/ermenilerden_ozur_diliyorum_icin_tesekkur_kampanyasi-917126/; Hugh Pope, “‘We Are All Armenians,’” *Wall Street Journal*, April 27, 2009, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB124077768575856957>.

²⁹³ Esra Özyürek, “A Turkish ‘I Apologize’ Campaign to Armenians,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 5, 2009, <http://www.latimes.com/la-oe-ozyurek5-2009jan05-story.html>.

of people who were willing to seek forgiveness was low, the campaign marked an important turning point as it “introduced a ray of hope for reconciliation between Armenians and Turks before the 100th anniversary of the catastrophe comes around.”²⁹⁴ Her comments corresponded with some of the responses from Armenian communities.

The Turkish intellectuals’ apology generated both positive and negative reactions among Armenian circles. Some welcomed the apology as a good first step, while others expressed concern that Turks would try to cover up their responsibility for the Genocide by issuing a simple apology. Armenian critics pointed out several shortcomings in the Turkish statement: First, the apology avoided the term Armenian Genocide by referring to it as the “Great Catastrophe”. Second, it alluded to the year 1915 only, rather than 1915-1923. Third, the apology was issued by individual Turks rather than the Turkish state. Even if the apology emanated from Turkish officials, it could not be viewed as a substitute for reparations and restitution.²⁹⁵

The apology campaign was indeed found inadequate. Aytekin Yıldız, the coordinator of the Confrontation Association (*Yüzleşme Derneği*), questioned why the initiators did not properly name the events as genocide.²⁹⁶ Ayşe Günaysu drew attention to Baskın Oran’s demonization of the term genocide and those who used it. This quote from Oran was highly problematic: “The Prime Minister should be grateful for our campaign. Parliaments around the world were passing Genocide resolutions one after another automatically. This will stop now. The Diaspora has softened. The international media has started to refrain from using the word genocide.” Seen from this perspective, the apology campaign was not personal but political through and through, but in different terms than the politics of recognition. Günaysu pointed at this crucial distinction,

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Harut Sassounian, “Turks’ Apology for Armenian Genocide: Good First Step, but Not Good Enough,” *The Huffington Post*, January 18, 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/harut-sassounian/turks-apology-for-armenia_b_151959.html.

²⁹⁶ “Is Turkey Ready to Apologize for 1915?,” *Hetq*, December 15, 2008, <http://hetq.am/eng/print/4700/>.

We now hear some of the initiators of the campaign trying to use the apology as a means to fight the use of the word Genocide and hamper the work of those who seek the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. They portray those seeking recognition as the twin sisters and brothers of the Turkish fascists, and they present the “Diaspora” as the enemy of any reconciliation.²⁹⁷

Oran’s perspective conveyed a defensive or preemptive intervention, rather than a commitment to the acknowledgment of injustices against the Armenians. Marc Mamigonian and Ayda Erbal provided critical engagement with the campaign within the framework of apology as a way of coming to terms with past injustices. Mamigonian underlined the non-existence of acknowledgement and agency in the statement.

The statement, for better or for worse, is not a call to action—it does not, for example, call upon the Turkish government to do anything, such as ending its massive efforts to deny history. Nor does the apology acknowledge anything; rather, it expresses a non-acceptance of insensitivity and of denial of what it calls “the Great Catastrophe.” Yes, the Armenians were subjected to a “Great Catastrophe” – but by whom? There is a history of denial and insensitivity—but who or what has promoted and continues to promote this?²⁹⁸

Erbal also showed that the apology text failed to meet the minimum requirements of a political apology. In addition, she questioned power relations behind the organization of the campaign and argued that the campaign was Jacobinist in its relationship to the public in Turkey and the Armenians. “In the case of Turkish citizens, both the idea of apologizing for denial and the text are dictated from above without any attempt to broaden the base of participants in drafting or pre-apology deliberation regarding the terms of apology.”²⁹⁹ The exclusion of the Armenians was even more problematic, as

²⁹⁷ Ayşe Günaysu, “About the Apology Campaign,” *Armenian Weekly*, January 10, 2009, <http://armenianweekly.com/2009/01/10/about-the-apology-campaign/>.

²⁹⁸ Marc Mamigonian, “Commentary on the Turkish Apology Campaign,” *Armenian Weekly*, April 21, 2009, <http://armenianweekly.com/2009/04/21/commentary-on-the-turkish-apology-campaign/>.

²⁹⁹ Erbal, “Mea Culpas, Negotiations, Apologies: Revisiting the ‘Apology’ of Turkish Intellectuals,” 92.

The organizers made no effort to get in touch with *representative* bodies of the Armenians to gain an insight into what they really want or need from an apology, or whether they need an apology from individual Turkish citizens at all. Instead, by mandating the term, hence normalizing the discourse at a lower equilibrium point than what genocide entails, by pre-emptively authoring a *public* apology on whose terms the offended and the “offender” did not agree, the campaign organizers created a de facto setting wherein if the offended party (Armenians) rejected the “apology,” they would be cast in a negative light and end up being portrayed as the hostile and aggressive party, despite the fact that preemption of this kind is a symbolically violent endeavor to begin with.³⁰⁰

Laurent Leylekian expressed similar arguments in a speech delivered at a conference in March 2009. Leylekian, then the director of the European Armenian Federation, stated that the AKP government, in clear contrast to Kemalist denial, embarked on a more subtle and pervasive denialist campaign. In this campaign a new strategy emerged, “the use of auxiliary scholars or – to say – the denial without explicit denial.”³⁰¹ The use of these public figures provides three advantages for the Turkish state:

- 1- Their sole existence makes credible the idea that there is a rising pro-European democratic civil society in Turkey which shouldn’t be discouraged by the EU. Even if critical toward Ankara’s policies, the subliminal message released by these people is ‘don’t humiliate Turkey.’
- 2- Specifically on the Genocide, the hubbub they are making derails the recognition process in creating an artificial debate – who is saying what, what for, who is against and why and so on – and in capturing once again this debate in non-political circles. This time, this is even ‘better’ as those circles are purely internal to Turkey and, according to this Turkish view, the Armenians and the whole world should ideally wait for a hypothetical outcome, i.e. for knowing if finally, and to what extent, the Turks and the Turks alone have agreed – or not – that this was a Genocide.
- 3- Last, these people can be conveniently and easily hushed or even crushed by the government if needed.³⁰²

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Laurent Leylekian, “Turkey’s Policies and Holes with Regard to the Armenian Genocide in the Framework of Its EU Accession Prospect,” *Eurotopie*, June 16, 2009, <http://eurotopie.leylekian.eu/2009/06/turkeys-policies-and-holes-with-regard.html>.

³⁰² Ibid.

Criticizing the 2008 Apology campaign, whose initiators included Baskın Oran, Leylekian maintained that

This kind of strategy also allows Turkey to divide Armenians between the so-called “good Armenians” who accept to dialog with these fake friends and the “bad ones” who refuse. What the “good Armenians” don’t understand is that whatever they can say to their dubious friends, whatever they can agree on not with them, they are pinned in a given framework promoted by Ankara.³⁰³

Baskın Oran addressed Leylekian’s criticism in a column he published in *Radikal* newspaper in May 2009.³⁰⁴ Oran first argued that Leylekian belonged to what he construed as the hawkish position among the Armenian diaspora. Responding to Leylekian’s statements, Oran initiated a criticism of two attitudes that he sees as extreme nationalisms. Both the Turkish and Armenian sides of the conflict, for him, have radicals who were invested in entrenched nationalist ideas and who refused to open up towards dialogue. In his critique of Leylekian, Oran stated that the latter was afraid of losing the status quo that works in favor of the hawkish position. Oran stated that if Turkey would soften its denial or stop its “idiotic” denial, Tashnak members like Leylekian would lose their major mainstay.³⁰⁵ If denial would disappear, the term genocide would disappear too. For that reason, Oran deduced, radical Armenians attacked public opinion leaders who promoted dialogue, like him.³⁰⁶

It is possible to see, in Oran’s perspective, reflections of a defensive administration of allowed discourses and distinction between “good” and “bad” Armenians. In this perspective, politically assertive and claim making Armenians, who were mostly in the diaspora, were dismissed as legitimate interlocutors. The

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Baskın Oran, “Leylekian ile Leylekgillere Dair,” *Radikal*, May 24, 2009, http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal2/leylekian_ile_leylekgillere_dair-937405/.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

establishment intellectual and activist nexus in Turkey preferred rather to communicate and collaborate with apolitical Armenians in Turkey and abroad. Such a choice follows structurally unequal positions and reproduces Armenians' weakness.³⁰⁷

What this preemptive or defensive attitude showed was that no matter how much the figures belonging to the dominant group, who came to "own" the country after the genocide, repudiated nationalism and argue that Turkey was now in a post-nationalist era, inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations and interactions were still shaped by nationalist sentiments. It has been easy to detect and criticize overt and aggressive forms of nationalism. The struggle against this form of nationalism has been one of the most crucial public duties in Turkey because nationalism is still one of the dominant ideological frameworks. The critique of nationalism, as it has been practised in Turkey, has important limitations. Within left-liberal circles, there is a growing sense that nationalism as an ideology has been transcended. Nationalism has been politically and morally convicted. In this post-nationalist atmosphere, making political and cultural claims related to a specific ethno-religious group is quickly stigmatized as nationalism or pursuing a nationalist agenda. This stigmatization aims at Armenians demanding justice as well. Such a negative conception glosses over the fact that genocide perpetrators targeted Armenians as a distinct ethno-religious group. Repudiating Armenian collective calls for recognition and redress as nationalism without acknowledging the historical specificity of Armenian victimization blurs the distinction between perpetrators and victims. It also delegitimizes claims for justice.

Some views of the initiators of the apology campaign also raised questions about how they conceived this dialogue framework. In an interview about his dialogue with

³⁰⁷ Erbal and Suciyan, "One Hundred Years of Abandonment."

Michel Marian, Ahmet Insel stated, “frankly, I think that we should not start from the point of satisfying the Armenians. More than satisfying the Armenians, we need to satisfy our conscience.”³⁰⁸ As it emerged, speaking with the Armenians consisted of addressing our own conscience. The memory work or the coming-to-memory these influential public figures advocated was a process for and between the Turks and Muslims in Turkey. It seems that such a conception of dialogue was closer to being a way of mending the self-image of the majority rather than meeting the demands of the victim group. This is a problematic position because it opens the door to the risk for counter-memory initiatives to reproduce the suppression of memories of past atrocities.

The Restoration of the Habab Fountains

In 2011, the Hrant Dink Foundation released an international call for participants in a restoration project. The call was addressed to young people, inviting them to take part in the restoration of the fountains located in Habab village in the Kovancılar district of Elazığ province in Turkey. The fountains were examples of multi-vein Armenian fountain architecture. The project was conceived not only as construction, but also as “a model for coming to terms with the past through involving young people and the elderly, the inhabitants of the village, the architects, and the restoration team as well as project partners”. Young participants were to stay in the village at least two weeks consecutively and take part in the construction as well as in oral history workshops with the locals.³⁰⁹

Young people from Armenian, Kurdish and Turkish communities responded to the call

³⁰⁸ “Ben açıkçası Ermenilerin tatmini noktasından hareket edilmemesi gerektiğini düşünüyorum. Ermenileri tatmin etmekten ziyade kendi vicdanımızı tatmin etmeliyiz.” Insel, Ahmet Insel ile Söyleşi: Milliyetçilik Sorunlu Bir “Onur”dur.

³⁰⁹ Hrant Dink Foundation, “Open Call for Participation in the Restoration of Habab Fountains,” accessed August 3, 2016, [http://www.armenianchurch.co.uk/documents/DINK-Habap_participation\(1\).pdf](http://www.armenianchurch.co.uk/documents/DINK-Habap_participation(1).pdf).

and volunteered to take part in this inclusive, bottom up, and collaborative civil society initiative aimed at bringing back to life two fountains in deep Anatolia built by Armenians.

In the aftermath of the genocide, the fountains had become obsolete and turned into ruins. As such the fountains constituted a site of memory where the memory of the Armenian presence in Anatolia and its destruction during the genocide was crystallized. These fountains were built in the first half of the seventeenth century and constitute examples of Anatolian/Armenian multi-niche fountain style. Habab (Havav in Armenian) village, inhabited mostly by Armenians prior to 1915, had three churches, one monastery, two schools and two fountains.³¹⁰ However, the genocide irreversibly changed the demography in replacing the Armenian inhabitants with Turkish and Kurdish people. In addition to the extermination and deportation of the Armenian population, their heritage was also left to disappear. Nothing remained of the schools and churches, and the monastery was in ruins.

³¹⁰ “Upper and Lower Fountains Re-Opened,” *Bianet*, November 30, 2011, <http://www.bianet.org/english/minorities/134411-upper-and-lower-fountains-re-opened>.

Illustration 5 - Ruins of the Armenian Monastery in Habab
(Credit: Esen Egemen Ozbek)

The fountains themselves were about to collapse before the intervention. As evidence of the cultural destruction and erasure of Armenian memories from the land, the fountains' deterioration was part of the genocidal destruction.

The predicament of the Habap fountains, physically and symbolically, came to an end when human rights lawyer and author Fethiye Çetin initiated the idea of renovating them in 2009. Fethiye Çetin had a personal connection to the village because it was the village where her grandmother, Heranuş, had lived as an Armenian child until she was nine years old. During the genocide, she was adopted by Muslims and had to convert to

Islam in order to save her life with a new name, Seher.³¹¹ Fethiye Çetin told the story of her grandmother and how painful it was for her to reveal her identity to her grandchildren in her memoir *Anneannem* [*My Grandmother*] (2004).³¹² The connection between the fountains and the memoir, which itself had become a turning point in the history of the coming-to-memory of the genocide in Turkey, added another important layer to the discussion of collective memory in the public sphere.

Çetin's initiative – joined by Zeynep Taşkın, supported by the Hrant Dink foundation, Chrest Foundation, Open Society Foundation, General Energy, private donors, and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism – paved the way for the restoration of the fountains from August 2011 to November 2011. The initiative, rather than devising only a physical renovation project, planned the whole endeavor as a dialogue and coming to terms with the past process.³¹³ This was an active, participatory, and dialogic memorialization work. The project process also produced a documentary, *Habab Fountains: The Story of a Restoration*,³¹⁴ both witnessing the restoration process and also unearthing memories of the genocide through interviews with local residents. These interviews further contributed to the memory work. Armenian volunteers and scholars Anoush Suni and Shushan Kerovpyan later elaborated on their experience in the restoration and its significance for the coming-to-memory of the genocide.³¹⁵ On

³¹¹ Çiğdem Mater, "'Anneannem' Heranuş'un Çeşmeleri," *Bianet*, November 29, 2011, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/134362-anneannem-heranus-un-cesmeleri>.

³¹² This crucial book will be discussed in further detail below.

³¹³ "Restoration of Armenian Fountain in the Village of Habab," *Memorialize Turkey*, accessed August 3, 2016, <http://www.memorializeturkey.com/en/memorial/restoration-of-armenian-fountain-in-habab-village/>.

³¹⁴ Dilek Aydın, *Habab Fountains: The Story of a Restoration*, Documentary, (2012), <http://www.imdb.com/video/wab/vi576890649/>.

³¹⁵ Shushan Kerovpyan, "Stones as Bearers of Memory : The Armenian Architectural Heritage in Turkey" (Armenian Studies Colloquium, Los Angeles, February 28, 2014),

November 25, 2011 a ceremony was organized to celebrate the re-opening of these fountains. The project team, media, and local administration joined Armenian guests in the ceremony.³¹⁶ On May 27, 2012, a larger festival was organized in order to underline the significance of this memory-site for public awareness and for facing the past.³¹⁷

Illustration 6 - Fethiye Çetin delivers a speech at the Habab Fountains Festival
(Credit: Esen Egemen Ozbek)

https://www.academia.edu/6318338/Stones_as_Bearers_of_Memory_the_Armenian_Architecture_I_Heritage_in_Turkey; Anoush Suni, “Renovation as Resistance: The Restoration of the Habab Fountains” (Hrant Dink Memorial Workshop: New Forms of Social Protest, Istanbul, May 25, 2012).

³¹⁶ “Upper and Lower Fountains Re-Opened.”

³¹⁷ “Habap’ın Çeşmelerinde Barış Şenliği,” *Bianet*, May 28, 2012,

<http://www.bianet.org/bianet/azinliklar/138680-habap-in-cesmelerinde-baris-senligi>; “Habab’ın çeşmeleri Barış Halaylarıyla Mutlu,” *Agos*, May 28, 2012,

<http://www.Agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/1519/hababin-cesmeleri-baris-halaylariyla-mutlu>.

Hundreds of people from Habap and other villages, from Turkey and abroad, including the present author, came together to witness the recovery of a part of Armenian heritage, to celebrate the reconstruction of a cultural continuity resisting extinction, and to be part of a broader process of coming to terms with a complex and painful past. Touring in the area, the guests came across other ruins of Armenian heritage as well.

Illustration 7 - The ruins of an Armenian church near Palu, Elazığ
(Credit: Esen Egemen Ozbek)

Cultural Products: Discovering the Armenians as a New Site of Memory

Another area where the coming to memory of the genocide has been recoverable has been cultural products dealing with the history of the Armenians in what became Turkey. Resembling a cultural turn in French history in the 1970s, what Henry Rousso

termed as “la mode retro,” the 1990s witnessed a memory boom when it came to the Ottoman past and its legacies in Turkey and other geographies previously forming part of the imperial imagination. This retro mode, which coincided with the proclamation of the Armenian Republic in early 1991, increased public interest in the Armenian community of Turkey. The decade of violence against Turkish diplomats between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s also contributed to this attention.³¹⁸ As an example of this interest, national newspaper *Güneş* ran a series on the Turkish Armenians by Nilüfer Güngörmüş and Manuel Çıtak in December 1990. The title of the series was *The Largest Non-Muslim Minority of Turkey: Armenians*.³¹⁹ The series was based on 24 interviews with the members of Istanbul’s Armenian community. The first installment of the series is copied below.³²⁰ In the mid-1990s, another national newspaper, *Hürriyet*, published a series

³¹⁸ For a series of newspaper articles on the Anatolian Armenians, please see Ufuk Güldemir, “Anadolu’daki Ermeni vatandaşlarımız,” August 11, 1981, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/20122>; Ufuk Güldemir, “Anadolu’daki Ermeni vatandaşlarımız,” August 1981, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/20121>; Ufuk Güldemir, “Anadolu’daki Ermeni vatandaşlarımız,” August 1981, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/20119>; Ufuk Güldemir, “Anadolu’daki Ermeni vatandaşlarımız,” 9999, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/20094>; Ufuk Güldemir, “Anadolu’daki Ermeni vatandaşlarımız,” August 1981, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/20096>.

³¹⁹ Nilüfer Güngörmüş and Manuel Çıtak, “Türkiye’nin en kalabalık gayrimüslim azınlığı Ermeniler:Cemaat kabuğuna çekildi,” December 9, 1990, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19646>; Nilüfer Güngörmüş and Manuel Çıtak, “Türkiye’nin en kalabalık gayrimüslim azınlığı Ermeniler:Çeşitlilik kültürü renklendirir,” December 13, 1990, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19679>; Nilüfer Güngörmüş and Manuel Çıtak, “Türkiye’nin en kalabalık gayrimüslim azınlığı Ermeniler:Önce geçim sonra kültür,” *Güneş*, December 12, 1990, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19696>; Nilüfer Güngörmüş and Manuel Çıtak, “Türkiye’nin en kalabalık gayrimüslim azınlığı Ermeniler:Cemaatin yeni dünya arayışı,” December 11, 1990, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19708>; Nilüfer Güngörmüş and Manuel Çıtak, “Türkiye’nin en kalabalık gayrimüslim azınlığı Ermeniler:Anadolu’da son Ermeniler,” December 15, 1990, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19655>; Nilüfer Güngörmüş and Manuel Çıtak, “Türkiye’nin en kalabalık gayrimüslim azınlığı Ermeniler:Dış Ermeniler’de Çözülme,” *Güneş*, December 14, 1990, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19658>.

³²⁰ The distortion in the image appears to be the result of its repohotographing for an archive. The author did not have access to the original print copy to fix the distortion.

entitled *Our Armenians*.³²¹ The series introduced Turkey's Armenian community to readers belonging to the majority. As encounters between journalists from Turkey and Armenian intellectuals in the diaspora increased, journalists began to introduce these intellectuals to the public in Turkey and suggested building dialogue.³²²

³²¹ The writer was able to access only one installment of the series. Berran Tözer, "Bizim Ermeniler:Cemaatte suni teneffüs," *Hürriyet*, March 12, 1995, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/19654>.

³²² Çalışlar, "Saat 1915'te durdu."

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin vatandaşı olan, burada doğan, büyüyen ve ölen Ermeniler, çoğunluğun ilgisizliğinden yakınıyor

Emfaat kabuğuna çekildi

TÜRKİYE'NİN EN KALABALIK
GAYRİMÜSLİM AZINLIĞI
ERMENİLER

İnceleme: Nilüfer Güngörmüş- Manuel Çıtak

Türkiye için Ermeni sözcüğü anı, ifade ediyor? 1980'lerin başlarında patlayan bombalar, akan kanlar, öldürülen diplomatlar geliyordu aklı. Sonraları Batı ülkelerinde acıları, acılmak istenen "Soykırım anıları" ile anılır oldu. Ardından ABD Senatosu'nun, artık külelenmiş devime "Soykırım" Ermeni Soykırımı Karar Tasarısı" ile yapıt kalıcı oldu. En son olarak da Sovyetler Birliği'ndeki değişimler, milliyetçi eğilimlerle birlikte anılmaya başlandı. Ermeni sözcüğü Dağlık Karabağ bölgesi, Azeri-Ermeni çatışmaları, Er-

menistan Cumhuriyeti'nin başımsızlık girişimleri... Bütün bu hengamede Tür-

kiye Cumhuriyeti'nin Ermeni vatandaşları unutuldu. Onun nüfus kâğıdını, pasaportunu

tasıyan, onun kanunlarına tabi olan, vergisini veren, askere giden, Türkiye'de doğan, büyüyen, ölen Ermeniler, gündelik hayatın zorunlu karşılımları dışında ezici çoğunluğun genel bir ilgisizliğine muhatap oldular. Zaten, büyük ölçüde kendilerinin dışında gelişen hasas dönemlerde ne yapacaklarını şaşırmasındaki Ermeniler de bu ilgisizliği azınlık psikolojisinin eğilimleriyle yorumlayarak, gitgide kendi kabuklarına daha bir kapandılar.

Sonuçta, yıllar önceden beri kendilerine has özellikler taşıyan toplumlar, ilgisizlik

münde bazı alanlarda sivrilen bir cemaat, yerini, ekonomik zorluklar nedeniyle giderek ıradanlaşan, öz kültüründen kopmak kaygısıyla başka kültürlerden uzak durmaya başlayan insanlar topluluğuna çekildi. Bir ölçüde Türkiye'deki Ermeni cemaatinin de portresini çizmeye çalıştık. Son dönemlerin ürünü olduğu kuşku götürmeyen, kültürlerarası ko-

pukluk sürecinin nedenlerini soruşturduk. Cemaatin bugüne kadar "Yabancılar" tarafından bilinmeyen, belki bilinmek de istenmeyen işleyişleri, sorunları hakkında bilgi edinmeye çalıştık.

Böyle bir amaç bütünü için, dediği röportaj önerimiz, görüşümüzü birçok kişiye önce attık, bazılarına tedirgin etti ama sonuçta tümü kapılarını bizlere açtı. Konuşmalar, anlat-

YARIN: İstanbul-Anadolu uyumsuzluğu

Sanatkar bir ailenin devamı: Toto Karaca

Çok az kişi bilir bir zamanların en ünlü operet oyuncularından, tiyatro ve sinema dünyasının ünlü simalarından Toto Karaca'nın gerçek adının İbrahim bir Ermeni olan babası kızıma doğumunu göremeden ölmüş. Çocukluğu tiyatro kulislerinde, Felekyan Kardeşler'in arasında geçen, Ona sanatmaya meyilli Mari Felekyan annesidir. Komedi rolleri oyuncudur. İyireli, Roza Felekyan ise dram rolleri. İrmak'ın dedesi de şairdir, dayısı ise tiyatro oyuncusu ve kemancı virtüözü.

Toto lakabını annesi takar. Onun 78 yıllık yaşamı yalnızca Türk gösteri sanatlarının değil, İstanbul'un da yakın tarihine çok tutar. Eğitimi temel olarak annesinin verdiği, özel derstir. Bu arada Eseyan ve Kuledibi British School'dan mezun olur. İngilizce, Fransızca öğrenir. Mahalle arkadaşları Hayriyye sayesinde eski yazıyı öğrenir. Karşıyığında o arabadan Ermenice öğrenir. Bir de Rusçası vardır, çok mukem-

mel olmasa da konuşulanları rahatlıkla anlar. Toto Karaca'nın ilk gençlik yılları Taksim Ayaspa'da geçmiştir. 1930'dan itibaren çeşitli topluluklarda sahneye çıkmış. Ermeni cemaatinde ender rastlanılan bir karar alıp, bir Müslümanla, kendisi gibi tiyatroya olan Ahmet Karaca ile evlenmiştir. Fakat bu birliktir Karaca Operet'i kurmuşlar.

Karaca çiftinin tek bir çocuğu var. Şöhret konusundaki onları geçen yarıncı Cem Karaca, 12 Eylül 1980'de birinci oğlunun yurtdışında kalması, ardından vatandaşlık çıkartılması yüzünden bir süreli gılgın yaşamış. Toto Karaca, Sorunlar hatta bu da çok ama çok sevinmiş.

Toto Karaca'nın yaşamı her zaman kaybetmediğini, birçok insanın belleklerine kazınmış o keskin bakışların muhafaza ettiğini gördüğünde anıyırsınız. Yıllar önce jubilelerini yapıp sahnelere veda etmiş olmasına rağmen, bir gece önce televizyonda gördüğünüz sanırsınız onu.

Toto Karaca'nın 78 yıllık yaşamı yalnız Türk gösteri sanatlarının değil, İstanbul'un da yakın tarihine çok tutar.

Bir tiyatro dergisi çıkaran Agop Ayvaz, eski bir oyuncu 'Benimle birlikte Kulis de bitecek'

Agop Ayvaz'la Sığır'daki Ermeni Mezarlığı'nda, Ermeni ve Türk tiyatrolarına emelî geçmiş sanatçıların mezarı başında görüştük. Leblebic Hor'un yazarı Arşak Benliyan, Darülfünun'daki rejisörlerinden Agop Madatyan, Roza ve Mari Felekyan Kardeşler... Agop Ayvaz son yıllarda buraları sık ziyaret eder olmuş. Gerçek dostlarının, tiyatro dünyasının artık bütünü buraya taşındığını, bütün o isimlerle birlikte tiyatromun da olup çıktığını söylüyor. Onu hâlâ tiyatroya bağlayan bir tek Kulis dergisi kalmış. Kulis Türkiye'de yayına hiç ara vermeden devam eden eski tiyatro dergisi. Agop Ayvaz 1946'da iki arkadaşıyla birlikte çıkarmaya başlamış dergiyi. Daha birinci yılın sonunda gelmeden iki arkadaş da ayrılmış bir daha kimseyi yanına almadan dergiyi bugüne kadar getirmiş. Cemiye derginin tirajının 3 bini bulduğu günler olmuş, hatta bir dönem hem Ermenice hem Türkçe iki kulis çıkarmış Agop Ayvaz. Ama tiyatromun, özellikle Ermeni tiyatrosunun parlık günleri biteli çok oluyor.

Agop Ayvaz'ın tiyatroya ilgisini yalnızca dergisiyle sınırlı değil aynı zamanda eski bir oyuncu. Gençliğinde her yıl profesyonel sahnelerde oynamış. Yılların seyyar tiyatroları da İstanbul'un bütün sahnelerinde teker teker dolatıklarını söylüyor. 1946'da amatörlerle seyyar uzun yıllar kendi topluluğuyla bu sanatı yaşatmaya çalışmış ancak Ermenide çoğu eskinde de okumaya olan ilginin azalması, maddiyatçı bir dün-

Agop Ayvaz'ın amacı derginin 50. senesini yapıp, yayını durdurmak. Yılların önem kazanması onun çabalarını bir bakıma bosa çıkmış. Yetirdiğini sandığı gençlerin her seferinde evlenerek, bir işe girerek tiyatrodan ayrıldığını görüyor o da bu işten vazgeçmiş. Agop Ayvaz'ın uzun yıllar Kulis'te yanyana yürüttüğü mezbahasında şimdi oğlu çalışıyor. O ise kişi Bonmonti'de, yazın adadaki evinde çoğu eski Türkçe kitaplarıyla başbaşa, dergiyi yayına hazırlamak için.

Ani İpekçaya karma bir aileden geliyor. Annesi Rum, babası Ermeni, annesinin ise Rus asıllı.

İstanbul Şehir Tiyatrosu'nun ünlü oyuncusu Ani İpekçaya: 'Farklı kültürler zenginliktir'

İstanbullu tiyatro izleyicilerinin geçirdiği sezon son olarak Sam Shepard'ın Yahşi Batı adlı oyununda izlediği Ani İpekçaya İstanbul Şehir Tiyatroları'nın en eski oyuncularından. 30 yılı aşkın tiyatro hayatında Coşkun Aral'ın Medea'sı kadar her türden oyunda ilginç yorumları olan, en çok Anı, Çehov ve Maksim Gor'ki oynamayı seven Ani İpekçaya işinde çok disiplinli. Prova-oyun-prova-oyun... "Bazı insanların başka üşşeler oluyor, bilimsel olarak buna benzin olmadı".

Yine kendisi gibi tiyatroya olan, bogandığı eş Çetin İpekçaya'dan olma kızları

Etiler'de oturuyor. Bir Türk-levantenin hayatında sorun çıkarmadığını, kızlarının da hiç bocalamadığını söylüyor. Zaten karma aile yapısının yansıması değil Ani İpekçaya. Annesi Rum, babası Ermeni. Annesinin de Rus asıllı. Bir ailede farklı din ve kültürlerin bir araya gelmesi daha çok tercih, daha çok bayram, daha zengin sofralar olarak görüyor ve seviyor.

Hayata bağlı olduğu kadar geçmişe ve geleceğe de düşkün. Annesinden gördüğü öğrendiği şeyler sürdürmek istiyor. Kendisinden sonraki kuşaklara, kendisinden önceki kuşakların nasıl yaşadığını aktarabilmek arzusun-

da. Otuden beri alle icinde-otak dil Türkçe. Ancak sanatçı gerektiklerinde Rumca ve Ermeniceyi çok iyi kullanabiliyor. Dine bakışını işe şöyle özetliyor: "Hristiyan olmaktan çok memnunuz. Kiliseye gidecek fırsat bulursam kaçırım. Ermenice dua ederim. Noel'de, yıla-şında evde olmak bir şansır benim için". Kazım üzerine ültiriyor Ani İpekçaya. Kendisinin hiç kendisi de Avrupa'da yaşıyor. Kazım da Türkiye'de yaşamamış istemiyor. Son olarak, sunları söylüyor: "Ölümün olan sanatçıdır. Hayır. Eski ölümün arkasında mutlu bir çocuk bırakmadır."

Marmara gazetesinin yöneticisi Rober Haddacıyan ödüllü bir romancı 'Anadilimiz önemini yitiriyor'

Marmara gazetesinin yöneticisi ve yazar olan Rober Haddacıyan 64 yaşında. 1940'da Sanatçıların kulu-şun gazetesinin başına kurulumun özel nedenlerle uğramaması üzerine 22 yıl önce çim ve hep amatör bir ruhla bugüne kadar getirmiş. Dünyapında ofset sisteminin ilk en gazete olan Marmara'yı oğlu ve teknik bir ekiple 60 aboneye iletiriyor. Gazetecilikle geçinmeyen Haddacıyan uzun yıllar bir kütüphane adına defalarca ödüllü katmış. Ermeni'den çıktuktan sonra da kendini tamamen gazete ve genç yaşlarda bağladığı yazılarıyla vermiş. Haddacıyan iki öykü kitabı, üç oyun ve Alek Menekyan edebiyat ödüllü kazanan "Tavan" adlı bir roman yaz-

mış. Elinde piposu, üniversitede felsefe eğitimi gördüğünü, ünlü varoluşçu düşünür Jean Paul Sartre'in oldukça etkin-ge kaldığını söylüyor. İlk edebiyat çalışmalarını Türkiye yapmış ama Ermenice dışında yazılamamış şieri yok.

Kültür ve edebiyatla ilgili her Ermeni aydın gibi Rober Haddacıyan da anadilinin kaçınılmaz bir şekilde Türkiye karşısında önemini yitirmesine hayıflanıyor. Bu konuda Ermeni okullarına Türkiye devletinin bakışını eleştiriyor: "Millet Eğitimi'nin okullarına gönderdiği Türkçe öğretmenleri Ermenice konuşmaması yanlış bir yargıya sahiptir. Onlar azınlık çocuklarının Türkiye'yi iyi bilmediğini sanarak, mültekele özet Türkçe öğretmek gerektiğini düşünüyorlar. Bunların Türk-

çe kadar Ermenice de öğrenmeleri gerektiklerini biliyorlar, öğretmenler gerek diyorlar. Okullarda 'Ermenice konuşmayın' diyecek kadar ıleri götürdükleri de oluyor bu tutum. Halbuki onlar bunu demese de zaten gençler Ermenice konuşmaya pek ıleriyeleli yok. Bir kere, bir meleketelele televizyon hangi dilde konuşuyor, o meleketelele insanlar hakim olan dil olur."

Edebiyat konusunda yeniliklere son derece açık biri olan Haddacıyan özel yaşamında geleneklere son derece bağlı. Oldukça geniz bir ailenin sefi. Tarabya'da bir evinin içi dairesi Haddacıyan ailesi tarafından paylaşıyor. Oğulları, geleneklere torunlarıyla her birikte. Ailenin kadınları çalışıyor.

Rober Haddacıyan dünya çapında ofset sisteminin geçen ilk gazete olan Marmara gazetesinin yöneticisi

The mid-2000s marked the emergence of a new set of cultural products, such as biographies and exhibitions, where the Armenians of Turkey have received public attention. It was as if Turkey was rediscovering these subaltern communities and their past experiences as if they were foreigners. The broader context of this interest has been a general nostalgia and yearning for the Ottoman imperial past and grandeur. The 1990s and 2000s in Turkey saw a growing popular interest in the Ottoman/Turkish past. Popular history books, soap operas, and movies were primary vehicles of memory. The majority of these products targeted ordinary consumers, invoking glorious moments of Ottoman/Turkish past to kindle fantasies of Turkish/Muslim dominance in the Middle East and the Balkans.

Within this Ottoman revival moment, the past imperial cosmopolitan life where various ethno-religious communities were living under the Ottoman rule was fondly depicted. These representations of the past were highly romanticized and idealized. All the constituting communities of the empire were portrayed as equal, and life under the imperial rule was portrayed as harmonious, peaceful, and egalitarian. In this representation, ethno-religious minorities were tolerated and were able to continue their lives in their own ways. This revaluation of multiculturalism and diversity, at least interpreted and idealized in this way, was the result of identity politics in Turkey. The image of Ottoman society as a mosaic of various separate cultures living in total accord has been reproduced again and again in this period.

Although these representations of Ottoman past failed to depict historical realities, growing popular interest in the Ottoman past created favorable conditions for works on

Armenian experiences under the Ottoman rule.³²³ One of the most transformative works in this genre was Fethiye Çetin's *Anneannem* [*My Grandmother*] (2004), mentioned earlier.³²⁴ In this book, Çetin told the story of her grandmother who converted to Islam in order to save her life during the genocide. She kept this secret all her life, until her last days. On her deathbed, she told her story to her grandchildren. This book became very influential in shedding light on a "forgotten" aspect of the genocide. Moreover, the book became very popular in Turkey and also reached many Armenians in the diaspora through translations. Çetin's work led the way for the publication of other life-story narratives of Armenians in Turkey. A new venue and discourse on memory has since emerged.

The discovery of the Armenian ancestry who survived the genocide by converting to Islam, being forced to abandon their identity and language, and changing their names, presents a return of the genocide memory in a literal sense. The shushed history and hidden identity of survivors revealed the layers of violence the perpetrators inflicted. As mentioned before, the Armenian genocide was not only an attempt at physical extermination of Armenians, but also an onslaught on Armenianness, as an identity and as a being. The genocide and its denial obliterated that identity and forced its survivors to stop being who they were. In this regard, the narratives of survivors, as transmitted to

³²³ Earlier examples of this genre are: İsmail Arıkan, *Mahallemizdeki Ermeniler* [Armenians in Our Neighborhood]. İstanbul: İletişim, 2001; Hagop Mintzuri, *Atina, Tuzun Var Mı?* [Athens, Do You Have Some Salt?]. İstanbul: Aras, 2000; Hüdavendigar Onur, *Ermeni Portreleri: Milet-I Sadıkadan Hayk'in Çocuklarına* [Armenian Portraits: From the Loyal Community to the Children of Hayk]. İstanbul: Burak, 1999; Yervant Sirmakeşliyan, *Balıkçı Sevdası* [Passion of Fishermen]. İstanbul: Aras, 2000; Krikor Zohrab, *Hayat, Olduğu Gibi* [Life, as It Is]. Ankara: Ayraç, 2000.

³²⁴ Fethiye Çetin, *Anneannem : Anı*, 1. basım. (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2004); Fethiye Çetin, *My grandmother: a memoir*, trans. Maureen Freely (London: Verso, 2008).

their descendants, constitute a significant and genuine coming to memory that overcomes the symbolic violence of identity assassination.

This new vector of memory in the form of stories of second or third generation descendants of survivors discovering that some or all of their ancestors were born as Armenians, but had to Turkify themselves, has since helped shape the public memory of genocide in Turkey. Following the footsteps of Fethiye Çetin's personal narrative of discovering her Armenianness, a number of life story accounts have been published since the mid-2000s. In May 2005 Baskin Oran published *M.K. Adlı Çocuğun Tehcir Anıları: 1915 ve Sonrası* (*Deportation Memories of a Child Called M.K.: 1915 and Aftermath*).³²⁵ The book is the memoirs of Manuel Kırkyaşaryan, who was 9 when he experienced and survived the genocide. İrfan Palalı published his *Tehcir Çocukları*, bringing together memoirs and fiction in a historical novel, in the same year and contributed to this burgeoning body of literature.³²⁶ In 2006 Erhan Başyurt's *Ermeni Evlatlıklar*, focusing on Armenian children who were given up for adoption during the genocide, was published.³²⁷ One of the most remarkable examples of this genre has been *Torunlar* (*Grandchildren*).³²⁸ This book, consisting of interviews with youth who discovered they have Armenian ancestors, contributed to the coming to memory of the genocide through the return of Armenian identity into life and public discourses. This discovery ties with Marianne Hirsch's "postmemory" as a mode of inter-generational transmission of

³²⁵ Manuel Kırkyaşaryan and Baskin Oran, "M. K. " *adlı çocuğun tehcir anıları: 1915 ve sonrası* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005).

³²⁶ İrfan Palalı, *Tehcir çocukları: Nenem Bir Ermeniymiş* (İstanbul: Su yayınları, 2005).

³²⁷ Erhan Başyurt, *Ermeni Evlatlıklar: Saklı Kalmış Hayatlar*, 1. baskı. (İstanbul: Karakutu, 2006).

³²⁸ Ayşe Gül Altınay and Fethiye Çetin, *Torunlar*, 1. basım. (İstanbul: Metis, 2009); Ayşe Gül Altınay and Fethiye Çetin, *The Grandchildren: The Hidden Legacy of "Lost" Armenians in Turkey*, trans. Maureen Freely (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 2014).

memories,³²⁹ but with significant differences. Slowly people began to discover the forgotten history of thousands of Armenian women and children who were, in most cases, forcibly converted to Islam. There is now a growing scholarly and popular literature on this topic. One significant example was the oral history project led by Leyla Neyzi and Hranush Kharatyan-Arakelyan. Consisting of in-depth life story interviews conducted by researchers from Armenia and Turkey, the project highlighted the afterlife of memories. The interviews were compiled in *Speaking to One Another: Personal Memories of the Past in Armenia and Turkey* (2010).³³⁰ Another example of this discovery was *Kılıç Artıkları: Türkiye'nin Gizli ve Müslümanlaşmış Ermenileri* (*Remnants of the Sword: Hidden and Islamized Armenians of Turkey*),³³¹ published by the Hrant Dink Foundation in November 2013. The book included papers presented in the international conference on Islamized Armenians held on November 2-3, 2013.³³²

Discovery stories were not limited to Armenians living in Turkey. Slowly, accounts of diaspora Armenians and Armenians living in Armenia emerged. An important example of this introduction of narratives of Armenians living abroad into the Turkish public was journalist Ece Temelkuran's serialized articles published in 2006 and later published as a book in 2008. In May 2008, Ece Temelkuran's *Ağrı'nın Derinliği*³³³ (*The Depth of Ararat*) was published. It reached 16 reprints in 2013. Translated into

³²⁹ Marianne Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 14, no. 1 (2001): 5–37.

³³⁰ Neyzi, Kharatyan-Arakelyan, and Simonyan, *Speaking to One Another*.

³³¹ Laurence Ritter and Max Sivaslian, *Kılıç Artıkları: Türkiye'nin gizli ve Müslümanlaşmış Ermenileri* (Istanbul: Hrant Dink Vakfı Yayınları, 2013).

³³² "Müslümanlaş(tırıl)mış Ermeniler Konferansı," *Hrant Dink Vakfı*, November 14, 2013, <http://www.hrantdink.org/?Detail=753>.

³³³ Ece Temelkuran, *Ağrı'nın derinliği* (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2008).

English, it was published by Verso in 2010 with the title *Deep Mountain*.³³⁴

Temelkuran's work is promoted as one a delicate and successful dialogue across the Turkish-Armenian divide. The work consists of Temelkuran's interviews with Armenians in Armenia, France and the U.S. The Armenian and French parts were serialized in the Turkish daily *Milliyet* in May and November 2006. The interviews and the book received mixed reactions in Turkey, ranging from nationalist critiques to appraisals as a model for a new "language" in which the conflictual aspects of Turkish and Armenian relations could be discussed.³³⁵ However, the book received more sustained critiques that questioned Temelkuran's relation with the Armenians she interviewed in terms of power asymmetries and the representational frames she employed while introducing the Armenians.³³⁶ Her account suffered heavily from blindness or deliberate oversight of post-colonial power relations between the Armenians and the dominant group in Turkey and from the repeated dichotomization of Armenians as good and bad, a governmental practice that reproduced post-genocidal inequalities.³³⁷

³³⁴ Ece Temelkuran, *Deep Mountain: Across the Turkish-Armenian Divide* (London; New York: Verso, 2010).

³³⁵ Amberin Zaman, "Ağrı'nın Derinliği," *Taraf*, June 8, 2008.

³³⁶ G.M. Goshgarian, "Genocide Denial Light," *New Politics*, Winter 2011, <http://newpol.org/content/genocide-denial-light>; Burcu Gürsel, "Queens of Hearts: Round and About 'Deep Mountain', Etc.," *Armenian Weekly*, December 11, 2010, <http://armenianweekly.com/2010/12/11/queens-of-hearts/>.

³³⁷ The way Temelkuran represents and addresses some of the issues reveals that there is need for more critical self-reflection among the people from Turkey who are willing to actively participate in the dialogue, because in the absence of self-reflection the dialogue may turn easily to a monologue. This is the case in Temelkuran's account. She sets out to tackle the ignorance and prejudices regarding the Armenians within the Turkish public sphere. She tries to listen, which is a highly charged term in this book, and understand them. Based on the assumption that both sides of the conflict, Turks and Armenians, have their own hardliner nationalists, she is trying to discover alternative voices. In search of these alternative voices, she tries to differentiate between those who "shout" and those who speak in "hushed voices." The diaspora Armenians who talks about "genocide", politics, lobbying, recognition, and reparations are quickly grouped in the "shouters" category. She quickly dismisses their views and demands because that "combative" language, which she ascribes to men in most cases, does not take into consideration the pain and

Publisher, journalist and human rights activist Osman Köker initiated the movement towards unearthing the visual archive of Armenian presence and history in Turkey. Köker published a book drawing on Orlando Carlo Calumeno's postcard archive.³³⁸ In order to increase the reach of the visual archive, he curated an exhibition that was on display from January 8-19, 2005 in Istanbul. The title was "*Sireli Yeğpayrıs (Sevgili Kardeşim): Orlando Carlo Calumeno Koleksiyonu'ndan Kartpostallarla 100 Yıl Önce Türkiye'de Ermeniler*" (*My Dear Brother: Armenians in Turkey 100 Years Ago with the Postcards from the Collection of Orlando Carlo Calumeno*). Around 7,000 people visited the exhibit, making it one of the most popular in recent cultural history. The collection has been mounted in London, Paris, Munich, Cologne, Frankfurt and Yerevan and has reached a considerably wide audience.³³⁹ The second instalment of the postcard collection was again published as a book and also displayed in an exhibition. The exhibition *Tarihe Yolculuk: Orlando Carlo Calumeno Koleksiyonu'ndan Kartpostal ve Objelerle 20. Yüzyıl Başında Türkiye'de Ermeniler* (*Voyage to History: Armenians in Turkey at the beginning of the 20th Century through postal cards and objects from the*

suffering. However, for her, Armenians and Turks being able to share the pain and mourn together would be the solution to the present conflict. According to her, belonging to Anatolia, or the Middle East, means a common history of suffering. All the peoples living in those lands have suffered and continue to suffer. This commonality of the pain makes Armenians and Turks "brothers" and "sisters". However, it is important to note that such an abstract notion of suffering does not do justice to the historical specificity of each instance of suffering. The over-generalization of suffering amounts to its erasure. If everybody suffers, what is the meaning of insisting on a particular suffering? Hence the book undermines important distinctions that should be made when discussing the Armenian Genocide and other forms of suffering. It is politically and morally dubious to equate what the Armenians had to go through with the ordeals of the population groups belonging to the ethno-religious majority in Anatolia.

³³⁸ Osman Köker, *100 Yıl önce Türkiye'de Ermeniler* (İstanbul: Birzamanlar Yayıncılık, 2005).

³³⁹ Osman Köker, "Sireli Yeğpayrıs- Sevgili Kardeşim!," *Bianet*, May 6, 2006, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/kultur/78652-sireli-yegpayris-sevgili-kardesim>.

Orlando Carlo Calumeno collection), remained on display from April 6-19, 2013.³⁴⁰ In 2012, Köker curated an exhibition about cultural diversity in Diyarbakır, one of the crucial cities of the Kurdish region. The exhibition was displayed in Diyarbakır between January 15 and February 7. It was then mounted at Depo between February 1 and March 10.³⁴¹

In addition to Köker's efforts to bring the Armenian heritage to the contemporary Turkish public, Depo, "a space for critical debate and cultural exchange" in Istanbul, hosted important exhibitions, performances and debates concerning the Armenian history and present. The space is an initiative of Anadolu Kültür, a not-for-profit organization operating in the cultural and artistic field.³⁴² Its cultural engagements with the Armenian genocide and history include:

- December 2, 1915 – January 17, 2016 Exhibition: *Bizzat Hallediniz [Please resolve personally]*³⁴³
- September 3 – November 1, 2015 Exhibition: *GRANDCHILDREN, New geographies of belonging*³⁴⁴
Artists: Achot Achot (Yerevan/Paris), Maria Bedoian (Buenos Aires), Talin Büyükkürkciyan (Istanbul), Hera Büyüktaşçıyan (Istanbul), Silvina Der-Meguerditchian (Buenos Aires/Berlin), Linda Ganjian (New York), Archi Galentz (Moscow/Berlin), Karine Matsakyan (Yerevan) Mikayel Ohanjanyan (Yerevan/Florence), Ani Setyan (Istanbul), Arman

³⁴⁰ Fırat Karadeniz, "100 Yıl öncesindeki Türkiye Ermenilerine Kartpostallarla Yolculuk," *Agos*, April 8, 2013, <http://www.Agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/4770/100-yil-oncesindeki-turkiye-ermenilerine-kartpostallarla-yolculuk>; "20. Yüzyıl Başında Türkiye'de Ermeniler," *Radikal*, April 6, 2013, http://www.radikal.com.tr/hayat/20_yuzyil_basinda_turkiyede_ermeniler-1128384/.

³⁴¹ Vercihan Ziflioğlu, "Exhibition Removes Veil of History Obscuring Anatolian Minorities," *Hürriyet Daily News*, February 15, 2012, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/exhibition-removes-veil-of-history-obscuring-anatolian-minorities-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=13754&NewsCatID=385>; "Cultural Diversity in Old Diyarbakır Exhibiton Opens in Diyarbakır," *Diyarbakır Sanat Merkezi*, accessed August 3, 2016, <http://www.diyarbakirsanat.org/en/-cultural-diversity-in-old-diyarbakir-exhibiton-opens-in-diyarbakir/c661/default.aspx>.

³⁴² "About," *Depo - Istanbul*, accessed August 3, 2016, <http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/about.asp>.

³⁴³ "Exhibition: Bizzat Hallediniz [Please Resolve Personally]," *DEPO İstanbul*, accessed August 4, 2016, http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/activites_detail.asp?ac=137.

³⁴⁴ "Exhibition: GRANDCHILDREN, New Geographies of Belonging," *DEPO İstanbul*, accessed August 4, 2016, http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/activites_detail.asp?ac=134.

Tadevosyan (Gyumri/Nancy), Scout Tufankjian (New York), Marie Zolamian (Beirut/Liege)

- April 29 – May 10, 2015 Exhibition: “*Wishing Tree*” on display at Depo along with photographs from Scout Tufankjian’s “*The Armenians*”³⁴⁵
- April 4 – 26, 2015 Exhibition: *Without knowing where we are headed...*³⁴⁶
- March 15 – April 12, 2015 Exhibition: Spectrography - Tracing the Ghosts Artists: Anna Barseghian, Stefan Kristensen, Uriel Orlow, Méliné Ter Minassian (performance)³⁴⁷
- January 14 – February 8, 2015 Exhibition: *Armenian Family Stories and Lost Landscapes* Artist: Helen Sheehan³⁴⁸
- September 5 – October 3, 2014 Exhibition: *Mobilizing Memory: Women Witnessing* Artists: Gülçin Aksoy, Hera Büyüктаşçıyan, Silvina Der-Meguerditchian, Hakikat Adalet Hafıza Merkezi (Truth Justice Memory Center), Gülsün Karamustafa, Susan Meiselas, Nar Photos (Serra Akcan, Fatma Çelik, Gülşin Ketenci, Aylin Kızıl, Serpil Polat), Lorie Novak, Emine Gözde Sevim, Aylin Tekiner Curators: Ayşe Gül Altınay, Işın Önoğlu³⁴⁹
- April 18 – May 25, 2014 Exhibition: *Memory without a Place* Artist: Silvina Der-Meguerditchian³⁵⁰
- October 25 – December 15, 2013 Exhibition: *Never Again! Apology and Coming to Terms with the Past* Project Coordinators: Asena Günel (editor), Önder Özengi (curator), Özlem Yalçınkaya³⁵¹
- April 26 – June 8, 2013 Exhibition: *Bearing Witness to the Lost History of an Armenian Family Through the Lens of the Dildilian Brothers (1872-1923)*³⁵²

³⁴⁵ “Exhibition: ‘Wishing Tree’ on Display at Depo along with Photographs from Scout Tufankjian’s “The Armenians,” *DEPO İstanbul*, accessed August 4, 2016, http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/activites_detail.asp?ac=129.

³⁴⁶ “Exhibition: Without Knowing Where We Are Headed...,” *DEPO İstanbul*, accessed August 22, 2015, http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/activites_detail.asp?ac=125.

³⁴⁷ “Exhibition: Spectrography - Tracing the Ghosts,” *DEPO İstanbul*, accessed August 3, 2016, http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/activites_detail.asp?ac=123.

³⁴⁸ “Exhibition: Helen Sheehan - Armenian Family Stories and Lost Landscapes,” *DEPO İstanbul*, accessed August 3, 2016, http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/activites_detail.asp?ac=119.

³⁴⁹ “Exhibition: Mobilizing Memory: Women Witnessing,” *DEPO İstanbul*, accessed August 3, 2016, http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/activites_detail.asp?ac=115.

³⁵⁰ “Exhibition: Memory without a Place,” *DEPO İstanbul*, accessed August 3, 2016, http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/activites_detail.asp?ac=109.

³⁵¹ “Exhibition: Never Again! Apology and Coming to Terms with the Past,” *DEPO İstanbul*, accessed August 3, 2016, http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/activites_detail.asp?ac=97.

³⁵² “Exhibition: Bearing Witness to the Lost History of an Armenian Family Through the Lens of the Dildilian Brothers (1872-1923),” *DEPO İstanbul*, accessed August 4, 2016, http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/activites_detail.asp?ac=88.

- April 30 – June 5, 2011 Exhibition: *Horovel*
Artist: Erhan Arık³⁵³
- April 27 – June 5, 2011 Exhibition: *Burning Eyes: Memories of the Armenians*
Artist: Antoine Agoudjian³⁵⁴

Gomidas Institute in London curated an exhibition on March 1-2, 2014 in Tatvan to remember the Armenians of Bitlis.³⁵⁵

Among the cinematographic endeavors engaging with the Armenian past and present in Anatolia are:

- Özcan Alper's short movie *Momi* (2001)³⁵⁶
- Talin Suciyan and Lara Aharonian's documentary, *Finding Zabel Yesayan* (2008)³⁵⁷
- Mehmet Binay's documentaries *Anadolu'dan Fısıltılar* (2008) and *Konuşan Fotoğraflar* (2009)³⁵⁸
- Berke Baş's documentary *Nahide'nin Türküsü (Hush!)* (2009)³⁵⁹
- Ümit Kıvanç's documentary *19 Ocak'tan 19 Ocak'a (From 19 January to 19 January)* (2009)³⁶⁰
- Güleğül Altıntaş's documentary *Don't Get Lost, Children* (2011)³⁶¹
- Onur Günay and Burcu Yıldız's documentary *Garod (Longing)* (2013)³⁶²

³⁵³ "Exhibition: Horovel," *DEPO İstanbul*, accessed August 4, 2016, http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/activites_detail.asp?ac=47.

³⁵⁴ "Exhibition: Burning Eyes: Memories of the Armenians," *DEPO İstanbul*, accessed August 4, 2016, http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/activites_detail.asp?ac=48.

³⁵⁵ "Remembering the Armenians of Bitlis," *Gomidas Institute*, February 24, 2014, <http://www.gomidas.org/press/show/37>.

³⁵⁶ Talin Suciyan, "Momi ve Hamşetsi Olmak.....," *Bianet*, May 28, 2001, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/kultur/2485-momi-ve-hamsetsi-olmak>.

³⁵⁷ Aram Arkun, "'Finding Zabel Yesayan' In NYC," *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, May 14, 2011, <http://www.mirrorspectator.com/2011/05/14/%e2%80%98finding-zabel-yesayan%e2%80%99-in-nyc/>.

³⁵⁸ Mehmet Binay, "Whispering Memories / Talking Pictures," *Whispering Memories/Talking Pictures*, accessed August 5, 2016, <http://whispering-memories-docu.blogspot.ca/>.

³⁵⁹ Berke Baş, *Nahide'nin Türküsü/Hush*, Documentary, (2009); Türk Sineması Araştırmaları, "Nahide'nin Türküsü," accessed August 5, 2016, <http://www.tsa.org.tr/film/filmgoster/8228/nahide-nin-turkusu>; Ebru Tahiroğlu, "Mithat Alam Film Merkezi: Nahide'nin Türküsü," *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Mithat Alam Film Merkezi*, December 16, 2009, <http://www.mafm.boun.edu.tr/index.php?engine=events&action=detail&id=129>.

³⁶⁰ "19 Ocak'tan 19 Ocak'a...," *NTV*, January 7, 2010, http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/19-ocaktan-19-ocaka,M_CotFLQ6U2xkIBfneqWqA.

³⁶¹ "Don't Get Lost Children," *Armenia-Turkey Cinema Platform*, accessed August 4, 2016, <http://www.cinemaplatform.org/en/films/dont-get-lost-children/68>.

- Lüsün Dink's *Saroyan Ülkesi (Saroyanland)* (2013)³⁶³
- Seda Grigoryan and Maria Titizian's documentary *In the Footsteps of Zabel Yesayan in İstanbul* (2014)³⁶⁴
- Devrim Akkaya's documentary *Diyar* (2014)³⁶⁵; Fatih Akın's feature length movie *The Cut* (2014)³⁶⁶
- Aren Perdeci and Ela Alyamaç's feature length movie *Yitik Kuşlar (Lost Birds)* (2015).³⁶⁷

The foundation of the Armenia-Turkey Cinema Platform, supporting emerging filmmakers from Armenia and Turkey, has been contributing to cinematographic discovery of the Armenian heritage in Turkey.³⁶⁸

Literary Works

- In 1991 Serdar Can published *Nenemin Masalları (My Grandmother's Fairy Tales)*. This book was one of the first literary works engaging with the memories of the genocide, but it did not receive attention when it first came out. Serdar Can told the lifestory of his grandmother who was a converted Armenian.³⁶⁹

³⁶² Evrim Kaya, "Bu 'Hasret' Hem Yıkımı Hem Umudu Anlatıyor," *Agos*, January 17, 2015, <http://www.Agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/10272/bu-hasret-hem-yikimi-hem-umudu-anlatiyor>.

³⁶³ "Saroyan Land / Saroyan Ülkesi," *Başka Sinema*, accessed August 4, 2016, <http://www.baskasinema.com/basin/saroyanland>.

³⁶⁴ L. Gülden Treske, "Zabel Hovhannesian- Yesayan* (4 Şubat 1878-1943?)," *Amargi: Feminist Dergi*, September 15, 2015, <http://www.amargidergi.com/yeni/?p=1651>.

³⁶⁵ Devrim Akkaya, *Diyar*, Documentary (Aheste Film, 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=004Xe-rBVuw>.

³⁶⁶ Umut Tümay Arslan, "Kesik'in Açtığı Yerden: Kat Kat Notlar - Altyazi.net," *Altyazi*, March 27, 2015, <http://www.altyazi.net/yazilar/kesikin-actigi-yerden-kat-kat-notlar/>.

³⁶⁷ "Türkiye'de çekilen İlk Uzun Ermeni Tehciri Filmi," *Haberturk*, September 2, 2015, <http://hbr.tk/Hn85P7>; Catherine Yesayan, "Lost Birds: A Movie Review," *Asbarez*, November 25, 2015, <http://asbarez.com/142242/lost-birds-a-movie-review/>.

³⁶⁸ "Who Are We?," *Armenia Turkey Cinema Platform*, accessed August 4, 2016, <http://www.cinemaplatform.org/en/about-project/who-are-we/37>.

³⁶⁹ Serdar Can, *Nenemin Masalları* (İstanbul: Umut, 1991); Ayşe Gül Altınay, Yüz Yıllık Suskunluk Kırılıyor, interview by Serpil İlgün, October 28, 2013, <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/70881/yuz-yillik-suskunluk-kiriliyor>; Adnan Çelik and Serdar Can, "'Nenemin Masalları' Gerçeğin Ta Kendisi," *Agos*, April 10, 2015, <http://www.Agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/11234/nenemin-masallari-gercegin-ta-kendisi>.

- In 1999 Baran Fundermann published *Gavur Elo (Infidel Elo)* focusing on Islamized Armenians who had to hide their identity in order to survive the genocide.³⁷⁰
- In 1999, Doğan Akhanlı published his novel on the Armenian genocide, *Kıyamet Günü Yargıçları (The Judges of the Judgment Day)*.³⁷¹
- In January 2000, 3,000 copies of Kemal Yalçın’s *Seninle Güler Yüreğim (You Rejoice My Heart)* were ready for distribution by Doğan Publication in line with the contract between the parties. The book is a documentary novel based on the author’s life-story interviews with converted Armenians in Anatolia. However, on January 12 the publisher contacted Yalçın to inform him that the book was not to be distributed due to a “warning” they received. When the author met with the publisher on August 17, 2002, he learned that the publisher had destroyed the copies on June 21, 2002 in line with a notarized Destruction Order. The publisher gave Yalçın a letter jointly signed by the publishing house’s board of directors that read “by destroying this book, we believe that we have prevented a new, black stain upon our country that could occur through a new case being opened [against it in the court of public opinion].” Confronted with this censorship, the author published the book at his own

³⁷⁰ Baran Fundermann, *Gavur Elo* (İstanbul: Belge, 1999); Ragıp Zarakolu, “Gizli Kimliklerin Trajedisi,” *Evrensel*, September 29, 2015, <https://www.evrensel.net/yazi/74983/gizli-kimliklerin-trajedisi>.

³⁷¹ Doğan Akhanlı, *Kıyamet Günü Yargıçları*, Kayıp Denizler 3 (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1999); Ahmet Altaylı and Doğan Akhanlı, “Kayıp Denizler Doğan Akhanlı,” *Sosyalist Barikat*, February 2000, <http://www.barikat-lar.de/barikat/ozgurbarikat/4/akhanli.htm>.

expense in Cologne, Germany in 2001 and 2003.³⁷² In 2006, Birzamanlar Yayıncılık, owned by Osman Köker, published the book in Turkey.³⁷³

- In 2004 Kemal Yalçın self-published his second book on the Islamized Armenian survivors, *Sarı Gelin - Sari Gyalin (Blonde Bride)*, in Germany.³⁷⁴ The book was published in Turkey in February 2006.
- In 2005, İrfan Palalı published his novel, *Tehcir Çocukları: Nenem bir Ermeniymiş (Children of the Deportation: My Grandmother had been an Armenian)*.³⁷⁵ The author narrated a fictionalized account of his discovery that his grandmother was born as an Armenian.
- In 2006, Esmahan Aykol's novel *Savrulanlar (Scattered Ones)*, that focused on being Armenian in Turkey was published.³⁷⁶
- In 2006, Elif Şafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* was published and, due to the author's high profile in Turkish cultural and intellectual establishment, it became a contested event itself in the historical trajectory of the genocide memories.³⁷⁷

³⁷² Kemal Yalçın, "You Rejoice My Heart," *Kemal Yalçın*, accessed August 5, 2016, <http://www.kemalyalcin.com/index.php/menu-ogesi-kitaplar/kat-liste-kitap-seninle-gueller-yuereim/262-seninle-gueller-yuereim>.

³⁷³ Kemal Yalçın, *Seninle Güler Yüregim* (İstanbul: Birzamanlar Yayıncılık, 2006).

³⁷⁴ Kemal Yalçın, "Sarı Gelin - Sari Gyalin," *Kemal Yalçın*, accessed August 5, 2016, <http://www.kemalyalcin.com/index.php/menu-ogesi-kitaplar/kat-liste-kitap-sar-gelin>; Kemal Yalçın, *Sarı Gelin - Sari Gyalin* (İstanbul: Birzamanlar Yayıncılık, 2006).

³⁷⁵ Palalı, *Tehcir çocukları*.

³⁷⁶ Esmahan Aykol, *Savrulanlar* (İstanbul: Merkez Kitaplar, 2006); Emine Özcan, "Nasıl Bir Şey Ermeni Olmak?," *Bianet*, June 3, 2006, <http://bianet.org/bianet/print/79892-nasil-bir-sey-ermen-olmak>.

³⁷⁷ Elif Şafak, *The Bastard of Istanbul* (New York: Viking, 2006). Originally written in English, Şafak's novel was published in Turkish in March 2006, Elif Şafak, *Baba ve Piç*, trans. Aslı Biçen (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2006).

- Yusuf Bağı's novel/biography *Ermeni Kızı Ağçık* (*Ağçık, The Armenian Girl*) was published in 2007. Bağı's work was based on his grandmother's lifestory.
- In August 2007 Filiz Özdem's novel *Korku Benim Sahibim* (*Fear is My Owner*) was published.³⁷⁸ Özdem told the story of a grandchild discovering the history of her ancestors who were Armenians but had to convert in order to survive the genocide.
- In 2008, Kemal Yalçın's third work on the surviving Armenians, *Hayatta Kalanlar: Gerçek Bir Hayat Hikayesi* (*Survivors: A True Life-Story*), was published.³⁷⁹
- Halil İbrahim Özcan's *Küller Arasında: Acının Terazisinde İki Halk: Türkler ve Ermeniler* (*Among the Ashes: Two Peoples on the Scale of Pain: Turks and Armenians*) was published in 2009.³⁸⁰
- Arif Nihat Dursun's novel *Bir Ermeni'yi Öldürmek* (*Killing an Armenian*) was published in 2012.³⁸¹

³⁷⁸ Filiz Özdem, *Korku Benim Sahibim* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2007); A. Ömer Türkeş, "Hafızanın Başkaldırısı," *Radikal*, September 7, 2007, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal.aspx?atype=haberyazdir&articleid=859786>.

³⁷⁹ Kemal Yalçın, *Hayatta Kalanlar: Gerçek Bir Hayat Hikâyesi* (İstanbul: Birzamanlar Yayıncılık, 2008); Songül Kaya-Karadağ, "Üç Kitap Bir Tabu (2)," *Yeni Hayat*, October 29, 2012, <http://www.yenihayat.de/2012/10/29/uc-kitap-bir-tabu-2/>.

³⁸⁰ Halil İbrahim Özcan, *Küller Arasında: Acının Terazisinde İki Halk: Türkler ve Ermeniler* (İstanbul: Nokta Kitap, 2009); Rozarin Doğan, "Acının Terazisi," *Radikal*, February 12, 2010, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal.aspx?atype=haberyazdir&articleid=980257>.

³⁸¹ Arif Nihat Dursun, *Bir Ermeni'yi Öldürmek* (İstanbul: And Yayıncılık, 2012); Rober Koptaş, "Her şey Arjantin'deki Ermeniyle Başladı," *Agos*, February 23, 2012, <http://www.Agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/686/her-sey-arjantindeki-ermeniyile-basladi>; Canan Hatiboğlu, "Kalıcı Sorunlarımız Korkularımızla Besleniyor," *Vatan Kitap*, April 15, 2012, http://vatankitap.gazetevatan.com/onlarin-sectikleri/kalici_sorunlarimiz_korkularimizla_besleniyor/1/18397.

- Ahmet Abakay's novel *Hoşana'nın Son Sözü* (*The Last Word of Hoşana*) was published in 2013.³⁸²
- Jan Devletoğlu's memoirs *İyi Kötü Ermeni* (the literal translation of the title is *Good Bad Armenian*, however it also refers to a popular formula in Turkey and in that sense the translation becomes *Armenian, for Better or for Worse*) was published in 2015.³⁸³

Culinary Culture

Food has become an important vector of memory attesting to the resilience of Armenian customs and their presence in many aspects of the national culture. Takuhi Tovmasyan's book, uniting a cookbook with a memory-document, has disseminated not only recipes and cultural practices but also memories of these recipes and the practices carried within them.³⁸⁴ Tovmasyan's book and others have been influential in terms of grasping public interest and reminding ordinary citizens that Armenian cuisine and culture has been an integral part of the culture of the land. In addition to popular interest, books on food culture have received creative³⁸⁵ and scholarly attention as well.³⁸⁶

³⁸² Ahmet Abakay, *Hoşana'nın Son Sözü* (İstanbul: Büyüdüdağ, 2013); "Abakay'ın Kitabına Akralardan Tepki: Halama 'Ermeni' Diyemezsin," *Radikal*, October 7, 2013, http://www.radikal.com.tr/hayat/abakayin_kitabina_akrabalardan_tepki_halama_ermenii_diyemezsin-1154450/.

³⁸³ Jan Devletoğlu, *İyi Kötü Ermeni* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2015).

³⁸⁴ Takuhi Tovmasyan, *Sofranız şen Olsun : Ninelerimin Mutfağından Damağımda, Aklımda Kalanlar* (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2004).

³⁸⁵ As an example, Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* consists of chapters each named after a particular ingredient of Ashure, Noah's pudding. The use of this dessert, common to many communities of the region, emphasizes the melting pot metaphor of multiculturalism and highlights the intricate entanglements or even bondings of the communities. Lenora Todaro, "Under Siege," *Village Voice*, February 13, 2007, <http://www.villagevoice.com/arts/under-siege-7157591>.

³⁸⁶ Muge Salmaner, "The Bittersweet Taste of the Past: Reading Food in Armenian Literature in Turkish" (PhD Dissertation, University of Washington, 2014), https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/bitstream/handle/1773/26682/Salmaner_washing

These works also enforce a sense of similarity and cultural translatability that can arguably facilitate empathetic and affective connection from the dominant group's end. Food is widely conceived as establishing cross-cultural bridges between communities, helping them understand each other by sidestepping the obstacles of genocide politics. This line of argument emphasizes the history of cohabitation based on mutual interactions between communities at multiple levels. It also posits that invoking memories of shared cultural identity including food would foster some kind of rapprochement between the communities. However, one may also legitimately ask if the sense of familiarity or "almost sameness" implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, promoted in these works mean the imposition of cultural homogeneity over Armenians and become a tool of containment in the long run. One may also question whether sidestepping politics through cultural connections are not political strategies in their own right.

To conclude, these new cultural products on the Armenians' history and life engendered further curiosity among the audience in Turkey. Readers, while rediscovering the erased existence of the Armenians in Anatolia, started to ask critical questions about their own identity and Armenian life. These works also contributed to the deconstruction of "Armenian" and "Turkish" camps. In a related manner, these works, emphasizing hybridity of Armenian and Ottoman/Turkish cultures, undermined essentialist constructions of national identity and underlined the language of empathy and reconciliation in clear contrast to the language of struggle and contestation.³⁸⁷ However,

ton_0250E_13443.pdf?sequence=1; Gönül Pultar, "Creating Ethnic Memory: Takuhi Tovmasyan's 'Merry Meals,'" in *Imagined Identities: Identity Formation in the Age of Globalization*, ed. Gönül Pultar (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 59–67.

³⁸⁷ Ayşe Gül Altınay, "İki Kitap, Bir Sergi: Türkiyeli Ermenilerin Yeniden Keşfi," in *İmparatorluğun Çöküş Döneminde Osmanlı Ermenileri: Bilimsel Sorumluluk ve Demokrasi Sorunları*, ed. Fahri Aral (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 481–90.

there has also been a risk that these discourses of discovery might evolve into the imposition of sameness as a cultural leveller that highlights the imagined similarities between Armenians and the rest of the population. These similarities, for consumers of Armenian culture, refer to an intimacy and authenticity constituting the basis of relations between Turks and Armenians. Promoted as a discourse of inclusion, the attributed sameness, in fact, may end up glossing over crucial differences and denies Armenians the chance to remain distinct. It may also undermine the possibility of political claim making for the Armenians as a distinct group.³⁸⁸

Erbal and Suciyan emphasize that the representational frames employed when the Armenians, their memories, literature, and heritage were introduced or translated into the broader public constitute the key issue. When situated tropes of Armenian life in Turkey have been transferred to the public sphere they have been mediated in a way that would align them with the dominant group's expectations, habits and conventions. Cultural differences, which are introduced to the public, must not be threatening socio-political hierarchies that maintain the dominant group's sense of superiority and sovereignty. The Armenians have been requested to express their experiences in a way that does not disturb the dominant group. The dominant group has offered only a conditional listening to what Armenians have to say. This has constituted another form of asserting the authority and supremacy of the dominant group over Armenians. It is Armenians' responsibility to accommodate the dominant groups' sensibilities in order not to alienate them and undermine the communication.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ Erbal and Suciyan, "One Hundred Years of Abandonment."

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

As discussed above, cultural products, life story narratives, family histories and artifacts have all become means of recuperating and rediscovering Armenian history and heritage within Turkey's cultural diversity since the 1990s. Publication houses like Belge and music production companies like Kalan were important actors in these efforts to discover, document and archive the diversity of Turkey.³⁹⁰ In this perspective, dealing with the common history of Turks, Kurds and Armenians, based on the fact that these groups share the same geography, has been a way of critically engaging with the history of violent homogenization and creating possibilities of co-existence and cohabitation for the distinct identities in Turkey.³⁹¹ Needless to say, such a broadening of the cultural sphere and public memory to acknowledge that the stories of subaltern groups were part of the country's history marks a remarkable transformation in republican history and national identity. Nevertheless, the members of the dominant group have been running the show as they had the access to the benefits of a power asymmetry and myriad privileges subaltern groups could not even dream of.

Armenian identity and its public appearances have been mostly governed by a subtle and widespread culturalization. The discourse by and about Armenians has been compartmentalized or isolated to the realm of culture. First of all, Armenians, speaking of Armenians living in Turkey, are construed to have a homogeneous, authentic, and monolithic culture or identity. This cultural identity, then, is attributed with certain characteristics. And as this is an attempt at rectifying or reversing the negative perception of Armenians and stopping discrimination against them, these characteristics are positive. This act of racism, operating within the universe of neoliberal multiculturalism and

³⁹⁰ Asli Igsiz, "Memleket, Yurt ve Cografi Kardeslik: Arsivci Kultur Politikolari," *Turkiye'nin Toplumsal Hafizasi*, 153-182.

³⁹¹ Igsiz, 158.

diversity management, depicts this “cultural island” as a “colour” of thousands-years-old Anatolian culture. Armenian cuisine, music, clothing, and religious and secular practices become objects of curiosity and receive growing interest, which can be labeled as a “rediscovery of Armenian culture”. One can argue that the only possible and plausible way of expressing Armenian existence is governed by the limits and parameters of this multicultural discourse, a hegemonic discourse that functions through appropriation and incorporation. It mobilizes, for example, Ottoman multiculturalism and tolerance as a historical model for the contemporary inclusion of Armenian cultural practices.³⁹²

There has been a strong tendency among discourses rediscovering Armenians and their culture to adopt a nostalgic tone. These discourses have mobilized generalizations about Armenians such as they are very industrious, polite, loyal, civilized, and respectful. They have especially emphasized what great neighbours they were. Many accounts invoke the image of neighbourhoods where each community would respect the other’s religious practices; they would exchange gifts in holidays. This portrait of harmonious coexistence and shared experiences has not done any justice to the pressures, violence, and racism the subaltern groups had to endure. When things changed, generally for unspecified reasons, the harmony was gone and the Armenians disappeared, referred to mostly as “they left”. This trope of mutual respect and peace has constituted the basis of the Ottoman tolerance idea as well because that tolerance made coexistence possible. The majority of the accounts express deep sadness and almost grief for the departure of Armenians. These narratives of “good old days” mark a sense of loss and invoke the idea that those times were much better than the unenchanted present.

³⁹² What the Ottoman Empire exerted over its subject population cannot be labeled as tolerance, it was rather a structure of systemized inequality.

This clearly nostalgic, romanticized and melancholic narrative has been popular because it provides the majority in Turkey with the opportunity to share the pain of the Armenian community without acknowledging their ancestors' role in the annihilation. Such a delicate and sophisticated form of disavowal has also perpetuated the schism between reality and fantasy by imagining a tolerance that was not real in the first place. This irreconcilable alterity of reality and fantasy, for Boym, constitutes the essence of the nostalgic emotion. For, "nostalgia (from *nostos* – return home, and *algia* – longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy."³⁹³ Always in-between and always attempting to fill that in-betweeness by superimposing past and present or home and abroad, nostalgia adopts mythic reconstruction of the past in the present. However, in many cases the constructed past is nothing but a projection of the present moment. Thus nostalgia, not surprisingly, ends up in phantasmagoria since past and present could not inhabit the same frame. This was also the case about the nostalgia of Ottoman tolerance and multiculturalism.

The rules of co-existence for various ethno-religious groups within Pax Ottomana were clearly laid out and closely supervised. They dictated a hierarchical social structure based on the systematized and institutionalized status of some minority communities as inferior imperial subjects. As a return for the acceptance of this status, the empire offered protection for these groups and did not embark on assimilationist policies. This arrangement has been referred to as "Ottoman tolerance". The use of the term tolerance in itself is enough to reveal that there had been no room for Armenians or other communities to be equal citizens of the empire. In contemporary Turkey, even though all

³⁹³ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiii.

citizens are equal constitutionally, in practice, structural inequality still governs the relations between the dominant population and various ethno-religious communities not belonging to the majority.

Unpacking the discourses of tolerance and “peaceful coexistence” in current circulation requires the acknowledgement that inequality and discrimination against minorities are rampant in the country. A broad coalition is invested in perpetuating this inequality even though Turkey is officially committed to “universal” values of human rights and democracy.³⁹⁴ The nostalgic reconstruction of “harmonious coexistence,” especially regarding the Armenian community in Turkey, is operational because there is only a small number of Armenians left in Turkey. So they do not pose a “perceived threat” for social order. Accordingly, it is possible for the population to reminisce about the “good old days” of greater Armenian presence. Now that the community has disappeared as a result of an “enigmatic” process, it is possible to mourn the passing of the traditional Ottoman society.

Discourses of loss, longing and representation resonate with what Renato Rosaldo conceived as “imperialist nostalgia”, “a particular kind of nostalgia, often found under imperialism, where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed.”³⁹⁵ Rosaldo developed the term in order to explain the nostalgic accounts produced by colonial officers and agents actively involved in the transformation of life in the colonies along imperial governance strategies and goals. Hence, at first sight it might

³⁹⁴ One has to note that democracy does not necessarily guarantee equality. Equality had not always been a condition of democracy. When one thinks about the imperial rules established by the British and French empires, democracy in the metropolis would easily coexist with brutal authoritarian colonial rule in the peripheries of the empire.

³⁹⁵ Renato Rosaldo, “Imperialist Nostalgia,” in *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 69.

be directly related to the Turkish case, but one can make the case that the notion resonates with dominant modes of perceiving and representing the Armenians and their cultures in post-1980s Turkey.

Contemporary Turkey is not directly involved in the destruction of the Armenian community; however, it is implicated in the perpetuation of the crime and injustice committed around 100 years ago because it is complicit in the denial. The genocide made the emergence of the homogeneous nation possible and laid the foundations of the power network in Anatolia. Thus, nostalgic and affective discourses about the loss of co-existence mean nothing much but mourning for a community in whose destruction one is complicit, even though obliquely. Nostalgic discourses displace the real terms of coexistence, gloss over tensions, and conceal infringements and injustices. Hence, they recast the members of the dominant group as “innocent bystanders” who have no responsibility in the perpetuation of the genocide through denial.

It is possible to encounter nostalgic elements within the counter-memory discourses advocating coming to terms with the problematic past. The language of nostalgic reconstruction is incorporated within the framework of “humanitarian” help endorsed by the agents of memory in Turkey. This incorporation, while removing responsibility from the wider picture, marks the ideology itself. Rosaldo’s statement, “ideological discourses work more through selective attention than outright suppression,” holds true for the Armenian commemoration cases.³⁹⁶ The agents of memory have the ultimate say on which terms they are going to lend their support in genocide memorialization or recognition campaigns. Attending to Armenian suffering in the name of humanity and as a conscientious duty invoke similar nostalgic dynamics at play in

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 87.

popular discourses. This is a process of containment that operates through representing Armenians as a cultural group. Orientalization and essentialization are instrumental in creating this framework. Instead of accounting for the actual absence of millions of Armenians and their erasure from the national history, culture, and heritage, this cultural discourse tokenizes remaining Armenians and remnants of their culture and incorporates them in a regime of nostalgia and romanticism.

Discourses of multiculturalism, diversity, siblinghood of peoples, and co-habitation carry the risk of obliterating a continuum of violent inter-ethnic relations based on colonial domination. Without questioning structural inequality sustaining the hegemonic position of the majority, subaltern groups will be governed on the basis of their differences and will receive only conditional recognition. As long as subaltern identities are admitted into public discourse as culturalized islands, “as vanishing colors of Anatolia,”³⁹⁷ or elements of a diverse cultural mosaic and not as equal members of society, the subaltern groups will be incorporated as nostalgically conceived and represented tokens, or worse, they will be used as proxies in the struggle for dominance between different strands of the dominant groups. Some members of Turkey’s Armenian population have recently spoken against this culturalization in feminist and post-colonial terms.

³⁹⁷ In 2000, a popular televised public debate show *Siyaset Meydanı*, (*The Square of Politics*), ran a debate on the topic of minorities in Turkey. This episode drew significant public attention and the proceedings were later published as a book. In this program, members of the subaltern communities such as Hrant Dink were there to express what it meant to belong to a minority identity in Turkey. The program underlined that these identities were vanishing without openly engaging with the reasons behind it. For a critique of the program, please see Esra Özyürek, “Renkli, Beyaz ve Siyah Vatandaşlar Üzerine,” *Birikim*, January 2001, <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim-yazi/4377/renkli-beyaz-ve-siyah-vatandaslar-uzerine#.V6cfrpMrLsk>.

I'm neither your *ebru* nor your tessera, nor am I a color of your Anatolia. 'What are you then?' you might ask. I'm the child of the remnants of sword; the daughter of women whose bodies have been ravaged; the daughter of a people which many times has been forced to exile and whose traces have been erased throughout the last century from the land it had lived in for millennia. I'm the daughter of a people which has been captivated, alienated from itself, subjugated, and whose existence as well as extermination have been denied, and temples, schools, foundations, even the hearts and minds of its members have been turned inside out. They call me a Turkish Armenian.³⁹⁸

Melissa Bilal also criticized the political logic of such reductionist culturalization of subaltern experiences.

This liberal way of speaking about cultures as "colors" that dominates the discourse on cultural politics today is clearly a continuation of the hegemonic nationalist cultural politics in its attempts of suppressing the past and present experiences of the people with different ethnic identities. This perspective dwelling on the idea of dead cultures closes all the spaces of vocalizing the fact that today in Turkey the conditions of living for different cultures has already been lost. This discourse tries to cover the long history of displacement and loss that people in Anatolia have been experiencing. In the picture it presents there is no possibility of expressing the fact that for decades people had a restricted relationship with their cultures, histories and memories because the "national identity", the "national culture" and the official "Turkish History" were constructed by repressing, denying or assimilating the "different" ethnic identities and cultures in Anatolia. This "new" discourse of cultural politics is another attempt at repressing the memories of Turkification with regard to the cultural heritage of Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Kurds, Zazas, Assyrians, Arabs, Circassians and other ethnic and religious groups.³⁹⁹

III. Legal Cases against Those Challenging the Official Narrative on the Genocide – Nationalist Backlash in the Mid-2000s

The mid-2000s was also a time when there was a nationalist backlash in Turkey, and nationalist actors and state officials took many public figures to court for their statements regarding the Armenian massacres and deportations. In 2005 and 2006 three

³⁹⁸ Talin Suciyan, "I'm Neither an Ebru nor a Tessera; nor Am I 'a Color of Anatolia!,'" *Azad Alik*, May 6, 2011, <https://azadalik.wordpress.com/2011/05/06/im-neither-an-ebru-nor-a-tessera%e2%88%97-nor-am-i-a-color-of-anatolia/>.

³⁹⁹ Melissa Bilal, "Women's Solidarity as a Resistance Strategy against Liberal Identity Politics in Turkey," *IIS Discussion Paper*, May 2006, <https://www.tcd.ie/iis/documents/discussion/pdfs/iisdp153.pdf>.

controversial high-profile legal trials took place in which Orhan Pamuk, Elif Şafak and Hrant Dink were prosecuted under Article 301⁴⁰⁰ of the Turkish Penal Code for “denigrating Turkishness”. Although they were not the only intellectuals prosecuted under this article, their trials were unique in that they were based on their critiques of the destruction of the Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1917. It is not uncommon for courts to be called upon to limit freedom of thought and expression on a variety of issues in Turkey; however, the courts’ transformation into a site of contestation over the memory of the events that led to the extermination of the Armenians was an unprecedented development. As a result, many civil society and human rights initiatives publicly protested these legal trials. The European Union and international human rights organizations also took interest in the process. In these cases, we find that the courts were called upon to carry judgment on historical events. The cases also reveal the level of politicization of Turkey’s past when it comes to the Armenian genocide and Turkish responsibility for those massacres. To further demonstrate concerns relating to

⁴⁰⁰ On June 1, 2005 Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code replaced the Article 159 of the previous penal code. The new Penal Code was a package of penal-law reform seeking to align Turkish penal legal framework with that of the European Union. It was introduced in preparation for the start of accession negotiations between the EU and Turkey. Article 301 punished the denigration of Turkishness, the Turkish Republic, the Grand National Assembly, and the foundation and institutions of the state. The article stated:

1. A person who publicly denigrates Turkishness, the Republic or the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, shall be sentenced to a penalty of imprisonment for a term of six months to three years.
 2. A person who publicly denigrates the Government of the Republic of Turkey, the judicial bodies of the State, the military or security organizations, shall be sentenced to a penalty of imprisonment for a term of six months to two years.
 3. Where denigrating Turkishness is committed by a Turkish citizen in another country, the penalty to be imposed shall be increased by one third.
 4. Expressions of thought intended to criticize shall not constitute a crime.
- Bulent Algan, “The Brand New Version of Article 301 of Turkish Penal Code and the Future of Freedom of Expression Cases in Turkey,” *German Law Journal* 9 (2008): 2237.

Turkish national identity, acknowledging Turkish responsibility was seen as a crime prosecutable under Article 301.

These high profile cases and the public campaigns stemming from them constitute another crucial moment where collective memory representations were contested and negotiated anew. Trials under Article 301 point to the problematic construction of Turkish national identity and its inherent symptoms of extreme anxiety. Moreover, the trials demonstrated that legal institutions were drawn into the politics of memory to judge various representations of Turkish history. Courts were used as a continuation of official and semi-official censorship. A growing stream of literature investigates these trials as instances where freedom of expression has been repeatedly breached in Turkey. This critical post-nationalist literature underlines the ways in which Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code has been used to prosecute legitimate criticism in Turkey.⁴⁰¹

The dominant literature at the intersection of memory studies and genocide studies focused on the transformative influence of legal trials in the aftermath of mass violence and gross violations of human rights. The UN Genocide Convention comprised another step in institutionalizing the formal mechanisms of international justice. War crimes tribunals (Nuremberg, the Former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, the Eichmann trial, and truth and reconciliation commissions) were turning points in the relationship between legal and memory discourses. The literature focusing on these legal processes and discourses concentrated on trying those responsible for the atrocities, discovering the truth behind the events, and restituting justice. As Mark Osiel argued, the trials of the perpetrators had a definite impact on the collective memory by engaging the

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.; Johnisa Tate, "Turkey's Article 301: A Legitimate Tool for Maintaining Order or a Threat to Freedom of Expression," *Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law* 37 (2009 2008): 181–217.

public's attention and awareness.⁴⁰² This framework, broadly termed transitional justice, was an integral part of coming to terms with a past breach in the community.⁴⁰³ Turkey came close to this type of transitional justice process during the Istanbul trials in 1919-1920, but this process was interrupted for a variety of reasons. However, the legal trials listed below could not be seen as part of this transformative paradigm. Rather, these trials represented moments where the nationalist agents in civil society aimed to repress the dissenting voices of intellectuals, writers, and journalists on the Armenian genocide. Although these trials ultimately led to the intimidation of divergent voices and hence to the endorsement of the official story, they constituted an important venue where the politics of memory was crystallized.

A brief timeline of these cases reveals the terms of the denialist thrust in the mid-2000s.

- February 6, 2005 Orhan Pamuk's interview with the Swiss newspaper *Tages Anzeiger* was published. In this interview Pamuk states, "thirty thousand Kurds and a million Armenians were killed in these lands and nobody but me dares to talk about it."⁴⁰⁴ When this quote referring to Turkey's genocidal past entered into circulation in Turkish media and public discourses, Pamuk encountered a massive wave of protests, attacks, and threats amounting to a hate campaign.⁴⁰⁵ As a result

⁴⁰² *Mass Atrocity, Collective Memory, and the Law* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1997), 2.

⁴⁰³ Caroline Fournet, *The Crime of Destruction and the Law of Genocide: Their Impact on Collective Memory*, International and Comparative Criminal Justice (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007); Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998); Elazar Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

⁴⁰⁴ English PEN, "The Case of Orhan Pamuk," *The New York Review of Books*, December 15, 2005, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2005/12/15/the-case-of-orhan-pamuk/>.

⁴⁰⁵ For a detailed documentation of the reactions to Orhan Pamuk's views, please see Vural, "Cumhuriyet Dönemi'nde Türk kamuoyunda Ermeni sorunu," 351–358. For Pamuk's account on

of the popular reactions, a court case was brought against Pamuk and the legal procedure began in March 2005. The prosecutor's office prepared the bill of indictment on June 30, 2005 according to Article 301 of the new Turkish Penal Code.

- On October 7, 2005, Hrant Dink was found guilty on charges of insulting Turkishness in a single sentence of his February 13, 2004 column. The article was one instalment of an 8-week series of columns dealing with post-genocidal identity complications among Armenians and Turks. The sentence,

was pulled out of context and his critical approach towards the attitude of Diaspora Armenians about their relations with Turkey was completely distorted and dismissed. On the contrary, the singled out sentence, "The clean blood that will fill the vacuum of poisonous blood emerging through the lack of the "Turk" is present in the noble vein that will be established by the Armenian with Armenia," was introduced in a hostile manner as "Hrant Dink insults Turkish identity".⁴⁰⁶

Despite the fact that experts whom the court summoned to determine whether Dink committed the crime stated that he did not, the Şişli Criminal Court sentenced Dink to six months imprisonment. His sentence was postponed.

The verdict was approved by the Ninth Penalty Council of the Supreme Court. The Head Prosecutors Office of the Republican Supreme Court rejected this verdict, but the rejection was refused by the General Penalty Council at the Supreme Court of Appeals. When Dink made a statement on the verdict, a new case was filed - this time on charges of attempting to influence the judiciary.⁴⁰⁷

- On December 16, 2005 the first hearing of Orhan Pamuk's case took place in a tense atmosphere. Ultranationalist groups staged protests outside the court building. Some observers inside the building attempted to physically attack

these reactions and his ultimate court case, please see Orhan Pamuk, "On Trial," *The New Yorker*, December 19, 2005, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/12/19/on-trial>.

⁴⁰⁶ "Biography: Hrant Dink (1954-2007)," *Hrant Dink Foundation*, accessed August 6, 2016, <http://www.hrantdink.org/?HrantDink=10&Lang=en>.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

Pamuk after the hearing.⁴⁰⁸ The representatives of the EU were among the audience as well as many intellectuals and human rights activists from Turkey.

The second hearing was scheduled for February 7, 2006.⁴⁰⁹

- In December 2006, a court case was brought against 5 columnists, Hasan Cemal, Murat Belge, İsmet Berkan, Haluk Şahin and Erol Katırcıoğlu, who publicly criticized the earlier court decision against the Ottoman Armenians conference. Kemal Keriñsiz filed the criminal complaint against these renowned figures on the ground that they had denigrated the judicial institutions and interfered with an ongoing case. The prosecutor asked for between 6 and 10 years of imprisonment.⁴¹⁰
- On January 22, 2006, following the Ministry of Justice's intervention, Pamuk's case was dropped.⁴¹¹
- On April 11, 2006 cases against 4 columnists, except Murat Belge, were dropped.⁴¹²
- In March 2006, Elif Şafak published *The Bastard of Istanbul* (*Baba ve Piç*) that became a bestseller. Şafak's novel followed intersecting stories of one Armenian and one Turkish family over a ninety-year period. The genocidal past, leaving

⁴⁰⁸ Atilla Güner, "Korku Dolu 40 Dakika," *Gazete Vatan*, December 17, 2005, <http://www.gazetevatan.com/korku-dolu-40-dakika-66629-gundem/>.

⁴⁰⁹ Ali Dağlar et al., "Koruma İsteyelim Mi?," *Hürriyet*, December 17, 2005, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/koruma-isteyelim-mi-3664445>; Hilmi Hacaloğlu and Muhammed Özcan, "Gergin Davaya Erteleme," *NTV*, December 17, 2005, <http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/354071.asp?cp1=1>.

⁴¹⁰ Erol Önderoğlu, "Pamuk Davası Kalktı, 301 Mücadelesi Bitmedi," *Bianet*, January 24, 2006, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/medya/73738-pamuk-davasi-kalkti-301-mucadelesi-bitmedi>.

⁴¹¹ "Court Drops Turkish Writer's Case," *BBC*, January 23, 2006, sec. Europe, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4637886.stm>.

⁴¹² "Gazetecilerin '301' Davası Düştü," *Hürriyet*, April 11, 2006, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gazetecilerin-301-davasi-dustu-4237503>.

one's homeland, creating identities out of absences and denial intermingled in the novel. The novel was influential in terms of bringing the Armenian genocide into public and popular discourse. It also pointed to the ways in which Turkish society justifies the genocide and is oblivious to it. The publication of the novel also tested the limits of freedom of speech as Kemal Kerinçsiz filed a criminal complaint against the author on April 21, 2006.⁴¹³ Kerinçsiz accused Şafak of insulting Turkishness by claiming that the Turks committed genocide in the following paragraph, among others, in her novel: "I am the grandchild of genocide survivors who lost all their relatives at the hands of the Turkish butchers in 1915, but I myself have been brainwashed to deny the genocide because I was raised by some Turk named Mustafa." Again Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code was used to suppress dissenting voices.

- September 21, 2006 Elif Şafak was acquitted during the first sitting of the case on *The Bastard of Istanbul*.⁴¹⁴
- On July 21, 2006 Hrant Dink published a column critical of Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, "1 Vote against 301." Another court case was brought against him, his son Arat Dink, who was the acting editor of Agos, and main editor Sarkis Seropyan.

The story that was published in Agos and led to this prosecution, quoted a statement that Hrant Dink had previously made to Reuters news agency. Referring to 1915 he had said "Of course this is a genocide because the result reveals and names the act itself. You see that a nation that was living on this land for four thousand years vanished after what happened." The statement he made to Reuters was later published in many Turkish newspapers as well as

⁴¹³ Susanne Fowler, "Istanbul Trial to Test Freedom of Speech," *The New York Times*, September 13, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/13/world/europe/13iht-writer.2799206.html>.

⁴¹⁴ Richard Lea, "Acquittal for Turkish Novelist," *The Guardian*, September 21, 2006, sec. Books, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/sep/21/turkey.world>.

Agos. But it was only the editors of Agos who were prosecuted under Article 301 for "insulting Turkishness."⁴¹⁵

When Hrant Dink was assassinated on January 19, 2007 the court case was still going on.

- On January 20, 2007 journalist Temel Demirer, during a public protest, declared,

Hrant Dink was assassinated not only for being Armenian, but also for openly expressing the truth that there was genocide in this country. Turkish intellectuals are complicit in Dink's murder if they do not violate Article 301, 301 times. There is genocide in Turkey's history and its name is the Armenian genocide. Hrant told us this truth at the cost of his life. I commit a crime and I call everybody to commit the same crime. Those who do not commit this crime in the face of the murderer state are complicit in Hrant Dink's murder. Those who massacred the Armenians in the past are attacking the Kurds today. Those who advocate for the siblinghood of peoples have to come to terms with the past. We have to commit this crime so that what happened to the Armenians does not happen to the Kurds. I call everybody to violate Article 301. The Armenian genocide happened in this country.⁴¹⁶

On January 24, 2008 the prosecution brought criminal charges against Demirer under Article 301 and 216 of the Turkish Penal Code. The court applied to the Ministry of Justice for the necessary permission to try Demirer on May 15, 2008. On September 9, 2008, the Ministry of Justice gave the court permission to proceed with the trial. On February 19, 2013, the court postponed the prosecution on the condition that Demirer would not commit a crime of the same nature in the coming three years. The decision was at the expense of Demirer's demands for acquittal. Acquitting Demirer would be an exemplary decision for other cases. Demirer, immediately after the hearing, repeated his conviction that Turkey had committed a genocide against the Armenians and that the state was a murderer.

⁴¹⁵ "Biography: Hrant Dink (1954-2007)."

⁴¹⁶ Hrant sadece Ermeni olduğu için değil, bu ülkede soykırım olduğu gerçeğini ifade ettiği için katledildi. Türkiye aydınları eğer 301 kere 301 suçu işlemezlerse Hrant'ın cinayetine ortak olmuş demektirler. Tarihimizde bir soykırım vardır. Adı Ermeni Soykırımı'dır. Hrant bu gerçeği hepimize kanı canı pahasına anlattı. Suç işliyorum, herkesi suç işlemeye çağırıyorum. Bu katil devlet karşısında suç işlemeyenler Hrant Dink cinayetine ortak olanlardır. Dün Ermenileri katledenler bugün Kürtlere saldırmaktadırlar. Halkların kardeşliğini isteyenler bu tarihle hesaplaşmak zorunda. Dün Ermenilerin başına gelenin bugün Kürtlerin başına gelmemesi için suç işlemeliyiz. Hepinizi suç işlemeye, 301 kere 301 suçu işlemeye çağırıyorum. Evet, bu ülkede Ermeni Soykırımı olmuştur.

Temel Demirer, "TCK 301 ve 216'lı Hikâye(m)," *Nor Zartonk*, April 6, 2013, <http://www.norzartonk.org/tck-301-ve-216li-hikayem/>.

On March 11, 2013 the prosecution requested permission from the Ministry to open a new case under Article 301 for this statement.⁴¹⁷

- On June 21, 2007 Historian Taner Akçam applied to the European Court of Human Rights against the Republic of Turkey under Article 34 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Akçam, represented by Montreal-based international law professor and lawyer Payam Akhavan, argued that Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code constituted a sustained and continuing danger of prosecution for him because of his scholarly engagement with the Armenian genocide. He asserted that the mentioned article violates several articles of the Human Rights Convention. On October 25, 2011 the European Court of Human Rights delivered its decision on Taner Akçam's case against the Republic of Turkey. The court ruled that Turkey's prosecution of the generation of content on the Armenian genocide violated Article 10 of the Convention on Human Rights, in other words freedom of expression. Even though no criminal case was brought against Akçam, the court decided that the criminal investigation and the public campaign against him demonstrated the existence of significant risk of prosecution for people who voice dissenting views on the Armenian genocide.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁷ Erol Önderoğlu, "Dink Cinayetini Kınayan Temel Demirer 301 ve 216'dan Yargıda," *Bianet*, March 4, 2008, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/ifade-ozgurlugu/105329-dink-cinayetini-kinayan-temel-demirer-301-ve-216-dan-yargida>; Demirer, "TCK 301 ve 216'lı Hikâye(m)"; Büşra Akman, "Temel Demirer Davası üzerinden Düşünce Özgürlüğü Toplantısı," *Yeşil Gazete*, April 2, 2013, <https://yesilgazete.org/blog/2013/04/02/temel-demirer-davasi-uzerinden-dusunce-ozgurlugu-toplantisi/>; "Temel Demirer'in 301 Davası Başladı, Kardeşlik İsteyenler Onu Yalnız Bırakmadı," *Sendika.Org*, March 6, 2008, <http://sendika10.org/2008/03/temel-demirerin-301-davasi-basladi-kardeslik-isteyenler-onu-yalniz-birakmadi/>; "Temel Demirer Davası Ertelendi," *Etkin Haber Ajansı*, February 19, 2013, <http://www.etha.com.tr/Haber/2013/02/19/guncel/temel-demirer-davasina-erteleme/>.

⁴¹⁸ European Court of Human Rights Second Section, "Case of Altuğ Taner Akçam v. Turkey (Application No. 27520/07): Judgment" (European Court of Human Rights, October 25, 2011),

- On April 30, 2008 Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code was revised because of concerns and complaints coming from domestic and international bodies about the violation of the freedom of expression. The government, instead of annulling the article altogether, chose to amend it and add a “security” mechanism. From then on, “the prosecution under this article shall be subjected to the approval of the Minister of Justice.”

[http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-107206#{"itemid":\["001-107206"\]}](http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-107206#{); Victoria Leenders-Cheng, “Victory at the European Court of Human Rights,” *McGill Law: Focus Online*, December 2011, <http://publications.mcgill.ca/droit/2011/12/09/akcam-v-turkey/>; “Akçam Wins Landmark Free-Speech Case in Euro Human Rights Court,” *Clark University*, November 2, 2011, <http://www.clarku.edu/article/ak%C3%A7am-wins-landmark-free-speech-case-euro-human-rights-court>; “Turkey Cannot Criminalize Armenian Genocide Recognition - Human Rights Court,” *News.am*, (October 26, 2011), <http://news.am/eng/news/79427.html>; “Taner Akçam Kazandı TCK 301 AİHM’e Takıldı,” *Bianet*, October 26, 2011, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/ifade-ozgurlugu/133648-tck-301-aihm-e-takildi>. For a critique of the ECHR’s verdict please see, Selman Dursun, “A Short Critique of the Judgement of the European Court of Human Rights on Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code,” *Human Rights Review* 1, no. 2 (December 2011): 17–22.

Chapter 3 – Commemorating the Armenian Genocide in Turkey

This chapter documents annual Armenian genocide commemorations organized on April 24 in Turkey since 2010. It will explore an uncharted area of the literature of coming to memory of the genocide in Turkey as there has been a limited number of scholarly works focusing on these commemorations thus far. By documenting commemorative events, describing their formal components, highlighting the frames of remembering the mobilized, and situating them within the broader memorial landscape, the chapter will fold these events into the post-1980 coming to memory of the genocide.

As the broader coming to memory of the genocide took place as part of a crisis of national identity and eroding Kemalist hegemony, genocide commemorations have occurred in relation to Turkishness and its changing memory regimes. The complex interplay between official discourse on genocide and discourses of counter-memory are related to the ways in which contemporary Turkish national identity has been challenged, negotiated, and remade. There is a historical context to this contemporary contestation over national memory that acknowledges the national traumas of the late imperial and early republican periods. The emergence of Turkishness was determined by deep anxieties, fears, resentments, and hostilities. Having to deal with a deeply wounded national sense of identity, processes of Kemalist nation-building created a peculiar connection between memory and identity that continues to cast a long shadow over discussions of the national past. Both genocide denialists and advocates of a coming to memory of the genocide continue to struggle with the parameters of national identity.

I. National Identity and Commemorations

Nations, as imagined communities, rely on their members' sense of unity and belonging with people whom they do not know.¹ Similarly, national memory is sustained by the sense that they have a shared past with these people as a result of belonging to the same community.² Commemorations are building blocks and reminders of this shared past. Thus within the framework of a nation's past and identity, our relationship with the past is often mediated by commemorations. Through commemorations, "a community is reminded of its identity as represented by and told in a master narrative."³

Commemorative activities are about making meaning of past events, ordering an otherwise disorderly history, and canonizing certain moments of the past that unite the community and function as a mirror to reflect back on their identity. They also entail regulated ritual performances, often incorporating embodied practices that bring myth, the sacred, and fantasy together to strengthen bonds and hold society together.

Even though commemorations are among the foundational blocks of the eternalized and naturalized past of a nation, they have a history that is traceable. Rather than being given and self-evident, commemorations come into existence through deliberate social and political action. There is an unavoidable and unconcealed characteristic of invention attributable to commemorations; they are 'invented traditions.' The credibility of these traditions cannot be taken for granted either as:

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

² John R. Gillis, "Introduction: Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship," in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 7.

³ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 70.

these newly constructed commemorations are successful when they manage to project an aura of traditionality that obscures their brief career as cultural representations of the past. But 'invented traditions' might succeed only partially or otherwise fail to convince of their traditional status when members of the society become aware of their fabricated character. Such awareness may lead to doubts about the appropriateness and validity of their commemoration of the past.⁴

This invented-ness implies a top-down imposition of organized collective remembrance onto citizens. However, such an approach assumes a schism between the state and society. Instead, conceiving commemorations as effects of power relations shaping and shaped by society's engagements with central and institutionalized forms of power would better fit the scope of this research.⁵ In general, nation states orchestrate public commemorative activities. As the nation is defined by what its members remember and forget,⁶ commemoration comprises an important tool for shaping the collective memory. Undeniably the nation-state is one of the determining factors governing the memorial and commemorative dynamics of the national community. However, the commemorative framework deployed by this form of political organization is not absolute. On the contrary, it is contingent on the nation-state's ability to exert hegemony over the population's political imaginary and this hegemony might be contested and transcended.

Commenting on the relationship between French national identity and commemorations, Nora referred to the last decades of the 20th century as the era of

⁴ Yael Zerubavel, "The Historical, the Legendary, and the Incredible: Invented Tradition and Collective Memory in Israel," in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 106.

⁵ For a discussion of different approaches to power relations and state-centered understandings of commemorations please see, T. G Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper, *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration* (London: Routledge, 2000).

⁶ Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?," in *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

commemoration.⁷ The determining characteristic of this era was post-national. Contemporary French society experienced the replacement of the “classical model of national commemorations” by a “loosely organized system of disparate commemorative languages.”⁸ In other words, the French nation-state lost its unifying framework on national history and hence “there is no commemorative superego: the canon has vanished.”⁹ The commemorative superego provided a total framework of commemorative meaning and practice. The framework determined symbolic content as well as ritualistic acts involved in commemorative discourses and practices. Clearly, the ordered and hierarchized realms of the classical model embodied in museums and monuments are reproduced and disseminated through the national education system. Representing and embodying the history of the victorious, the classical model relegated the past of the “losers” into oblivion and silence.

The withdrawal of national myth led to the disenchantment and politicization of commemorations with potential for conflict and controversy. As the nation-state, the affirmed sovereign in the classical model, lost its hegemonic grasp on commemorative discourses, a multiplicity of commemorative initiatives without “central organizing principles” that are susceptible to myriad influences of diverging and sometimes contradictory factors came to act as agents of commemoration.¹⁰ The politicization of commemorations resulted in their secularization and democratization, thus becoming more akin to political demonstrations. This allowed for the return of previously silenced sub-national group memories, eroding the monist framework of national commemoration

⁷ Pierre Nora, “The Era of Commemoration;,” in *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, vol. 3: Symbols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 609–37.

⁸ Ibid., 614.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

in its classical model and gradually introduced a multiplicity of claims on the past voiced by groups often with diverging agendas.¹¹

Commemoration has become an inherently contested terrain, particularly in the contemporary multiplication and diversification of agents aside from the nation-state laying claims on commemorative practices. So instead of a singular collective memory, we need to conceive of coexisting, competing, converging and possibly diverging narratives regarding the content and form of commemorations.¹² The fragmentation, diversification, politicization, and democratization of the commemorative register, according to Nora, established the dominance of the present over the past: “What matters is not what the past imposes on us but what we bring to it.”¹³ The configuration, needs, and conflicts of the present came to determine how the past is to be commemorated. As a result, the act of commemorating a historical event has become more important than the event itself being commemorated.¹⁴

The selection and canonization of historical moments and figures to be commemorated is a function of power relations and struggles. These relations often unfold in the cultural field, taken as the totality of collective action. In any given moment commemorations are subject to the interplay of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic claims. Hence, commemoration “is by definition social and political, for it involves the coordination of individual and group memories, whose results may appear consensual when they are in fact the product of processes of intense contest, struggle, and, in some

¹¹ Ibid., 616.

¹² Barbara A Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Maidenhead, Berkshire, England; Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 2003), 127.

¹³ Nora, “The Era of Commemoration:,” 618.

¹⁴ Ibid., 621.

instances, annihilation.”¹⁵ For a variety of reasons, some commemorations gain political and social traction and become permanent while others fall through the cracks. In many cases, commemorations entail certain ritualized activities and performances. This performative aspect of commemorations is equally crucial in sustaining collective identity and unity as the commemorated instance of the past itself. In moments of contestation, crisis, or transformation, commemorations may become divisive and lead to conflict.

In general, commemorative performances highlight the continuity of a communal past;¹⁶ however, continuity has been a problematic concept for Ottoman-Turkish history. On the discursive level, the Kemalist republic presented itself as a clear rupture with or departure from the Ottoman past. Crystallized in Mustafa Kemal’s *Nutuk (The Speech)*, the break with the past was to be absolute:

In *Nutuk*, this myth of rebirth is linked with the narrative of discontinuity, a narrative of distinct separation from the Ottoman Empire. This narrative of discontinuity distanced the Turkish Republic from the Ottoman Empire on several different levels. First and foremost, the Sultanate and the Caliphate are presented as useless and backward institutions that cannot be reconciled with modernization. The argument for the abolition of both the Sultanate and the Caliphate (in 1922 and 1924, respectively) was made through the individual acts of treachery of Sultan Vahdeddin, who vouched for the British mandate and, during the Independence Struggle, actively struggled against the nationalist forces in Anatolia. In *Nutuk*, not only the last Ottoman Sultan Vahdeddin but all Ottoman Sultans are degraded as “a bunch of madmen,” “moronic and ignorant” “animals.”

The narrative of discontinuity also promotes, in lieu of the multiethnic configuration of the Ottoman Empire, a strictly ethnic nationalism. Ethnic nationalism was reinforced with the aid of the myth of the nation-as-family that was to become a significant part of the Kemalist national myth in the 1930s. Thus, the Turkish nation was seen as one family, whose father was Mustafa Kemal. This paternal role was underscored in 1934 when Mustafa Kemal instigated the “Last Name Law,” whereby all Turkish citizens had to take last

¹⁵ Gillis, “Introduction: Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship,” 5.

¹⁶ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 48.

names, and claimed the name of *Atatürk*, which literally meant the “Father of the Turk,” for himself.¹⁷

Republican relations with the past focused chiefly on discovering and inventing a usable national past that bracketed the Ottoman period, which did not fit with the self-image of the young nation. Hence Kemalist commemorations concentrated on the very recent past and de-emphasized continuity. In this respect, the Kemalist conception of national identity and temporality converges with the idea of modernity, as described by Paul de Man:

as a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier, in the hope of reaching at last a point that would be called a true present, a point of origin that marks a new departure. This combined interplay of deliberate forgetting with an action that is also a new origin reached the full power of the idea of modernity.¹⁸

In line with this modernist ethos, very few historical moments and figures inherited from the Ottoman era were commemorated under the Kemalist collective memory regime.¹⁹

Kemalist commemorative discourses and practices, while continuing with some of the inherited late-Ottoman commemorations, invoked more recent moments of national history (most importantly the turning points of the National Struggle for liberation and the foundation of the republic based on national sovereignty). As such, official memorialization efforts in Turkey riveted collective memories of the nation and the emerging identity of the nation. Present commemorations and the commemorated past were almost coeval in the Turkish case. Nevertheless, breaking with the imperial past proved to be problematic for many reasons. On the most practical level, there were major continuities in institutions and cadres. The cadres who founded the republic were

¹⁷ Hülya Adak, “National Myths and Self-Na(rra)tions: Mustafa Kemal’s Nutuk and Halide Edib’s Memoirs and The Turkish Ordeal,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2003): 516–517.

¹⁸ Paul de Man quoted in Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 61.

¹⁹ One of the crucial exceptions to this is the Gallipoli campaign commemoration.

inherited from the imperial era, and the majority of civil and military bureaucrats were imperial as well.²⁰ Some of the Ottomanists questioned the rupture thesis between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic and underlined the continuities between the Young Turks and Turkey under Mustafa Kemal who had been a member of the party.²¹

The modernist tendency to prioritize the present and the future over the past also came with its unavoidable counterpart, the constant preoccupation with the past.²² Rejecting the imperial past meant constantly engaging with it in order to refute it. Stigmatizing the Sultanate and delegitimizing the Islamic basis of socio-political organization resulted in the constant revision of history. The Kemalist preoccupation with the imperial past was obvious even when the regime mobilized a significant amount of intellectual and cultural resources to unearth, canonize, and sustain an alternative national historiography focusing on a pre-Ottoman Turkish past.

As shown earlier, the coming to memory of the Armenian genocide takes place in the context of the challenge posed to the Kemalist hegemony over historical memory. As such, memory work about the genocidal past is a form of contested memory. The official denial continues to prevent the emergence of a unified and inclusive history of the late Ottoman Empire and its diverse populations. In its most general sense, historical contestations are closely related to struggles over the historical truth where there is no consensus over historical facts. Hodgkin and Radstone highlight that contests about the

²⁰ Virginia H. Aksan, "Ottoman to Turk: Continuity and Change," *International Journal* 61, no. 1 (December 1, 2005): 19.

²¹ Erik J. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London; New York: I.B.Tauris, 2014).

²² Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 61.

past not only question the past, but also problematize the present as well.²³ Contests put the past and present in tension with one another where the present has to find meaningful ways to engage with controversial past events. Many of the sustained contestations over the past attest to the fact that this is not an easy task to accomplish. Especially problematic are the situations where engaging with past events involves recognizing wrongdoings, acknowledging responsibility for these wrongs, admitting guilt and finding ways for reparation and restitution of justice.

The coming to memory of the Armenian genocide marks an extraordinarily problematic moment of contestation for Turkey; it puts the present under pressure in terms of coming to terms with this genocidal past. A variety of agents of memory are contesting the official historical narrative on the genocide to put forward their own claims of historical truth and to force the Turkish state and society to take responsibility for past malfeasance. In other words, at this level the contest is about what really happened in the past and how to characterize it. One of the primary fields where the contestation is staged is public commemorations of the Armenian genocide in Turkey. These events are open contests over the historical truth and they also bring questions related to representational order into the foreground as well.²⁴ In this sense, commemorations of genocide in Turkey constitute an element of multifaceted and protracted conflict over history, even though they begin as attempts at resolving the conflict.

Analyzing the example of the exhibit *Counting the Cost* (later entitled *Taking Account*) that listed the names of around 3500 people killed during the Northern Ireland conflict, McDowell and Braniff underline some of the crucial points that need to be taken

²³ Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, "Introduction: Contested Pasts," in *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 1.

²⁴ Ibid.

into consideration while thinking about the commemorations of conflict. These points include:

- The possible tensions of using space to represent the past where memory can become either accepted or act as a focus of resistance;
- The sometimes complicated nature of choosing an adequate form of commemoration and the trauma it can evoke;
- Questions and disputes surrounding the ownership of memory;
- Divergent definitions of victimhood and other issues of inclusion and exclusion;
- Tensions between private and public grief;
- The dichotomy between individual and collective memory, and;
- The difficulty of commemorating the past within a rapidly shifting political landscape.²⁵

The points emanating from the context of Northern Ireland can also be used to problematize commemorations of the Armenian genocide in Turkey. Questions such as how to commemorate the Armenian genocide in Turkey, the best way to convey genocidal facts to the wider public, and, what is being commemorated, gain importance. When, where, who, and how questions are accompanied by wider ethical, moral, and political ones regarding contemporary Turkey.

II. Commemorating Difficult Pasts

The complex, multi-faceted, and overdetermined presence of the Armenian genocide in the collective memory in Turkey can be best understood from the perspective of commemorating difficult pasts. The literature on commemorating difficult pasts agrees on two possible ways of commemorating difficult or troubling pasts. The first is dissensual/multivocal and the second is fragmented. Wagner-Pacific and Schwartz's study on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial develops the dissensual/multivocal model in the face of an event over whose public meaning there is no consensus. The contestation over the

²⁵ Sara McDowell and Máire Braniff, *Commemoration as Conflict: Space, Memory and Identity in Peace Processes* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 3.

meaning of the Vietnam War and its participants creates a multivalent memorial field. The inherent ambivalence of the Vietnam War for the American public challenges the established socio-cultural and political conventions of commemoration because until the 1990s the major understanding of commemoration in the literature has assumed a socially “shared significance” behind the commemorative activities.²⁶

In many instances, this socially shared significance has been one of the major factors sustaining a sense of group unity. However, events such as the Vietnam War and commemorating such events deeply problematize the existing conceptions and practices for memorialization. Hence the authors ask, “how is commemoration without consensus, or without pride, possible?”²⁷ What they see in the emergence and evolution of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a dissensual monument where different communities of memory come to the memorial on the same date but with different and contradicting ways of interpreting the war. In other words, different communities of memory are divided in their moral evaluations of the event itself, but they still share the space and date to remember the event.

Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, in surveying the commemorations for Israel's assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, maintains that in addition to this dissensual model of remembering a difficult past, there also exists a fragmented model of commemoration. In this second model, “a fragmented commemoration includes multiple commemorations in various spaces and times where diverse discourses of the past are

²⁶ Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past,” *American Journal of Sociology* 97, no. 2 (1991): 379.

²⁷ Ibid.

voiced and aimed at disparate audiences."²⁸ In a clear break from the dissensual model, in cases of fragmented memories the spaces and dates of commemorations are not shared by remembering groups. Each group organizes its own event attended only by people sharing the group's interpretation of Rabin himself and of his assassination. Therefore Rabin's memorial field is populated by a multiplicity of commemorative activities held at different places at different times.

Vinitzky-Seroussi states that three factors deserve attention in order to understand commemorations of a difficult past and to determine whether the outcome will be a dissensual or fragmented commemoration. These include: "the political culture of the commemorating society; the timing of the commemorations, or in other words, the relevance of the past to the present agenda; the power of the agents of memory."²⁹ She holds that it is more likely to have a fragmented commemoration in a 'conflictual' political culture where the past has a strong bearing on the present and where there are strong agents of memory.³⁰

Seen from a certain perspective the relevance of the past to the present concept may put the focus on a presentist or present-oriented approach to the relation between the past and the present in which the past is defined solely by the needs and interests of the present. On the other end of the spectrum is what Conway calls "the continuity

²⁸ Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, "Commemorating a Difficult Past: Yitzhak Rabin's Memorials," *American Sociological Review* 67, no. 1 (2002): 31–32.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁰ Conflictual political culture might not be the most analytically nuanced category to understand politics on a societal scale because at this scale conflict and consensus are in constant shift and the configuration of political power is being made and remade. Hence, it is hard to qualify a society as consensual and conflictual. It is also important to investigate a political culture from a longitudinal perspective in order to see the interplay of conflict and consensus among various political actors because conflict and consensus are historical events or states. In addition, in a given society various past events equally relevant to the present agenda may lead to different forms of commemoration.

perspective,” which stresses the importance of the continuity of socially shared views of the past through intergenerational transmission.³¹ Conway succinctly states that ‘the past-present nexus’ is too complex to be successfully explained by either of these perspectives alone. He converges with Barry Schwartz's formulation about commemoration which takes it as “a stable image upon which new elements are intermittently superimposed.”³²

This median approach provides a more balanced view of the relevance of the past to the present in which there is a more dynamic relationship between the two. Pomianz also stressed the relationship between the past and the present with a specific interest in conflicts about the past: "when time is right, an era of the past may serve as a screen on which new generations can project their contradictions, controversies, and conflicts in objectified form."³³ Which events will become a screen depends not only on the nature of present conflicts but also on the nature of past events themselves. Events that marked a controversial moment in a society's past are most likely to be revisited in situations of present conflict.

Commemorations of the Armenian genocide in Turkey more closely resemble the fragmented model even though some elements of the dissensual model are also discernible. Sustained denial of past atrocities has made commemorations of the genocide a highly charged activity. The politics of memory determine almost all aspects of commemorative practices and performances:

Insofar as there are different social interpretations of the past, public commemoration dates are issues around which social debate and even political conflict emerge. What date should be commemorated? Or, more to the point,

³¹ Brian Conway, *Commemoration and Bloody Sunday: Pathways of Memory*. (Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 16.

³² Quoted by Rousso in *Ibid.*, 17.

³³ Quoted in Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 5.

who wants to commemorate what? Rarely is there social consensus on these issues.³⁴

April 24 held almost no place in the commemorative landscape of Turkey until the mid-2000s.³⁵ It had been the canonized and institutionalized date of Armenian genocide commemoration, with Armenian communities organizing commemorative activities. However, for a very long time this date did not have any meaning in the memorial landscape of Turkey. When it finally entered into the wider commemorative field, rather than marking Armenian suffering, it was resented as a mere opportunity for Armenians and international public opinion to challenge Turkish national identity with the claim of genocide. At the same time, the date was marked with heightened interest by the political leaders of Western countries and supranational organizations, with specific attention being given to the annual April 24th speech of the US president. Small victories

³⁴ Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, trans. Judy Rein and Marcial Godoy-Anativia (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 36.

³⁵ It is located between April 23rd, the National Sovereignty and Children's Day, and April 25th, Anzac Day, which is commemorated soldiers from Australia and New Zealand who took part in the landing at Gallipoli in 1915. Every year thousands of Australians and New Zealanders participate in the commemoration ceremony. The Armenian genocide and the Anzac landing were deeply connected; however their memories have not necessarily fed into each other. Robert Manne, "A Turkish Tale: Gallipoli and the Armenian Genocide," *The Monthly*, February 2007, <https://www.themonthly.com.au/monthly-essays-robert-manne-turkish-tale-gallipoli-and-armenian-genocide-459>. In 2015, the genocide anniversary and the Anzac Day came to the fore because the Turkish government decided to start Anzac Day ceremonies on April 24, instead of the traditional April 25. The government also intensified its commemorative thrust and invited world leaders to join the commemorations, including the Armenian president Serzh Sarkisian. This move was an attempt at eclipsing the centennial of the genocide. Constanze Letsch, "Turkey Eclipses Centenary of Armenian massacre by Moving Gallipoli Memorial," *The Guardian*, April 16, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/16/turkey-armenia-1915-centenary-gallipoli-massacre-genocide>; Joanna Slater, "A Century Later, Turkey's President Strives to Reframe a Nation-Building Battle," *The Globe and Mail*, April 24, 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/a-century-later-turkeys-president-strives-to-reframe-a-nation-building-battle/article24109806/>. It attested to the AKP's denialist politics of memory and its attempts to redefine the memorial regime in Turkey. It also marks a shift from March 18th, which marked the naval victory at Gallipoli, as the traditional primary commemorative date of victory. Since Yael Zerubavel's reminder, we know that nations constantly revisit their history and re-cast their stories of origins through selective commemorations. Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

were won when these leaders did not use the term genocide and an angry backlash took place when they did. In general, April 24 is seen as a date of denigrating Turkishness because the “hypocritical” West has always been more attuned to sufferings of non-Muslims than those of Muslims. Accordingly, the date has figured as a symbolic site for perceived challenges to Turkey’s national innocence, integrity, and honour. The memory projects investigated here, then, attempt to radically transform the public meaning and political implication of this date.

A handful of scholarly treatises on genocide commemoration in Turkey highlight the impact of memory contestation and politicization on commemorative agency and performances. Fatma Müge Göçek has recently argued that the struggle over the nature and the meaning of past events between the Turkish official narrative and the Armenian narrative prevents the recognition of pain and the commencement of healing.³⁶ The antagonistic positioning of the interpretations of the events of 1915-17 and the quick polarization between the parties involved, according to Göçek, intervene in the process of mourning and inhibit the ‘normal’ procedure of coming to terms with a difficult past for both the Armenian and Turkish communities.³⁷ This inability to mourn transforms the unacknowledged memory into collective trauma. Memory becomes “a negative indelible event that starts to be perceived as threatening to the very existence of the social group in question.”³⁸

³⁶ Fatma Müge Göçek, “Remembering the Past: How to Commemorate 24 April 1915,” in *The Transformation of Turkey: Redefining State and Society from the Ottoman Empire to the Modern Era* (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 212.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 213.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 213–214. The symmetrical attribution of responsibility for inability to mourn to Armenians and Turks-Muslims does not do full justice to the stalemate. The contestation over historical memory originated with the denial of atrocities through legitimization. The perpetrator side has direct responsibility for the perpetuation for the denial. Situating the Armenian

In the Turkish-Armenian case, these groups are traumatized for different reasons. For the Armenians, the lack of acknowledgment and recognition of suffering on the part of the Turkish state and society is the source of their own collective trauma. For the Turkish state and society, the acknowledgment and recognition of this violent period paving the way for the establishment of the national community threatens the very existence of the dominant narrative of the Turkish nation-state.³⁹ Göçek maintains that collective commemorations are important practices that contribute not only to psychological processes of healing in the aftermath of mass violence, but also to the ethical restoration of dignity, the drawing of moral lessons, and the reestablishment of coexistence.⁴⁰ However, she reminds us that there is an impasse at the moment concerning the commemoration of the events beginning in 1915.⁴¹

Her suggestion to overcome this deadlock and to pave the way for reconciliation is to assign scholars from both sides as the agents of memory because, "they can acknowledge the past in a manner that gives voice to both the Turks and the Armenians, that threads historical events in such a way as to enable the two sides to recognize their embedded traumas as mutual."⁴² At the beginning of this undertaking is the declaration of April 24, 1915 as a shared day of remembrance among both Turkish and Armenian peoples. Both parties need to incorporate the losses of 1915 into their collective

perspectives on the past on the same level with the Turkish-Muslim ones risks of losing sight of this origin.

³⁹ Ibid., 214.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 213. The therapeutic approaches to memory in contexts of mass violence may take the form of remembering to forget, or a way to leave the past behind. However, in the case of Armenian genocide, rather than advocating a coming to terms with the past once and for all, demanding a continuous engagement with history contributes more to the politics of equality in Turkey.

⁴¹ Ibid., 214–215.

⁴² Ibid., 215.

memories and to mourn together for those who perished, but this should be done in a way that unites the two sides; the ground for this unity is the commonalities between these two communities based on shared homeland, culture, and everyday practices.⁴³ Scholars can work as guides in the quest for creating a common knowledge about the events on the basis of which it is possible to create a culture of collective commemoration.⁴⁴

Scholars are already playing crucial roles in the coming to memory of the Armenian genocide in Turkey. In fact, scholarly research constitutes a crucial vector of memory through which the Turkish public and other agents of memory have increased their knowledge of atrocities against the Armenians. Some among them, as a result of Turkey's peculiar intellectual history, have also functioned as public opinion leaders. They have been involved, directly or indirectly, in the commemorative campaigns in Turkey, especially in building the commemorative discourses and agendas.

A variety of not-for-profit and grassroots organizations together with political initiatives have functioned as catalysts of disseminating the “unearthed” memories of the genocide to the public. Among these, two organizations have taken the initiative to organize Armenian genocide commemorations in Turkey. The first is the Commission against Racism and Discrimination at the Istanbul Branch of the Human Rights Association (*İnsan Hakları Derneği – İstanbul Şubesi Irkçılığa ve Ayrımcılığa Karşı Komisyon – İHD*), and the second is the Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism (*İrkçılığa ve Milliyetçiliğe Dur De – DurDe*).⁴⁵

Commemorating the genocide against the hundred year old denialist thrust is not an easy feat to achieve, as the denial has been a component of communal identity in

⁴³ Ibid., 215–216.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 216.

⁴⁵ More information on these organizations can be found below.

Turkey. Going against the grain not only threatens to shatter national identity, but it also resonates with major fears, anxieties, and prejudices that have been driving the population since the late Ottoman period. Agents of memory organizing the commemorations in Turkey are members of this political community which is shaped by denial ethos. Also, Turkey does not have any tangible experience with coming to terms with past episodes of state and mass violence. Therefore, the agents of memory are flying blind, to a great extent, attempting something which is a radical departure for the nation state.

From the outset it must be said that commemorations organized by İHD and DurDe, above anything else, are open contestations of the official silence publicly participated in in Turkey. From this perspective, regardless of the differences between the two organizations' commemorations, they aim to intervene in the collective memory by, first of all, recognizing that the events of 1915-17 constitute an integral part of Turkey's communal past; a part that has long been ignored, silenced, and left into oblivion, but that needs to be remembered collectively. As Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz reminded us,

before any event can be regarded as worth remembering, and before any class of people can be recognized for having participated in that event, some individual, and eventually some group, must deem both event and participants commemorable and must have the influence to get others to agree.⁴⁶

The deliberate efforts of İHD and DurDe define a moment in which the politics of memory has crystallized in Turkey where a small number of people challenge an officially-backed society-wide interpretation of the past.

The efforts to bring back the memory of the atrocities against Armenians and secure official and popular recognition have been swimming counter-current:

⁴⁶ Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," 382.

To construct museums and install commemorations is the result of the initiative and the commitment of social advocacy groups that act as memory entrepreneurs. These groups usually demand public and official recognition of these physical markers, and this societal demand may generate opposition and conflicts with those who want to erase and deny, or do not give them the priority that the promoters demand. There is also the struggle over the narrative that is going to be conveyed, over the content of the story that comes to be attached to the site.⁴⁷

On the one hand, public actors organize the commemorations, which constitute counter-memory initiatives against the denial. On the other, these actors adopt different perspectives of what is to be commemorated on April 24 and how it is to be remembered. These are roughly the two dimensions of the politics of memory about the Armenian genocide memorialization in Turkey.

Reflections on how to commemorate the genocide are slow to emerge, however. Much public dissident energy is allocated to ‘doing something’ against the denial. The sense of immediacy takes over deliberative commemorative politics and practices themselves. The agents of memory continue the habits of political activism in Turkey that are more about reflex reactions of events than building processes and activities with mid- to long-term planning. Cengiz Algan, the spokesperson for DurDe, declared that they had the idea of organizing a public commemoration on April 24, 2010, ten to fifteen days prior to the date.⁴⁸ In this regard genocide commemorations converge with political protests in content, form, and modes of performances. Reminiscent of their conditions of possibility, the commemorations are devised against the state taken as the sole, omnipresent, and omni-potent subject of denial.

⁴⁷ Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, 39.

⁴⁸ Nagehan Alçı, “Konuşmanın Vakti Geldi,” *Aksam.com.tr*, May 3, 2010, http://aksam.medyator.com/2019/08/18/yazar/17205/nagehan_alci/konusmanin_vakti_geldi_.html.

III. The Agents of Memory

In the literature on the memory of contested pasts, a variety of concepts are developed to understand groups of people who take sides in a memory conflict and who actively intervene in the ways in which the past is remembered and interpreted: “memory choreographers,”⁴⁹ “practitioners of memory,”⁵⁰ and “memory entrepreneurs.”⁵¹ “Agents of memory” closely follows these conceptualizations and covers a wide range of activities that memory performances entail. These actors participate in memory projects which aim at, especially in the context of memory conflicts, creating and sustaining symbolic resources, discourses and strategies, and ideological and moral sources of legitimation to back up their truth claims against other truth claims about the past.

IHD and DurDe are not seen as ‘Honest brokers’ or neutral mediators of contesting memory narratives because they are invested in it as well. Unavoidably, genocide recognition campaigns must unfold in a terrain determined by shifting political landscapes populated by a multiplicity of domestic and foreign actors motivated by distinct interests. The Armenian genocide has created the conditions of a transnational political community invested in the politics of memory. Armenian and Turkish diasporas, international communities of experts, scholars, activists, and politicians were the agents acting in the field of the global politics of the Armenian genocide.

⁴⁹ Conway, *Commemoration and Bloody Sunday: Pathways of Memory*.

⁵⁰ Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick; London: Transaction Publishers, 1994).

⁵¹ Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*.

The Commission against Racism and Discrimination at the Human Rights Association (İHD)

The emergence of organizations and discourses of human rights in Turkey was a response to violent political repression, systematic torture, death penalties, and disappearances that the September 12, 1980 military coup used to control politics and society.⁵² Relatives of detainees and prisoners, concerned about the well-being of their kin, sought to organize. They found the Prisoners' Families Solidarity Association (*Tutuklu ve Hükümlü Aileleri Yardımlaşma Derneği*, TAYAD) on February 3, 1986, however the association was banned later that year.⁵³ Subsequently, a group of 98 intellectuals, lawyers, doctors, journalists, architects, engineers, and writers, led by prisoners' families founded the Human Rights Association on July 17, 1986.⁵⁴

The founding of the association marked the framing of political repression and the struggle against it within human rights discourses. This can also be seen as an expansion

⁵² Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 278–281.

⁵³ Berkan Hamdemir, "Türkiye'de İnsan Haklarını Koruma Amaçlı Resmi ve Sivil Girişimler" (Masters Thesis, Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi, 2009), <http://193.140.180.119/tez/T00949.pdf>.

⁵⁴ The alphabetically ordered list is as follows: Ahmet Abakay, İbrahim Açı, Vahide Açı, Niyazi Ağırnaslı, Z. Ayla Akbal, Perihan Akçam, Gülten Akın, Şükran Akın, M. Oktay Akıncı, M. Yücel Akıncı, Fevzi Bahattin Argun, Mehmet Ali Aybar, Aydın Aybay, Rona Aybay, Ali Aydemir, Güngör Aydın, Nebi Barlas, Aykut Başçıl, Kazım Bayraktar, Mehdi Bektaş, Murat Kadri Belge, Akın Birdal, Ali Bozkurt, Recep Cüre, Ahmet Bozkurt Çağlar, Gülizar Çağlayan, Fatma Çakır, İsmail Sami Çakmak, Sacide Çekmecici, Halit Çelenk, Adnan Çelik, Sennur F. Çelik, M. Emin Değer, İsmet Özdal Demirdöğen, Neriman Deniz, Veli Devecioğlu, Bekir Doğanay, Hüseyin Ekinci, M. İzzet Eray, Aydın Erdoğan, Osman Ergin, Leman Fırtına, Nusret Fişek, Cevat Geray, Haluk Bahri Gerger, Hıdır Göktaş, Jülide Gülizar, Sadık Gürbüz, Gençay Gürsoy, M. Suphi Gürsoytrak, Nevzat Helvacı, Nurkut İnan, H. Alpay Kabacalı, Arslan Başer Kafaoğlu, M. Nuri Karacan, Filiz Karakuş, Kemal Işkın Keleşoğlu, Şükran Ketenci, Mihriban Kırdök, Ahmet Hulusi Kırım, Handan Koç, Hikmet Koçak, Hamdi Konur, Aziz Nesin, Osman Oge, S. Özcan Öktem, Hüsnü Öndül, Yavuz Önen, Mahmut Tali Öngören, Haldun Özen, Işıl Özgentürk, M. Ali Özpolat, İsmet Pekdemir, İ. Emil Galip Sandalcı, Melahat Sarptunalı, İbrahim Saydan, Yücel Sayman, Zarfı Sel, O. Merih Sezen, Fatma Ümit Sezer, Ayşe Simen, Ali Sirmen, Didar Şensoy, Şaziment Şulekoğlu, Tahsin Şulekoğlu, F. Adalet Sümer, Ercüment Tahiroğlu, Ahmet Tahtakılıç, Cahit Talas, Zeki Tavşancıl, Şirin Tekeli, İbrahim Tezan, Vecihi Timuroğlu, Müşerref Toper, Erbil Tuşalp, Serap Yakut, İbrahim Yetkin, Ragıp Zarakolu. İnsan Hakları Derneği (Ankara), *Kuruluşundan bugüne İHD: Onbeşinci yıl*. (Ankara: İHD, 2001).

from the core issue, the conditions of prisoners, to a much larger scope of human rights violations. Nevertheless, prisoners' relatives were at the forefront and they have since become important figures and symbols in the field of human rights activism. Leman Fırtına, Didar Şensoy, Sacide Çekmecci, Gülizar Çağlayan, Perihan Akçam,⁵⁵ Şaziment Şulekoğlu, Melahat Sarptunalı, and Vahide Açıan were among these figures.⁵⁶ İHD emerged as a grassroots and needs-based human rights organization dealing with the immediate political violence.⁵⁷

In time the association expanded its activities and became a crucial organization documenting, reporting, and seeking to stop human rights violations. As of 2001 it listed

⁵⁵ Perihan Akçam's experience with political imprisonment began when her spouse Dursun Akçam, one of the founders of the Teachers' Union of Turkey (Türkiye Öğretmenler Sendikası, TÖS), was arrested in the wake of the March 12, 1971, military intervention. Alper Akçam, "Dursun Akçam'ın Yaşam Öyküsü," *Dursun Akçam*, accessed June 9, 2015, <http://www.dursunakcam.com/yo.html>. Her son Taner Akçam, who later became a renowned scholar of the Armenian genocide, was also actively involved in radical leftist politics in the mid-1970s. He was the editor-in-chief of the *Revolutionary Youth* (Devrimci Gençlik) journal, the publication of the Revolutionary Path (Devrimci Yol, Dev-Yol). He was sentenced to imprisonment, but a year into his confinement he escaped the prison and claimed political refugee status in Germany. After the September 12 coup, he was leading the Dev-Yol cadres and working to re-organize revolutionary forces that fled to Syria. He was going back and forth between Germany and Syria. There, until 1984, he worked side by side with Abdullah Öcalan and PKK. "Bio/Özgeçmiş," *Tanerakcam.com*, accessed August 21, 2016, <http://www.tanerakcam.com/biography/>; Taner Akçam and Neşe Düzel, "Apo Bana Demişti Ki...", *Taraf.com.tr*, March 13, 2012, <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/haber-apo-bana-demisti-ki-88509/>. Perihan Akçam's younger son, Cahit Akçam, was also a part of the Dev-Yol organization in Turkey. After the coup, he was tried for their involvement and stayed in prison until 1988. "Çileli Uzun Bir Yol Hikâyesi: DEV-YOL," accessed June 9, 2015, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/85999/Cileli_uzun_bir_yol_hik_yesi_DEV-YOL.html. Perihan Akçam was a staunch supporter of her son and other prisoners alongside their families. She related that experience in her book, *Onca Çileden Sonra*. Perihan Akçam and Şadiye Dönümcü, "Perihan Akçam'la Söyleşi: Mamak Kapısında Anne Olmak," *Bianet - Bagimsiz İletişim Ağı*, November 5, 2011, <http://www.bianet.org/biamag/diger/133881-mamak-kapisinda-anne-olmak>; Şadiye Dönümcü, "Onca Çileden Sonra: Bu Kitabı Okuyun; Öfkelenin Yeniden!," *Bianet*, November 5, 2011, <http://www.bianet.org/biamag/insan-haklari/133887-bu-kitabi-okuyun-ofkelenin-yeniden>.

⁵⁶ These figures and others, such as and Vahide Açıan, reveal that there was a clear gendered aspect to this initiative as they were female relatives of prisoners, mostly mothers and in some cases sisters.

⁵⁷ İnsan Hakları Derneği, "Hakkımızda," *İnsan Hakları Derneği*, accessed December 11, 2015, <http://www.ihd.org.tr/hakkimizda/>.

16,000 members and had 34 branches in Turkey.⁵⁸ Many of its members belonged to left of center and secularist groups. In the late-1980s and 1990s, the association put more emphasis on human rights violations as part of the conflict between the Turkish armed forces and the PKK. There has been a strong pro-Kurdish stream among the membership. However, increased emphasis on the conflict created tension within the association and led some members to step away from the association.⁵⁹

Some of the areas the association focused on were state violence, amnesty, the death penalty, peace, freedom of expression, disappearances, unsolved deaths, and torture.⁶⁰ Undertaking campaigns against human rights violations committed against subaltern groups in Turkey, the association has been an important supporter of the Kurdish struggle and a staunch defender of Kurdish rights.⁶¹ The expansion of the association's activities to include human rights violations against the Kurdish population in Turkey furthered the place of ethno-religious identities in Turkey.⁶² For its activities the association, its executives, and members came under prosecution, threats, and attacks.⁶³ 23 of its members were assassinated while hundreds were injured.⁶⁴ The association continues to face sustained threats and ongoing repression. The association's position regarding the Turkish-Kurdish conflict made it a target for direct state or state-sanctioned popular violence and repression. In addition, the same position paved the way

⁵⁸ İnsan Hakları Derneği (Ankara), *Kuruluşundan bugüne İHD*, 26.

⁵⁹ Başak Çalı, "Human Rights Discourse in Turkey: Domestic Human Rights NGOs," in *Human Rights in Turkey: Policies and Prospects*, ed. Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 223.

⁶⁰ Derneği, "Hakkımızda."

⁶¹ Hamdemir, "Türkiye'de İnsan Haklarını Koruma Amaçlı Resmi ve Sivil Girişimler," 158.

⁶² Çalı, "Human Rights Discourse in Turkey: Domestic Human Rights NGOs," 224.

⁶³ Burçin Belge, "İnsan Hakları Derneği 15 Yaşında," *Bianet*, July 17, 2001, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/3431-insan-haklari-dernegi-15-yasinda>.

⁶⁴ Derneği, "Hakkımızda."

for the association's stigmatization and marginalization among members of dominant intelligentsia, public opinion leaders, and activists.

The marginalization of İHD among mainstream circles reached its peak in 2005 when one of its founders, Adalet Ağaoğlu, the progressive leftist writer and activist, resigned from the association. Her resignation was on the grounds that it failed to remain impartial in the conflict, failed to denounce the PKK's terrorist activities, and endorsed a one-sided rights defense favoring the Kurdish population.⁶⁵ The association's inclusion of ethno-religious identities and rights under the umbrella of human rights activism in Turkey expanded towards non-Muslim groups as well. A small group among the association's members in Istanbul established the Commission against Racism and Discrimination. Yelda⁶⁶ (penname for Yeldağ Özcan), Neşe Ozan⁶⁷ and Osman Köker⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Ağaoğlu sent her resignation letter to the mainstream newspaper Hürriyet, which was notorious for popularizing chauvinist nationalist and racist points when it covered issues relating to Kurdish rights in Turkey. The newspaper framed her letter in a way that depicted İHD as a supporter of the PKK and blamed the association for endorsing Kurdish terrorism. "İHD, PKK'cı Artık İstifa Ediyorum," accessed December 13, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ihd-pkk-ci-artik-istifa-ediyorum-338617>.

⁶⁶ Yelda was one of the leading members of the association's Istanbul branch. She was a socialist/communist from Turkish origins. She was active in feminist and socialist feminist politics. She was especially influential within the association after 1990. For her own account of her personal history of coming to work on racism and discrimination against the subaltern groups please see, Emre Can Dağlıoğlu, "Yelda Röportajı: 'Sözlerim Her Defasında Sessizlik Duvarına Çarptı,'" *Az Bilmiş özneler*, June 1, 2015, <http://www.azbilmisozneler.com/2015/06/yelda-roportaj-sozlerim-her-defasnda.html>. She was credited for being the first person from Turkey to publicly recognize the Armenian genocide in Turkey in 1996. Yelda was also among the initiators of the Saturday Mothers campaign. Denis Donikian, "Démocrates Turcs et Génocide Arménien (1)," *Medz Yeghern 1915*, August 13, 2015, <http://denisdonikian.blog.lemonde.fr/2015/08/13/>.

⁶⁷ Ozan, who passed away in 2014, was a metallurgy engineer. She worked as a journalist, translator, and writer. She was involved in leftist, feminist, and human rights movements in Turkey. In the mid-1990s she was a member of executive board of İHD. She was among the organizers of some of İHD's important campaigns on subaltern rights in Turkey, such as "Arkadaşıma Dokunma" ("Don't Touch My Friend"), the exhibitions on September 6-7 1995 and the Tuzla Armenian orphanage. She was part of the "Group to Supervise History Teaching for Peace." In the second half of the 2000s Ozan concentrated her efforts in defending the rights of the Roma people in Istanbul who faced expropriation and displacement due to urban gentrification projects aiming at transforming their neighborhood, Sulukule. She was a member of the Sulukule Platform organizing solidarity for the Roma people and defended their right to city.

are credited for establishing a “Minority Rights Watch Commission” in 1994.⁶⁹ Later the commission was entitled “Commission against Racism and Discrimination.” Ayşe

She was among the founders of Kader Kısmet Atölyesi (Workshop of Destiny and Fortune) helping Roma women join their manual labour, learn from each other, and sell their productions. Nadire Mater, “Neşe’imiz Gitti!,” *Bianet - Bagimsiz Iletisim Agi*, September 22, 2014, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/yasam/158654-nese-miz-gitti>; “Neşe Ozan’ın Ardından: Sulukule Asıl şimdi Yıkıldı,” *Agos*, accessed December 16, 2015, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/8083/nese-ozan-in-ardindan-sulukule-asil-simdi-yikildi>; “Hep Yüreğinin Göttürdüğü Yere Gitti Neşe - Ayşe GÜNAYSU,” *Özgür Gündem*, September 22, 2014, <http://www.ozgur-gundem.com/yazi/119137/hep-yureginin-goturdugu-yere-gitti-nese>; “NEŞE OZAN’I KAYBETTİK.,” *UCTEA Chamber of Metallurgical and Materials Engineers*, September 30, 2014, http://www.metalurji.org.tr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=463:nee-ozani-kaybettik&catid=35:duyurular&Itemid=59; An Interview with Pelin Demireli, Neşe Ozan and İlhan Sayın about Their Solidarity Work with Sulukule Residents, interview by Balca Ergener, Asena Günel, and Erden Kosova, Red Thread, 2011, http://www.red-thread.org/dosyalar/site_resim/dergi/pdf/8238618.pdf.

⁶⁸ Köker worked as a journalist and editor for a variety of newspapers and journals. Between 1997 and 2001 he was the editor of the journal, *Toplumsal Tarih (Social History)*, published by the History Foundation. In 2002 and 2003 he edited Kevork Pamukciyan’s complete works in four volumes for Aras publishing house. In 2005 he founded Bir Zamanlar (Once Upon a Time) publishing house. His publishing work, like his editorial engagements, has concentrated on the history of cultural diversity in Turkey. In addition to publishing, Köker organized conferences, panels, etc. In tandem with publishing, he curated a series of exhibitions about the same theme. The exhibition, *Sireli Yeğpayrıs (Sevgili Kardeşim) (My Dear Brother)*, opened in January 2005 simultaneously with the launch of the book using the same material, *Orlando Carlo Calumeno Koleksiyonu’ndan Kartpostallarla 100 Yıl Önce Türkiye’de Ermeniler (Armenians in Turkey 100 years ago: with postcards from the collection of Orlando Carlo Calumeno)*. These cultural products have been important landmarks in the memorial landscape in Turkey. The exhibition was a memorialization project supported by the Heinrich Boell Foundation and Memorialize Turkey initiative. The exhibition has since then visited a number of countries. “Osman Köker,” *Heinrich Böll Stiftung*, n.d., <https://tr.boell.org/tr/person/osman-koker>; “Yayıncı Olarak Da Azınlıklar,” *ZAMAN*, accessed December 16, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/pazar_yayinci-olarak-da-azinliklar_1204098.html; “My Dear Brother: Armenians in Turkey 100 Years Ago : Brunei Gallery - SOAS Exhibition,” accessed December 16, 2015, <https://www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/mydearbrother/>; “Mon Cher Frère - Siréli Yeghpayres,” *Péniche Anako*, February 2010, http://peniche.anako.com/Agenda_5.html; “Armenians in Turkey 100 Years Ago,” *Memorialize Turkey*, 100, accessed December 16, 2015, <http://www.memorializeturkey.com/en/memorial/armenians-in-turkey-100-years-ago/>. Köker relates how he came to work on the Armenian history in Turkey here. “Başkasının Acısını Anlamak, Anlatmak,” *Heinrich Böll Stiftung*, March 24, 2015, <https://tr.boell.org/tr/2015/03/24/baskasinin-acisini-anlamak-anlatmak-osman-koker>.

⁶⁹ Günaysu underlined the “Arkadaşıma Dokunma” (“Don’t Touch My Friend”) campaign, a female protest against ethnic discrimination, in terms of crystallizing activist interest in minority rights. Interview with Ayşe Günaysu and Yelda, “Daha Öğreneceğimiz Çok Şey Var,” *Birikim*, no. 71–72 (April 1995), <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim-yazi/4975/daha-ogrenecegimiz-cok-sey-var#.Vms5yxorLsk>; Ayşe Günaysu, “90’ların Hak Mücadeleleri: Savaşa, Milliyetçiliğe,

Günaysu, one of the main figures organizing the Armenian genocide commemorations, was among the members of this commission.

Members of the commission belonged to the socialist movement in Turkey. Some were involved in feminist politics as well. They were activists struggling against a myriad of rights violations. Through the establishment of the commission, these human rights defenders paid particular attention to relations between dominant and subaltern groups, and to human rights violations committed against these communities in Turkey. Kurdish and non-Muslim communities were at the center of their agenda. Defending these groups' rights brought with it a reflective problematization of earlier episodes of violence and repression against these groups. The commission members were able to introduce the topic of violence against the subaltern groups into leftist political media.⁷⁰

Alongside documenting, reporting, and memorializing violence and rights violations against the subaltern groups, some commission members, particularly Yelda,

İrkçılığa Karşı: Arkadaşıma Dokunma!," *Bianet*, accessed December 13, 2015, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/160975-savasa-milliyetcilige-irkciliga-karsi-arkadasima-dokunma>. The commission held monthly discussions regarding minority rights. It documented and created annual reports on violations of minority rights in Turkey. It curated an exhibition on September 6-7, 1955 pogroms against non-Muslim communities. It also published a book on the confiscation of the Tuzla Armenian orphanage following an exhibition on the property. İnsan Hakları Derneği, "İHD İstanbul Şubesi – İrkçılık ve Ayrımcılığa Karşı Komisyon Raporu," *İnsan Hakları Derneği*, accessed December 11, 2015, <http://www.ihd.org.tr/ihd-istanbul-subesi-irkcilik-ve-ayrimciliga-karsi-komisyon-raporu/>; Esra Akın, "Kitabına Uydurarak El Koyma," *Milliyet Sanat*, December 18, 1996, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/1996/12/18/sanat/kitabina.html>. The commission was also instrumental in introducing subaltern cultural products into the public sphere in Turkey through discussions and panels with the participation of writers and artists. Osman Köker, "Diyarbakırlı Bir Ermeni'nin Öyküsü," *Yazın Dergisi*, September 1, 1995, <http://www.arasyayincilik.com/press.php?i=522>. The same group of human rights defenders started the Saturday Mothers initiatives consisting of relatives of disappeared inmates and victims of unsolved murders.

⁷⁰ Not all segments of the leftist movement in Turkey were interested in adopting the subaltern groups' issues as their own. The United Socialist Party and its journal *Söz* were the major outlets where commission members were able to bring subaltern rights into relief. Interview with Ayse Gunaysu.

began to question the racial structure of society in Turkey and its inherent power asymmetries. As part of this wider critical engagement with these dominant socio-cultural and political inequalities, commission members were also critical of the dominant racist and discriminatory attitudes among progressive Turkish intelligentsia.⁷¹ This critical engagement highlighted and problematized the permanence of structures of privilege that the dominant groups enjoyed on the basis of their Turkishness. Along with the association's stance regarding the Kurdish-Turkish conflict, the self-reflexive and critical attitudes of the commission members lead to their isolation and abandonment by mainstream figures and organizations.

As a result of this growing interest in the injustices committed against the Armenians, the commission decided to begin to mark the anniversary of the Armenian genocide. The commission began its Armenian genocide-related activities in 2005 before any other civil society initiatives in Turkey. This event constitutes the first commemorative event an organization in Turkey undertook to mark the Armenian genocide. That year on April 24, the commission held a press conference at İHD's İstanbul office.⁷² During this conference the organizers had openly identified the events of 1915 as genocide and protested the official denial. The event was almost completely

⁷¹ Yelda, *Çoğunluk aydınlarında ırkçılık* (Sultanahmet, İstanbul: Belge Uluslararası Yayıncılık, 1998).

⁷² At the 2005 event, Eren Keskin, who was then president of the İstanbul branch of İHD, read the press release on behalf of the commission. The press release clearly named the events that befell the Armenians under the Ottoman Empire in 1915 as genocide. It also called on the Turkish state to recognize the genocide. Representatives from the pro-Kurdish Democratic People's Party (*Demokratik Halk Partisi*, DEHAP), the Socialist Platform of the Oppressed (*Ezilenlerin Sosyalist Platformu*, ESP), Socialist Democracy Party (*Sosyalist Demokrasi Partisi*, SDP), and Labor Party (*Emeğin Partisi*, EMEP) also supported İHD's press release. International press such as German TV channels ZDF and ARD followed the announcement. Ufuk Köroğlu, "İHD Başkanı Keskin'den Ermenilere Destek," *Zaman*, April 25, 2005, <http://www.zaman.com.tr/anasayfa/ihd-baskani-keskin-den-ermenilere-destek/166981.html>. Please find the press release in Appendix.

ignored in the media as there was next to no coverage. However, it was not completely unmarked.⁷³ The commission held similar press conferences to mark the genocide's anniversary and stop denial in 2006⁷⁴ and 2007. In 2008, the association organized a panel entitled "What Happened in 1915" at İstanbul Bilgi University. The speakers were Ara Sarafian, Eren Keskin, Ragıp Zarakolu, and Erdoğan Aydın.⁷⁵ Law enforcement units took tight security measures around the university's Dolapdere campus to protect the speakers and the attendees.⁷⁶ Gülseren Yoleri, chairperson of İHD's İstanbul Branch, maintained that people in Turkey should know the historical facts and be able to interpret them freely in order to respond to past wrongs.

⁷³ One semi-official reaction, though indirectly, was expressed by Hatem Cabbarlı, the director of Armenian Research at the Turkish Centre for International Relations and Strategic Analysis (TÜRKSAM). He mentioned the commemoration in order to highlight the discrepancy between Turkish and Armenian states' approaches to events about the genocide. He maintained that even though it is possible for scholars and activists recognizing the genocide to hold events and conferences in Turkey, it is inconceivable to have events or conferences that claim that there was no genocide in Erevan, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Armenia. He suggested that the Turkish government should identify and support individuals and groups in Armenia who believe that the Ottoman Empire did not commit genocide against the Armenians. If the Turkish government could make these groups raise their voices publicly, the Armenian government would most probably oppress these groups. Such an attack on the freedom of expression would allow the Turkish government to blame Armenia for violating human rights and democracy. Hatem Cabbarlı, "Sakin Kimse Duymasın... Türkler Ermenilere Soykırım Yapmadı," *TÜRKSAM*, June 17, 2005, <http://www.turksam.org/tr/yazdir392.html>. The author implies that Armenia was supporting the group organizing the commemorative event and he clearly demanded the Turkish government to hit the Armenian with its own weapon. This is one of the foreign policy "strategies" suggested by TÜRKSAM in order to take the denial to a new front.

⁷⁴ Please find the 2005 and 2006 press release texts in Appendix H.

⁷⁵ Titles of their speeches were: Eren Keskin, "April 24th, 1915, from the human rights perspective"; Ragıp Zarakolu, "April 24th as a milestone in the destruction of intellectuals"; Ara Sarafian, "Why do the Armenians take April 24th, 1915, as the beginning of the genocide – a critical analysis"; Erdoğan Aydın, "Historical consciousness and coming to terms with history." "Panel: 24 Nisan 1915'te Ne Oldu?," *Savaş Karşıtları*, April 18, 2008, <http://www.savaskarsitlari.org/arsiv.asp?ArsivTipID=9&ArsivAnaID=44967>.

⁷⁶ Tahsin Aksu, "'Ermeni Sorununu Beraber çözeriz,'" *Milliyet Haber*, April 25, 2008, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/-ermeni-sorununu-beraber-cozeriz-/siyaset/haberdetayarsiv/25.04.2008/520804/default.htm>.

Illustration 9 - İHD's "What Happened in 1915?" Panel

(From left to right: Ara Sarafian, Eren Keskin, Ragıp Zarakolu, and Erdoğan Aydın. Credit: Nouvelles d'Arménie Magazine)

This panel was thought to be a contribution towards that goal.⁷⁷ The highlight of the event was the provision by historian Ara Sarafian, the director of the Gomidas Institute in London, of a historiography of the genocide with specific focus on its perpetration in the Harput province of the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁸ He also marked the changing atmosphere in Turkey regarding the genocidal past. He acknowledged the existence of dissident voices that were open to study and discuss this past openly. He maintained that the Armenian “question” was to be solved in Turkey and not somewhere else through open dialogue between involved parties.⁷⁹ The audience received Sarafian's presentation positively. Questions and commentaries were mostly supportive and in line with his arguments. There appear to have been two negative reactions. One of the attendees asked Sarafian

⁷⁷ Hrant Kasparyan, “24 Nisan 1915'te Ne Oldu?,” *Nor Zartonk*, April 28, 2008, <http://www.norzartonk.org/24-nisan-1915%e2%80%99te-ne-oldu-2/>.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Aksu, “Ermeni Sorununu Beraber çözeriz.”

why he did not mention the Armenian uprisings beginning in 1894. The same person also called on him to tell what happened in Van after the declaration of the Armenian republic there. Sarafian argued that this was the reiteration of the official theses and that the uprisings were used to legitimate the genocide.⁸⁰

If the level of media attention can be taken as a clue to the general public interest, this panel marked an important growth in interest. Newspapers and media outlets that adopted a more critical position against the government and the official narrative supported the panel. These outlets included *Bianet*,⁸¹ *Taraf*,⁸² and *Birgün*.⁸³ Apart from these alternative and dissident channels, the panel was also covered in the mainstream media, such as *Milliyet*. The event received significant support from Ali Bayramoğlu, a columnist writing at the major conservative newspaper *Yeni Şafak*. Bayramoğlu underlined that April 24, 1915, was the beginning of the Armenians' "tragedy." He stated that the İHD's panel was the first commemoration of April 24 in Turkey. Even though, he argued, some will attack this event and will call it betrayal, this panel was one of the steps taken towards "paying a debt" and the democratization of Turkish national identity through increased historical consciousness. The panel marked the importance of historical consciousness and democratization. The author called on his readers to learn

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ "1915'le Hesaplaşmadan Demokratik, Çoğulcu Bir Yaşam Zor," *Bianet*, April 25, 2008, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/azinliklar/106544-1915-le-hesaplasmadan-demokratik-cogulcu-bir-yasam-zor>.

⁸² "24 Nisan'da İşte Bunlar Olmuştu," *Taraf.com.tr*, April 24, 2008, <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/haber-24-nisanda-iste-bunlar-olmustu-6158/>.

⁸³ Emek Değirmenci, "'24 Nisan Tabusu' Tartışıldı," *BirGun*, April 26, 2008, <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/24-nisan-tabusu-tartisildi-40150.html>.

about the past because knowing the past would lead to catharsis/purification and to a reformulation of one's identity.⁸⁴

Nevertheless, not all the responses were supportive. An ultra-nationalist newspaper, *Türkiye'de Yeni Çağ*, also covered the panel. The newspaper called the panel an act of betrayal where "Armenian lies" were expressed one more time [the first time being the 2005 conference that convened at Bilgi University] and insulted Sarafian.⁸⁵ The event was also criticized by semi-official think tanks established to struggle with "Armenian claims." Former ambassador Ömer Engin Lütem argued that this panel did not contribute "scientifically" to the study of the events of 1915 and that it was a political act. He also argued that the discourse of "coming to terms with the past," which had become popular among oppositionist circles in Turkey since 2000, had degenerated to mean not the open discussion of the past but the imposition of "Armenian theses" and demands for recognition of the genocide.⁸⁶ In a similar vein, Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş argued that with this panel the events to commemorate the genocide had been transferred to Turkey as well. She warned that this event was a foundation for future events to impose genocide recognition.⁸⁷ The panel was also covered in Armenian diaspora forums.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Bayramoğlu's article was reproduced another news portal. Ali Bayramoğlu, "'24 Nisan 1915'den 24 Nisan 2008'e'," *HaberX*, April 25, 2008, [http://www.haberx.com/24_nisan_1915den_24_nisan_2008e\(17,n,10069909,204\).aspx](http://www.haberx.com/24_nisan_1915den_24_nisan_2008e(17,n,10069909,204).aspx).

⁸⁵ "Samimiyet Testi," *Yeni Çağ Gazetesi*, April 19, 2008, <http://www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/samimiyet-testi-6692h.htm>; Ceyhun Bozkurt, "Şahin Susuyor," *Yeni Çağ Gazetesi*, April 25, 2008, <http://www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/sahin-susuyor-6808h.htm>.

⁸⁶ Ömer Engin Lütem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar," *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, 2008, <http://www.eraren.org/index.php?Lisan=tr&Page=DergiIcerik&IcerikNo=548>.

⁸⁷ Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş, "Soykırım İddialarının 93. Yıldönümü Etkinlikleri," *Avrasya İncelemeleri Merkezi*, 2008, www.avim.org.tr/eskimakaletekli.php?makaleid=128.

⁸⁸ "Intervention d'Ara Sarafian à Istanbul Le 24 Avril 2008."

On April 24, 2009, the İHD organized a commemorative event entitled, “24 April 1915 and Armenian Intellectuals: They Were Arrested, They Were Deported, and They Did Not Even Have a Grave Stone.”⁸⁹

⁸⁹ İnsan Hakları Derneği, “Ermeni Aydınları ve 24 Nisan 1915 Etkinliği Afişi – İHD İstanbul Şubesi,” *İnsan Hakları Derneği*, April 23, 2009, <http://www.ihd.org.tr/ermeni-aydinlari-ve-24-nisan-1915-etkinligi-afisi-ihd-istanbul-subesi/>.

Ermeni Aydınları ve 24 Nisan 1915

**Tutuklandılar, sürüldüler,
mezar taşları bile olmadı..**

**24 Nisan 2009, Cuma
Saat: 14.00**

Tütün Deposu

Lüleci Hendek Caddesi No.12 - Tophane

İnsan Hakları Derneği İstanbul Şubesi

Illustration 10 - The Poster of İHD's Commemorative Event in 2009

The event began with a mini-concert by *Kardeş Türküler*, a dissident and progressive folk music group, and continued with the press release read by Eren Keskin.

She stated, “the death of [Armenian] intellectuals represented a loss not only for the Armenian language, culture, thought and science world, but also for the Ottoman society of the time and for 'the world of all of us today'.”⁹⁰ She also pointed to the collective responsibility behind the events of 1915 and their aftermath by saying that “we, who believed what we were told, and who stayed quiet even if we did not believe it... We are all guilty.”⁹¹ Then the event proceeded with the reading of life stories of Armenian poets, Rupen Sevag, Siamanto (Atom Yerjeyan), Taniel Varujan and writer, lawyer, socialist, and Member of Ottoman Parliament Krikor Zohrab, who were all killed after their arrest in 1915. Selected poems of the poets were also read during the event by publisher Ragıp Zarakolu and members of the Boğaziçi Performance Arts Society's theatre department. An exhibition of the stories and pictures read and collected by Teotig (Teotoros Lapçinyan), a survivor of the mass arrest and the genocide, was displayed. Teotig had put together these materials in his book "The Memory of April 11" published in 1919. The event ended after Zarakolu's recounting of Armenian composer Gomidas Vartabed's life story.⁹²

On April 24, 2009, the genealogy of the adoption of April 24 as the commemoration day of the Armenian genocide made the news in Turkey. A mainstream news outlet asked historians Derya Tulga and Halil Berktaş why the Armenians chose April 24 to commemorate the genocide. Tulga argued that the Armenian community had adopted this day over May 27, the day when the official deportation law was passed, because it marked the elimination of the leaders of the community which prevented them

⁹⁰ Bawer Çakır, “220 Armenian Intellectuals Exiled in 1915 Commemorated,” *Bianet*, April 24, 2009, <http://www.bianet.org/english/other/114092-220-armenian-intellectuals-exiled-in-1915-commemorated>.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

from preparing for the actual deportation and massacres. Halil Berktaş maintained that the Armenians retrospectively took April 24 as the harbinger of the disaster. He also said that some of the Armenian intellectuals informed him about commemorations of the events taking place as early as 1919 and 1920 at refugee camps in Syria and Lebanon.⁹³ Erdal Şafak, a columnist in mainstream newspaper *Sabah*, also provided a brief introduction of the commemoration day to his readers in his column on April 24, 2009.⁹⁴

Ragıp Zarakolu reproduced the history of April 24 that was passed to him by Hayk Demoyan, the director of the Armenian Genocide Museum and Institute (AGMI).⁹⁵ A brief historical note on the origins of the commemoration day was published on AGMI's website on March 31, 2009. According to this account, April 24 had been adopted as the "Day of Mourning and Commemoration" after the first public events organized by the Armenian community in İstanbul in 1919. Some of the Armenian intellectuals and notables who survived the genocide established a 13-member committee in March 1919 to organize the first commemoration of the massacres. As a result of the committee's efforts, a series of events, mostly religious in nature, took place. Between April 15 and 25 a liturgy was held. The Armenian patriarch in İstanbul gave a sermon. All Armenian schools and businesses were closed. In the afternoon of the 24th, the St. Trinity Armenian Evangelical Church housed a liturgy after which ceremonial mourning together with speeches, declamations and sacred music took place. A volume specifically prepared by Teotig to mark the date was published in İstanbul. On April 25, a similar

⁹³ Fatih Aça, "Neden 24 Nisan?," *NTV*, April 24, 2009, http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/neden-24-nisan,prI4__jGTEWNpdsNRoXBOA.

⁹⁴ Erdal Şafak, "24 Nisan," *Sabah*, April 24, 2009, http://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/safak/2009/04/24/24_nisan.

⁹⁵ Ragıp Zarakolu, "24 Nisan'ın Anma Günü İlan Edilişinin 90. Yılı," *Newede Dersim*, accessed February 24, 2013, newededersim.com/news_print.php?id=3528.

ceremony was organized in the Armenian Catholic Church at the Vatican. Since these first events in 1919, April 24 was officially adopted as the mourning and commemoration day.⁹⁶ Hence, argued Zarakolu, after 90 years of its inception, the commemoration of April 24 returned to its original location, İstanbul, with İHD's event.⁹⁷

A small number of people, mainly Ayşe Günaysu, Eren Keskin, Meral Çıldır, and Hrant Kasparyan organize the commission's genocide commemoration. They constitute the core group actively involved in making the commemoration possible. They create not only the memorial strategy and discourse but also the materials to be used during the event. They write the press releases to be read at the commemoration on behalf of the commission. They communicate with law enforcement in order to obtain the necessary permissions to hold the public commemoration. They take care of public relations and relations with the media.

Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism (DurDe)

The second agent of memory that organized annual commemorations on April 24 was Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism (DurDe). DurDe is a grassroots organization that was established in February 2007 to "combat racism and nationalism."⁹⁸ Leftist activists organized at the Revolutionary Socialist Workers' Party (DSİP), and leftist/left-liberal intellectuals and public opinion leaders initiated DurDe as a response to the assassination of Hrant Dink in January 2007. DurDe does not have a formal organizational structure; it is a platform of activists and public opinion leaders. Cengiz

⁹⁶ "At the Origins of Commemoration: The 90th Anniversary Declaring April 24 as a Day of Mourning and Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide," *The Armenian Genocide Institute-Museum*, March 31, 2009, <http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/31.03.2009.php>.

⁹⁷ Zarakolu, "24 Nisan'ın Anma Günü İlan Edilişinin 90. Yılı."

⁹⁸ "About DurDe," *DurDe Platformu*, accessed January 9, 2016, <http://www.durde.org/english/about-durde/>.

Alğan was one of the co-founders of DurDe along with Levent Şensever. Alğan was DurDe’s spokesperson until his resignation from the organization on May 30, 2014⁹⁹, at which point Şensever became the representative of the organization. The organization acts as an action-based hub of loosely organized individuals and groups. DurDe also has a presence in Ankara, İzmir, and Bodrum. DurDe does not have a membership system. Its ties to the public are mostly online and through social media. As of February 2016, DurDe’s Facebook page had 184,000 followers; its mailing group has 3,000 members; and 13,600 people follow its Twitter feed. Its website receives on average of 10,000 visits monthly.¹⁰⁰

Individual figures involved in the coming-to-memory of the genocide have high visibility. Baskın Oran, Ahmet İnsel, Cengiz Aktar, and Ali Bayramoğlu have supported DurDe’s campaigns. Their names are usually listed among campaign signatories, speakers in panels organized by DurDe, and invitees to public demonstrations and press conferences. The clout these figures carry brings legitimacy and wider social acceptance to DurDe’s events. Their close ties with the establishment, on the other hand, were among the reasons DurDe’s memory politics was more conservative in comparison to

⁹⁹ Alğan resigned from the DurDe initiative due to ideological and political disagreements between himself, DurDe, and DSİP. The rift emerged during the Taksim Square protests and deepened during the allegations of corruption against the AKP government in December 2013. Alğan states that he was increasingly disillusioned with the DSİP and the left’s actions during the protests that he considered to be a civil coup attempt against the government. The allegations of corruption, for him, were also the next stage in anti-government plots. As a result, he not only distanced himself from DurDe, but also from the left in general and became critical of the movement. Cengiz Alğan, “Cengiz Alğan: DurDe Girişimi’nden İstifa Mektubumdur,” *DurDe Platformu*, May 30, 2014, <http://www.durde.org/2014/05/cengiz-algan-durde-girisiminden-istifa-mektubumdur/#more-244>; Melek Gedik, “Cengiz Alğan: Gezi’den Sonra çevremi Kaybettim,” *Karar.com*, May 19, 2015, <http://www.karar.com/gundem-haberleri/9591-cengiz-algan-geziden-sonra-cevremi-kaybettim>; İsa Tatlıcan, “‘Artık O Mahalle İle Birlikte Yürümek İstemiyorum,’” *Sabah*, June 22, 2014, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2014/06/22/artik-o-mahalle-ile-birlikte-yurumek-istemiyorum>.

¹⁰⁰ “Some Figures on DurDe,” *DurDe Platformu*, accessed August 17, 2016, <http://www.durde.org/english/some-figures-on-durde/>.

İHD. Some members of the Turkish Armenian community have also supported DurDe's commemorations and other genocide related events. Hayko Bağdat and Garo Paylan have been the most visible figures in this regard.

DurDe and its supporters see Dink's assassination as a sign of a "racist and nationalist surge" in Turkey traceable to a small minority consisting of certain political parties and some groups within the state bureaucracy. They call the silent majority to take action against racism.¹⁰¹ DurDe lists three public efforts as their main campaigns: "Remove § 301, Trial Racists" in 2008¹⁰²; the campaign in support of public prosecutor Zekeriya Öz when he came under investigation during the Ergenekon trial against the military officers involved in a coup attempt¹⁰³; and "Apologising to our Armenian Brothers and Sisters."¹⁰⁴ DurDe also credits itself with organizing the first Armenian genocide commemoration in Turkey. It claims: "the commemoration held on 24 April 2010 in Istanbul organized by DurDe was the first of its kind ever as a remembrance of the Armenian Genocide of 1915."¹⁰⁵ In time and in line with the political turmoil of Turkey, the scope of issues the coalition represented by DurDe focused on expanded to include the Kurdish issue, the headscarf issue, militarism and democracy, anti-Semitism,

¹⁰¹ "Founding Call of DurDe," *DurDe Platformu*, accessed January 9, 2016, <http://www.durde.org/english/founding-call-of-durde/>.

¹⁰² Until 2008 the campaign collected 20,000 signatures supporting the removal of the controversial clause of the Turkish Penal Code and organized over 30 public meetings.

¹⁰³ DurDe held a public press conference demanding the immediate cessation of the investigation. "Zekeriya Öz'ü Tanırız, İyi Savcıdır," *Turnusol*, September 13, 2008, <http://www.turnusol.biz/public/haber.aspx?id=728&pid=16&haber=%22%22Zekeriya%20%C3%96z.>

¹⁰⁴ The above-discussed Apology campaign started with 300 signatures from intelligentsia and collected more than 32,000 signatures. "Özür Diliyoruz," accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.ozurdiliyoruz.com/>.

¹⁰⁵ This statement is not true for two reasons; first, İHD had organized genocide commemorations in the past; second, DurDe did not name the events of 1915 as genocide in their 2010 event. "About DurDe."

Islamophobia and freedom of belief, and hate crimes.¹⁰⁶ DurDe is a member of the United for Intercultural Action and the European Grassroots Antiracist Movement (EGAM).¹⁰⁷ A small group of activists led by Cengiz Alğan and Levent Şensever choreographed the commemorations in line with adopted memorial strategies and discourses and with help from DSİP executives and members, such as Şenol Karakaş. DurDe commands more material and human resources than İHD. The party's cadres and resources have been mobilized to deal with the logistics of the commemorations and to carry out the event itself.

Questions of Ownership, Inclusivity, and Representation

The above description of the agents of memory reveals that the actors involved in the commemorations belong mostly to the dominant population in Turkey. The intended audience of commemorations also seems to be the Turkish-Muslim majority, as memory choreographers' political demands focus on the official and popular recognition of the atrocities against the Armenians. The identity of agents and the targeted audience make the commemorations' performances for the Turkish-Muslims by the Turkish-Muslims.

These facts point to some of the problematics of commemorative practices and draw our attention to issues of representation, ownership, and power asymmetries. The commemorative process follows a much more convoluted path than the straightforward move from the denial/silence to acknowledgment paradigm that is shared and disseminated by many of Turkey's progressive political agents involved in the politics of memory. However, the fact that these events are held does not, in itself, signify an

¹⁰⁶ "DurDe's Position on Some Political Issues in Turkey," *DurDe Platformu*, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.durde.org/english/durdes-position-on-some-political-issues-in-turkey/>.

¹⁰⁷ "About DurDe."

ongoing engagement with the genocidal past. Commemorations as public performances of memory, and the actors involved need to be held accountable for their interventions as well. This exercise in accountability and responsibility brings forth some questions relating to representation and legitimation, including to whom the memory of the genocide belongs, and what the purpose of the commemorations is. We also need to ask whether or not the agents of memory devise inclusive practices respecting the Armenians' historical position, situating them as equal agents rather than token participants, paying close attention to who gets to exercise agency as well as whose voice is allowed into the public sphere.

The importance of conceiving commemorations as processes of engagement with a difficult past rather than end points or goals to reach has been emphasized in the memory studies literature.¹⁰⁸ One of the key components of the memorialization process is public consultation and deliberation that includes the Armenian survivors and that acknowledges their ownership of the memory.¹⁰⁹ Clearly, the Armenians, themselves, without distinction between those living in Turkey and abroad, should be involved in the broader discussion regarding memorialization initiatives. The process that the coming to memory of the Armenian genocide follows is equal to, if not more important, than the

¹⁰⁸ Judy Barsalou and Victoria Baxter, "The Urge to Remember: The Role of Memorials in Social Reconstruction and Transitional Justice," *Stabilization and Reconstruction Series* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, January 2007), 13, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/srs5.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ For discussion on the ownership of memory, its relation to social and symbolic power, and its ties to the ethics of representation please see, McDowell and Braniff, *Commemoration as Conflict*; Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (University of California Press, 1999); Cheryl Natzmer, "Remembering and Forgetting: Creative Expression and Reconciliation in Post-Pinochet Chile," in *Social Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Jacob C. Climo and Maria G. Cattell (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2002), 161–80; Elizabeth Jelin, "The Minefields of Memory," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 32, no. 2 (October 1998): 23–29; Stephen H. Browne, "Review Essay: Reading, Rhetoric, and the Texture of Public Memory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 2 (May 1, 1995): 237–50, doi:10.1080/00335639509384111.

outcome. The way the agents of memory in Turkey and the wider public choose to engage with this memorialization campaign has the potential to recast Turkish identity.

Some of the agents of memory are aware of these issues and they demonstrate self-reflexivity about their position of power and privilege. Ayşe Günaysu, while commenting on the act of commemorating the genocide in Turkey, underlines the historical difference between the Armenians and Muslims in post-genocidal Turkey. The genocide was one of the conditions of possibility of the Turkish nation-state with its Muslim bourgeoisie. Hence, there is a historical continuity in terms of responsibility. Muslims in Turkey constitute the group who benefitted from the destruction of Ottoman Armenians: “We are the members of a group who reproduced, proliferated, and reinforced its dominance as a majority in the absence of the Armenians and other Christian peoples annihilated just for this purpose.”¹¹⁰ There is, then, an obvious and constitutive power asymmetry between Armenians and Muslims. It follows that, since their roles during the genocide were categorically distinct as victims and perpetrators, the ownership of commemoration should reflect this clearly. As the bearers of memory, it is their place, arguably, to decide whether or not to commemorate the genocide and in what form. Establishing inclusive methods of building and sustaining a campaign that aims to inscribe victims’ memories back into the collective memory is clearly one of the most important moral and political responsibilities in the aftermath of political violence. This is especially urgent ethically because the Armenian community in Turkey, for obvious historical reasons, does not command the same degree of social and political power as the agents of memory do. Despite having their own newspapers, cultural centres and

¹¹⁰ Ayşe Günaysu, “Günaysu: Commemorating Genocide in a Post-Genocide Denialist Habitus,” *Armenian Weekly*, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://armenianweekly.com/2013/10/02/gunaysu-commemorating-genocide-in-a-post-genocide-denialist-habitus/>.

publishers, theirs is a subaltern space. It is for this reason that it is important to note the increased presence of Armenian voices in these commemorations and to pay attention to the degree to which they are or are not equal owners of the commemorations. Arguably, it is incumbent on the agents of memory not to high-jack the Armenian tragedy for different political agendas, such as the wider democratization process. Instrumentalizing genocide memory for different political agendas would deepen the wounds of memory.

Recognition of genocide is often framed within a generalized discourse of democratization in Turkey. This framework misses the historical specificity of the genocide and categorizes it with other instances of state violence. It also fails to adequately address the issues of restoring justice and acknowledging responsibility for the historical act of genocide. Armenians living in Turkey remain subject to overt and covert racism. They do not enjoy equal citizenship rights even though they are legally protected on paper. A systematic culture of impunity reigns over crimes committed against them. There is a strong and disturbing continuity between the impunity the genocide perpetrators and deniers enjoyed and the impunity Hrant Dink's murderers are enjoying. Hence when Armenian citizens take a political stance to actively engage with matters related to their own history of genocide, they are taking significantly higher risks than Turks or Kurds. For them, there are two alternatives:

either you choose to stay relevant and become politically involved and risk getting killed because of your involvement, or you choose to be reduced to total irrelevancy in another country - which is, of course, a subtle way of being killed.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Ayda Erbal, "We Are All Oxymorons!," *Azad Alik*, 2008, <https://azadalik.wordpress.com/2013/01/21/we-are-all-oxymorons/>.

IV. Commemorations of the Armenian Genocide

Human Rights Association's Commemorations

On April 24, 2010, at 13:30 a group of about 50 people gathered outside the Haydarpaşa Train Station located along the Asian shore of the Bosphorus. In clear contrast to fast-paced pedestrian circulation, especially during rush hours that gave the building its transitional character, the group was stationary. Wearing dark-coloured clothes, they were standing and talking amongst themselves. They looked determined but worried. They were looking around as if they were expecting other people, but at the same time they seemed apprehensive. It looked like the arrival of others might be good or bad depending on who showed up.

The second group of people was the law enforcement. Police presence was unmistakable as officers in uniforms and plain-clothes populated the small space between the building and the dock used by ferries carrying Istanbulites between European and Asian sides as part of their daily commute. In addition to regular units, riot police forces were also deployed, implying the possibility of a clash. The third group outside the building was media workers. Reporters and camera crews were around the first group. They were talking to group members, getting information, and setting up video cameras. They were doing their routinized tasks and they were oblivious to law enforcement units showing their familiarity with working in police presence.

Illustration 11 - Law enforcement units outside of the station
(Credit: *Hürriyet*)

On the upper left hand of the picture there was a large portrait of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and sacred leader of the republic, and the father of the Turks. His portrait, placed in its elevated position, symbolically watched over the nation.¹¹² The founder of the Turkish republic and its contemporary defenders offered a reminder that the commemorators were under supervision. Citizens of the republic are all too familiar with his virtual presence in all sorts of public spaces from classrooms to state offices. The reality of Atatürk watching over the nation through his visual representations has been a crucial part of public life in Turkey. Knowing that he is always watching over and feeling his paternalistic gaze have a self-disciplinary effect on the citizens. Taking into

¹¹² Having Atatürk's poster is another instance of his omni-presence in public life in Turkey. For a visual survey of Atatürk's presence please see Elif Shafak and Emin Ersoy, "Someone to Watch over Me: How Atatürk Lives on in Modern Turkey – in Pictures," *The Guardian*, November 8, 2013, sec. World news, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2013/nov/08/ataturk-turkey-photography-ersoy-emin>.

consideration that the father of the nation had totally removed Armenians from Turkish history and Turkish national community and canonized the denialist discourses and practices as seen in the first chapter, his virtual presence in the commemorative space drew a line excluding Armenians and their memories. Under his watch, demands for genocide recognition and justice were not welcomed.

Illustration 12 - Media workers following the commemoration
(Credit: *Milliyet*)

The presence of these three groups of people and the setting itself set the stage for a political demonstration. Each party involved was preparing to perform its own role. As similar events happen on a daily basis there is a sense of familiarity with the overall setting, both for actors and observers. The location, though, was not known to be a

politicized space. The historical building and its surroundings were not subject to previous political contestation.¹¹³ The station, built by the Anatolian-Baghdad Railway in 1908, was the final stop of the Istanbul-Medina-Damascus line and later inter-city lines to Anatolia.¹¹⁴ A product of Ottoman-German collaboration¹¹⁵ attesting to the alignment of their imperial interests, the station was a part and parcel of Ottoman modernity and administrative centralization. Along with contributing to the economic integration of imperial markets, the railroad and the station strengthened administrative control of the Ottoman capital over the provinces. The station was among the hubs of a modern network through which central authorities were able to exert their power over the imperial population and landscape in a direct way. During the republic the station continued to play its role of transporting people, objects, and power.

¹¹³ This was about to change as at the end of 2009 a new development project for the railway site was approved. The project was to bring into being a mixed-use development site including a trade center. The government-backed project was subject to opposition. İrem Maro Kırış, "Re-Exploring Late Ottoman Buildings in Today's Istanbul," *Archnet-IJAR* 7, no. 2 (July 2013): 318–29. Hence the site was slowly becoming a stage of political contestation.

¹¹⁴ "Haydarpaşa Railway Station," *World Monuments Fund*, accessed July 8, 2015, <http://www.wmf.org/project/haydarpasa-railway-station>.

¹¹⁵ The station was a gift from the German Empire. Kırış, "Re-Exploring Late Ottoman Buildings in Today's Istanbul."

Illustration 13 - Haydarpaşa Train Station
(Credit: Celalettin Güneş)

The Haydarpaşa station was emulated into the cultural realm as an iconic image in cinematographic and cultural memory frequently depicted as an arrival or entrance point to Istanbul.¹¹⁶ Closely connected with the history of rural to urban immigration in Turkey since the 1950s, the image of the station implied new beginnings and hope. This positive and, now, nostalgic public perception of the station glosses over tragic endings and despair. The state used the railroad as an instrument of political repression, annihilation, and the displacement of ethno-religious groups that were deemed not to belong to the nation. For these groups the station was the first stop of violent extermination and forced

¹¹⁶ Isil Kaymaz, “Urban Landscapes and Identity,” in *Advances in Landscape Architecture*, ed. Murat Özyavuz (InTech, 2013), http://cdn.intechopen.com/pdfs/45403/InTech-Urban_landscapes_and_identity.pdf. Selim İleri, “Anılar Arasında İstanbul” (Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi, October 22, 2008), http://www.obarsiv.com/pdf/selim_ileri.pdf.

exile. These latter memories of the station have been repressed and removed from collective memory.

The group who gathered outside of the station were the members and supporters of İHD. They gathered outside the building to commemorate the Armenian genocide. The initiative was unearthing the repressed memories of the station. Commemorators were challenging the polished surface of national memory and also the heavily stylized and aestheticized nostalgic memory of an imperial past. They were involved in an intervention into collective memory that was to inscribe back the nation's difficult past into its present. They aimed at transgressing the boundaries of the nation.

The attendees sat down on the old marble stairs of the imposing neo-classical building. A big Turkish flag was hanging on the façade of the building to mark the 23rd of April National Sovereignty and Children's Day (*23 Nisan Ulusal Egemenlik ve Çocuk Bayramı*). As previously mentioned, Atatürk's portrait was also a part of this national occasion.

Illustration 14 - İHD commemorators outside the station building. The Turkish flag is visible
(Credit: *Agos*)

This civic holiday, one of the crucial elements of the Kemalist memory landscape, celebrates and commemorates the opening of the Turkish National Assembly on April 23, 1920 in Ankara while the war of national liberation was under way. The opening of the national assembly represented the nationalist movement's move to replace the Sultan's divine and absolute sovereignty with popular national sovereignty. As the national movement won the victory in its War of Liberation and established the republic, the 23rd

of April was canonized as a key moment in the national history of Turkey in the late 1920s.¹¹⁷

Situated at the juncture of a Kemalist commemorative drive to mark the birth of the Turkish nation and conception of children as the future of the nation, the 23rd of April national holiday has been functional in the building and reproduction of a shared memory and identity for the nation. This identity was oriented towards the future with a fantasy of a new nation embodied on the nation's progeny. The national holiday has functioned as a secular 'invented tradition' creating a national memory for the republic and repressing the Ottoman imperial one.¹¹⁸ The flag as the symbol of the nation with its reference to the national holiday constituted the physical and memorial background for the group and their commemorative event, though there was a sharp contrast between their reasons for being there. Unlike the markers of Kemalist memory celebrating the dominant national narrative on the past, the commemorators were foregrounding markers of a different past, a much more problematic past.

Soon after Eren Keskin, lawyer, human rights activist, and honorary board member of the İHD, stood up and read the press release.¹¹⁹

NEVER AGAIN!

On April 24, 1915, 220 Armenian intellectuals, who were among the most productive members of the Ottoman artistic, literary and intellectual world, were arrested.

First, they were taken to Mehterhane, which was used as central prison, the next day they were taken to Sarayburnu to board on a boat that would take them to the Haydarpaşa train station. From there they began their journey towards

¹¹⁷ Hale Yılmaz, "Celebrating National Holidays," in *Becoming Turkish Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey, 1923-1945* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2013).

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 179–184.

¹¹⁹ A video recording of Eren Keskin reading the press release could be found here (in Turkish): "Soykırım"ı protesto eyleminde Edip Başer gerginliği, 2010, <http://www.etha.com.tr/et-tv/ihd24-nisan-1915-bir-daha-asla/>.

Anatolia. They were not informed about where they were taken. One group headed to Ayaş and the other to Çankırı. 58 of 70 people who were sent to Ayaş and 81 of 150 who were sent to Çankırı were killed.

Among the killed were leading intellectuals of the time. They did not hold anything but a pen in their lifetime. They disappeared without even leaving behind a gravestone.

Atrocity was not limited to the Armenian intellectuals. The Armenian presence in Anatolia, with all its historical, economic, and social issues, was destroyed through the Committee of Union and Progress and its gunman organization Special Organization (Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa).

As a result of racist ideas and policies, not only were Armenians killed, but their properties, money, memories, and histories were also confiscated.

A civilization was wiped out of its motherland of thousands of years and exterminated.

Those who have the same mentality are trying to make us forget by imposing an official history based on lies.

Unfortunately, they managed to convince the majority of Turkish society.

However, we, human rights defenders, do not believe in this lie imposed on us for 95 years.

We want the truth to prevail!

We do not want to be crushed under this burden of pain!

We say no to embargoes on words!

We want international law to be implemented in line with peoples' righteous demands.

We invite everybody to carefully read the United Nations' "The Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," dated 1948.

Article 2 of the convention defines genocide as:

- **Killing members of a group**
- **Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group**
- **Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part**
- **Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group**
- **Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group**

The aforementioned article takes any of these as sufficient to define events as genocide.

Yes, we invite all to be conscientious in line with this convention and to properly name the events of 1915.

As human rights defenders we say once again that **GENOCIDE IS A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY** and **NEVER AGAIN**.¹²⁰

IHD İstanbul Branch

The Commission Against Racism and Discrimination

¹²⁰ Please see the Turkish original of the press release in Appendix.

İnsan Hakları Derneği, "Bir Daha Asla!," *İnsan Hakları Derneği*, April 24, 2010, <http://www.ihd.org.tr/bir-daha-asla/>.

Illustration 15 - İHD's banner and portraits of the Armenian leaders arrested on April 24, 1915
(Credit: CNNTurk)

Naming the events of 1915 as genocide, stating that genocide is a crime against humanity, and denouncing the official historiography, this press release was the centerpiece of the first public commemoration of the Armenian genocide in Turkey organized by bodies belonging to the dominant group. The group also marked the train station as a stop in this criminal history. After the press release, the group walked towards the seashore and threw red carnation flowers¹²¹ to the Bosphorus in memory of the

¹²¹ Red carnations have been an integral part of commemorations and demonstrations organized to mark death in Turkey and elsewhere. They are used in a wide variety of occasions mostly to express grief and perform mourning. The use of flowers in public commemorations and memorial sites, as a broader topic, has received scholarly attention. Susanne Greenhalgh, "Our Lady of Flowers: The Ambiguous Politics of Diana's Floral Revolution," in *Mourning Diana: Nation, Culture and the Performance of Grief*, ed. Adrian Kear and Deborah Lynn Steinberg (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 40–59; Alf Lüdtke, "Histories of Mourning : Flowers and Stones for the War Dead, Confusion for the Living: Vignettes from East and West Germany," in *Between History and Histories the Making of Silences and Commemorations*, ed. Gerald M Sider and Gavin A Smith (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Robert Hemmings, "Of Trauma and Flora: Memory and Commemoration in Four Poems of the World Wars," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 77, no. 2 (April 1, 2008): 738–56; Paul Gough, "Conifers and Commemoration — the Politics and Protocol of Planting," *Landscape Research* 21, no. 1 (March 1, 1996): 73–87.

Armenian victims of the genocide. The turquoise background highlighted the floating flowers' color.

İHD's commemoration was the first fully public commemorative activity undertaken in Turkey to remember the victims and to demand official and popular recognition of the genocide. İHD commemoration organizers used the same event format and structure between 2010 and 2013 with minor changes. The number of attendees remained about fifty during the same period. Over these four years the İHD held their main commemorative event in two locations, the Haydarpaşa train station and the building where the arrested Armenian leaders were kept on April 24, 1915.¹²² The commemorations were closer to political demonstration in their form and message. They staged an embodied coming to memory of the genocide in public space. Putting oneself out there was the critical component of the commemorations in the face of denial. In this regard, the act of joining the commemorators and standing by them was a transgression of symbolic and intimate boundaries of the nation as it was founded on the genocide itself. The event was stationary and site-centered. The İHD used one major banner and

¹²² Places of commemoration will be discussed in detail below.

smaller placards and portraits of the Armenian leaders arrested on April 24.

Illustration 16 - İHD's 2011 Commemoration. The banner is visible on the ground
(Credit: *Bianet*)

For example, the banner used in the 2011 and 2012 events read, “1915 is Genocide, Genocide Is a Crime Against Humanity.” The placards read “The Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum = Prison in 1915.” These written and visual materials provided the context for the press release. Each year a representative of the association read the press release that constituted the key point of the event.¹²³ In the absence of acknowledgment of Armenian memories and their markers, the İHD tried to open up a space for them through their commemorative message. The İHD had hosted historian Ara Sarafian on more than one occasion to deliver a speech on the genocidal events and their long shadow over the present.

In 2012, the İHD added a visit to Sevag Şahin Balıkcı’s tomb as part of their annual commemorative event. Sevag Şahin Balıkcı was murdered by a fellow army

¹²³ Please see Appendix I for the full texts, in Turkish and English, of the İHD’s press releases between 2010 and 2013.

private on April 24, 2011, while serving in the army. The date of the murder was not a coincidence, and it was yet another instance of the regime of impunity for the crimes committed against the Armenians. His murder demonstrated that the denial of the genocide was actually the perpetuation of the conditions and relations that made the genocide possible in the first place. Since 2012, the İHD had visited his tomb together with his family.

The terms and grammar of the memory contestation showed that what was at stake was the ways in which national identity was defined. The number of attendees also remained at about 50 between 2010 and 2013. This number is small relative to the attendance figures DurDe's commemorations reached. One reason for this was the straightforward message adopted by İHD members. Uncompromising recognition of genocide and the acknowledgment of Turkish-Muslim responsibility were not popular even among politically aware citizens and activists.

DurDe's Commemorations at Taksim Square

Responding to DurDe's call, which had been circulating online and through activist networks, hundreds of people began to gather at the Taksim Square around 6:30pm. Many of the commemorators followed the call and wore black or dark-coloured clothes. Their body language as well as their facial expressions demonstrated uneasiness and concern.¹²⁴ Around 7:00pm there were between 700 and 800 commemorators at the event.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Cengiz Aktar, speaking about DurDe's event, mentioned that they were worried about a possible attack on the commemorators. He also complained about the negative approaches of CHP and MHP. He stated that the commemorators were blamed with "commemorating the genocide" even though the text did not use the term. Şükran Pakkan, "24 Nisan Türkiye'de de Anılacak," *Milliyet Haber*, April 22, 2010, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/24-nisan-turkiye-de-de-anilacak/siyaset/siyasetdetay/22.04.2010/1228190/default.htm>. In this piece, Cengiz Aktar was

The call to commemorate had a long list of inviters who adopted the text and lent their support to the event.¹²⁶ Of about the 200 hundred names DurDe had approached, 70 accepted the invitation to support the commemorative event.¹²⁷ The actual list of inviters had 65 names. The inviters were all public figures and had significant influence on public opinion. Thanks to their high profiles, connections, and visibility, they carried significant clout. The list included leftists, left-liberals, conservatives, and democrats. The inviters were intellectuals, journalists, scholars, authors, lawyers, human rights defenders, political activists, artists, and a deputy. Many of the inviters were at the Taksim Square on April 24, 2010.

The site of commemoration was along the wall belonging to the historical water distribution system together with the old reservoir known as *Maksem*.¹²⁸ The

depicted as the spokesperson of DurDe by mistake. For the correction, please see “Sözcü Aktar Değil Algan,” *Milliyet Haber*, accessed August 19, 2016, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/sozcu-aktar-degil-algan/guncel/haberdetayarsiv/25.04.2010/1228737/default.htm>.

¹²⁵ Orhan Kemal Cengiz, “Is Turkey Overcoming The Armenian Taboo?,” trans. Timur Göksel, *Al-Monitor*, April 22, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/04/armenian-genocide-taboo-turkey-anniversary.html>.

¹²⁶ Ahmet İnsel, Ali Bayramoğlu, Aslı Erdoğan, Avi Haligua, Ayhan Bilgen, Ayla Yıldırım, Aysın Yeşilay İnan, Ayşe Batumlu, Ayşegül Devecioğlu, Baskın Oran, Cafer Solgun, Cengiz Aktar, Cengiz Algan, Deniz Zarakolu, Dilek Gökçin, Doğan Tarkan, Eren Keskin, Erol Köroğlu, Ferhat Kentel, Fethi İnan, Fethiye Çetin, Garo Paylan, Gülten Kaya, Hakan Tahmaz, Halil Berktaş, Hayko Bağdat, Hilal Kaplan, Hürriyet Şener, İpek Çalışlar, İsmail Erdoğan, Jale Mildanoğlu, Kadir Cangızbay, Kerem Öktem, Kutluğ Ataman, Lale Mansur, Leman Yurtsever, Levent Şensever, Mahir Günşiray, Mehmet Demir, Mithat Sancar, Neşe Düzel, Nil Mutluer, Orhan Miroğlu, Osman Köker, Öztürk Türkoğlu, Perihan Mağden, Roni Margulies, Semra Somersan, Sezgin Tanrıku, Sırrı Süreyya Önder, Şanar Yurdatapan, Şenol Karakaş, Tamar Nalcı, Tanıl Bora, Turgay Oğur, Ufuk Uras, Ümit Kardaş, Ümit Kıvanç, Vivet Kanetti, Yalçın Ergüdoğan, Yaman Yıldız, Yasemin Çongar, Yıldız Önen, Zeynep Gambetti, Zeynep Tanbay. “Bu Acı BİZİM Acımız. Bu Yas HEPİMİZİN./This Is OUR Pain. This Is a Mourning for ALL OF US.,” *Deutsch Armenische Gesellschaft*, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://www.deutscharmenischegesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/This-is-OUR-pain.-This-is-a-mourning-for-ALL-OF-US.-20100424.pdf>.

¹²⁷ Pakkan, “24 Nisan Türkiye’de de Anılacak.”

¹²⁸ Taksim, which means distribution or division, takes its name after the water distribution system that was used to supply water to the city. “From supplying water to art” *Hurriyet Daily News*, December 19, 2008, “From Supplying Water to Art,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, December 19, 2008, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/from-supplying-water-to-art-10598550>.

commemorative site was right across from the Republic Monument memorializing the military victory of the Turkish national struggle and the establishment of the republic under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's leadership. The site was demarcated and separated from the rest of the square with metal barriers installed by police forces. The barriers created a rectangular and physically confined space. Police officers from special units carrying full body armour were located along the borders of the space. The human fortification intensified the sense of being separated from the square.

As part of the security measures, commemorators were admitted to the designated site after being frisked and officers checked their bags. The officers were also verifying if those attempting to enter the site knew what the event was about. A young male officer asked the present author, "for the genocide commemoration, right?" as I approached the entrance. Hearing the officer's straightforward question was a displacing experience. I was about to attend the second genocide commemoration of the day in one of the most public and visible places in Turkey that was still vehemently denying the genocide. The officer's question also demonstrated that, even though the organizers refrained from using the term genocide, the public perceived the event as "genocide commemoration." After attending the İHD's event earlier that day, it was clear that the AKP government was allowing the commemorations to be organized and that the organizers worked together with law enforcement in order to guarantee the safety of the participants.

The setting of the commemorative site was simple and stern as was the case in İHD's event. It was also temporary. A banner was placed on the ground close to the side of the rectangular area facing the rest of the square and the Republic monument.

Illustration 17 - DurDe's banner in the 2010 commemoration
(Credit: *Bianet*)

The banner had “This is OUR pain. This is a mourning for ALL OF US” inscribed in Turkish, Armenian, and English. Candles, most of which were in the shape of a pomegranate, were placed around the banner and lit. Red carnations adorned the banner. Commemorators were silently sitting in a semi-circle around the placard facing the square and the unavoidable monument. Armenian music was playing in the background through the mobile sound system the organizers brought.

While commemorators continued entering the site, a group of about 20 to 30 people carrying Turkish and Azerbaijan flags gathered at another corner of the square. Soon, the group of protesters approached the commemoration. They were shouting

slogans, “betrayers to Yerevan [the capital of Armenia],” “this is Turkey, love it or leave it,” “the Turk has no friend except the Turk,” “damn the Armenian diaspora.” As they were closing the distance with the commemorators, they began to curse. The atmosphere inside the commemorative site got tense. The commemorators responded with applause. There were some verbal exchanges between the two groups. The police did not let the protesting group approach any further. The protesters dispersed soon after.

A couple of minutes later the music stopped. A commemorator, Zeynep Tanbay, stood up and read the press release on behalf of the group. The press release text was the same as the one used for the call for the event, reproduced above.

The text of the press release was as follows,

This is OUR pain. This is a mourning for ALL OF US.

In 1915, when we had a population of only 13 million people, there were 1.5 to 2 million Armenians living on this land. In Thrace, in the Aegean, in Adana, in Malatya, in Van, in Kars... In Samatya, in Şişli, in the Islands, in Galata...

They were the grocer in our neighborhood, our tailor, our goldsmith, our carpenter, our shoemaker, our farmhand, our millwright, our classmate, our teacher, our officer, our private, our deputy, our historian, our composer... Our friend. Our next-door neighbors and our companions in bad times. In Thrace, in the Aegean, in Adana, in Malatya, in Van, in Kars.... In Samatya, in Şişli, in the Islands, in Galata...

On April 24th, 1915 they were “rounded up.” We lost them. They are not here anymore. A great majority of them do not exist anymore. Nor do their graveyards. There EXISTS the overwhelming “Great Pain” that was laid upon the qualms of our conscience by the “Great Catastrophe.” It has grown deeper and deeper for the last 95 years.

We call upon all the peoples of Turkey who share this heartfelt pain to commemorate and pay tribute to the victims of 1915. In black, in silence. With candles and flowers...

For this is OUR pain. This is a mourning for ALL OF US.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Bu acı BİZİM acımız. Bu yas HEPİMİZİN.

1915’te, nüfusumuz henüz 13 milyonken, bu topraklarda 1,5 – 2 milyon Ermeni yaşıyordu. Trakya’da, Ege’de, Adana’da, Malatya’da, Van’da, Kars’ta... Samatya’da, Şişli’de, Adalar’da, Galata’da...

Mahalle bakkalımız, terzimiz, kuyumcumuz, marangozumuz, kunduracımız, yan tarladaki rençberimiz, değirmencimiz, sınıf arkadaşımız, öğretmenimiz, subayımız, emir erimiz, milletvekilimiz, tarihçimiz, bestekârimiz... Arkadaşlarımızdılar. Kapı komşularımız, dert

In the meantime another small group of nationalists protested the event, but there was no disruption. Moments later Tanbay finished with the release. The organizers announced the end of the commemoration. The commemorators stood up and left the carnations they were holding on the banner. Then they slowly left the square and started to walk along the *İstiklal* (Independence) Street. They were shouting, “Turks, Kurds, Armenians, long live the siblinghood of peoples,” “shoulder to shoulder against fascism.” The police units were walking at the both sides of the group, separating them from the Saturday evening crowd. Some passersby protested them and yelled at them, but the police prevented any kind of contact between the parties. The commemorators dispersed without incident after arriving at the Galatasaray Square.

The format of DurDe’s commemorative event at the square remained the same between 2010 and 2013. A silent sit-down in the Taksim Square with background music and press release was the repeated structure of the event.¹³⁰ DurDe, like the İHD, used a banner with the main message on it and portraits of the Armenian intellectuals. In 2012, DurDe added a new banner to its visual materials.

ortaklarımızdılar. Trakya’da, Ege’de, Adana’da, Malatya’da, Van’da, Kars’ta... Samatya’da, Şişli’de, Adalar’da, Galata’da...

24 Nisan 1915’te “gönderilmeye” başlandılar. Onları kaybettik. Artık yoklar. Çok büyük çoğunluğu aramızda yok. Mezarları bile yok. “Büyük Felaket”in vicdanlarımıza yüklediği “Büyük Acı” ise olanca ağırlığıyla VAR. 95 yıldır büyüyor.

Bu “Büyük Acı”yı yüreğinde hissedenden bütün Türkiyelileri 1915 kurbanlarının anısı önünde saygıyla eğilmeye çağırıyoruz. Siyahlar içinde, sessizce. Ruhlarına yakacağımız mumlarla, çiçeklerle...

Çünkü bu acı BİZİM acımız. Bu yas HEPİMİZİN.

24 Nisan 2010

Taksim Meydanı, Tramvay Durağı

“Bu Acı BİZİM Acımız. Bu Yas HEPİMİZİN./This Is OUR Pain. This Is a Mourning for ALL OF US.”

¹³⁰ Please see Appendix J for the full texts of DurDe’s press releases between 2010 and 2012.

Illustration 18 - DurDe banner and commemorators in the 2011 commemoration
(Credit: *Bianet*)

Illustration 19 - DurDe's comemmorative banner in 2012

(Credit: 140 Journos)

Designed as a postcard by Alexander Kranz, a German graphic designer, to mark the 90th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, the pomegranate with a deep cut symbolized the annihilation of the Armenians.¹³¹ The text on the picture read “*Bazı Yaralar Zamanla*

¹³¹ Alexander Kranz, “The Pomegranate Goes around the World,” *Armenianwounds*, accessed August 19, 2016, <http://akranz.wixsite.com/armenianwounds>.

İyileşmez – 24 Nisan 1915” [“Some Wounds, Time Never Heals – April 24, 1915”]. The design has been used since then in many of the commemorative materials.

The number of attendees grew gradually. In 2011, about 2,000 people attended the event. The following year, the number reached 3,000.¹³² Starting with 2011, DurDe expanded the number of cities where it organized a commemorative event to mark the Armenian genocide. In 2011, DurDe held events in Ankara and İzmir as well.

Illustration 20 - DurDe's Ankara commemoration in 2012
(Credit: *Bianet*)

In 2012, the number of locations rose to five with the addition of Bodrum and Diyarbakır.¹³³ The event format was similar in these locations to the Istanbul event and the press release was the same as the one read in Istanbul.

The Use of Portraits

Both İHD and DurDe commemorators carried black and white portraits with names on them. The pictures were reproductions of old photographs of Armenian men.

¹³² Cengiz, “Is Turkey Overcoming The Armenian Taboo?”

¹³³ Ibid.

Their names were written in Latin alphabet, but they were not Turkish. The words belonged to a different language, a language that was much more prominent during the empire, but that has since been obliterated. The pictures carried by the commemorators represented the Armenian notables who were rounded up in Istanbul on April 24, 1915, and exiled to Ayaş and Çankırı. Many of these Ottoman Armenians perished during their deadly exile which was part of the overall genocidal calculus. Those who survived were subject to social and symbolic death as their identity, individual and communal, was annihilated. The visual representation of the Armenian genocide was very rare; there is no visual archive that bears witness the atrocities. There is no equivalent of the Holocaust visual memory, or to borrow from Sontag, “the photographic inventory of ultimate horror.”¹³⁴ While Hirsch, following Sontag and later Hartman, talks about the saturation of the contemporary visual landscape with images of the Holocaust, Baronian underlines that in the case of the Armenian genocide there is a significant lack of images attesting to the horror.¹³⁵ There is a limited number of photo collections pertaining to the genocide. The number of visual materials about the earlier Ottoman atrocities against the Armenians is even smaller.¹³⁶

Within the context of memorialization performance undertaken by the commemorators, the portraits performed mimetic functions and also operated as instruments of recollection. The photographs were called to stand in for the figures they represented. Their function was to rescue these figures from oblivion and denial. They

¹³⁴ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977).

¹³⁵ Marianne Hirsch, “Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 14, no. 1 (2001): 6–7; Marie-Aude Baronian, “Image, Displacement, Prosthesis: Reflections on Making Visual Archives of the Armenian Genocide,” *Photographies* 3, no. 2 (2010): 207.

¹³⁶ Baronian, “Image, Displacement, Prosthesis.”

also had to give them back their individual humanity and identity, to remind the world of their subjective uniqueness. This not only puts a face to the victims of the genocide, it also reconstructs the memory of these figures. Genocide has resulted in the obliteration of Armenian identity in general and of each Ottoman Armenian subject in particular. Along with their identity, the photographs attempted to give the Ottoman Armenians their equality and dignity as well. The photographs represent the return of the Armenians to places where they created a life and where they lost their life.

The simultaneous use of portraits with their names was a means of individuating some of the anonymous victims of the genocide.¹³⁷ Bringing the portraits with names forth served the purpose of publicly recognizing a victim as an individual.¹³⁸ It also inscribed these private artefacts of memory into the public sphere to include them back into the collective memory from which they had been excluded. With the lack of public and permanent memorialization of the victims in Turkey, using the portraits anchors the memory through the inalienable singularity of portraits and names. However, Baronian reminds us of the problematic face of naming:

Naming is supposed to be the act of distinguishing individuals and establishing identity, but it also reminds us of the logic of naming enacted by the perpetrators who named the Armenians *as Armenians* and, in so doing, provoked the trauma of being identified as Armenian.”¹³⁹

This problematic aspect was the dilemma of invoking them as Armenians.

¹³⁷ There is a clear class and privilege aspect here. Not all Armenian citizens of the Ottoman Empire were in a position to have their portraits or any kind of photographic representation. Hence only a small number of genocide victims benefitted from the restorative and restitutive functions of photography. Nonetheless, in the face of the appalling scale of the atrocity, individuating and recognizing even one victim is remarkable.

¹³⁸ Rachel Hughes, “Nationalism and Memory at the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide Crimes, Phnom Penh, Cambodia,” in *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory*, ed. Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 183.

¹³⁹ Baronian, “Image, Displacement, Prosthesis,” 210. Original emphasis.

The portraits recover a moment before the genocide and restore the depicted person's dignity that the perpetrators attempted to remove. The anterior space the portraits gesture at was not peaceful and egalitarian for the Armenians, but they had more room to determine their own lives. The portraits in the commemoration offer a simultaneous reminder that that anterior life is gone forever. As such they acted as carriers of "a shared expressed story of enduring loss" for the Armenians living all around the world.¹⁴⁰ In the infinitely and irrevocably fragmented formations of Armenian identity, visual archives and collections are part of a discursive order "which seeks 'conclusive and restitutive judgment on a legal and moral injustice' while producing 'a transnational Armenian identity based in the shared experience of genocide.'"¹⁴¹

As shown above, the genocide constituted not only the annihilation of the Armenian population, but also the erasure of their history and presence in their homeland. Hence the portraits function as "certificates of presence."¹⁴² In the double erasure of genocide and its denial, photography's referential characteristic has been crucial:

I call "photographic referent" not the *optionally* real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph ... The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; ... A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed.¹⁴³

Understood in these terms, the portraits demonstrate the presence of the Armenians. In this capacity they are archival. Visual materials and artefacts have been crucial means for

¹⁴⁰ Nefissa Naguib, "Storytelling: Armenian Family Albums in the Diaspora," *Visual Anthropology* 21, no. 3 (2008): 238.

¹⁴¹ Leshu Torchin, "Since We Forgot: Remembrance and Recognition of the Armenian Genocide in Virtual Archives," in *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture*, ed. Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas (London; New York: Wallflower Press, 2007), 83.

¹⁴² Naguib, "Storytelling," 231.

¹⁴³ Roland Barthes quoted in Hirsch, "Surviving Images," 14.

the Armenians to document and sustain their pre-genocide presence in their homeland. One major project that aims to reconstruct Armenian life during the Ottoman era is Houshamadyan.¹⁴⁴

The place of the pictures of the arrested and deported Armenian intellectuals has recently been further reinforced through an exhibition at DEPO İstanbul between April 4th and 26th, 2015. For the exhibition “Without knowing where we are headed...,” the artist Nalan Yırtmaç’s reproduced (stenciled with acrylic on canvas) hundreds of the portraits.

Illustration 21 - Nazan Yırtmaç, Untitled (Segment)
(Credit: DEPO İstanbul)

¹⁴⁴ “Houshamadyan: A Project to Reconstruct Ottoman Armenian Town and Village Life,” accessed August 22, 2015, <http://www.houshamadyan.org/en/home.html>.

The work was the centerpiece of the exhibition marking the hundredth anniversary of the genocide and had a high visibility and level of significance. The catalogue text explained the function of this work as follows:

This work pulls them out from under the generic heading of "arrested and cast out Armenians" and turns them into people with familiar names and faces; the active participants of the cosmopolitan Ottoman intellectual milieu. These portraits the artist has produced in her own pictorial language based on photographs from the few publications that have survived to the present day summon a past that is scarcely known by some and completely ignored by others back to collective memory.¹⁴⁵

As such, these portraits called their addressees into political action. They were not only to remind the victims, but also to mobilize the viewers towards recognition of the genocide. The portraits were expected to re-represent their owners with the aim that Turkish society acknowledge that the Armenians belonged to their "universe of moral obligation."¹⁴⁶ Unfortunately, thus far the Turkish audience has not answered this call.

V. Places of Commemoration

DurDe's counter-memory campaign challenged representations of the Turkish past that portrayed it as Turkish nation's defense against encroaching imperialism and the state's role as the protector of the nation. It highlighted the state violence against the population and destructive construction through which the nation was built. However, the campaign obscured the broader responsibility of genocide perpetration and its denial. It may also be seen as being exclusionary regarding the ownership of the commemorations. Hence, at the level of counter-memory campaigns there are issues of inclusivity and representation.

¹⁴⁵ "Exhibition: Without Knowing Where We Are Headed...", *DEPO İstanbul*, accessed August 22, 2015, http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/activites_detail.asp?ac=125.

¹⁴⁶ Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 4.

Commemoration at sites of memory is an act arising out of a conviction, shared by a broad community, that the moment recalled is both significant and informed by a moral message. Sites of memory materialize that message. ... Where moral doubts persist about a war or public policy, commemorative sites are either hard to fix or places of contestation. ... There was no moral consensus about the nature of the conflict; hence there was no moral consensus about what was being remembered in public, and when and where were the appropriate time and place to remember it.¹⁴⁷

Studying genocide commemorations organized by DurDe and İHD requires a closer look at spatial choices they made to hold their respective events. Such a look brings forth the relationship between commemoration and place into high relief. Memory, space, and identity constitute the broader context of the commemorations. Analyzing different places of commemoration chosen by these two agents of memory will shed light on their respective politics of memory as well. In the face of denial and in the absence of an Armenian genocide monument in Turkey that would sustain and fixate the memory of genocide, memorialization initiatives are bound to operate through performances of temporary memory. The location of commemorations, thus, has a particular bearing on the overall message and politics of commemorators.

DurDe's Place of Commemoration

DurDe held its annual genocide commemoration at Taksim Square between 2010 and 2013. However, after the Gezi process the government banned all political demonstrations at the square. As a result, in 2014 and 2015 DurDe moved the location for its commemorations to the point where the Istiklal Avenue reached Taksim Square. To unpack the significance of DurDe's place of commemoration, one must infer because the organization does not specify its reasons for holding the commemoration at Taksim

¹⁴⁷ Jay Winter, "Sites of Memory and the Shadow of War," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning, and Sara B Young (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 62.

Square. If it has a spatial politics, which it does, it is not openly stated. The most obvious reason would be to benefit from the central location and public significance of the square in order to make the commemoration as visible as possible. Being the most public square in the city, Taksim is at the heart of public life. The commemorations at the square could be understood in conjunction with the existing memorial landscape and identity anchors there. Nevertheless, by not engaging with a specific politics of place, DurDe opted to operate within the parameters of a generalized and un-situated public order, missing some of the significant connections between the Armenian genocide and the square. This lack of engagement with genocide-specific components of the place of commemoration undermines the overall effectiveness of the events.

DurDe's choice of location is significant since it situates the Armenian genocide commemoration in dialogue with the memorial landscape of the Turkish nation-state. Taksim square is closely connected with the construction of Turkish national identity and its inscription over urban space. The square has also been the place of new public ideas imagined by the new regime and its population. In line with the secular and modernizing ethos of the regime, the square was to sculpt the new republican public. However, attesting to the limits of creating an all-encompassing narrative of publicness and demonstrating the excess of divergent and dissenting tropes challenging and deconstructing this imagined publicness, the square witnessed challenges to the Kemalist national identity. Thus the place of commemoration DurDe chose for their event has invoked the interplay of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic contestation over space in Istanbul. Juxtaposing Kemalist politics of space with counter-movements' politics of space highlights the making and unmaking of national identity in urban geography.

Doing so sheds light on the meaning and significance of making a counter-claim over the republican square.

The Kemalist regime paid specific attention to reconfiguring public spaces in order to remind the population that they were a nation and put the nation's imprint on built environment. Kemalist spatial reconfiguration projects paid particular attention to public squares, often organized around powerful carriers of national memory usually involving sacralised representations of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in monumental form. Taksim Square has been an important example of carefully curated public spaces of the young Republic.¹⁴⁸ The square was designed as a "landscape of sovereignty."¹⁴⁹ Commenced in the second half of the 1920s,¹⁵⁰ and undergoing a complete transformation in the 1930s as a modern republican square replacing imperial reminders, the square has been a symbolic space in Kemalist urban cosmology showcasing the nationalist, secular, and modernist ethos of the new regime. The square has also embodied interrelated agendas of nation-building, state-formation, and the creation of a new public. In this respect it eclipsed two major public squares that were crucial public spaces under the Ottoman Empire, Sultanahmet and Beyazıt Squares.¹⁵¹ A plausible explanation for the choice of Taksim as the Kemalist public square, as advanced by

¹⁴⁸ Birge Yıldırım and Arzu Erdem, "Taksim Meydanı'nın Cumhuriyet'in Kamusal Alanı Olarak İnşası," *Tasarım+kuram* 11, no. 19 (May 2015): 95–106.

¹⁴⁹ Garrett A. Sullivan, *The Drama of Landscape: Land, Property, and Social Relations on the Early Modern Stage* (Stanford University Press, 1998), 19.

¹⁵⁰ The space that came to be Taksim Square was not a public square prior to that. As late as 1925–1926, the space looked more like an opening or intersection. Ayşe Hür, "Menderes ve Erdoğan'ın Jakoben Belediyeciliği," *Radikal*, November 4, 2012, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/ayse-hur/menderes-ve-erdoganin-jakoben-belediyeciligi-1106514/>. The space had to be repurposed so that it could become a public space.

¹⁵¹ Ayşe Hür, "Devletin 1 Mayıs Paranoyası, Taksim Tabusu," *Taraf.com.tr*, May 3, 2009, <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/ayse-hur/devletin-1-mayis-paranoyasi-taksim-tabusu/5333/>.

scholars, is that the republic wanted to create a new space representing its revolutionary spirit that would not be anchored in imperial locations of publicness.¹⁵²

As part of the Kemalist regime's drive to inscribe and represent the national identity through transforming the urban landscape, the creation of Taksim Square began with a series of changes in toponyms reflecting republican values in 1927. One of the avenues leading to the square was renamed as the Republic Avenue, and the famous Cadde-i Kebir¹⁵³ (Grand Rue de Péra or Grand Avenue) was renamed as the Independence Avenue.¹⁵⁴ The physical transformation of the square in line with Kemalist ideological tenets continued with the building of the Republic Monument in 1928 prior to a major period of change in the 1930s and 1940s. Under the supervision of the architect and urban planner Henri Prost, the existing imperial remnants were destroyed and a new built environment concretizing national identity emerged.

The square was conceived as the "ceremonial space" of the republic¹⁵⁵ to host official ceremonies commemorating and perpetuating the republic. It was a place imparted with symbolic meaning, "choreographing the drama of state power."¹⁵⁶ It has been a major public space in Istanbul where the citizens were called to perform their national identity during national holidays. It has been a crucial part of the memorial landscape of the Republic as the scene of national commemorative activities. The

¹⁵² Serkan Ortaç, "Bir Meydanın Hikayesi: TAKSİM," *VivaHiba*, March 7, 2014, <http://vivahiba.com/article/show/bir-meydanin-hikayesi-taksim/>.

¹⁵³ During the late Ottoman period, the Avenue and its surrounding areas housed foreign embassies and the elite Levantines. Sinan Polvan and Neslihan Aydın Yönet, "Story of Taksim Square's Transformation: 'From Death's Stillness to Life's Hubbub,'" in *Urban Transformation: Controversies, Contrasts, and Challenges* (14th IPHS Conference, Istanbul, Turkey, 2010), <http://iphs2010.com/abs/ID88.pdf>.

¹⁵⁴ Yıldırım and Erdem, "Taksim Meydanı'nın Cumhuriyet'in Kamusal Alanı Olarak İnşası."

¹⁵⁵ Hür, "Menderes ve Erdoğan'ın Jakoben Belediyeciliği."

¹⁵⁶ Brian S. Osborne, "Landscapes, Memory, Monuments, and Commemoration: Putting Identity in Its Place," *Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal* 33, no. 3 (2001): 39.

Kemalist heart of the square and its hegemonic centre was the Taksim Republic Monument (*Taksim Cumhuriyet Abidesi*). Part of the Republican regime's deliberate campaign to replace imperial and religious symbols with national ones, the monument sought to embody the nation and narrate its story.¹⁵⁷ It was also there for the citizens to identify themselves with the nation and recognize themselves as a nation. The monument belonged to double registers of the nation, pedagogic and performative.¹⁵⁸

Sculpted by Italian artist Pietro Canonica,¹⁵⁹ the monument was erected on August 8, 1928.¹⁶⁰ Italian architect Giulio Mongeri later landscaped the area surrounding

¹⁵⁷ The nation is simultaneously constituted, among other processes, in this very act of narration. For more on "nation as narration," please see Homi K. Bhabha, "Introduction: Narrating the Nation," in *Nation and Narration* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990), 1–7.

¹⁵⁸ For more on pedagogic and performative [pedagogic and performative *what* of the nation?] of the nation, please see Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *Nation and Narration* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990).

¹⁵⁹ The commissioning of a foreign artist to represent this crucial achievement of the Turkish nation came under criticism. Peyami Safa, one of the significant writers of the republican era, voiced his criticism in a piece entitled, "Bir Anıtın İntiharı" (The Suicide of a Monument) in 1933. Beşir Ayvazoğlu, "Taksim Cumhuriyet Anıtı Nasıl Eleştirildi?," *ZAMAN*, November 8, 2012, http://www.zaman.com.tr/yazarlar/besir-ayvazoglu/taksim-cumhuriyet-aniti-nasil-elestirildi_2012765.html; Yıldırım and Erdem, "Taksim Meydanı'nın Cumhuriyet'in Kamusal Alanı Olarak İnşası."

¹⁶⁰ A committee was established to commission the monument and to supervise its building. Canonica's plan was submitted to Mustafa Kemal in 1926. Upon his approval, the sculptor began his work on the monument. Faik Gur, "Sculpting the Nation in Early Republican Turkey," *Historical Research* 86, no. 232 (May 1, 2013): 365. The building of the monument was funded through a donation campaign. Based on the list of donors included in Banoğlu's work, Gur notes that 90% of the donations came from non-Muslim citizens. For the full list please see, Niyazi Ahmet Banoğlu, *Taksim Cumhuriyet Abidesi şeref defteri* (Istanbul: [İtimat Kitabevi], 1973). Other sources cite financial institutions like American Express, Banca Commerciale Italiana, and Union Bank as well as foreign entrepreneurs like Mario Serra among the contributors. Hür, "Devletin 1 Mayıs Paranoyası, Taksim Tabusu." At the time Mario Serra was running a casino and club at the Yıldız Palace, which was previously used by the Sultan Abdulhamid II as his seat of government. "Yıldız Sarayı 1926'da Gazino ve Kumarhane Yapılmış," *Cihan Haber Ajansı: Doğru ve Hızlı Haberin Adresi*, accessed November 23, 2015, <http://www.cihan.com.tr/tr/yildiz-sarayi-1926da-gazino-ve-kumarhane-yapilmis-1522062.htm>; Murat Bardakçı, "Yıldız Kumarhanesi," *Www.haberturk.com*, October 26, 2015, <http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/murat-bardakci/1144767-yildiz-kumarhanesi>.

the monument.¹⁶¹ Two of the four façades of the monument represent the foundation of the republic as a result of the successful war of liberation¹⁶². The monument not only physically embodied the foundation of the republic but also the central figures involved in this process whom the Kemalist regime decided to canonize in the mid-1920s.¹⁶³ The monument visually conveyed the message that Mustafa Kemal, who saved the nation from extinction as a soldier, was leading it under the new nation-state as a civilian leader.

¹⁶¹ Murat Gul, *Emergence of Modern Istanbul: Transformation and Modernisation of a City* (London; New York: I.B.Tauris, 2009), 89.

¹⁶² The memorialization of the War of Liberation, which was the beginning of the Kemalist republican narrative of national identity, calls for comment because among the motivations of the glorified national struggle was preventing the return of the subaltern groups of the Ottoman Empire, especially the Greeks and Armenians, to the Anatolia. The possibility of these groups laying claims on Anatolia and demanding the restitution of confiscated properties galvanized popular support for the resistance movement. Seen under this light, memorializing the national struggle almost inherently means obliterating the memory of the subaltern groups of the empire.

¹⁶³ Walter B. Denny, "Fine Arts," in *The Routledge Handbook of Modern Turkey*, ed. Metin Heper and Sabri Sayari (New York: Routledge, 2012), 91. As Gur pointed out some of the important leaders of the national struggle, such as Kazım Karabekir, Ali Fuat Cebesoy, Rauf Orbay, and Refet Bele, were excluded from the monument. These leaders were excluded for opposing Mustafa Kemal's policies. In contrast to the absence of these significant figures, Gur states that the monument, on its civilian façade, memorialized two Soviet Russian officers, General Mikhail Vasilyevich Frunze and Marshal Kliment Yefremovich Voroshilov, in recognition of the Soviet Union's support to the national struggle. Gur, "Sculpting the Nation in Early Republican Turkey," 368. Ayşe Hür, rather than being certain about whether these two figures depicted on the monument were the Soviet officers, stated that this was a claim. Hür, "Devletin 1 Mayıs Paranoyası, Taksim Tabusu."

Illustration 22 - The façade of the Taksim Republic Monument
(Credit: Çetin Bayramoğlu)

Illustration 23 - The second façade of the monument depicting Mustafa Kemal Atatürk at the helm of the nation followed by the national leaders after the establishment of the Republic
(Credit: Scisa)

Holding the genocide commemoration at a site of memory dedicated to celebrating the achievements of the nation and consecrating its past problematizes the dominant national narrative and identity by introducing the genocide into the memorial landscape, albeit temporarily. The monumentalized narrative of the nation emerging from a glorious self-defence against the imperialist occupation is troubled with the destruction as construction at the foundation of the nation-state. Commemorating the genocide at the square reveals the violence as constitutive of national sovereignty.

State-sponsored national memory was not the only collective memory embodied in the square. Taksim Square has been an integral part of another set of counter-memories, those of the labor and leftist political movements, since the mid-1970s. In the case of the latter, the square contained a counter-memory. The history of the labour movement and leftist politics during much of the republican era has been one of repression. Nevertheless, the relatively liberal 1961 constitution, promulgated after the military coup on May 27, 1960, created an atmosphere in which this movement could express itself relatively freely.¹⁶⁴ In line with the socio-economic transformations Turkey was undergoing in the 1960s and 1970s, especially rural to urban migration and industrialization, the political spectrum also expanded to include previously repressed leftist parties and movements.¹⁶⁵ Legalization of trade unions in the constitution increased labor activism. The rising labor movement got in touch with emergent student movements in universities and became a significant venue through which discontented groups in Turkey expressed their dissent.

¹⁶⁴ Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 246.

¹⁶⁵ One of the first political parties that were established after the return to democracy in January 1961 was the Workers' Party of Turkey. Ibid.

The rising tide of labor and the leftist movement reached its peak in the 1970s. Strikes and political demonstrations were key components of this activism. The square was a major public space in the city and was highly accessible for demonstrators.¹⁶⁶ Thus, political demonstrations frequently took place in the square. Among these events, May 1st Labor Day has a particularly symbolic meaning. The Turkish state allowed mass events marking May 1st sporadically and generally under tight control. After a long intermission, the government allowed for a mass demonstration to be held at Taksim square. Following the success of the 1976 demonstration at Taksim Square, the Confederation of Progressive [though Revolutionary would capture the spirit of the time better] Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK), organized a mass demonstration at the same location in 1977.¹⁶⁷

On May 1, 1977, about half a million people marched towards Taksim Square to celebrate Labor Day. What started as a peaceful celebration and demonstration ended with a massacre because the crowd came under fire and 34 people died during the stampede. 98 members of trade unions and leftists organizations were tried in relation to the massacre and none were sentenced. No state official was ever tried.¹⁶⁸ So the event remains unsolved and continues to be a contested event between the state and the left. As a result of this tragedy, May 1st 1977 was engraved in collective memory as the Bloody May 1 or the Taksim Square Massacre. This date has since become a crucial component of collective memory, especially in the labour movement and the left in general. Along

¹⁶⁶ Aysegul Baykan and Tali Hatuka, "Politics and Culture in the Making of Public Space: Taksim Square, 1 May 1977, Istanbul," *Planning Perspectives* 25, no. 1 (January 2010): 58.

¹⁶⁷ Korhan Atay, Korhan Atay Anlatıyor: 1 Mayıs 1977 Neden ve Nasıl Kana Bulandı?, interview by Nilay Vardar, May 1, 2013, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/146248-1-mayis-1977-neden-ve-nasil-kana-bulandi>.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

with the date, Taksim square also gained significant symbolic meaning in the collective memory: “The existence of the demonstration on 1 May 1977, with the memories and associations it evokes, has permanently changed the face of Taksim Square.”¹⁶⁹

Dominant strands of collective memory remember the Bloody May 1st as a site of state violence against organized opposition. The event itself gained importance through this meaning-making frame. This frame was related to a particular idea about characteristics of the Turkish state regarding class politics. The existence of this idea further strengthened the hold of the Bloody May 1st in collective memory because “it is often, then, in the realm of the ideas, however contested and contradictory, that the meaning of memory spaces are embedded.”¹⁷⁰ Blaming the “deep state” or the state’s counter-guerrilla organizations, this frame of remembrance situates the event in the continuum of the state’s dirty war against opposition. Understood as a violent intervention against and subsequent delegitimization of the left by the dominant social classes and their state, May 1, 1977 reverberates as an episode that Turkish society must come to terms with. The themes of impunity, unaccountability, and injustice still dominate current memory discourses related to the event.¹⁷¹

DurDe’s genocide commemoration therefore resonates with this spatial reminder of state violence and its memory. DurDe and many of the organizations and individuals undertaking the genocide commemoration inherited the legacy of May 1st for their involvement in the leftist movement. In addition to challenging the Kemalist landscape

¹⁶⁹ Baykan and Hatuka, “Politics and Culture in the Making of Public Space: Taksim Square, 1 May 1977, Istanbul,” 63.

¹⁷⁰ Nuala C. Johnson, “Locating Memory: Tracing the Trajectories of Remembrance,” *Historical Geography* 33, no. 0 (2005): 173.

¹⁷¹ Tanıl Bora, “Taksim, 1 Mayıs 1977 ve Yüzleşme,” *Birikim*, no. 253 (May 2010), <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim-yazi/6510/taksim-1-mayis-1977-ve-yuzlesme#.VmCra9-rTsl>.

and national identity, holding the genocide commemoration at Taksim Square helps organizers to connect with the reverberating memory of May 1st and translates the genocide commemoration into the lexicon of struggle against state violence in Turkey. This constitutes a political strategy aimed at gathering support from leftist and dissident groups who are critical of state violence and sympathetic to the struggle against it.

So far this section has demonstrated that DurDe's spatial politics of commemoration should be considered in relation to the dominant mode of publicness the square concretized and to the Kemalist construction of national identity. As such, holding the Armenian genocide commemoration at the square, even though commemorators did not explicitly make the point, poses a challenge to Turkishness and aims at reaching out to the wider public. The choice of Taksim Square is perhaps also a strategy to compound the significance of the commemoration by connecting it to one of the major sites of counter-memory and framing it in a way that highlights the state violence continuum. These strategies are in line with the objectives discussed above and the politics of DurDe. However, such strategies, which aim to reach the widest public possible, run the risk of glossing over some other aspects of the square and its environment that contain memories directly related to the genocide and its afterlife.

Within this context, DurDe's organizing the commemoration at this symbolically crucial public square should be read as an attempt to re-inscribe previously repressed Armenian memories into the official public memory embodied and displayed at the square. It is a challenge to the ideological, cognitive, and emotive boundaries of the republic through its mobilizing of a variety of discourses and practices of memory. Genocide commemorations exist within the same performative order as the Kemalist

ones, however with a subversive agenda. In this regard, DurDe's politics of space highlights an important civil society intervention against the denial of Armenian memory and genocidal past. However, there have been some important aspects missing in these commemorations.

The historical trajectory of the Republic monument not only witnessed the celebration and sacralisation of the nation, but also the episodes of symbolic violence committed on its behalf. As the embodiment of the nation and its sacred leader, the monument is where loyalty to the nation and one's national identity are to be performed whenever one is interpellated as a Turkish citizen. It was the space of nation where differences had to negate themselves and perform sameness or oneness. This was exactly what Turkish Armenians were summoned to do on April 24, 1965.

Illustration 24 - Newspaper clipping showing the Armenian delegate in front of the Monument
(Credit: CNNTurk)

In the face of the international genocide recognition campaign initiated by Armenians in soviet Armenia and diaspora through genocide commemorations, the Armenian community of Turkey was summoned to Atatürk's presence to denounce the campaign and to renounce their history and distinct identity. At the fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian genocide, representatives of the Armenian community in Turkey laid a wreath at the Republic Monument and reiterated their unconditional belonging and loyalty to the Turkish nation. Interestingly, this imposition of self-denial or disavowal on

Turkey's already decimated Armenian community was not part of the commemorative agenda of DurDe. There was no reference to this event of grave symbolic violence against the Armenians in the memorial discourse. There was also no reflection on why the Armenian community of Turkey were so abandoned and so alone in that particular moment of history.

Another grave omission concerned a matter related to confiscated Armenian property in Istanbul during the republican era. During the Gezi Park protests in 2013, historical connections between the park and systematic injustices committed against the Armenians in Turkey emerged.

Illustration 25 - Graffiti in the Gezi Park: “We did not forget 1915, we will not let it be forgotten”
(Credit: Esen Egemen Ozbek)

These connections, briefly and in very limited terms, carried discussions about the Armenian genocide and confiscation of Armenian property to the public sphere. Nevertheless, these discussions, as much as they attest to the slowly changing positions regarding the genocidal past in Turkey, also reveal the limits of public discourse and action about this past. Even though these new “discoveries” about the past fuel, to some extent, new initiatives for bringing back the genocide into collective memory, there are still considerable challenges that need to be addressed.

One of the major moments of coming to memory happened when the public “discovered” that there was an historical Armenian cemetery near the Park, a cemetery confiscated during the republican era. Some dissenting groups and news outlets were quick to claim that the Gezi Park was on the land that belonged to the Armenian cemetery. These accounts pointed at the continuity between different governments’ attempts to confiscate property belonging to the public. The accounts also called for the inclusion of this memory of confiscation into the collective memory of state violence.

The actual history of the confiscation of Pangalti Surp Hagop cemetery and the church within it has been a part of Armenian collective memory. However, the history of this government-led confiscation was made public with Armaveni Miroglu’s piece in July 2008.¹⁷² On July 24, 2011, Gokhan Tan, in his piece, “Varolmayanin tescili” (“The Inscription of the Non-Existent”), made the link between the cemetery and the construction of the military barracks.¹⁷³ In August 2011, Tamar Nalcı and Emre Can

¹⁷² Armaveni Miroglu, “Pangalti Ermeni Mezarligi.” *Toplumsal Tarih*, Vol. 32, no. 187 (July 2008).

¹⁷³ Gokhan Tan, “Varolmayanin Tescili.” *Radikal* 2. Published on July 24, 2011. Retrieved on July 4, 2013. Aysegul Baykan and Tali Hatuka, “Politics and Culture in the Making of Public Space: Taksim Square, 1 May 1977, Istanbul,” *Planning Perspectives* 25, no. 1 (January 2010): 63.

Dağlıoğlu published a piece in AGOS entitled, “Bir Gasp Hikayesi” (“A Story of Seizure”) where they clearly delineated the story of the cemetery from its establishment in the mid-16th century until its final expropriation in 1939.¹⁷⁴ The history of the cemetery is also available through the Istanbul Armenian Foundations website.¹⁷⁵ *Nor Zartonk*, a group of Armenian activists participating in the protests, pointed to the parallel between the confiscation of the Armenian Cemetery and the Gezi Park with a make-shift grave stone for the cemetery itself. The English text on the yellow paper read, “you captured our graveyard, but you can’t capture our park! Armenians from Turkey. Nor Zartonk.”

¹⁷⁴ Tamar Nalci and Emre Can Daglioglu, “Bir Gasp Hikayesi.” *Bianet*. Published on August 27, 2011. Originally published in AGOS. Retrieved on July 4, 2013.

<http://bianet.org/bianet/azinliklar/132420-bir-gasp-hikayesi>

¹⁷⁵ Istanbul Ermeni Vakıfları, “Pangalti Surp Hagop Ermeni Mezarlığı.” Retrieved July 4, 2013. <http://www.istanbulermenivakiflari.org/tr/istanbul-ermeni-vakiflari/vakif-listesi/beyoglu-uc-horan-yerrortutyun-ermeni-kilisesi-vakfi/24>

Illustration 26 - Make-shift gravestone for the Surp Hagop Armenian Cemetery
(Credit: *Nor Zartonk*)

Questions arise about why DurDe does not acknowledge and highlight this immediate connection with the genocide, especially given the fact that the distance between the location where DurDe holds its commemorations and the confiscated land is no more than 250 meters. Including this connection in the counter-memory performances would serve as a significant landmark of severely repressed memories of the genocide.

İHD's Places of Commemoration

İHD has pursued a different strategy when choosing the place of commemoration. In comparison to DurDe's spatial choice, İHD's strategy is better crafted to combine their memory politics with the politics of space. The locations the organization chose to commemorate the genocide are directly related to the genocide itself: the building that houses the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum and the Haydarpaşa Train Station.¹⁷⁶ The former was the prison where the arrested Armenian leaders were kept before their deadly forced deportation and the latter was the starting point of the deportation. There are no signs at these locations that refer to the partial annihilation of the city's Armenian population. Nothing refers to the genocidal events nor to their subsequent denial in these locations.

¹⁷⁶ In addition to these two central places of commemoration, İHD undertook memorialization activities at other locations as well. Here is list of all these locations:

2010 – The Haydarpaşa Train Station

2011 – The Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum

2012 – The Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum and Sevag Şahin Balıkcı's grave at the Şişli Armenian Cemetery

2013 – The Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum and Kütahya Governor Faik Ali Özansoy's grave at the Zincirlikuyu Cemetery

2014 – The Haydarpaşa Train Station; Sevag Şahin Balıkcı's grave at the Şişli Armenian Cemetery; and the Taksim Square as part of the Platform for Commemorating the Armenian Genocide

2015 – The Beyazıt Square (commemorating the members of the Armenian Hunchak Party executed there on 15 June 1915); The Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum; The Haydarpaşa Train Station; Sevag Şahin Balıkcı's grave at the Şişli Armenian Cemetery; and the Taksim Square as part of the Platform for Commemorating the Armenian Genocide

Challenging this erasure, İHD presents these spaces as crime scenes. This memorialization strategy anchors their events and concretizes their message. It also serves the purpose of reminding the public that these symbolic locations of Ottoman-Turkish modernity and national identity are marked by the genocide and contained memories of the genocide. Thus, İHD embarks on an excavation of public memory with a specific agenda of scratching the surface to reveal the repressed layers of national memory tied to episodes defined by criminal acts against the Ottoman Armenians.

Similar to the commemoration in 2010 discussed earlier, İHD held its commemorations at another crime scene, the Ibrahim Pasha Palace that hosts the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum, 2011 and 2012. The almost 500-year old building is located in the Sultanahmet Square (or the Hippodrome Square), which is at the heart of the Ottoman imperial court complex and old city. A few minutes walk from the Topkapı Palace,¹⁷⁷ eyeing Hagia Sophia¹⁷⁸ from distance, facing the Sultan Ahmed Mosque,¹⁷⁹ the building sits at the crossroads of two once powerful imperial legacies co-existing within the present moment of the nation state.

¹⁷⁷ The palace was the administrative center of the Ottoman Empire and the residence of the sultans between the mid-fifteenth century and mid-nineteenth century. Sultan Mehmed II, Mehmed the Conqueror, ordered its construction after he conquered Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire. Its construction began in 1460 and ended in 1478. The palace ceased to house the court when Sultan Abdulmecid I moved the dynasty to the newer Dolmabahçe Palace. The palace became a museum on April 3, 1924 after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic.

¹⁷⁸ The famous East Roman Empire basilica was last built during the first half of the sixth century. One of the pinnacles of Byzantine architecture, the building became a mosque under Ottoman rule. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ordered the mosque to be transformed into a museum. Since February 1, 1935 the building functions as such. "History," *Hagia Sophia Museum*, n.d., accessed June 6, 2015.

¹⁷⁹ One of the significant examples of Ottoman and Islamic architecture, the mosque was commissioned by Sultan Ahmed I and built by Mehmet Aga between 1609 and 1616. It is commonly known as the Blue Mosque because of the tiles decorating its interior walls. "Sultan Ahmet Mosque (The Blue Mosque)," *English.Istanbul.gov.tr*, n.d., accessed June 6, 2015.

İHD made its politics of memory and its relationship to space clear in their 2011 call for commemoration. Through this text the association made an intervention in the memory landscape of Istanbul. The text highlighted the repressed memories of the genocide that were stored in material sites and buildings:

In Turkey, cities hide a history kept like a secret. People pass by across many “crimes scenes” without being aware of it. One of these scenes was the Mehderhane, the Ibrahim Pasha Palace, which many survivors’ narratives mention. The building now hosts the “Islamic Arts Museum. [sic]” This is the Central Prison where Armenian intellectuals, poets, writers, journalists, doctors, pharmacists, lawyers were kept on April 24 after being arrested. They were first brought to Pangaltı police station and then were taken here before they were taken to Haydarpaşa where they started their voyage to inner Anatolia. This year, İHD Istanbul Branch will commemorate the Armenian intellectuals, who were arrested on April 24, 1915 and sent to a voyage that claimed the lives of most, outside of the Ibrahim Pasha Palace, which is now “Islamic Arts Museum.[sic]” We will say, “here,” “the Armenian intellectuals were held in these cells and wards before being sent to the deadly voyage. This place is one of Istanbul’s crime scenes!”¹⁸⁰

İHD wanted to hold their commemoration at a place in Istanbul in which they could concentrate their criticism of the genocide and its denial. While major locations of genocidal violence are spread over the Anatolian peninsula, the commemorators might have chosen to identify a genocidal site in Istanbul in order to have access to a broader audience and more public visibility.

¹⁸⁰ Türkiye’de kentler sır gibi saklanan bir tarihi gizler. İnsanlar hiç bilmeden birçok “suç mahalli”nin önünden geçer. İşte bunlardan biri de, kurtulanların ayrıntılı anılarında geçen Mehderhane, yani Ibrahim Paşa Sarayı, yani bugün Sultanahmet meydanındaki “İslam Eserleri Müzesi”dir.

Burası, 24 Nisan gecesi evlerinden alınan şair, yazar, gazeteci, doktor, eczacı, hukukçu Ermeni aydınların, Pangaltı karakolu’nda toplandıktan sonra götürüldüğü ve Haydarpaşa’dan Anadolu’nun içlerine yola çıkarılınca kadar tutuldukları Merkez Cezaevi’dir.

Bu yıl İnsan Hakları Derneği İstanbul Şubesi olarak 24 Nisan 1915’te tutuklanan ve büyük çoğunluğundan bir daha haber alınamayan Ermeni aydınlarını, Ibrahim Paşa Sarayı, bugünkü “İslam Eserleri Müzesi” önünde anacak ve “işte” diyeceğiz, “Ermeni aydınlar, ölüm yolculuğuna çıkarılmadan önce burada hücrelerde ve koğuşlarda tutuldu. Burası İstanbul’un suç mahallerinden biridir!”

“24 Nisan’da İHD ile Sultanahmet’deyiz...,” *Nor Zartonk*, April 22, 2011, <http://www.norzartonk.org/2011/04/22/24-nisanda-eminonune/>.

This subversive act, aiming at invoking a hidden episode of the past, was an important component of the İHD's commemorative strategy that was a place-based memory work drawing on ethics and politics.¹⁸¹ The commemorations, especially İHD's events, stand at the crossroads of a "biography of a site" approach adopted in sites of memory school and place-based practice.¹⁸² Supporting the textual reference, the commemorators carried small placards marking the significance of the museum building. The commemorators held the placards together with pictures of arrested Armenian leaders during the commemoration. While leaving the site of commemoration they put the placards and red carnations on the boxwood hedge that separated the museum from the square. Even though the group could not mark the site permanently, the embodied performance and indexical relationship between the placards and the building revealed the connection between the site and genocide.

¹⁸¹ Karen E. Till, "Wounded Cities: Memory-Work and a Place-Based Ethics of Care," *Political Geography*, no. 31 (2012): 3–14.

¹⁸² Ibid.

Illustration 27 - İHD commemorators marking the criminal history of the building, 2011
(Credit: *Demokrat Haber*)

These makeshift and temporary markers of counter-memory collapsed the past and the present and subverted the museum that was meant to showcase the achievements of Turkish and Islamic civilizations. With the commemorative intervention, the genocide became part of what was being showcased. The museum was transformed from a site of memory to a site of counter-memory. The act of public reminding invoked the genocidal heritage and articulated it within the broader heritage of the country. The museum memorialized the achievements of the Turkish nation and Muslim community, however the commemoration revealed the violence that contributed to the building of the nation, perpetrated in the name of nation and Islam. In clear contrast to places sacralizing national imaginaries including monuments, memorials, and museums, the stress on crime scenes constituted the unmaking of this sacralization.

In clear contrast to a patriotic topography, the counter-memory intervention undermined the memorial order of the nation. In this order monuments, commemorations and other memorialization devices tell the glorified history of the nation. However, İHD's commemorations called on the wider public to recognize the crimes committed in the nation's name. Young commented on the tension related to counter-memory initiatives, "after all, while the victors of history have long erected monuments to remember their triumphs, and victims have built memorials to recall their martyrdom, only rarely does a nation call on itself to remember the victims of crimes it has perpetrated."¹⁸³ In contemporary Germany, the question of how a nation can include its crimes against other groups within its own memorial topography and practices lead to torn convoluted collective memory: "It is that of a nation tortured by its conflicted desire to build a new and just state on the bedrock memory of its horrendous crimes."¹⁸⁴

Memory work in perpetrator communities is complicated even when the crime is officially and publicly recognized and responsibility is taken. In cases where the crime is still being denied, the memory work becomes even further complicated, divisive, and controversial. State-sponsored memory in Turkey continues to deny the deliberate extermination of the Armenians and other subaltern groups. There is minimal official will to incorporate the memory of the crime within the collective memory of Turkey. On the contrary, the memorial landscape of Turkey still exalts the perpetrators.

The emphasis on crime scenes should be taken in relation with the naming practices Turkey engaged with since the genocide itself. As a part of the genocidal calculus, the Armenian toponyms were replaced with Turkish ones in the aftermath of

¹⁸³ James Edward Young, "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 270.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 270–271.

genocide. Moreover, many of the genocide perpetrators were celebrated as national heroes through state-sponsored toponyms.¹⁸⁵ The republican regime commemorated and celebrated these political figures by giving their names to districts, avenues, streets, schools, and mosques.¹⁸⁶

Illustration 28 - Talat Paşa Primary School at İstanbul's Şişli District
(Credit: AGA-Online)

¹⁸⁵ Some commentators pointed at the need to discredit genocide perpetrators if Turkey is to come to terms with its past. Murat Çelikkan, Murat Çelikkan Söyleşi: “Ermeni Soykırımı Faillerini Artık Yargılayamasak da İtibarsızlaştırabiliriz,” interview by Müge Yamanyılmaz, May 30, 2015, <http://www.bianet.org/biamag/toplum/164898-ermeni-soykirimi-faillerini-artik-yargilayamasak-da-itibarsizlastirabiliriz>.

¹⁸⁶ Laure Marchand and Guillaume Perrier, *Turkey and the Armenian Ghost: On the Trail of the Genocide* (Montreal & Kingston; London; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's Press - MQUP, 2015), 112. For a list of some of these toponyms and visuals related to the memorialization of Talat Paşa, please see “Suçluya Saygı: Talat Paşa (Mehmet Talat),” *Arbeitsgruppe Anerkennung (AGA)*, accessed November 9, 2015, <http://www.aga-online.org/worship/talat-pasha.php?locale=tr>.

Illustration 29 - Street Sign, "Talat Pasha Boulevard"
(Credit: AGA-Online)

In 1943, Talat Paşa's remains were brought back from Berlin where he was assassinated in 1921 and buried with full honors in a state ceremony at the cemetery at the Freedom Hill that also hosts the Monument of Freedom.¹⁸⁷ The repatriation of his body and his burial in this cemetery was a turning point for his omni-presence in the public life in Turkey. The Turkish state and society's will to remember Talat Paşa as a national hero guarantees his memory a more durable presence than the memories of the genocide. It also attests to the fact that there is almost no official or popular willingness to remember the Armenians. On the contrary, political elites representing the dominant social classes and groups in Turkey reinforced their dominance through their monopoly over naming and deciding what figures were to be remembered. Hence the dominant group has been able to reproduce their position through the politics of memory as "control of a society's memory largely conditions the hierarchy of power."¹⁸⁸ The discussion on how a nation commemorates its own crimes necessitates, first of all, transforming the relations of power permeating and shaping the society.

¹⁸⁷ Marchand and Perrier, *Turkey and the Armenian Ghost*, 113. Enver Paşa, the other leader of the CUP and wartime Defense Minister, also received a similar re-burial in 1996 at the same location.

¹⁸⁸ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 1.

İHD's efforts at marking Haydarpasa train station and TIEM as crime scenes might be read as a challenge to this broader power hierarchy and the inherent erasure of victims' memories. In a more specific aspect of the politics of memory, unearthing the memories deposited in these locations and showing the earlier name of these buildings have been a way of creating counter-memorial campaigns, one that attempts to challenge the celebration of some of the leading genocide perpetrators. Hence İHD's attempt to remind the public of the repressed role of those buildings constituted a subaltern memory intervention, even though this intervention was bound to be transient/temporary.

The crime scene approach is subversive in that it aims to re-inscribe the erased history of these sites. This approach has a clear didactic vision as it attempts to introduce Istanbulites to the hidden history of the urban landscape. It ties the memory of the genocide and its contemporary re-inscriptions in the places in which the crime took place. The commemorative branding of these sites with criminal history creates a tangible and concrete presence of the past because "the preservation of recollections rests on their anchorage in space."¹⁸⁹ Moreover a crime scene as a trope introduces discourses of truth, evidence gathering, and laying charges. The İHD's commemorations asked the nation to remember the criminal episode in its history through site-specific memory work. The events held a mirror to Istanbulites showing them the history they have been passing by. It was hoped that public encounters with "vicarious memories" located in these sites would help change Turkey's contemporary memory regimes.

İHD's memory project attempted to acknowledge the pervasiveness of the memories of annihilation. Reminiscent of Stih and Schnock's counter-monumental

¹⁸⁹ Nathan Wachtel quoted in Steven Hoelscher and Derek H Alderman, "Memory and Place: Geographies of a Critical Relationship," *Social & Cultural Geography* 5, no. 3 (2004): 348.

memory project in 1993, İHD's event also attempted to infiltrate Istanbulites' everyday lives through creating a "place of remembrance." In Stih and Schnock's project, a deliberate resistance to the idea of creating a complete monument led the artists to create a counter-memorial approach.¹⁹⁰ İHD did not have the opportunity to establish a memorialization intervention for a longer duration, however during the commemoration itself participants were able to bring back the denied memory. In this way, they sought to get commemorators, passersby, ordinary citizens, and the wider public to see that the memory stored in these locations was already a part of their story and to have their own relationship with that memory. That relation carried the potential, albeit small, for changing the memory.

İHD's choice of place of commemoration showed the public that the genocide took place in the middle of the city, in its most central locations. In addition to functioning as representations of a traumatic past, these commemorations were excavations, in the sense of removing the layers of deliberate forgetting and denial. They uncovered memories localized in these locations; memories of an event that attempted to erase all of its traces. Not only was the genocide, in its nature, an assault on traces as evidence, truth, and document, but the post-genocidal era also perpetuated the genocide through denial. Denial repressed these traces even further and hid them in the ever-changing present of the city to become urban palimpsests.¹⁹¹

The commemorations attempted at making the effortless denial of the public impossible by showing them the historical memories stored in these crime scenes. They

¹⁹⁰ James Edward Young, "Memory and Counter-Memory," *Harvard Design Magazine*, no. 9 (Fall 1999), <http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/9/memory-and-counter-memory>.

¹⁹¹ For more on the presence of the past in the urban landscape and its constant inscription and re-inscription on the built environment please see Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

undermined the privilege of staying silent about and not looking at these reminders of past atrocities. Racial and colonial foundations of inter-communal relations in Turkey have neutralized and even celebrated these spaces of injustice in order to sustain Turkish-Muslim dominance. The emphasis on crime scenes made these constitutive power hierarchies within society visible.

VI. Defending the Nation: Denialist Responses to the Commemorations

Expectedly, the Armenian genocide commemorations received a myriad of denialist reactions from the public. Reactions ranged from criticism to counter memorialization events justifying the genocide and forcefully re-articulating the denialist discourse. What was striking about these reactions was their crosscutting nature. Many members and institutions of the dominant group, regardless of their ideological or political differences and animosities, were united in the face of the demands for memorialization of the past atrocities the ancestors of the nation had committed. The emerging national front was determined to defend the nation against the internal enemies who betrayed their nation. The fierce responses showed that the commemorations hit a nerve among the population.

Associate Professor Orhan Çekiç, who protested the İHD's commemoration at Haydarpaşa, continued his criticism on national television on April 26, 2010 in a debate with Ragıp Zarakolu, one of the founders of the İHD. The whole debate focused on commemorations and their meaning in contemporary Turkey. Arguing that the commemorations were provocative events, Çekiç stated that the human rights association was acting like an Armenian rights association. He demanded the İHD to work for all humans and not just for Armenians since many humans suffered at that time. He

suggested, rhetorically, that Turkey create a memorial monument dedicated to both Armenian and Turkish losses. Otherwise, one-sided initiatives, such as the apology campaign and commemorations, would only serve Armenian interests. Professor Toktamış Ateş also stated that these commemorations aligned with the diaspora's goals.¹⁹²

He argued that the commemoration campaign falsely focused only on 1915 and missed the historical background leading up to deportations. For him, this background revealed the Armenians' betrayal of the Ottoman Empire that had begun in 1880. The Armenians, in pursuit of their separatist nationalism, sided with the Russians and initiated revolts against the central government by attacking local Muslim and Turkish populations. He added that initiatives like commemorations acknowledging Armenian suffering or apologizing for them would have the legal outcome of Armenians demanding the return of Turkish territory. Çekiç stated that the demand for territory was included in the Armenian constitution and any Turkish recognition of injustice would lend such claims legitimacy and public support. In his opinion, events in Turkey were crucial for Armenian plans to acquire land and reparation because the Armenian organizations realized that they could not achieve these goals through international law. Hence they devised a Trojan strategy to create specific public opinion within Turkey through commemorations. This public opinion would be open to complying with Armenian demands. Also, these kinds of events undermined Turkey's prestige.¹⁹³

¹⁹² Çağdaş Çetindemir, "'24 Nisan Anması' Aydınları Böldü," *Nor Zartonk*, April 23, 2011, <http://www.norzartonk.org/24-nisan-anmasi-aydinlari-boldu/>.

¹⁹³ "Ermeni İddialarını Anma Tartışması," *5N1K*, April 26, 2010, <http://tv.cnnturk.com/video/2010/04/26/programlar/5n1k/ermeni-iddialarini-anma-tartismasi/index.html>.

In a similar vein, Professor Ümit Özdağ, who was a member of the MHP, accused the agents of memory involved in the genocide recognition campaign and in the organization of commemorations of subscribing to “liberal fascism.”¹⁹⁴ He also asked Volkan Akyıldırım, representing the DurDe initiative, why they would not organize a joint commemoration for Turks and Armenians alike. He stated that Armenian bands murdered Turks in 1915. Why would they not be remembered, he asked. Were they not worthy of being remembered?¹⁹⁵ Professor Yusuf Halaçoğlu also problematized Turkish losses not being commemorated.¹⁹⁶

Others raised the same issue in their response to the commemorative initiatives:

Why are the defenders and resisters of the Armenian tragedy forgetting the tragedy of people who comprise nearly 50 percent of the population in Turkey today and who were forced to emigrate to Anatolia during the course of the last 150 years? Aren't non-Christians allowed to have tragedies? Of course Turkish intellectuals need to be concerned about the pains of their neighbors, but they also need to be concerned with the tragedy that exists within their own country.¹⁹⁷

Referring to Muslim and Turkish groups, millions of people, who had to emigrate to Anatolia following the Ottoman Empire's territorial losses in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and as a result of the violent assimilation and ethnic cleansing policies they faced, the author claimed that these people, too, deserved to be commemorated, even more than the Armenians.

¹⁹⁴ “Soykırım Tartışması Fena Alevlendi,” *Haber Name*, April 22, 2010, <http://www.habername.com/haber/umit-ozdag-ermeni-volkan-akyildirim-38081.htm>.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.; “5n + 1k’da Sert ırkçılık Tartışması,” *Videonuz*, April 22, 2010, <http://videonuz.ensonhaber.com/izle/5n-1k-da-sert-irkcilik-tartismasi>.

¹⁹⁶ Çetindemir, “‘24 Nisan Anması’ Aydınları Böldü.”

¹⁹⁷ Hasan Kanbolat, “Armenian Relocation and Turkish Forgetfulness,” *Today's Zaman*, April 27, 2010, http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/hasan-kanbolat/armenian-relocation-and-turkish-forgetfulness_208567.html.

Another type of the negative reaction to the commemorations was related to the above mentioned fifth column claims. Özdağ referred to the commemorators as “domestic diaspora,”¹⁹⁸ and argued that they hold Turks responsible for all the wrongs in the past. Undertaking partial memory work ignoring Turkish suffering and pushing the genocide agenda, commemorations were part and parcel of a psychological campaign against Turks and Turkey.¹⁹⁹ The trope of internal collaborators and betrayers harkened back to the Armistice period when, facing defeat against the Allies, some members of the Ottoman elites in Istanbul joined a variety of organizations aiming to secure the support of the victorious powers or to realize their political aspirations. Some of these organizations included the “Society of the Friends of England” and the “Wilsonian League.”²⁰⁰ Retrospectively stigmatized in Turkish historiography starting with Mustafa Kemal’s Speech in 1927, these organizations were portrayed as the degenerated imperial center’s betrayal of national ideal and sovereignty. Some of the commentators on the commemorations, referred to the commemorators as the “Society of the Friends of

¹⁹⁸ This appellation was clearly racist as it invoked an essentialized conception of the Armenian genocide that was by nature an enemy of the Turkish nation. The domestic actors involved in recognition and memorialization campaign were presented as guilty of betrayal and associated with the diaspora. The nationalist groups protesting the commemorations mobilized the same trope of domestic diaspora. “İstanbul’daki Ermeni Diasporasına Tepki Yağdı,” *Zeynebiye - Ehlibeyt Dünyasının Gündemi*, April 25, 2010, http://www.zeynebiye.com/istanbul-daki-ermenidiasporasina-tepki-yagdi_d74826.html. Özdağ’s racist utterance was adopted by some observers writing about the televised debate. Burhan Ayeri, “İlk ülke Olmak...,” *Aksam.com.tr*, April 26, 2010,

http://aksam.medyator.com/2010/04/26/yazar/17167/burhan_ayeri/ilk_ulke_olmak_.html. Some of the leading members of Turkish nationalist movement used this racist idiom for the organizers and attendees of the 2005 conference. “Okuyan: Bu Yerli Diasporanın İhaneti,” *Haber7*, September 26, 2005, <http://www.haber7.com/siyaset/haber/113413-okuyan-bu-yerli-diasporanin-ihaneti>.

¹⁹⁹ “‘Bu Acı Hepimizin’ (mi),” *Haberiniz.com.tr*, April 22, 2010, <http://haberiniz.com.tr/haber/gundem/11910/bu-aci-hepimizin-mi.html>.

²⁰⁰ Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building*, 193.

Armenia.”²⁰¹ Consisting of socialists, liberals, second republicanists, Kurds, and supporters of the Gülen movement, this organization was to mourn for Armenians who died during an alleged genocide. However, the truth was the opposite, for this commentator. Instead of Armenian genocide, there was Turk-Muslim massacre perpetrated by the Armenians.²⁰²

Events Protesting the Commemorations

Different groups organized protests against the commemorations. Some of these protests happened simultaneously with the commemorations, while others were held separately. Usually nationalist and anti-imperialist leftist groups came to Taksim Square to protest the commemorations.

The first of such protests happened on April 24, 2010 against İHD’s event. While Eren Keskin was reading the press release, a group of about 15 people gathered inside the train station and began to protest against the use of the term genocide within the press release. The group consisted of retired Turkish ambassadors, relatives of Turkish diplomats killed by Armenian groups, scholars, and the retired general Edip Başer. The protestors carried Turkish flags and posters with pictures of the some of the Turkish diplomats killed in service in the 1970s and 1980s by Armenian groups such as the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia and the Justice Commandos of the

²⁰¹ Feridun Yıldız, “Yerli Ermeni Diasporası’na İthaf Olunur,” *Haberiniz.com.tr*, April 23, 2010, <http://haberiniz.com.tr/kose-yazisi/11986/yerli-ermeni-diasporasina-ithaf-olunur--feridun-yildiz.html>. The “Society of the Friends of Armenia” was used as a stigma against Turkish intellectuals such as Orhan Pamuk and Yaşar Kemal and their supporters in the mid-2000s when they made public statements acknowledging the Armenian massacres. Aziz Karaca, “Ermeni Muhipler Cemiyeti,” *Yeni Mesaj Gazetesi*, December 5, 2005, <http://www.yenimesaj.com.tr/?artikel,5019400>.

²⁰² Yıldız, “Yerli Ermeni Diasporası’na İthaf Olunur.”

Armenian Genocide. One of the posters read: “Why were we murdered? The victims of Armenian terror, 1973-1994.”

Illustration 30 - Protesters carrying pictures of assassinated Turkish diplomats
(Credit: *Hürriyet*)

The group claimed that the genocide claims were lies and that Turkey did not commit genocide against any nation. The group continued their protest even after the press release was ended, and a historian among the protestors, Orhan Çekiç,²⁰³ the head

²⁰³ Assistant Professor Orhan Çekiç used to be the Head of the Atatürk's Principles and Reforms Research and Application Center at Maltepe University. "Maltepe Üniversitesi'nde Başörtüsü Düşmanlığı," *Timeturk*, January 8, 2013, <http://www.timeturk.com/tr/2013/01/08/maltepe-de-ortu-dusmanligi.html>. He has been working as a journalist and scholar focusing on various aspects of modern Turkish history. He has been a frequent contributor to the official narrative on the genocide through his publications, presentations, and interviews. "Yrd. Doç. Dr. Orhan Çekiç'in Özgeçmişi," *Turkish News*, January 13, 2013,

of the Republican History Department at Maltepe University, had a heated exchange with businessman and activist Osman Kavala who was among the commemorators. Çekiç yelled the following statement to the commentators: “There are social scientists and historians in this country. Open the archives. You are apologizing, insolents.” During the altercation, the police had to intervene to move the protesting group to a safe distance.²⁰⁴ As a result of this intervention protecting the commemorators, the commemoration ended peacefully. Commemorators boarded a boat they had rented for their transportation.

The presence of retired general Edip Başer²⁰⁵ among the anti-commemoration protesters drew media attention and many reporters asked him questions inside the

<http://www.turkishnews.com/tr/content/2013/01/13/yardocdrorhancekicinozgecmisi/>. Most recently he was listed among the experts interviewed in Serkan Koç’s documentary *The 1915 Documentary: A Film Based on Armenian Sources (Ermeni Belgeleriyle 1915)*. “The 1915 Documentary: A Film Based on Armenian Sources,” *Turkish News*, accessed August 17, 2016, <https://www.turkishnews.com/content/2015/04/03/the-1915-documentary-a-film-based-on-armenian-sources/>. Orhan Çekiç gave a talk at the London screening of the movie. The title of his talk was “Stillborn Child of Imperialism: Armenia.” “The Federation of Turkish Associations UK Would like to Invite You to the First Screening of a Ground Breaking Documentary,” *Federation of Turkish Associations in Britain*, accessed August 17, 2016, http://turkishfederation.org.uk/en/duyuru_detay.asp?id=44.

²⁰⁴ Burçin Belge, “Ermeni Aydınları, Haydarpaşa’da Anıldı,” *Bianet*, April 24, 2010, <https://www.bianet.org/bianet/azinliklar/121546-ermeni-aydinlari-haydarpasa-da-anildi>; “İHD Haydarpaşa’da Ermeni Aydınları Andı,” *CNN Türk*, April 25, 2010, <http://www.cnntrk.com/video/turkiye/2010/04/25/ihd.haydarpasada.ermeni.aydinlari.andi/20548.338002/index.html>; M. Akif Erdem, “Haydarpaşa’da 24 Nisan Gerginliği,” *Hurriyet.com.tr*, April 24, 2010, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/14520581.asp>.

²⁰⁵ Başer was among the top ranking of the Turkish Armed Forces as the Deputy Chief of the General Staff. His name was among those who would be the next Chief of General Staff, but he did not get the position. Instead he was assigned as the Commander of the Second Army until his retirement in 2002.

After his active duty, Başer, who holds a PhD in modern Turkish history, became the chairman of the board of the Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies based in Turkey. The Center was privately funded by Ülker family and vied to become a think tank focusing on Turkey’s relations in the region. The think tank was mostly known for its focus on Turkish-Armenian relations. The center stopped its operations in 2008 as Ülker stopped its funding. Murat Yetkin, “Ülker, ASAM’dan Desteğini çekti, Faaliyet Durdu,” *Radikal*, accessed August 18, 2015, http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/murat_yetkin/ulker_asamdan_destegini_cekti_faaliyet_durdu-908834.

The center was sustaining and propagating genocide denial narrative and materials through its subsidiary Institute for Armenian Research. This institute has been publishing the Review of

station. Başer, who was simultaneously involved in national security, national historiography on the conflict with Armenians, and actively struggling with the PKK, brought significant clout to the protest. His presence threw the genocide commemoration into sharp relief against national identity and historiography.

Armenian Studies since 2002. The institute now operates within the scope of the Center for Eurasian Studies.

General Edip Başer worked as the founding director of the Institute of Atatürk Principles and Revolution History between 2003 and 2014. “Edip Başer,” *LinkedIn*, accessed August 17, 2016, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/edip-ba%C5%9Fer-5040a797>. The major task of this institute was to coordinate the compulsory course with the same title that all university students in Turkey are obliged to take in order to meet the requirements for graduation. The course first started to be taught in 1934 and has since become a staple of university curriculum with minor revisions. Süleyman İnan, “Türkiye’deki Üniversitelerde İnkılâp Dersleri: Tarihsel Bakış [‘Turkish Revolution Courses’ in Turkish Universities: A Short History],” *Yükseköğretim Dergisi* 2, no. 1 (April 2012): 52–55. The course has been an important tool for indoctrination and the dissemination of official historical narrative in Turkey.

In the meantime, Başer was appointed as the Turkish envoy for countering terror, including the PKK, in September 2006. He was to work in collaboration with his counterparts from the US and Iraq, former Air Force General Joseph Ralston and General Amir Amed Hassun, respectively. “Gov’t Appoints Retired Gen. Baser as Special Envoy to Fight Terror,” *TodaysZaman*, accessed August 18, 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/latest-news_govt-appoints-retired-gen-baser-as-special-envoy-to-fight-terror_36497.html. “Iraq Names Arab General as Anti-Terrorist Coordinator,” *TodaysZaman*, accessed August 18, 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/latest-news_iraq-names-arab-general-as-anti-terrorist-coordinator_36642.html. General Başer was dismissed from this post in May 2007 following a disagreement with then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in January 2007. Murat Yetkin, “Başer: Zor Durumda Kaldım,” *Radikal.com.tr*, January 9, 2007, http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/murat_yetkin/baser_zor_durumda_kaldim-802571; Murat Yetkin, “Ankara’da Zafiyet İşaretleri,” *Radikal.com.tr*, January 8, 2007, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=209493>; “Edip Başer Görevden Alındı,” *Ntvmsnbc.com*, May 22, 2007, <http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/408638.asp>. For more information on his biography please see, Edip Başer, *Kanatsız Uçmak: Ana Babasız Çocukluktan Ordu Komutanlığına* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2014).

Illustration 31 - General Edip Başer speaks to reporters

(Credit: *Hürriyet*)

In response to these questions, Başer expressed a widespread denialist argument:

I do not know why they [the commemorators] condemn the deportation. Instead, they should be condemning the claim of genocide that they believe in. The idea, raised by Armenians, that ‘the genocide is fact.’ Some people who agree with this initiated an apology campaign. I do not agree with such a claim and act. I do not believe that this claim is true. For the Turkish nation, Turkish state did not commit genocide against any group in its history. There is no genocide in Turkish history. There is no historical document attesting to genocide in this history. To the contrary, many ethnic groups committed genocides against the Turks and there are various documents related to these. The Turkish nation never had feelings of animosity or hatred against any nation. Armenian citizens [of the Ottoman Empire] were dragged into feelings of hostility and animosity. Hence the claim of genocide is artificial. [...] Organizing this kind of an event in Turkey is shameful. An act that cannot be approved. It is wrong to recognize the genocide or to accept that the Turks committed genocide and to embark on activities for these goals.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Tehciri kınamak ayrı şey, onlar tehciri neden kınayacaklar bilemiyorum. Ama bence asıl kınayacakları onların iddia ettikleri, inandıkları şey. Ermeniler tarafından da iddia edilen ‘Ermeni soykırımı gerçektir’ düşüncesi. Bu düşünce içinde olan insanlar özür dileme gibi bir kampanya başlattı bir de. Ben şahsen böyle bir iddiaya da böyle bir eyleme de katılmıyorum. [...] Doğruluğuna da inanmıyorum böyle bir düşüncenin. Çünkü Türk ulusu, Türk devleti hiç bir

Başer had a two-pronged agenda. First, he put forward a literal denial,²⁰⁷ negating the factuality of the genocide. Second, he reversed the roles of the Armenians and Turks and claimed that the Turks were actually victims of various genocides. Not surprisingly he claimed that there was no “scientific” evidence attesting to the Armenian genocide. Corollary to his claim to victimhood, he blamed the victims of genocide for having hostility and animosity against the Turks. More importantly, his reaction revealed crucial connections between genocide denial and national identity. After disavowing that Turks committed genocide, the retired General argued that as a member of the Turkish nation it was “wrong” to recognize the genocide. Those who are doing so were to be ashamed for committing a wrong against their nation. He situated genocide recognition and Turkish national identity as mutually exclusive and incompatible. Organizing events advocating genocide recognition in Turkey, in the midst of the nation, would undermine national unity and weaken the nation.

The demand for scientific proof for the genocide was also echoed in Assistant Professor Orhan Çekiç’s words: “There are social scientists and historians in this country. Open the archives. You are apologizing, insolents.” Invoking history as the objective and impartial arbiter of the past has been a key component of the official Turkish position

şekilde tarihinde hiç kimseye karşı bir soykırım hareketi yapmamıştır. Türk ulusunun tarihinde soykırım yoktur. Bunu hiç bir [sic] tarihi belge ifade etmemektedir. Ama diğer bir çok [sic] ulusun tarihinde Türkler’e karşı soykırım hareketleri söz konusudur. Bunlarla ilgili tarihi belgelerde [sic] ortadadır. Türk ulusu hiç bir ulusa karşı kin ve nefret duygusu içinde olmamıştır. Ermeni vatandaşları bir düşmanlık, bir kin duygusu içine sürüklenmiştir. Bu nedenle soykırım iddiası yapay bir iddiadır. [...] Böyle bir eylemin Türkiye’de yapılması bana göre utanç verici. Bana göre hiç bir zaman onaylanmayacak bir hareket. Türkiye’de soykırımı kabullenerek, evet Türkler soykırım yapmıştır denerek, bunun içinde [sic] böyle eylemlere girişmek bana göre çok yanlış. Erdem, “Haydarpaşa’da 24 Nisan Gerginliği.”

²⁰⁷ Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial : Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity ; Blackwell Publishers, 2001).

since the 1980s. Emphasizing history as the scientific knowledge of the past is hoped to bring credibility to the official narrative. This position assigns history the task of deciding whether the events that began in 1915 constituted genocide or not. If an impartial study of all possible documents pertaining to these events were to produce scientific evidence demonstrating the Ottoman government's intent to destroy the Armenians, Turkey would recognize the genocide. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan expressed this point of view on April 10, 2005, in his letter addressed to Robert Kocharian, the President of the Republic of Armenia at that time.²⁰⁸ The Prime Minister was not alone in pushing for the joint history commission. On April 13, 2005, The Turkish Grand National Assembly also released a declaration supporting this controversial proposal. The declaration was the outcome of a consensus between the governing AKP and the main opposition CHP, and members of the DYP, ANAP, and SHP, all the parties constituting the assembly in its 22nd term.²⁰⁹ In other words, Orhan Çekiç's words belong to "leave history to historians" discourse. This

²⁰⁸ Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "Text of the Letter of H.E. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Addressed to H.E. Robert Kocharian, the Then President of Armenia, Proposing to Form a Joint Historical Commission with Armenia (2005)," *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, April 10, 2005, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/data/DISPOLITIKA/text-of-the-letter-of-h_e_-prime-minister-recep-tayyip-erdogan-addressed-to-h_e_-robert-kocharian.pdf.

²⁰⁹ The Turkish Grand National Assembly, "Declaration by the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Supporting the Turkish Proposal to Form a Joint Historical Commission with Armenia (2005)," *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, April 13, 2005, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/declaration-by-the-turkish-grand-national-assembly_-supporting-the-turkish-proposal-to-form-a-joint-historical-commission-with.en.mfa. For parliamentary deliberations during which representatives of all parties expressed their views on the events of 1915 and unanimously denied the genocide please see the minutes of the session on April 13, 2005 (in Turkish), *Aksaray Milletvekili Ramazan Toprak ve 31 Milletvekilinin, Türkler ve Ermeniler Arasındaki Tarihsel İlişkilerin Objektif Veriler ve Tarafsızlık ölçüleri İçerisinde Ele Alınarak Bir Millî Politika Oluşturulması Konusunda Genel Görüşme Açılmasına İlişkin önergesi (8/19) and Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Grubu Adına Grup Başkanvekilleri İstanbul Milletvekili Ali Topuz, İzmir Milletvekili K. Kemal Anadol ve Samsun Milletvekili Haluk Koç'un, Ermeni Soykırımı İddialarına Karşı Gerçeklerin Ortaya Çıkarılması Konusunda Genel Görüşme Açılmasına İlişkin önergesi (8/20)*, 2005, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/Tutanak_B_SD.birlesim_baslangic?P4=14205&P5=B&PAGE1=12&PAGE2=36.

discourse has been articulated at a variety of levels in Turkey and enjoys popular traction. It crystallizes the contestation over the past by putting historiography on the spot and politicizing it in an attempt to depoliticize the conflict. Similar tropes of contestation and denial are reinforced through visual objects and banners. Some of the protestors were wearing the Turkish flag.

Illustration 32 - Protesters wearing the Turkish flag
(Credit: *Hürriyet*)

The Turkish flag hanging on the façade of the building and smaller flags the protestors were wearing mirrored each other and reinforced the official memorial order of the nation and subjective identification and engagement with it.

The use of the Turkish flag by members of the protesting group constituted a multi-layered instance. The flag, being used as an object, symbolizes the nation and national identity. As an object its use is determined by rules and regulations. Wearing the

flag, as some of the protestors did, was against the law,²¹⁰ but by doing so the protestors claimed legitimacy and intensified the level of their challenge. Wearing the flag also points at a much stronger identification of nation through emotional and bodily investment. The flag wrapping the protestors' bodies demonstrates a subjective engagement with national identity and its representation. The body is crucial here because "it is the primary site of both privacy and display."²¹¹ Hence the flag operated as an intimate object of affection bearing emotional investments as well as an official inscription of the nation.

Another aspect of the flag's use during this protest was related to the identity of the protestors. As mentioned above, some of the protestors were relatives of Turkish diplomats and public servants killed by Armenian groups. In line with legal regulations, the families of officials who died while serving the country are presented with a Turkish flag during the official interment ceremony as a token of appreciation and to express the nation's indebtedness to the deceased. So the presence of the Turkish flag also referred to the ultimate sacrifice assassinated Turkish officials did for Turkey.²¹² Hence the trope of Turkish blood, shed for protecting the motherland and consecrated through the red color of the flag, was reinforced.

²¹⁰ *Türk Bayrağı Kanunu*, vol. 2893, 1983, http://mevzuat.meb.gov.tr/html/18171_0.html; *Türk Bayrağı Tüzüğü*, vol. 85/9034, 1985, <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/2.5.859034.pdf>.

²¹¹ Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

²¹² For an official list of Turkish diplomats killed by Armenian organizations please see, "Turkish Diplomats Killed by Armenian Terrorists," *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism*, accessed August 19, 2015, <http://www.kultur.gov.tr/EN,32325/turkish-diplomats-killed-by-armenian-terrorists.html>. A recent list compiled by retired ambassador Ömer Engin Lütem has some differences and stops at 1984, while the official list goes up to 1994, "Study Shows 31 Turkish Diplomats Killed by Armenian Groups from 1973-86," *Daily Sabah*, accessed August 20, 2015, <http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2015/04/25/study-shows-31-turkish-diplomats-killed-by-armenian-groups-from-197386>.

The figure of the assassinated Turkish bureaucrat has been a key element of the official campaign to undermine the Armenian position. Attacks against diplomats and public servants retrospectively extrapolated to demonstrate Armenian aggression against the Turks before and during WWI and to argue that the Turks defended themselves. Thus the protestors' strategy was to juxtapose Turkish victimization to undermine Armenian victimization. This juxtaposition of distinct historical victimizations, each of which deserves recognition in its own right, did not do justice to any of the victims for it is used as a strategy to equate Turkish suffering with Armenian suffering and thus to negate legitimate Armenian demands for recognition. The assassination of Turkish diplomats was unacceptable and illegal. Nevertheless, operationalizing this unique suffering as an evidence of Turkish rightfulness was not justifiable.

Nationalist groups organized another set of protests. The Turkish nationalist groups tend to be small and relatively less organized. This fact was a sign that the National Action Party did not undertake a party-wide protest movement organized through the party's infrastructure because the party has a large base of young supporters and youth branches and it commands organizational capabilities sufficient enough to hold a better organized and wide-reaching event. An example of such nationalist protestors was a group of around 30 people who called themselves "Turkish nationalists". The group gathered around the Republic Monument in Taksim Square before Say Stop's commemoration in 2011 carrying Turkish and Azerbaijan flags. Some of the slogans of the group were "Turkey is Turkish and will remain so," "This is Turkey, love or leave it."

– slogans similar to those used in the 2010 protests.²¹³ The group had a press release as well. The text reiterated the theme of collaboration between the Armenian diaspora and “so-called” Turkish intellectuals. The group claimed that the intellectuals and artists were using their titles to deceive Turkish society. The nationalists situated themselves against this “deceitful” group and claimed that they would protect Turkey at all costs. The group also warned the reporters not to be instruments of “genocide lies” expressed by these intellectuals and not to attempt to intrigue Turkish society. The group dispersed after the press release.²¹⁴

Another group of nationalists, a much bigger and aggressive group, protested the commemorations in 2011 as well. Around 300 people came together at Galatasaray Square, a 10 minute walk from Taksim square, at around 18:00. Their main banner stated, “We did not forget the February 26, 1992, Khojaly massacre.”²¹⁵ The slogans the group shouted included “This is Turkey, either love it or leave it,” “Down with Armenian diaspora,” “Ogün Samast öle.”²¹⁶

²¹³ “Türkiye Türk’tür Türk kalacak,” “Burası Türkiye ya sev ya terk et.” “Taksim’de Sözde Soykırım İddialarına Tepki,” *ZAMAN*, April 24, 2011, http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_taksimde-sozde-soykirim-iddialarina-tepki_1125710.html.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ “26 Şubat 1992 Hocalı katliamını unutmadık” Taner Yener and Uğur Can, “Taksim’deki Anma Töreninde Gerginlik - Milliyet Haber,” *Milliyet Haber*, April 24, 2011, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/taksim-deki-anma-torende-gerginlik/gundem/gundemdetay/24.04.2011/1381903/default.htm>.

²¹⁶ “Burası Türkiye ya sev ya terk et,” “Kahrolsun Ermeni diasporası,” “Ogün Samast öley.” This last slogan was especially disturbing as it praised the assassination of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in 2007. This obvious support for the murder of an Armenian was a clear threat to the Armenians and those who campaigned for genocide recognition. In addition to verbal support, some members of the group wore white tuques or hats. The iconic item, worn by Ogün Samast during the murder, was quickly adopted in some nationalist circles in the immediate aftermath of the killing to show their approval of the heinous act and their support for Samast.

Illustration 33 - A group of nationalist protesters marching towards Taksim Square
(Credit: *Milliyet*)

The group then began to march along the *İstiklal* (Independence) Street to reach Taksim Square to protest the commemoration in real time. During their march they continued to shout their slogans. They were waving Turkish and Azerbaijani flags. Once at Taksim Square, the group became more aggressive. Some members of the group climbed onto the Republic Monument to place a nationalist flag.

Illustration 34 - Protesters waving the nationalist movement's flag on the monument
(Credit: *Milliyet*)

Hanifi Çakır read the press release that voiced an open animosity and threat to Armenians:

Here is our advice to the Armenian people, stop being an instrument of imperialist powers, stop your slanders and apologize to the Turkish nation, and ask for pardon. Abolish your so-called state [referring to the Republic of Armenia] and join the Turkish Republic. Only this attitude would give you and future generations peace of mind. Otherwise you will be called to account to the Turkish nation in front of history.²¹⁷

The inherent sense of domination and superiority over Armenians manifested itself with a mixture of symbolic and potentially physical violence with hints to lynching mentality. Unmistakably, the threats were more to the Armenian people than to the organizers of the commemorations. Within this structural racist framework the Armenians had been subjected to social death once and for all. It was socially acceptable, and even

²¹⁷ “Ermeni halkına tavsiyemiz şudur, Artık emperyal güçlerin oyuncağı olmayı bırakın ve iftiralardan vazgeçip Türk Milleti’nden özür ve af dileyin. Sözde devletinizi fesh edip Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’ne katılın. Çünkü sizi ve gelecek nesillerinizi ancak bu tutumunuz huzura kavuşturacaktır. Aksi takdirde tarih önünde Türk Milletine mutlaka hesap vereceksiniz” Yener and Can, “Taksim’deki Anma Töreninde Gerginlik - Milliyet Haber.”

encouraged, to remind them of their categorical difference, to deride them, and to threaten them. The systematic impunity the dominant group enjoyed since the genocide itself had been a sign of the wide social basis of power asymmetry between itself and the Armenians.

Some nationalist organizations organized demonstrations protesting the organization of genocide commemorations through holding separate events. The Great Union Party (Büyük Birlik Partisi), a small Islamist nationalist party representing a fraction of the right wing political base, organized a public protest at the Taksim Square on April 25, 2010. The event was organized to criticize and denounce those who commemorated the Armenian genocide the day before. Around a hundred people gathered around the Republic Monument at the square, almost at the same location where the genocide commemoration was held.

The placard the group carried had the following message on it, “The so-called intellectuals on the Diaspora’s payroll/the darkness of degenerates falling on the Turkish flag.” The group also carried the pictures of assassinated Turkish diplomats. Some of the slogans of the groups included, “So-called intellectuals, sold cowards,” “Armenians, behave yourselves and do not test our patience,” “Down with American imperialism.” Other signs of the group also carried aggressive, threatening, and insulting messages targeting the Armenians and those who contested the official denial. “Those who left in 1915 are gone and they are done on that day,” “we are BBP we can take on all Armenians,” “we are not Armenians or Armenian-supporters,”²¹⁸ “Armenian diaspora is proud of you [the commemorators in Turkey],” “sold Turkish intellectuals have mental

²¹⁸ This message was a direct reference to thousands of people who protested the assassination of Hrant Dink with the slogan "We are all Armenians, We are all Hrant Dink" during his funeral in 2007.

disabilities, there is no need to pay attention to what they say,” “is it necessary to insult one’s own flag and religion to be an intellectual?”^{219,220}

Muhittin Açııcı, vice president of the party’s Istanbul branch, read the press release. The press release demonstrated some of the major themes in popular genocide denial in Turkey. One of these themes was the perception of demands for recognition of past injustices within the parameters of age-old fears about foreign intervention in Turkey’s domestic affairs or “external enemies trying to corner Turkey.” Hence the text maintains that the commemoration was a plot against Turkey.

Yesterday a group of intellectuals and artists, who are susceptible to all sorts of planned interventions, commemorated those who died during the events that they claim to take place on April 24, 1915. These intellectuals, who turned their back to the historical truth, to the blood that their ancestors had shed, to the pain suffered, did not shed light²²¹ on, but darkened Turkey. They acted like flag bearers of the unfounded genocide claims and defamations.²²²

²¹⁹ The stress on intellectual, which was repeating in other protests against commemorations, points at the ambivalent image of intellectual within contemporary Turkey. On the one hand, the intellectual had been an important public figure for historical reasons mostly emanating from the modernization reforms. Intellectuals became powerful figures as a result of the top-down modernization attempts to command respect in Turkey. On the other hand, because of their ties with the "West," and their tendency to lend themselves to hierarchical relations, there is a widespread distrust towards them.

²²⁰ "Diaspora'nın ücretli sözde aydınları Türk Bayrağı'na düşen soysuzların karanlığı," "Sözde aydınlar, satılmış korkaklar," "Ermeni şaşırma sabrımızı taşıрма," "Kahrolsun Amerikan emperyalizmi," "1915'te giden gitmiştir, gittiği gün bitmiştir," "Bize derler BBP yeteriz tüm Ermeni'ye," "Biz Ermeni ve Ermenici değiliz," "Ermeni diasporası sizinle gurur duyuyor," "Ücretli aydınlar zihinsel özürdür, sözlerini dikkate almayınız," and "Aydın olmak için bayrağa ve dine sövmek mi lazım?" "Taksim'de Ermeni Bayrağı Yakıldı," *İnternethaber.com*, April 25, 2010, <http://www.internethaber.com/taksimde-ermeni-bayragi-yakildi-247197h.htm>.

²²¹ Another reference to the intellectuals, the Turkish word "aydın" means who is enlightened and in turn that person enlightens his/her surrounding.

²²² Dün de planlı ve her türlü hain müdahalelere açık olan sözde sanatçı ve sözde aydınlardan oluşan bir grup 24 Nisan 1915'te meydana geldiği iddia edilen olaylarda hayatını kaybedenler için anma töreni düzenledi. Her türlü tarihi gerçeğe, akan kana, çekilen acıya sırtlarını dönen aydın kelimesini utanmadan kendilerine yakıştırıp aydınlatmak yerine ülkenin ışığını söndürmeye kalkan bu kişiler, tamamen siyasi bir içeriğe bürünen bu asılsız ve iftira niteliğindeki iddiaların bayraktarlığını yapmaktadırlar. "Taksim'de Ermeni Bayrağı Yakıldı."

The message continued with an interpellation of the commemorators as members of the Turkish nation and blamed them for failing to perform their national identity correctly. In addition, the commemorators also failed the political community, which they were supposed to lead in their capacity as its intellectuals. "They resemble anything but intellectuals. They are alienated from and even hostile to their own society. This artificial, despotic, and Jacobin team takes insulting Turkishness and its history as its duty."²²³ The protestors held the commemorators in contempt because they attributed a crime to Turkishness and demanded recognition. This obviously essentialist and ahistorical conception of nation did not leave any room for divergence from, let alone challenge to, national imaginary and identity.

The press release ended with a thinly veiled threat about possible outcomes of commemorating the genocide. "We denounce those who took side with Armenian claims yesterday and who wanted to sow seeds of enmity between us and our Armenian citizens with whom we lived together for years."²²⁴ This sentence had a double agenda. It threatened to embark on animosities against Turkish Armenians and it also blamed the commemorators for causing this. At the end of the event, the group burned an Armenian flag, even though the police requested otherwise, in retaliation for the Turkish flag burnt at Yerevan on April 24.

²²³ "Bu aydından başka herşeye benzeyen; toplumuna yabancılaşmış hatta düşmanlaşmış, inorganik zorba jakoben takımı Türk'e ve tarihine hakaret etmeyi kendisine vazife edinmiştir." Haluk Atalay and Uğur Can, "Taksim'de Ermeni Bayrağı Yakıldı," *Posta*, April 25, 2010, <http://www.posta.com.tr/turkiye/HaberDetay/Taksim-de-Ermeni-bayragi-yakildi.htm?ArticleID=27557>.

²²⁴ "Dünkü eylemde Ermeni iddialarından yana tavır alıp, yıllardır koyun koyuna yaşadığımız Ermeni vatandaşlarımızla aramıza düşmanlık filizleri ekmek isteyenleri şiddetle kınıyoruz." "Taksimde Ermeni Bayrağı Yakıldı," *Yeniasir*, April 26, 2010, http://www.yeniasir.com.tr/politika/2010/04/26/taksimde_ermen_i_bayragi_yakildi.

The threat of violence was not only a generic statement. On April 27, 2010, Bianet announced that İHD received death threats over the phone prior to the April 24 event. The chairwoman of the İstanbul Branch, Gülseren Yoleri, stated that the threats first came through phone and then over email. She also said that İHD was preparing to lay a criminal complaint against those who made the calls and sent the emails. She argued that these threats would not intimidate and deter them from pursuing their goals. “There are dark pages in the history. We want these to be known publicly. Confronting this past will lead to revealing the truth. It will help those who could forgive to do so and we would be able to walk towards peace.” Underlining that they had received many threats in the past as well and that they would not change the course of their activism, Yoleri stated that Turkey was changing. Coming to term with the past was a necessary condition for bringing peace to the country. So they would continue their commemorative events and their demands for recognition.²²⁵

The above-mentioned wide social basis of hierarchy and structural racism brought a self-identified revolutionary socialist party to protest the genocide commemorations. Members of the People’s Liberation Party (Halkın Kurtuluş Partisi, HDP) gathered at Taksim Square every April 24 to protest the genocide commemoration organized by DurDe. The party protested genocide memorialization initiatives on the ground that they were instruments of imperialism undermining the foundation of the Turkish national independence and sovereignty. For the party, the “genocide lie” was a part of the Sèvres Treaty mentality aiming at carving out Turkey and establishing foreign control over the

²²⁵ Tolga Korkut, “İHD 24 Nisan’da Ölümle Tehdit Edenlerin Peşini Bırakmayacak,” *Bianet - Bagimsiz Iletisim Agi*, April 27, 2010, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/121595-ihd-24-nisan-da-olumle-tehdit-edenlerin-pesini-birakmayacak>.

country. In this sense, the party argued that demanding genocide recognition was to collaborate with the imperialists.²²⁶

In their 2011 protest, the group carried a banner that read, “Long live our second war of liberation against the new Sèvres.”

Illustration 35 - People's Liberation Party members protesting the genocide commemoration
(Credit: *Posta*)

The evocation of the Sèvres Treaty in this context and labelling the campaign to come to terms with Turkey’s genocidal past as “New Sèvres” marked the continuation of the “Sèvres Syndrome.”²²⁷ The convergence of anti-imperialist and nationalist ideologies in a “nationalist left” in Turkey constituted one of the discursive barriers on the way to critically engage with the past. The founding moment of the Turkish Republic that was construed to be a national struggle against the imperialist European powers continued to dominate public imaginaries and to determine the interpretation of history. A brief list of

²²⁶ HKP explained their stance on the Armenian genocide here, “Ermeni Sorunu,” *Halkın Kurtuluş Partisi*, April 24, 2013, <http://kurtuluspartisi.org/ermeni-sorunu/>.

²²⁷ The “obsession” with the Sevres Treaty was recently problematized as the “Sevres Syndrome” in Turkey. For an informative analysis of this syndrome please see, Fatma Müge Göçek, “Why Is There Still a ‘Sèvres Syndrome’? An Analysis of Turkey’s Uneasy Association with the West,” in *Transformation of Turkey: Reinterpreting State and Society from the Empire to the Republic* (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 98–184.

slogans and banners of the group reveals this aspect. Some of the other slogans and banners of the group were “We will prove wrong the Armenian Genocide lie,” “Long live the fellowship of peoples against the New Sèvres,” “America, the genocide perpetrator leave our country,” “Damn with U.S. and EU imperialisms”²²⁸ The group carried a banner with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Lenin’s pictures side by side. While Mustafa Kemal was represented as the leader of “our” first anti-imperialist liberation struggle, Lenin was depicted as his ally.²²⁹

The continued protests of the HKP received criticism within the leftist political movement. Some commentators criticized the HKP’s protest on the grounds that the party was pursuing Turkish nationalism under the disguise of anti-imperialist ideology. The critique focused on the question of what was a genuine and legitimate leftist position regarding this kind of ethno-religious violence and injustices. It was also a question about who were allowed to criticize Turkish state regarding the past atrocities and which atrocities to be problematized. The HKP’s position, according to its critique, praised Unionist and Kemalist nationalism and subscribed to the official narrative on the inter-ethnic relations in the late Ottoman and republican periods. The party denied not only the sufferings of subaltern groups, but also their distinct ethno-religious identities. Such a position inherently carried hypocrisy in it. On the one hand, leftist organizations like the HKP denounced state violence against socialist movement in Turkey. On the one hand, they protested non-Muslim groups doing the same thing. These parties acted like

²²⁸ “Ermeni soykırımı yalanını boşa çıkaracağız,” “Yeni Sevr’e karşı yaşasın halkların kardeşliği,” “Asıl soykırımcı ABD ülkemizden defol,” “Kahrolsun ABD, AB emperyalizmi.” “Taksim’de Yüksek Gerilim.”

²²⁹ “Taksim’de Sözde Ermeni Soykırımına Destek Eylemi,” *Cihan Haber Ajansı*, April 24, 2011, <http://www.cihan.com.tr/tr/taksimde-sozde-ermeni-soykirimina-destek-eylemi-pCHMzA3Mzkw.htm>.

reactionary revolutionary organizations invested in the idea of social change as long as that change was brought by Turkish or dominant ethno-religious group. What was more disturbing than these parties' discrimination based on Turkish supremacy was wider socialist movement's silence about it. Organizations like the HKP were still considered legitimate allies within the socialist movement despite their open denial. Leftist platforms they were involved did not reject them.²³⁰

This was not the only criticism towards the leftist dismissal of genocide commemorations. Doğan Tarkan, the general president of the Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party (DSIP), took issue with the leftist movement's overall response to the memorialization of the genocide. Even though he also marked the HKP's protest as a response, his main concern was with mass organizations within the leftist movement and supporters of the pro-Kurdish bloc. These organizations, instead of attending the genocide commemoration, chose to attend a demonstration protesting the AKP's plans to build a nuclear power plant.²³¹ Tarkan criticized that this demonstration was held on April 24. Remarking that anti-nuclear events had been organized in Turkey on April 26, the anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, Tarkan stated that leftists organizations deliberately chose not to attend the commemorations on the pretext that they created by organizing this anti-nuclear demonstration. These organizations knew about the

²³⁰ Tamer Çilingir, "Ermeni Soykırımı Anması ve Yaşanan 'Sol' Rezillik," *Devrimci Karadeniz*, April 27, 2014, <http://devrimcikaradeniz.com/ermen-soykirimi-anmasi-ve-yasanan-sol-rezillik/>.

²³¹ The Anti-Nuclear Platform (NKP) organized the event. A wide variety of political parties and civil society initiatives supported it. These included, but were not limited to, the Greenpeace, the Greens Party, the Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats, the Republican People's Party, the Democratic Left Party, the Communist Party of Turkey, the Confederation of Public Workers' Unions, the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey, the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects, the Atatürkist Thought Association, the Istanbul Medical Chamber, the Istanbul Chamber of Pharmacists. "Kadıköy'de Nükleere Karşı Miting," *Bianet*, April 25, 2011, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/129513-kadikoy-de-nukleere-karsi-miting>.

commemoration, but they still put the demonstration on the same day. Tarkan explained this choice with reference to fragmentation within the leftist movement.²³² In addition to the fragmentation, the wide basis of genocidal denial might have contributed to left's non-involvement in genocide memorialization campaign.

Counter-Events Articulating Denial

Nationalist groups, closer to militantly secular Unionist and Kemalist streams, organized public events protesting the genocide claims and the public events commemorating the events of 1915. The main premise of this kind of events was based on the deep-seated and widespread aggressive defensive impulse emanating from the fear of foreign powers undermining Turkey's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Built on and reproducing the late imperial and early republican anxieties of national extinction, the event evoked discourses of "national security" and "national unity." This discursive politics of the past reduced the campaign for recognition to a pawn of international realpolitik at the expense of acknowledging Armenian suffering and accepting the past injustices into the combined story of the late Ottoman society.

The biggest of these was held in İzmir on April 24, 2010 and it was called "*Soykırım Yalanı*" "The Genocide Lie" March. Organized jointly by the Talat Paşa Committee (*Talat Paşa Komitesi*), the Azerbaijan Culture Association Centre (*Azerbaycan Kültür Merkezi Derneği*), the Center for National Strategy İzmir branch (*İzmir Ulusal Strateji Merkezi*, USMER), and the Union of Forces for the Republic (*Cumhuriyet İçin Güçbirliği*), the event brought together 1000 people. Closely connected

²³² Doğan Tarkan, "Ermeni Soykırımı Anmasına Katılmamanın Mazereti Çernobil Olabilir Mi?," *Marksist.org*, April 27, 2011, <http://www.marksist.org/haberler/3547-dogan-tarkan-ermen-soykirimi-anmasına-katılmamanın-mazereti-çernobil-olabilir-mi>.

to left Kemalist and nationalist circles and to the Workers' Party, these initiatives represented a marginal and small, but aggressive and militant strand of genocide denial within civil society in Turkey. Especially striking among these initiatives was the Talat Paşa Committee, which was founded in 2005. The name of the committee was honoring Talat Paşa who was one of the main perpetrators of the Armenian genocide. Struggling against the claims of genocide was one of the central goals of the committee.

Attendees carried Turkish and Azerbaijan flags and placards denying the Armenian genocide. The group walked to the Fallen Diplomats Memorial at Karşıyaka that was erected in 2008 to commemorate the Turkish diplomats killed by Armenian organizations.²³³ The event was covered in national print and visual media.²³⁴

²³³ The memorial, the first one dedicated to 34 diplomats assassinated by the ASALA and the JCAG between 1973 and 1994, was commissioned by the CHP-led Karşıyaka municipality and sculpted by Ahmet Uzun. It was opened in November 2008 with a ceremony that was attended by relatives of murdered diplomats, citizens, Onur Öymen, retired ambassador and the vice-president of CHP, the mayor Cevat Durak, and the deputy governor Nevzat Ergün. Marking the ultimate sacrifice of the public workers representing their nation and country, the memorial was part of a contestation over historical memory and who were deemed worthy of remembering by the national community. While diplomats were given the title of martyrs, the Armenian victims were subjected to social death once more. Though the opening ceremony of the memorial did not receive the attendance of high-level politicians and civil servants; that changed in January 2013 when the then Minister of Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu visited the monument and thanked the mayor. "Şehit Diplomatlar Anıtı," *Milliyet Haber*, November 21, 2008, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/sehit-diplomatlar-aniti/eg/haberdetay/22.11.2008/1019176/default.htm>; "Şehit Diplomatlar Anıtı İzmir-Karşıyaka'da Açıldı," *Turkish News*, November 20, 2008, <http://www.turkishnews.com/tr/content/2008/11/20/sehit-diplomatlar-aniti-izmir-karsiyakada-acildi/>; "Davutoğlu'ndan Şehit Diplomatlar Anıtı Teşekkürü," *Kent Yaşam*, January 8, 2013, <http://www.kentyasam.com/davutoglundan-sehit-diplomatlar-aniti-tesekkuru-hbrdty-29039.html>; "Şehit Diplomatlar İçin Karşıyaka'da Da Anıt Var," *Sondakika.com*, August 17, 2012, <http://www.sondakika.com/haber/haber-sehit-diplomatlar-icin-karsiyaka-da-da-anit-var-3872546/>. For pictures of the monument at the sculpture Ahmet Uzun's website please see, "ANIT HEYKELLER < Heykeltraş Ahmet Uzun," accessed October 28, 2015, <http://www.heykeltrasahmetuzun.com/anit-heykeller/>. The second monument, in Turkey, for the diplomats was opened at Fethiye, Muğla in July 2015. Ali Murat Taşkent, "Fethiye'de Şehit Diplomatlara Saygı Anıtı," *Avrasya İncelemeleri Merkezi*, September 1, 2015, <http://www.avim.org.tr/analiz/tr/FETHIYE%E2%80%99DE-SEHIT-DIPLOMATLARA-SAYGI-ANITI---Ali-Murat-TASKENT/4186>; "Sözde Soykırımın 100. Yılına Tepki, Şehit Diplomatlara Saygı Anıtı!," *Avrasya İncelemeleri Merkezi*, July 24, 2015,

Illustration 36 - A scene from “The Genocide Lie” March, 2011
(Credit: *Haber Dükkanı*)

<http://www.avim.org.tr/bulten/tr/107091>. In April 2015, an initiative of retired ambassador demanded the creation of another monument for fallen diplomats, including but not limited to the diplomats assassinated by Armenian organizations, at Ankara and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs accepted this demand. “Dışışleri Bakanlığı Şehitleri Anısına Bir Anıt Yapılması,” *Avrasya İncelemeleri Merkezi*, April 9, 2015, <http://www.avim.org.tr/yorumnotlarduyurular/tr/DISISLERI-BAKANLIGI-SEHITLERI-ANISINA-BIR-ANIT-YAPILMASI/3989>. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs erected monuments abroad at some of the cities where Turkish diplomats were murdered, among these cities are Lisbon (July 2015) and Ottawa (September 2012), “Cavusoglu Inaugurates Lisbon Memorial for Fallen Diplomats,” *TRT World*, July 27, 2015, <http://trtworld.com/turkey/cavusoglu-inaugurates-lisbon-memorial-fallen-diplomats-5051>; The Canadian Press, “Ottawa Unveils Monument to Slain Turkish Diplomat,” *The Globe and Mail*, September 20, 2012, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-unveils-monument-to-slain-turkish-diplomat/article4557798/>.

²³⁴ For a video report of the event, please see “‘Soykırım Yapmadık Vatani Savunduk’ Yürüyüşü,” *Tgrt Ana Haber Videoları*, April 24, 2010, <http://beyazgazete.com/video/anahaber/tgrt-haber-63/2010/4/25/soykirim-yapmadik-vatani-savunduk-yuruyusu-tgrthaber-44607.html>.

Some of the placards read “We did not commit genocide, we defended our fatherland,” “No one could make us recognize the lie of Armenian genocide,” “No one can set eyes on Turkish nation’s history, independence, and sovereignty.”²³⁵ The picture below showed two of these placards. At the background it is possible to see the memorial. The black base of the memorial had with the pictures and names of the fallen diplomats. On that base three white human silhouettes erected on the base.

Illustration 37 - One of the protesters delivers a speech at the monument
(Credit: *Haberler*)

Representatives of organizing initiatives gave speeches at the monument. Lawyer Erdoğan Özer, speaking on behalf of the Union of Forces, expressed a textbook case of official denialist discourse by blaming the Armenians. He suggested that the arrests on April 24, 1915, were nothing but the government’s preventive measures against the leaders of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), also known as

²³⁵ “Biz soykırım yapmadık, vatanımızı savunduk”, “Hiçkimse bize Ermeni soykırımı denen yalanı kabul ettiremez”, “Hiç kimse Türk milletinin tarihine, bağımsızlığına, egemenliğine göz dikemez.” Mustafa Oğuz, “İzmir’de Soykırım Yalan’ı Yürüyüşü,” *Hurriyet.com.tr*, April 26, 2010, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/izmir-de-soykirim-yan-i-yuruyusu-14529062>.

Dashnaktsutyun, who were preparing for a rebellion against the Ottoman government. Özer further claimed that the forced deportation was only to displace the rebelling Armenians and their supporters. He criticized the groups who commemorated the genocide and apologized from the Armenians for acting in line with imperialist goals. He stated that it was the Dashnaktsutyun who had to apologize, not Turks.²³⁶

Another speaker, retired air lieutenant general Yaşar Müjdecı from the Talat Paşa Committee, also claimed that it was the Armenians who had committed genocide. Blaming the victim was a common thread in crude genocide denial discourses. He continued, “it was impossible for Turks to do such thing. If it was the case, there would be left any single Armenian in Anatolia.”²³⁷ Subscribing to a logical fallacy of reducing the characteristics of the genocide into only two, Müjdecı repeated a denialist line. Orhan Ayber, from USMER, accused the Armenians with lying and stated that it was the duty of the Turkish nation to prove them wrong.²³⁸ Seyfettin Ayakyay, from the Azerbaijan Culture Association Center, underlined that “we” defended the nation and did not commit genocide.²³⁹ Ertan Özen, speaking on behalf of the relatives of the fallen diplomats, called the government to pursue a stronger and uncompromising foreign policy and not to betray the country.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Oğuz, “İzmir’de Soykırım Yalan’ı Yürüyüşü.”

²³⁷ “Böyle bir şeyin Türkler tarafından yapılması mümkün değil. Eğer öyle olsaydı, Anadolu’da tek bir Ermeni dahi bırakılmamış olurdu” “Sözde Soykırım Protesto Ediliyor,” *Cumhuriyet.com.tr*, April 24, 2010,

http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/139026/Sozde_soykirim_protesto_ediliyor.html.

²³⁸ “‘Soykırım Yapmadık, Vatan Savunduk’ Yürüyüşü,” *Dünya Gazetesi*, April 24, 2010, <http://www.dunya.com/politika/soykirim-yapmadik-vatan-savunduk-yuruyusu-85372h.htm>.

²³⁹ “‘Soykırım Yapmadık, Vatan Savunduk’ Yürüyüşü,” *Haberler.com*, April 24, 2010, http://www.haberler.com/soykirim-yapmadik-vatan-savunduk-yuruyusu-haberi/?utm_source=facebook&utm_campaign=tavsiye_et.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

Another counter-protest happened in Ankara. The Atatürkist Thought Association's members, Hasan Erçelebi, the general secretary of the Democratic Left Party, Bülent Esinoğlu, the deputy chairman of the Workers' Party, and representatives of some civil society initiatives gathered outside the building that housed the National Assembly between 1924 and 1960.²⁴¹ Some of the slogans included "either independence or death, fully independent Turkey," "Genocide plan, an American lie," "we are Mustafa Kemal's soldiers."²⁴²

Similar to the event in İzmir, the protest in Ankara was organized by a coalition of secular, Kemalist, and left nationalists. The group was critical of countries that officially recognized the Armenian genocide and of the "inactivity" of the AKP government. The "weak" foreign policy line adopted by the governing party, the group claimed, caused some countries to impose their own agenda on Turkey and demanded genocide recognition.²⁴³ The attendees argued that Turkey's sovereignty and independence had been severely compromised due to imperialist schemes against Turkey. One of the main tactics used against Turkey in this context was the mounting pressure put on Turkey about the Armenian genocide. Erçelebi, in his speech, repeated the denialist discourse, "Turkey, Turks, had never committed genocide or become murderers in any period of history." He also called the president and the speaker of the National Assembly to confront the "genocide lies." He also requested the National Assembly to convene in a

²⁴¹ "“Soykırım Yapmadık, Vatan Savunduk” Yürüyüşü.”

²⁴² "Ya istiklal ya ölüm, tam bağımsız Türkiye", "Soykırım yalanı, Amerikan planı", "Mustafa Kemal'in askerleriyiz" "Sözde Soykırım Protesto Ediliyor.”

²⁴³ "Soykırım Eylemlerinde Tanıdık Görüntüler," *soL Haber Portalı*, accessed February 12, 2013, <http://haber.sol.org.tr/devlet-ve-siyaset/soykirim-eylemlerinde-tanidik-goruntuler-haberi-27347>.

special session to “discuss the ‘genocide lies’ and to announce the truth to the world.”

The Assembly should also cancel the protocols between Turkey and Armenia.²⁴⁴

Politicians’ Responses: “Are They Living on the Moon?”

Members of parliament from the CHP, MHP, and DSP acted like a denialist front when it came to engaging with the genocide commemorations. They got together and united their forces with remarkable ease. This attested to the existence of a “national consensus” among them, showing that the denial had a established grammar and terms shared by involved parties. This collaboration also showed that the ethno-religious dominance of Turkishness trumps all other political cleavages between these parties, and united them in protecting the status quo based on the supremacy of Turkishness.

Deputies reacting to the genocide commemorations agreed that these events were harmful for Turkey and Turkish nation. Canan Aritman (CHP – İzmir) characterized DurDe’s commemoration as a provocation and demanded that the government prevent it.²⁴⁵ The events were assessed within the framework of nation and its interests and it was clear that coming to terms with the past was ill fitting that frame. Also excluded was the fact that the Armenians were an integral part of that national community. The MPs perpetuated the image of Turkey under constant threat of dismemberment and violation of its sovereignty. The mentality of national security trumping all other policy considerations determined their views on the commemorations. The agents of memory involved in the organization of commemorative activities were accused to be collaborators serving Turkey’s enemies. According to Rahmi Güner (CHP – Ordu), the

²⁴⁴ "Türkiye, Türkler, tarihin hiçbir döneminde soykırım yapmadı, katil olmadı" and "soykırım yalanını konuşup gerçekleri dünyaya haykırmasını, protokollerin de yırtılıp atılmasını"
“”Soykırım Yapmadık, Vatan Savunduk” Yürüyüşü.”

²⁴⁵ “Provokasyona Büyük Tepki,” *Yeni Çağ Gazetesi*, April 21, 2010,
<http://www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/provokasyona-buyuk-tepki-34213h.htm>.

United States was trying to strike Turkey through its internal collaborators and that the AKP government was being instrumentalized in this plot against Turkey.²⁴⁶ These enemies, the US and other imperialist powers and of course Armenians, used these domestic actors as a fifth column to further push their agenda.

Some, like Arıman, claimed that the memory work regarding the genocide was nothing but an injustice against the Turkish nation because foreign powers were trying to undermine Turkey's unity. Juxtaposing the fighting between Kurdish militia and Turkish armed forces with memory initiatives, she tarred all of these activities with the same brush.

Are these people [DurDe] living on the moon; do they not see how tense Turkish society has become. Turkish nation is really showing patience here. From time to time we witness through saddening events that the patience runs out. The organization of this kind is unacceptable in such an atmosphere in which Turkey is tense and subject to gross injustices. Foreign powers want to create internal conflict; they want internal fighting to begin. It looks like these people [DurDe] want to serve this project. 'Genocide' is defamation against Turkey voiced by its enemies. Serving the enemy is unacceptable. Ethno-nationalism has begun to be imposed on Turkey. This meaningless, insulting, and treacherous event cannot take place in this tense atmosphere with Turkish society being patient. I strongly denounce this undertaking. The government, for the sake of Turkey's security and peace of mind, should not allow this event. Turkey still receives the bodies of its fallen soldiers. Each day this nation is stabbed in its heart. Such an injustice should not be inflicted on a nation that tries to create its unity for years and showing patience.²⁴⁷

The never ending project of nation-building, with its inherent quest for impossible wholeness and narcissistic wounds inflicted by its traumatic past, continued to hold Turkey within a heightened sense of impending fragmentation and extinction.

The Armenians were subjected to physical and social death in order for the dominant group to guarantee its nationhood and to have a fully formed national identity.

²⁴⁶ "Türkiye İçeriden Vuruldu," *Yeni Çağ Gazetesi*, April 26, 2010, <http://www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/turkiye-iceriden-vuruldu-34323h.htm>.

²⁴⁷ "Provokasyona Büyük Tepki."

Armenians were framed as betrayers, and international public opinion and commemorators in Turkey did not reveal this truth. “It is commonly known that there were Armenian mobs who attacked the Ottoman army from behind; who killed the elders and youth in raids to Turkish villages. The point that they collaborated with the enemies of the empire is obvious.”²⁴⁸ As a result of the guilt by association, all Armenians were stigmatized as betrayers on the grounds of some Armenian groups’ subversive activities. Attempts at resurrecting Armenians from their social death threatened to shatter, in the MPs’ views, that precarious and unachieved identity. Hence, the commemorations were seen as undermining Turkishness.

The Armenians were categorized as external or not fully belonging to the nation, and now their sympathizers within Turkey were pushed to the margins, facing the threat of punishment. According to the MPs, the Armenians did not fulfill their responsibility toward their nation. Hasan Erçelebi (DSP – Denizli) made this point.

Those who organize apology campaigns to Armenians cannot be taken as intellectuals. Symposiums and panels they organized had a single goal, to leave behind documents that would prove that genocide was committed. How one can perceive these events, which were undertaking with the purposing causing Turkey trouble, as good intentioned efforts.²⁴⁹

Intellectuals stopped putting the nation’s interest before anything else. Instead, they betrayed their national community by helping the Armenian claims make inroads in the society. Instead of acting as gatekeepers who would prevent “harmful” ideas to penetrate the national consciousness, they themselves advocated such destructive ideas. Instead of

²⁴⁸ “1915 olayları ile ilgili gerçekler ortaya çıkartılmıyor. Osmanlı ordusunu, Türk ordusunu arkadan vuran, köyleri basarak yaşlıları, gençleri katledenlerin Ermeni çeteleri olduğunu herkes biliyor. Düşmanla işbirliği yaptıkları gerçeği ortada.” “Türkiye İçeriden Vuruldu.”

²⁴⁹ Ermenilerden özür dileme kampanyaları hazırlayanlar insanlar aydın sıfatı taşıyamaz. Düzenlenen sempozyum ve panellerin tek amacı, ileride soykırım yapıldığını ispatlayacak belgeler bırakmaktır. Türkiye’nin başını ağrıtmak için gerçekleştirilen bu çabaları iyi niyetle nasıl yorumlayabilirsiniz? Ibid.

shaping the public opinion in a way that inculcated society with national ideals, they voiced dissident ideals undermining national consciousness.

All the MPs were critical of the governing AKP and blamed it for being lenient with these collaborators and not preventing these fifth column activities. Akif Akkuş (MHP – Mersin) stated, “the enemies of Turkishness are emboldened by the AKP. As long as this government continues to rule the Armenian lies will get bigger and bigger.”²⁵⁰ In a similar vein, Güner also argued that the AKP government failed to do its job. “Unfortunately, the AKP government does not know how to conduct international politics. Turkish flags are burnt; Turks are insulted. The government still stands these insults.”²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ “Türklük düşmanları AKP’den cesaret aldı. Bu yönetim başta oldukça Ermeni yalanları daha da büyüyecek.” Ibid.

²⁵¹ “Maalesef AKP hükümeti dış politikayı bilmiyor. Türk bayrakları yakılıyor, Türklere hakaret ediliyor, ama hükümet bu hakaretleri sineye çekiyor.” Ibid.

Chapter 4 – Rethinking the Genocide Commemorations in a Continuum of Breakthrough and Containment of the Denialist Tradition

In this chapter I propose to document and analyze the complex and even contradictory responses to the Commemorations across actors and collectivities in the always-unstable field of the Turkish nation state. On the one hand, there is genuine reason to acknowledge and applaud the transformative potential of these Commemorations – in breaking the deep-seated taboo against the naming of the genocide, in defying the overt legal and social censorship of previous decades, and in the moral act of empathy with another history and memory, that of the Armenians, whose underground memory provides the foil for Turkish denial.

Yet, as I have shown, there are vastly different registers and degrees of acknowledgment of the genocide, even among those who organized and participated in the commemorations. Accordingly, it is necessary to deconstruct the discourses in play to fully measure the degree to which they subvert and oppose the official narrative. Far from being uniform in their potential for a transformation of the status quo, they operate in a continuum that ranges from audaciously taking up the place of the Armenian Other in this Turkish drama of defense and denial, to new discourses which appear to assuage the minority national and majority international call for acknowledgment of the genocide while yielding little ground on the dominant state narrative. While I will rehearse several of these rhetorical strategies here, none has been more powerful (or deft in its avoidance) than the discourse of “Just Memory”: a narrative ploy that draws equivalencies between

the suffering of Turks and Armenians and, therefore, continues the stubborn refusal to acknowledge historical guilt.

I. Transformative Impacts of the Commemorations

Ernest Renan first reminded us that the formation of nations relies on simultaneous remembering and forgetting.¹ While past heroic deeds or victories are canonized and memorialized, past injustices and atrocities are rarely allowed in the nation's pantheon. The interplay of remembering and forgetting constitutes the texture of the nation's past and its identity in the present. Recognizing Armenians in Turkey on April 24, as a day of commemoration, was represented as their inclusion into national body politics as members of the nation deserving public remembrance. Yet, it is a move that also has a horizon and limit,

A society can ill afford to re-examine collectively a special class of political events in which the members of society feel tainted by a kind of corporate complicity in an act of injustice done in their name; and yet temporal distance and historical accommodations have so far removed them from it that they do not feel responsible, only uneasy.²

To further add to the difficulty, in the case of the Armenian genocide, historical wrongs have been justified through discursive formations constituting national subjects and practices, including commemorating subjects and their commemorative practices. Compounded by late Ottoman traumas about the loss of the empire and the threat of political extinction, the Armenian genocide memories inhabit a problematic collective memory. The commemorations, then, only were amongst the initial steps towards

¹ Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?," in *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

² Sheldon S. Wolin, "Injustice and Collective Memory," in *The Presence of the Past: Essays on the State and the Constitution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 34.

untangling these complex articulations of power, identity and meaning of the past in the present.

Challenging Dominant Formations of Turkish National Identity and Alternative Political Imaginaries

A survey of responses to the commemorations highlighted their impact on the questioning of national identity. The commemoration in 2010 “was our demand for a real and genuine country, society in the middle of a social engineering construction site made up of official historiography’s lies, ideological dogmas, and fascistic ignorance.”³ Stating that lies about the Armenians and their annihilation alienated socialists and dissidents like him from Turkey, Tulgar claimed that commemorations and the return of historical truth opened up a space for new ways of belonging in the country. The commemorative event brought with it “a hope of becoming one country, one society again, though with tremendous pain.”⁴

Cengiz Aktar also underlined the potential hopefulness of memory work.

In the past, our Armenian citizens commemorated that ominous day burying their pain within themselves and behind closed doors all around the world. Now dark pages of the history of these lands are being remembered together, the memory returns, and dogmas are being defied. The common pain is being shared. “April 24” starts to mean something.⁵

In this perspective, the long repressed memory of the genocide made its comeback in the public sphere and constituents of that public started to remember together. For many, the

³ “Resmi tarih yalanları, ideolojik ezberler, faşizan cehaletle kurulmuş bir toplum mühendisliği şantiyesinin ortasında gerçek, sahici bir ülke, bir toplum hakkımızı talep ediyoruz.” Ahmet Tulgar, “Meydanda Yas,” *BirGun.net*, April 26, 2010, <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/meydanda-yas-2196.html>.

⁴ “Orada, evet, tahammül fersah acılar ama yeniden bir ülke, bir toplum olma umudu da göründü.” Ibid.

⁵ Cengiz Aktar, “Hafıza Geri Geliyor,” *Erkan’s Field Diary*, April 25, 2011, <http://erkansaka.net/cengiz-aktar-hafiza-geri-geliyor/>.

cooperation in remembering past atrocities was an unmaking of the ethno-nationalist compartmentalization of Turkish society and its inherent hierarchies. Being able to commemorate the atrocities contaminated the fantasy of the nation as pure and homogeneous “Turkish.” Memorialization activities highlighted inner tensions of the nation and official narrative to carve a space for difference. Commemorators adopted the discourse of pain in order to cross ethno-religious boundaries of the nation. They invested in a “sense of commonness”,⁶ a sort of community between them and the Armenians on the basis of pain, to advocate alternative imaginaries of the nation. Neşe Düzel iterated a similar view regarding the role of sharing the pain and maintained that commemorating the pain would be the only way of ensuring that something like the genocide would not happen again.⁷ Hayko Bağdat argued that the question was not only an Armenian question; it belonged to everybody in Turkey.⁸

Nil Mutluer underlined the therapeutic and transformative potential of the commemorations.

We commemorate April 24 together for the first time. It is a precious step from this perspective. There will be reactions, but the events will ensure that those that need to be spoken will be spoken about. We live on the same land in Turkey. In addition to the Armenians’ trauma, the inability to come to terms with the past traumatizes non-Armenians as well. This is a step that would help to discuss these issues in a friendly manner.⁹

⁶ Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 317.

⁷ Ece Yıldız, “‘Büyük Felaket’in Yıldönümü: 24 Nisan’da ‘Bu Yas Hepimizin’ Diyenler Anlatıyor,” *Bianet*, April 24, 2010, <http://www.bianet.org/biamag/insan-haklari/121539-24-nisan-da-bu-yas-hepimizin-diyenler-anlatiyor>.

⁸ Hayko Bağdat, Bu sadece Ermenilerle değil, Türkiye’deki herkesle ilgili bir konu, April 24, 2012, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/component/content/article/7004-roportaj-hayko-bagdat-bu-sadece-ermenilerle-degil-turkiyedeki-herkesle-ilgili-bir-konu>.

⁹ İlk defa 24 Nisan’ı toplumca bu şekilde anıyoruz. Bu açıdan çok kıymetli bir hareket. Tepkiler olacaktır mutlaka, ama konuşulması gerekenlerin konuşulmasını sağlayacak. Türkiye’de aynı topraklar üzerinde yaşıyoruz. Ermenilerin yaşadığı travmadan ayrı olarak Ermeni olamayan tarafın da yaşadığı travma, tarihle yüzleşememekten doğuyor. Bu gibi sorunları dostluk içinde

Marking the unattended trauma of the dominant group had the potential to heal the national consciousness and transform identity. Disavowal and its destructive effect on the Turkish population was a common trope among responses to the commemorations.

Zeynep Gambetti adopted a similar position regarding the proper way of relating with past injustices.

We are responsible for all events on this land. The past is shaped by all of us; it touches us all. It was “we” not “others” who lived through the events of 1915. Pain is common; loss is common. Our alienation to our own history by othering Armenians diminished us; caused dissociative identity disorder. Owning the past as ours; confronting the pains in this past; and mourning for these pains will liberate and mature us. How long can we continue to be a society that runs away from itself? ... We need to relate to 1915, we need to find our own words about it, and build our conscience. We should stop seeing 1915 as “history”; instead we should start seeing it as our past and give it place in our memory. Only in this way can we create the conditions of cohabitating with ourselves and those we othered.¹⁰

Disavowal of genocide and exclusion of Armenians fissured the national psyche; it undermined social wholeness and destroyed the social fabric. Recognizing the past as belonging to all members of the population would help remedy the deep cracks of communal identity.

Ali Bayramoğlu, who also was part of the coalition behind the DurDe commemoration, quoted sociologist Nilüfer Göle in his column: “There is a Turkey that

konusup tartışabilmeye başlamayı sağlayacak bir adım bu. Yıldız, “‘Büyük Felaket’in Yıldönümü: 24 Nisan’da ‘Bu Yas Hepimizin’ Diyenler Anlatıyor.”

¹⁰ Bu topraklarda yaşananların tamamından sorumluyuz. Geçmiş hepimizin eseridir, hepimize dokunur. 1915 olaylarını, “biz”den farklı birileri, “ötekiler” yaşamış değildir. Acı ortak acıdır, kayıp ortak kayıptır. Ermenileri ötekileştirmek suretiyle kendi geçmişimize yabancılaşmamız bizi eksiltmiş, kişilik bölünmesine yol açmıştır. Geçmişe kendi geçmişimiz olarak yeniden sahip çıkmak, bu geçmişteki acılarla yüzleşmek, bunların yasını tutmak hepimizi özgürleştirecek, olgunlaştıracaktır. Kendinden sürekli kaçan bir toplum olmaya daha ne kadar devam edebiliriz ki? ... 1915’le artık ilişkilenecek, ona dair kendi sözcüklerimizi bulmak, kendi vicdanımızı oluşturmak zorundayız. 1915’e “tarih” olarak değil, kendi geçmişimiz olarak bakmak ve belleğimizde ona bir yer açmak zorundayız. Sadece ötekileştirdiklerimizle değil, kendimizle de birlikte yaşamının koşulunu ancak böyle tesis edebiliriz. Ibid.

forgot that the Armenians were people of this country, of these lands. Are you aware how horrible a denial is this?”¹¹ Commemorating the Armenians was a means of dealing with this denial. It was also healing, transforming, and liberating. The emerging democratic and diverse identity of Turkey, for him, necessitated coming to terms with the past and confronting the denial.¹² Sabahat Tuncel, the MP of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, stated that commemorations were important in terms of communizing the pain, getting society to confront the past, and showing that the people of Turkey could live together. Remembering and commemorating are required to build peace and democracy.¹³ Caricaturist and writer Kemal Gökhan Gürses conceived the commemorations as an opportunity to confront “ourselves” and to problematize the denial in which “we” were implicated.¹⁴

The stress unmistakably fell on the pains of a national identity formed by and continuously dealing with deep divisions, fears and aggression. These commentators asked what kind of community Turkey was. Accepting that some members of the national community were genocide perpetrators created tremors and destabilized contemporary identity-formation processes. Mourning the victims was conceived as a way of atoning for the sins of the forefathers. However, the disturbing question about our role as accomplices in sustaining the denial since then is still with us.

¹¹ “Ermenilerin bu ülkenin, bu toprakların insanları olduğunu unutmuş bir Türkiye var. Bu ne kadar korkunç bir inkârdır farkında mısınız?” Ali Bayramoğlu, “’24 Nisan Dedikleri...,” *Düzce Yerel Haber*, April 23, 2011, <http://www.duzceyerelhaber.com/Ali-BAYRAMOGLU/1390-24-nisan-dedikleri>. Bayramoğlu’s column was originally published in Islamist conservative daily *Yeni Şafak*.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Yıldız, “‘Büyük Felaket’in Yıldönümü: 24 Nisan’da ‘Bu Yas Hepimizin’ Diyenler Anlatıyor.”

¹⁴ Ekin Karaca, “‘1915’te Ermenilere Ne Oldu’ Yerine ‘Türlere Ne Olduğu’ Sorulmalı,” *Bianet*, April 24, 2012, <https://www.bianet.org/bianet/azinliklar/137822-1915-te-ermenilere-ne-oldu-yerine-turklere-ne-oldugu-sorulmali>.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the question of genocide remembrance was closely connected to tensions related to the challenge posed to a dominant Turkish national identity, conceived of as uniformly Kemalist and militantly secular. Yet, at the same time, pious Muslims were urged to come to terms with the annihilation of the Armenians and support the commemorations. Conservative/Islamist columnist Hilal Kaplan presented her support for the commemorations in a religious discourse. She called on the Muslims of Turkey to attend the commemorations through invoking God's eternal justice.

The sin for this atrocity fell on the Unionists, then on their collaborators, and finally on those who did not object to this atrocity because the "Right" was trodden in this process that had begun on April 24, 1915. It is for this reason that the mufti of Boğazlıyan Abdullahzade Mehmet Efendi told one of the perpetrators, Boğazlıyan's district governor, "God exists and beware of his wrath!" in those days. In days when we are unable even to say that much, I would like to remind the Muslims of Turkey of Abdullahzade Mehmet Efendi's words: "God exists and beware of his wrath!"¹⁵

By reminding Muslims that they would be judged on perpetuating the denial, Kaplan invited them to take side with what is "right".

Kaplan reminded her readers in another piece that the CUP's goal was to create a "Turkish homeland". After all, Turkification policy had a two-pronged social engineering approach, getting rid of non-Muslims first and then of Islam as a practice and identity. Creating a "laic, modern, European, Western" state required the annihilation of the non-Muslim inhabitants of Anatolia and rendering a Muslim majority which was Muslim in name only. The republican ideology, instead of pursuing the post-World War I efforts of confronting the genocide perpetrators, chose in practice to reproduce the Unionist ideology and continued de-Islamization. Kaplan demanded that it was time for her fellow

¹⁵ Hilal Kaplan, "Allah var ve O'nun gazabından korkun!," *Yeni Şafak*, April 22, 2011, <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/hilalkaplan/allah-var-ve-onun-gazabindan-korkun-27063>.

Muslims to question past atrocities and confront exterminatory policies because in clear contrast to the purist ideology of “Turkish homeland,” the “House of Islam” was able to create and sustain a multi-religious social fabric. She quoted Verse 135 of Surah Al Nisa of the Quran, “stand out firmly for justice,”¹⁶ in order to support her own call to attend the commemorations.¹⁷

The involvement of public figures from Islamist and conservative circles in the commemorations was seen as a positive sign of change in contemporary Turkey’s position regarding the Armenian genocide. In 2012, Zişan Tokaç read the press release in DurDe’s commemoration. Wearing a headscarf, which has been one of the symbolic sites of struggle between a Kemalist secular ideology and Islamist conservative one, was a deliberate choice on DurDe’s part in order to demonstrate the support of some members of the Islamist community and, hence, to expand the event’s reach and legitimacy.

¹⁶ For the whole surah, please see <http://quran.com/4/135>.

¹⁷ Hilal Kaplan, “Bir İslâmsızlaştırma hamlesi olarak 1915,” *Yeni Şafak*, April 23, 2012, <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/hilalkaplan/bir-islamsizlastirma-hamlesi-olarak-1915-32070>.

Illustration 38 - Zişan Tokaç reads DurDe's press release on April 24, 2012
(Credit: *Turnusol*)

In addition to incorporating this most visible sign of political Islam into its commemoration, MAZLUM-DER, The Association for Human Rights and Solidarity for the Oppressed, the leading human rights advocacy organization within Islamist movement, gave its support to DurDe's commemoration and also issued its own press release regarding the genocide.¹⁸ Etyen Mahçupyan underscored the political significance of the Islamist movement's involvement in genocide memorialization.

This year, a headscarved woman read the press release concerning the commemoration of April 24 in the name of all participants. Many intellectuals

¹⁸ "Devletin ve Bu Coğrafya İnsanın Artık Ermeni Tehciri Gerçekliğiyle Yüzleşmesi ve Helalleşmesi Gerekir," *Mazlum-Der*, April 23, 2012, <http://www.mazlumder.org/tr/main/faaliyetler/basin-aciklamalari/1/devletin-ve-bu-cografya-insaninin-artik-ermen/9021>; "Soykırım Kurbanları İzmir'de Anıldı," *Yurtsuz*, April 24, 2011, <http://www.yurtsuz.net/News.aspx?newsid=712#.ViN83xNViko>.

and columnists from Islamic groups expressed their respect for the sorrow resulting from the forced relocation of Armenians, and they condemned the pro-CUP mentality. The Association of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed Peoples (MAZLUM-DER), the most important human rights association among the Islamic groups, issued a press release that was extremely respectful of the lost lives, that underlined the historical reality and that refused to use pro-state jargon. In this respect, Turkey is about to pass the threshold... The policy of denial is now being perceived as a ridiculousness that sticks only to neo-nationalist (Ulusalcı) TV channels. The government is very unlikely to remain indifferent to the mental liberation of the Islamic groups. But the West should refrain from raising this issue as a “foreign policy” matter once again...¹⁹ Conservative and pious Muslims of Turkey were to carry out the transition of national identity.

Mahcupyan insisted that genocide denial had gradually become a marginal attitude limited to the state and ultranationalists as the majority population, Islamic community, began the process of coming to terms with past atrocities.

Nabi Yağcı, one of the leading figures of the Turkish left and the Turkish Communist Party, also marked the diversity of agents of memory. He was especially positive about the support of those segments with “Islamic sensibilities”.²⁰ Also significant for him were perspectives on the relationship between belief, justice and ethno-religious differences conceived from an Islamic point of view. Commenting on a speech by Mehmet Arif Koçer, an executive of the Mazlum-Der, at a panel on the Armenian genocide, Yağcı argued that these perspectives marked the rise of a joint “conscience” movement in Turkey regarding the Armenian genocide.

Inscribing Armenian Memories into Turkish Memory

This potential transformation of national identity received a positive reception among some Turkish-Armenians as it implied the inclusion of non-dominant ethno-

¹⁹ Etyen Mahcupyan, “A Headscarved Woman at the April 24 Commemoration,” *Today's Zaman*, May 3, 2012, http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/etyen-mahcupyan/a-headscarved-woman-at-the-april-24-commemoration_279331.html.

²⁰ Nabi Yağcı, “Tarihe Doğru Uzun Yürüyüş,” *Taraf.com.tr*, April 26, 2012, <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/nabi-yagci/tarihe-dogru-uzun-yuruyus/21073/>.

religious identities. The expansion of public memory practices to accept the previously underground memories of Armenian suffering was crucial for them. Nazlı Temir, a Turkish-Armenian, applauded this aspect of the events as well.

Today, a group of democrats shouts out after their lost ones. The slogans that we heard today, “Turkey belongs to Turks and will stay that way”, do not represent the whole society anymore. A minority group in this country raises its voice. The floodgates are open now; the change is under way. You can come and shout as much as you want. You can keep repeating “Armenians get out,” as you did today. Today we realized that your voice is weak. The applause and silence of the minority responded to nationalism, to fascism sustained by ‘Turkishness’.²¹

Temir challenged the nationalist groups that came to the square to protest the commemoration. She was convinced that a historical threshold had been crossed in Turkey and that inevitable change was under way.²² Though less enthusiastic than Temir, Garabet Orunöz noted that the organization of a genocide commemoration at Taksim reflected a change in coming to terms with the past. He underlined that there were people interested in questioning the official narrative.²³

²¹ Bugün Taksim meydanında bir grup demokrat, sessizce haykırıyor yitirdiklerinin ardından. Yani bugün burada duyduğumuz gibi “Türkiye Türklerindir ve Türklerin kalacak” sloganları artık bu toplumun tamamını temsil etmiyor.

Bu ülkede azınlık bir grup gün geçtikçe çığlıklarını yükseltiyor. Ok yaydan çıktı artık, sizler istediğiniz kadar 24 Nisan’larda gelin bağırın. Aynı bugün olduğu gibi ‘Ermeniler defolun’ demeye devam edin. Biz bugün fark ettik ki sizi sesiniz çok cılız çıkıyordu. Azınlığın alkışları ve sessizliği bu ülkedeki milliyetçiliğe, ‘Türklük’ten beslenen faşizme cevabını verdi. Nazlı Temir, “24 Nisan 1915: Türkiye Yas Tutmaya Başladı,” *Bianet - Bağımsız İletişim Ağı*, April 25, 2010, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/121549-turkiye-yas-tutmaya-basladi>.

²² The hope for change received a major blow when a Turkish Armenian, Sevag Şahin Balıkçı, was shot dead on April 24, 2011 while serving in the military. Once again, being an Armenian meant being in danger in Turkey. The trial of his murderer, Kıvanç Ağaoğlu, has so far shown that the life of an Armenian citizen is not of equal value to that of a Turkish citizen. The Armenians as a group are still left outside of the “universe of moral obligation”. As Bingaz and Suciyan suggested, this killing happened in a grim irony in which memorialization activities were held in order to increase awareness. Silva Bingaz and Talin Suciyan, “24 Nisan 2011’in Ardından,” *Azad Alik*, February 9, 2012, <https://azadalik.wordpress.com/2012/02/09/24-nisan-2011-in-ardindan/>.

²³ Garabet Orunöz, Bu Acı Kimin? –Türkiye’de Ermeni Olmak..., interview by Cemile Bayraktar, May 12, 2010, <http://nabukednazar.blogspot.ca/2012/10/bu-ac-kimin-turkiyede-ermeni-olmak.html>.

Murad Mıhçı highlighted the mutual understanding of ethno-religious groups – Kurds, Turks and Armenians – as a crucial step towards a solution. “What touched me the most was the joint commemoration with the Saturday Mothers. A portrait of Krikor Zohrab being in the hands of a victimized Kurdish mother was striking.”²⁴ In addition to reciprocal understanding, the convergence of past and current victimhoods would also contribute to reconciliation. The commemorations, for Mıhçı, demonstrated courage and a growing willingness to come to terms with the past. He argued that the positive correlation between confronting the past and establishing peace was visible to many in contemporary Turkey, in clear contrast to a decade earlier when the problematic history was not discussed openly because Turkish intellectuals did not even know much about it.²⁵

Markar Esayan, supporting the commemorative initiative, marked the importance of expanding the limits of national community to include the Armenians.

Now, turning to the disaster that Armenians faced and that will be remembered in Taksim for a second time, can we for just a moment approach the human disaster without political concerns, calculations and the prejudices the two peoples have developed against each other? I think we finally can. If we can realize that the loss is our loss as well, then we can leave behind the “buts” and share this pain with our Armenian friends.²⁶

Framing the commemorations within a humanistic discourse, Esayan called for acknowledgement of a universalized memory and pain.

²⁴ “Beni en çok etkileyen Cumartesi Anneleri ile beraber olan anmaydı. Krikor Zohrab'ın resminin mağdur bir Kürt annenin elinde olması, çok etkileyiciydi.” Murad Mıhçı, “Paskalya Bayramı ve 24 Nisan’ı Anma,” *Demokrat Haber*, April 22, 2011, <http://www.demokrathaber.net/paskalya-bayrami-ve-24-nisani-anma-makale,891.html>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Markar Esayan, “April 24: Can We Start over Again?” *Today's Zaman*, April 23, 2011, http://www.todayszaman.com/op-ed_april-24-can-we-start-over-again-by-markar-esayan_241830.html.

Challenging the Law of the Nation and Demanding Proper Burial

Garo Paylan and Hayko Bağdat, who were involved in the organization of commemorations, marked the significance of the commemorations. Paylan underlined that the format of silent commemoration at Taksim corresponded to the Armenians' commemoration methods in their churches. He added, "people who do not want to carry this burden of conscience anymore will be at Taksim."²⁷ Bağdat argued that the commemorations constituted a major turning point and would have a lasting influence. "I think that last year's event at Taksim [referring to the DurDe commemoration in 2010] initiated a historical transformation and will be written in golden letters in the historiography of the Armenian question. We want to prepare a grave for a relative who died. We will put a headstone and carve on it. This event is a story of preparing the grave of a friend."²⁸ By introducing the concept of proper burial, Bağdat differentiated between the law of the state and the law of relatives or friends of the deceased. It is the relative or friend's responsibility to give a proper burial and hence a dignified closure to the deceased loved one.

Bağdat was not alone in making the connection between commemorations and proper burial. Orhan Kemal Cengiz, a Turkish journalist, pointed out that the past was still present in Turkey.

Turkey has not passed the critical threshold in which this bloody past will just be history. This dark side of the country has not fully come to light yet. It will take a long time to confront this past. We are just at the beginning of a long healing

²⁷ "Artık bu vicdani yükü taşımak istemeyen herkes Taksim Meydanı'nda olacak." Garo Paylan and Hayko Bağdat, Ermeni soykırımını anmak: Gerçek seni özgürleştirsin, interview by Arife Köse, April 15, 2011, <http://www.sosyalistisci.org/index.php/ariv/80-414-13-nisan-2011/955-ermeni-soykrmn-anmak-gercek-seni-oezguerletirsin>.

²⁸ "Geçen yıl Taksim'de yapılan eylemin tarihsel anlamda çok önemli bir dönüşümü başlatan, Ermeni meselesi ile ilgili yazılacak olan tarihte altın harflerle yazılacak olan bir iş olduğunu düşünüyorum. Öldüğünü bildiğimiz bir yakınımızın mezarını yapmak isteriz. Taş koyarız üzerine ve yazı yazarız. Arkadaşımızın mezarını yapmak hikâyesidir hala bu iş." Ibid.

process. Here in Turkey we have long been living together with the unburied bodies of victims of past atrocities. The year 1915 was just the beginning; it was the biggest earthquake, but it continues to have consequences in different forms. These commemorations may be seen as small things that are carried out by a bunch of people, but their symbolic value is just so great.²⁹

Commemorations were important in terms of dealing with a past that is not past.

Undertaking memory work and burying the dead would put the past where it belongs, history. However, the past was alive and occupied the present. Coming to terms with the past would be a therapeutic process, in ethical as well as psychoanalytic frameworks.³⁰

Towards the Possibility of Mourning

Within this framework, creating a space for Armenians in the Turkish body politic was tied to mourning. If majority Turks could mourn the Armenians, that would symbolize the latter's inclusion in the new communal identity of Turkey. "Patriotism, primarily, means sharing the pain of fellow citizens, and the Armenians who perished in 1915 were our fellow citizens."³¹ Even more cautious observers of the commemorations, such as Nagehan Alçı, urged those dissident groups who were involved in memory work

²⁹ Orhan Kemal Cengiz, "We'll Be There on April 24," *TodaysZaman*, April 21, 2011, http://www.todayszaman.com/op-ed_well-be-there-on-april-24-by-orhan-kemal-cengiz_241639.html.

³⁰ Freud's work on melancholy and mourning is the *locus classicus* of memory work in these frameworks. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia (1917)," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works* (London: Hogarth, 1957), 237–58. For a critique of coming to memory of past atrocities as healing in Turkey, please see Duygu Gül Kaya, "Coming To Terms with the Past: Rewriting History through a Therapeutic Public Discourse in Turkey," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 04 (November 2015): 681–700.

³¹ "Yurtseverlik, zaten öncelikle, yurttaşlarının acılarını paylaşmaktan geçer ki, 1915'te ortadan yok olan Ermeniler, bizim yurttaşlarımızdı." Cengiz Çandar, "Tarihi 'ıslah' Etmek...", *Hurriyet.com.tr*, April 27, 2010, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/14540972.asp>.

to continue their efforts in the face of nationalist reactions; and “finally, some people, in 2010, were able to mourn what had happened 95 years ago without hiding.”³²

Most of the positive responses also agreed on framing the commemorations within the discourses of mourning and sharing the pain of Armenians. The main message of the Taksim commemoration, “This is OUR pain. This is a mourning for ALL OF US,” set the terms and grammar of the memorialization campaign in Turkey. This is a counter-memory that leaned on the universality of pain and called for empathy. It invoked compassion and care from the dominant group by speaking to a shared conscience.³³

The discourse of “shared pain” resonated with dissident groups and received a positive response. Sharing a mutually conceived pain and confronting the past were seen as necessary conditions for acting to shape the future.³⁴ Many attendees of the commemoration, its supporters, and commentators described what happened at Taksim as “mourning.”³⁵ Nayat Temir, a Turkish Armenian, stated, “Turkey started to mourn,” in reference to the DurDe commemoration.

For the first time, Armenians, Kurds, Turks, Assyrians, and a group of intellectuals mourn for the Armenian intellectuals, their relatives, and their dead ones who perished 95 years ago. Without being disturbed by the nationalist fascistic slogans, they mourn in silence. An accumulated grief, one that could not be mourned. A handful of people, we witness an important historical event today.³⁶

³² Nagehan Alçı, “Konuşmanın Vakti Geldi,” *Aksam.com.tr*, May 3, 2010, http://aksam.mediyator.com/2019/08/18/yazar/17205/nagehan_alci/konusmanin_vakti_geldi_.html.

³³ Tolga Tüzün, Bugün burada olmak çok önemli, April 24, 2012, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/component/content/article/7014-roportaj-tolga-tuzun-bugun-burada-olmak-cok-onemli>.

³⁴ Maya Arakon, Bu acılarla yüzleşirsek geleceğe dönük bir şeyler yapabiliriz, April 24, 2012, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/component/content/article/7011-roportaj-maya-arakon-bu-acilarla-yuzlesirsek-gelecege-donuk-bir-seyler-yapabiliriz>.

³⁵ Tulgar, Alçı, Candar,

³⁶ Türkiye’de ilk kez Ermeniler, Kürtler, Türkler, Süryaniler ve bir grup aydın bundan 95 yıl önce yitirdikleri Ermeni aydınlarının, akrabalarının, ölülerinin arkasından yas tutuyorlar. Öte yandan

Temir argued that the mourning at Taksim had a deep effect on the Armenian community in Turkey; a community that had been unable to mourn its lost ones since 1915. In addition to the genocide itself, antidemocratic measures during the Republican era intimidated the community, silenced it, and forced it to withdraw into itself. Temir notes the marked contrast between the consecutive dates of April 23, the national holiday commemorating the opening of the Turkish national assembly, and April 24. Temir underlines that in being forced to share the “national joy” at each national holiday, the Armenian community was obligated to respect a national order that did not respect its own citizenship rights. Constantly marginalized, left in limbo, and subject to simultaneous inclusionary and exclusionary policies, “the community had to keep silent all the time and this silence inflicted wounds. The inability to mourn deepened the wounds that formed scabs.”³⁷ For Temir, the commemoration at Taksim was the beginning of salving the wounds by sharing grief. “From now on, April 24 is the preface of a clean slate in Turkey, it is the day when the mourning for the Armenians who died 95 years ago started. It is a day for Armenians to celebrate their holiday.”³⁸

Other Armenians also noted that the commemorations’ primary purpose was related to mourning. An anonymous Turkish Armenian participant in TESEV’s research project regarding the Armenian community in Turkey argued that commemoration was significant. “I got, for the first time, the opportunity to light a candle for my grandfathers, the very first time. I got the opportunity to shed tears. For many Turkish-Armenians

duyulan milliyetçi, faşizan sloganlarına aldırıyor sessizce yas tutmaya devam ediyor. Temir, “24 Nisan 1915: Türkiye Yas Tutmaya Başladı.”

³⁷ Hep sustu ve bu suskunluk büyüdüğü, derin yaralar açtı, yas tutamadıkça bu yaralar ağırlaştı, kabuk bağladı. Ibid.

³⁸ 24 Nisan Türkiye’de beyaz bir sayfanın önsözü artık, bundan 95 yıl önce ölen Ermeniler’in ardından yas tutulmaya başlanan gün bugün. [...] Ermenilerin bayram sevinci bugün. Ibid.

having their suffering acknowledged and shared with Turkish friends was more important than official and even international recognition.³⁹

For Mithat Sancar,⁴⁰ the emancipation of the memory of April 24, which had started with the efforts of a few trying to confront the shame and its contemporary legacy, required Turkey to learn to mourn.⁴¹ Evoking Mitscherlich's groundbreaking psychoanalytic work on the post-Nazi era Germany, *The Inability to Mourn*,⁴² he concluded that Turkish citizens have not mourned the Ottoman Armenians, not only because such mourning was prohibited by the official ideology, but also because the remaining population did not actually experience the annihilation of the Armenians as a loss. The lack of mourning demonstrated the popular approval of the genocide. Sancar's remedy for Turkish society was learning to mourn for the Armenians in order to stage an authentic encounter with the collective identity. In order to master the traumas of the past and "normalize," Turkey has to learn how to mourn its losses. For this, he suggested that April 24 should be a day of national mourning.⁴³

Mobilizing Conscience

³⁹ "Ben dedelerim için ilk kez bu topraklarda bir mum yakma olanağını buldum, ilk kez. Orada bir gözyaşı dökmek olanağını buldum. Türkiyeli dostlarla bu acıyı paylaşmak Amerikan Başkanı'nın ne söylediğinden çok daha önemliydi." Quoted in Günay Göksu Özdoğan and Ohannes Kılıçdağı, *Türkiye Ermenilerini Duymak: Sorunlar, Talepler ve Çözüm Önerileri* (Istanbul: TESEV, 2011), 122.

⁴⁰ Sancar is a professor of law and member of the Kurdish political movement in Turkey. Currently, he is a member of parliament for the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP). He is the author of one of the few works written in Turkey focusing on the issues of coming to terms with the past, politics of memory, and justice. Mithat Sancar, *Geçmişle Hesaplaşma: Unutma Kültüründen Hatırlama Kültürüne* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2007).

⁴¹ Mithat Sancar, "Yasaklanan ve Tutulmayan Yas," *Taraf.com.tr*, April 27, 2011, <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/mithat-sancar/yasaklanan-ve-tutulmayan-yas/16007/>.

⁴² Alexander Mitscherlich and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior* (New York: Grove Press : Distributed by Random House, 1975).

⁴³ Sancar, "Yasaklanan ve Tutulmayan Yas."

The discourse of “conscience” structured the public response in Turkey. The Armenians would tell their stories and, in response, secular Turks and Muslims alike, would feel guilty and would recognize the genocide. But this discourse of conscience had a double edge. In its meaning as an ethical debt towards the other, conscience carried a transformative potential and positively contributed to the coming to memory of the genocide. The responses discussed below pointed to this first meaning.

Ufuk Uras argued that the commemorations were the best method of questioning official history, provoking a shift in public opinion. A key aspect of this process was to share the pain of the victims and undertake, in turn, the political coming to terms with the past.⁴⁴ For Koray Çalışkan, conscience [*vicdan*] was tied to the duty to remember.⁴⁵ Commentators such as Hasan Cemal underlined the necessity and moral imperative of acknowledging the crime against humanity committed against the Armenians. This was what being human required.⁴⁶ Ali Bayramoğlu stressed the discourse of fulfilling an obligation and paying a debt through the commemorations.⁴⁷ Mazlum-Der’s ex-president Ayhan Bilgen argued that through these events, the commemorators discharged their humane responsibility to history.⁴⁸ Publisher and human rights activist Ragıp Zarakolu, in a piece entitled “The Test of Conscience,” presented the commemoration of the arrested

⁴⁴ Ufuk Uras, Resmi tarihi en iyi sorgulama böyle olur, April 24, 2012, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/component/content/article/7015-roportaj-ufuk-uras-resmi-tarihi-en-iyi-sorgulama-boyle-olur>.

⁴⁵ Çalışkan quoted in Ceren Terziahmetoğlu, “‘1915 Ortak Acımız, Gerçek Bir Yüzleşme ve özür Bekliyoruz...,’” *t24.com.tr*, April 24, 2012, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/1915-ortak-acimiz-gercek-bir-yuzlesme-ve-ozur-bekliyoruz/202396>.

⁴⁶ Hasan Cemal, “Ermenilerin 24 Nisan Acısını Paylaşıyorum!,” *Milliyet Haber*, April 24, 2010, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/ermenilerin-24-nisan-acisini-paylasiyorum-/hasan-cemal/siyaset/siyasetyazardetay/24.04.2010/1229159/default.htm>.

⁴⁷ Ali Bayramoğlu, Bu anmalar sayesinde toplumun bazı kesimleri soykırımın varlığını kabul ediyor, April 24, 2012, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/component/content/article/7017-roportaj-ali-bayramoglu-bu-anmalar-sayesinde-toplumin-bazi-kesimleri-soykirim-varligini-kabul-ediyor>.

⁴⁸ Yıldız, “‘Büyük Felaket’in Yıldönümü: 24 Nisan’da ‘Bu Yas Hepimizin’ Diyenler Anlatıyor.”

Armenian intellectuals as a “conscientious and significant event” by “people who represented the conscience of Turkey.”⁴⁹ Being part of the commemorations and supporting the process of coming to terms with the past on the basis of conscience was also represented in terms of universal humanity and humanitarianism.⁵⁰

II. Governing the Coming to Memory of the Armenian Genocide through Commemorations

The positive responses to memorialization campaigns shared the general tendency to see these events as part of a linear progression from silence/forgetting/denial to remembering/coming to terms with the past.⁵¹ The wider network of leftist, left liberal, conservative liberal, and some Islamist journalists, intellectuals and scholars supported the commemorations and acted as self-professed emissaries of coming to memory of the genocide.⁵² Their endorsement and involvement was an important factor making the commemorations possible thanks to their clout and power in influencing public opinion. This network assumed a narrative of progress and self-celebration in terms of bringing the genocide back into public debate. Yet, as we have seen, this linear narrative of progress from silence and taboo to free speech situated official position and civil society in diametrically opposite corners, claiming that civil society finally broke down the wall of silence. In this perspective, civil society laid the foundation of a different future by

⁴⁹ Ragıp Zarakolu, “Vicdan Sınavı,” *Evrensel*, April 25, 2011, <http://www.evrensel.net/yazi/4861/vicdan-sinavi>.

⁵⁰ Arakon, Maya Arakon; Kerem Kabadayı, Bu anmalarla ciddi yol kat ettik, April 24, 2012, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/component/content/article/7007-roportaj-kerem-kabadayi-bu-anmalarla-ciddi-yol-kat-ettik>.

⁵¹ Kaya, “Coming To Terms with the Past: Rewriting History through a Therapeutic Public Discourse in Turkey,” 682.

⁵² Cengiz Çandar, “Türkiye, Gerçeği İle Yüzleşmeli...”, *Radikal*, April 17, 2010, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/cengiz-candar/turkiye-gercegi-ile-yuzlesmeli-991939/>.

engaging with a process of coming to terms with the past and undertaking memory work that would force Turkey to revise the official narrative of denial.⁵³

For the adherents of this position, the organization of genocide commemorations in Turkey was a historical moment and a turning point, even the beginning of “mastering the past”⁵⁴ or the “return of memory”.⁵⁵ For some, commemorations were instrumental in getting some members of the Turkish body politic to recognize the Armenian genocide.⁵⁶ Others highlighted the positive impact the commemorations might have on Turkish-Armenian reconciliation.⁵⁷ Some even argued that the commemorations were the most important initiative in Turkey regarding the genocide.⁵⁸ However, other commemorators argued in a more cautious vein, that the commemorations were “small but meaningful steps”⁵⁹ and “important but not enough”.⁶⁰ These commentators also pointed out that the number of people who attended the commemorations was too low. Others, more hopeful, believed that the number would increase gradually.⁶¹

⁵³ Çandar, “Tarihi ‘ıslah’ Etmek...”

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Aktar, “Hafıza.” Aktar’s piece was originally published in daily Vatan’s website on April 25, 2011, however the link does not work anymore.

⁵⁶ Bayramoğlu, Ali Bayramoğlu.

⁵⁷ Yavuz Baydar, “April 24, 2010: Another Turning Point,” *Today’s Zaman*, April 26, 2010, http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/yavuz-baydar/april-24-2010-another-turning-point_208485.html.

⁵⁸ Tüzün, Bugün burada olmak çok önemli.

⁵⁹ Ömer Laçiner, Anmalar küçük ama anlamlı bir adım, April 24, 2012, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/component/content/article/7010-roportaj-omer-laciner-anmalar-kucuk-ama-anlamli-bir-adim>.

⁶⁰ Ahmet İnsel, Bu anmalar tarihle yüzleşme açısından önemli, April 24, 2012, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/component/content/article/7009-roportaj-ahmet-insel-bu-anmalar-tarihle-yuzlesme-acisindan-onemli>.

⁶¹ Aydın Engin, Seneye daha da kalabalık olacağız, April 24, 2012, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/component/content/article/7006-roportaj-aydin-engin-seneye-daha-da-kalabalik-olacagiz>.

The common ground among the attendees and commentators was that the commemorations contributed to the return of genocide into public discourse.⁶² A report published by the not-for-profit organization TESEV also shared the view that the DurDe commemoration constituted a turning point in the longer trajectory of the genocide ceasing to be a taboo subject.⁶³ The consensus among many commentators was that the genie was out of the bottle; and there was no turning back.⁶⁴ All agreed that the change was unmistakably happening, but they all also understood that the process would be gradual.⁶⁵ What is more, they were aware that Turkey was belated in undertaking these kind of events.⁶⁶

A smaller number of commentaries made the connection between the commemorations and future potential steps to come to terms with the genocide. For these commentators, the commemorations were part and parcel of the recognition campaign, but other concrete steps would be necessary in the future. The Member of Parliament Sırrı Süreyya Önder shared the same perspective and said Turkey had to undertake

⁶² Katırcıoğlu and Önder separately quoted in, Terziahmetoğlu, “‘1915 Ortak Acımız, Gerçek Bir Yüzleşme ve özür Bekliyoruz...’”; Laçiner, Ömer Laçiner; Hosrof Dink, Önemli olan inkâr değil, idrak etmek, April 24, 2012, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/component/content/article/7013-roportaj-hosrof-dink-onemli-olan-inkar-degil-idrak-etmek>.

⁶³ Aybars Görgülü, Alexander Iskandaryan, and Sergey Minasyan, *Türkiye-Ermenistan Diyalog Serisi: Yakınlaşma Sürecini İncelemek* (Istanbul: TESEV, 2010), http://www.tesev.org.tr/assets/publications/file/Yak%C4%B1nla%C5%9Fma%20S%C3%BCreci%20%C4%B0ncelemek_10.2010.pdf.

⁶⁴ Ufuk Uras quoted in Terziahmetoğlu, “‘1915 Ortak Acımız, Gerçek Bir Yüzleşme ve özür Bekliyoruz...’”

⁶⁵ Zeynep Tanbay, Artık bu TC devletinin özür dilemesini sağlamalıyız, April 24, 2012, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/component/content/article/7016-roportaj-zeynep-tanbay-artik-bu-tc-devletinin-ozur-dilemesini-saglamaliyiz>; Dink, Hosrof Dink; Engin, Aydın Engin.

⁶⁶ Ümit Kıvanç, Böyle bir şey hiç olmamış gibi yaşayamayız, çok ayıp, April 24, 2012, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/component/content/article/7012-roportaj-umit-kivanc-boyle-bir-sey-hic-olmamis-gibi-yasayamayiz-cok-ayip>; Ferda Keskin, Gerçeklerle yüzleşmenin vakti geldi, April 24, 2012, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/component/content/article/7008-roportaj-ferda-keskin-gerceklerle-yuzlesmenin-vakti-geldi>.

concrete legal measure to restore justice.⁶⁷ Şenol Karakaş, spokesperson for the DSIP, underlined that the commemorations poked holes in the cloth of official state ideology and maintained that the recognition of the genocide was crucial for Turkey's democratization.⁶⁸ Zeynep Tanbay also stated that their aim in undertaking these commemorative events was to push the Turkish state to recognize the genocide and to apologize for it.⁶⁹

While the overall reception of the commemorations as the agents of memory was positive and supportive, there were some critical voices attuned in a more sophisticated way to the limits of the discourses and practices employed by recent agents of counter-memory. They argued for going beyond the self-celebrating tone of "Turkey began to speak about the genocide," and pay more attention to *how* it spoke about it in terms which compromised actual transgression of the dominant narrative. The result was an attempt to prevent certain scholars from presenting their critical reading of the tentative coming to memory of the Armenian genocide and the 2008 Apology campaign in particular.⁷⁰

Yet, a breakthrough of sorts has to be acknowledged, even taken into the limits of the discourses of commemorations. The commemorations posed significant challenges to the official narrative and questioned the denial. In more than one instance commemorators were stigmatized as "bad" national subjects who were performing their

⁶⁷ Önder quoted in, Terziahmetoğlu, "1915 Ortak Acımız, Gerçek Bir Yüzleşme ve özür Bekliyoruz..."

⁶⁸ Şenol Karakaş, Bu devletin resmi ideolojisinin temelinde delik açıyoruz, April 24, 2012, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/component/content/article/7005-roportaj-senol-karakas-bu-devletin-resmi-ideolojisinin-temelinde-delik-aciyoruz>.

⁶⁹ Tanbay, Artık bu TC devletinin özür dilemesini sağlamalıyız.

⁷⁰ Ayse Gunaysu, "Silenced but Resilient: A Groundbreaking Panel Discussion in Istanbul," *Armenian Weekly*, August 3, 2010, <http://armenianweekly.com/2010/08/03/gunaysu-silenced-but-resilient-a-groundbreaking-panel-discussion-in-istanbul/>.

identity wrong and betraying their nation. However, the commemorations were never banned as such. On the contrary, law enforcement took every measure to protect the commemorators from possible attacks during the events. There was no prosecution against the organizers or participants. On the face of it, these curious facts do not fit well with the official denial – or do they?

Critical views about the proliferation of counter-memories about the atrocities against Armenians underlined the possibility of co-optation of the dominant narrative, even while it appeared to be challenging and overturning it.

The existence of mere memories about the Armenian genocide and public talk about it have become integral to the State's denialist program. Ahmet Davutoğlu for instance, instrumentalized the memory boom as Foreign Minister in 2010 by stating: "Just ten years ago the Armenian question was taboo in Turkey, but now our public freely discusses it. The events in the early twentieth century were denied before, and now Turkey does not deny that Armenians suffered tragic events."⁷¹ (quoted in Phillips 2012, 19) Hence, the fact that the Armenian genocide could not be erased from social memory does not make the political refusal of formally acknowledging the intentional dimension of the crime less effective. For all that academics and civil society took up the challenge to remember the genocide of 1915, it seems that we still do not recognize the basic "mechanics" of genocide denial.⁷²

Presented as evidence to changing attitudes in Turkey, being able to express counter-memories on the atrocities helped the government to make a case of freedom of expression. What was crucial about this maneuver was that the government was able to

⁷¹ The author could not locate the original of the Davutoğlu quote as the source (Phillips, 2012) was not in the bibliography. However, it was possible to find another quote from the Minister of Foreign Affairs conveying a similar perspective. "Ten years ago in Turkey you wouldn't have an environment to discuss Armenian issue in a free manner. Today we have. Everybody is talking, and – but you don't have that freedom in France or in some European countries. As a Turkish intellectual, you cannot defend your version of history." "Perspectives on Turkish Foreign Policy: An Address by H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey" (The Brookings Institution, November 29, 2010), http://www.brookings.edu/~media/events/2010/11/29-turkey/20101129_turkey.pdf.

⁷² Seyhan Bayraktar, "Remembering the Armenian Genocide in Contemporary Turkey," *Testimony Between History and Memory*, no. 120 (April 2015): 69.

rhetorically frame the issue in such a way that it did not have to recognize the intentionality of the genocide.

For the administration, allowing the public to talk about the suffering was a way of presenting Turkey in a more favourable light. From the perspective of the democrats or progressive public opinion leaders and many stakeholders in the commemorations, the increased references to the genocide were presented for a long time as an end in itself. There is a discernible tendency among public figures who have been instrumental in terms of disseminating the emerging knowledge of the atrocities “to laud every action in the name of ‘breaking the silence’ for its own sake, irrespective of ideological, textual or social implications.”⁷³

The last decade or so of public engagement with the difficult past is replete with references to breaking the silence, breaking the taboo, the fall of the wall of silence. One can see this drive as a “mechanism of increasing incitement,”⁷⁴ to produce speech in terms of Foucault’s repressive hypothesis. But the relationship between the modes of confession and reinscription of taboos is far from clear here. Certainly, all the statements were not necessarily policed by the state or law enforcement, public figures acted like gatekeepers of public discourse.

Foucault’s characterization of the restrictive order of the classical age holds true for memory discourses in Turkey. “A control over enunciations as well: where and when it was not possible to talk about such things became much more strictly defined; in which

⁷³ Burcu Gürsel, “The Mythical Interface of Turkish Intellectuals’ Orientation toward the Armenian Genocide,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 04 (November 2015): 791.

⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, vol. 1 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 12.

circumstances, among which speakers, and within which social relationships.”⁷⁵

Commemorative discourses and the coming to memory discourses were regulated in a number of ways: audiences were identified, interlocutors were chosen, acceptable and unacceptable subjects and statements were distinguished. In short, a critical deconstruction of this emergent “speech” has largely been missing. Instead, “the active engagement of Turkish progressives in the discourse has been welcomed *as such* without evaluating its impact on the genocide debate in Turkey. Instead, its (seemingly) positive effects have been, by and large, taken for granted.”⁷⁶

The denial of the genocide through justification had been one of the most visible discursive formations governing social, political, economic and cultural institutions and practices in Turkey. What needs to be emphasized at the start is the genocide was the constitutive violence of the Turkish Republic as an ethno-religiously homogeneous sovereign nation-state. The annihilation of the Armenians was a necessary condition of belonging to a newly-constituted “modern” Turkish national identity. In turn, the denial of the genocide has continued to construct Turkish subjects through its myriad of discourses constituting them as denying subjects. Yet it is clear that the extermination of the Armenians has been the open secret at the heart of the Turkish nation. Genocide-denial is a set of society-wide discursive formations based on ethnic and class interests of the dominant segment of the population. It manifests itself through articulations of cultural and emotional energies at every level of the body politic including the intellectual establishment. The Turkish state is the nexus of these interests and has been

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1:17–18.

⁷⁶ Bayraktar, “Remembering the Armenian Genocide in Contemporary Turkey,” 62.

their primary carrier, but all members of society at large are overwhelmingly complicit in the denial.

The proliferation of references to the genocidal past was accompanied or was in resonance with a transformation in language that Turkey witnessed in the post-1980s. In this period Turkey was provoked to speak about its past, but this provocation was accompanied by an alteration of the relationship between language, experience and truth. It is conspicuously plastic, playful, and self-referential.⁷⁷ Not only did it dispense with any attempt to reconstruct experience, it also repudiated irony implicit in such a quest. This language brought about an unprecedented heteroglossia to public discourses; however this heteroglossia was subtly framed in a way that did not allow for critical engagement with moral and legal responsibility, evoking claims of justice in any substantive sense.

This self-referential language was comforting for self-identifying progressives or democrats, most of whom were journalists, activists, and scholars with conspicuous presence in public debates, helping them to re-establish their moral authority. Being a member of this privileged segment of the society made these subjects hubs in power networks with close connections with and easy access to decision-making processes. Hence, they assumed the role of impartial and objective arbiters or voices of “common sense.” Such a role concealed the fact that they had specific class, ethnic and gender interests and that they were heavily invested in the current social order. Thus, a field of public speech without any concomitant responsibility emerged and quickly expanded. In return, underprivileged groups had almost no choice but to build alliances with these

⁷⁷ Nurdan Gürbilek, *Vitrinde yaşamak*, Third edition (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2001), 25.

power brokers in order to reach the wider public and participate in political decision-making spaces. These alliances, in turn, provided these figures with increased moral authority and made them representatives of public “conscience.” As hubs of power they have a greater say in the conditions of the plausibility of public statements. They began to function as mediators who presented underprivileged groups’ demands to dominant groups in a “language” that they would understand and, more importantly, empathize with. What follows, then, is a documentation and analysis of the grammar of the commemorations of the Armenian genocide. As we will see, these engagements have been tied to the wider unstable political fields within which counter-memories made their claims.

What’s in a Name?

The majority of, what I will call “memory actors” involved in commemorations have adopted gradualism as a viable strategy to convince Turks that the acts committed against Armenians during the First World War constituted a grave injustice. This strategy was built upon a slow process of “moral suasion” through “soft” statements aiming at winning over the hearts and minds of the Turkish public at large. The idea was to start the recognition campaign with minor steps that posed minimal threat to hegemonic framework. The agents of memory opted to carry out these steps piecemeal and cautiously. The assumption was that small changes would lead to larger ones. The most important task was to initiate a subtle transformation by raising only low-level concerns and low-risk demands, in turn. This strategy repudiated almost all forms of statements, claims and demands that threatened existing Turkish identity.

Central to this strategy is DurDe's deliberate decision not to use the term "genocide" during the first three commemorations. Legitimizing certain narratives and modes of claim making at the expense of others, on the grounds that the dominant group was not "ready" to hear these "radical" or "extreme" demands or that they might have "alienating" effects on this group, undermined the more radical potential of forthright coming to memory of the genocide. Instead, what emerged was a constantly revised discourse that aimed at setting limits, imposing definitions, and inculcating specific ways of talking about the genocidal past. Within this limiting framework, demands for recognition and compensation were easily stigmatized as extremist claims which only served to antagonize public opinion in Turkey.

In other words, the commemorations participate in a politics of memory which seeks to limit boundaries of the subjugated knowledge, which is the Armenian genocide. Political actors involved in memorialization campaigns acted as mediators between Armenian demands and public opinion. This mediation included a significant degree of self-censorship as well. DurDe's spokesperson, Cengiz Alğan, underlined that the genocide was at the foundation of the Turkish Republic and argued that recognition of the genocide, formal apology, and reparations were the only way to proceed with the effort to confront Turkey's past.⁷⁸ However, Alğan only expressed these views during an interview at the end of the commemorations. Tellingly, the commemorative message did not bring forth this perspective and these demands. How, one wonders, can significant change occur if no one demands them?

⁷⁸ Cengiz Alğan, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin temelinde Ermeni soykırımı yatıyor, April 24, 2012, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/component/content/article/7003-roportaj-durde-sozcusu-cengiz-algan-turkiye-cumhuriyetinin-temelinde-ermeni-soykirimi-yatiyor>.

Inevitably, at the center of this gradualist strategy was the term genocide and the surrounding “politics of naming”,⁷⁹ to use Mahmood Mamdani’s term. The overdetermined “G-word”⁸⁰ became the central bone of contention over the last five decades due to the sustained Turkish denial of the intentional physical, cultural and economic destruction of the Ottoman Armenians on the grounds of their ethno-religious identity. In the face of Turkey’s disavowal of historical truth, “the Armenian diaspora saw the word as a perfect fit to describe what had happened to their parents and grandparents and began referring to the *Medz Yeghern* as ‘the Armenian genocide’.”⁸¹

Commemorators organized around DurDe, representing the broadest coalition or network of counter-memory advocates, deliberately chose *not* to use the term “genocide” in their calls to events or press releases between in 2010 and 2011. The term, however, was used after 2012. The 2010 text referred to the genocidal events with a Turkish translation of the Armenian term *Medz Yeghern*, “*Büyük Felaket*.”⁸² This translation was also used in the Apology Campaign in 2008. The agents of memory used this term to allude to the genocide without using the term. *Medz Yeghern* means “Great Crime/Evil” and it has been one of the key terms the Armenians used in order to refer to the genocidal events. However, due to mistranslations it was also sometimes translated as “Great

⁷⁹ Mahmood Mamdani, “The Politics of Naming: Genocide, Civil War, Insurgency,” *London Review of Books*, March 8, 2007.

⁸⁰ Belinda Cooper and Taner Akcam, “Turks, Armenians, and the ‘G-Word,’” *World Policy Journal* 22, no. 3 (September 21, 2005): 81–93; Thomas de Waal, “The G-Word: The Armenian Massacre and the Politics of Genocide,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, December 16, 2014, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/12/16/g-word-armenian-massacre-and-politics-of-genocide-pub-57528>.

⁸¹ Waal, “The G-Word.”

⁸² DurDe, “Bu Acı Hepimizin,” *Nor Zartonk*, April 19, 2010, www.norzartonk.org/2010/04/19/bu-aci-hepimizin.

Calamity/Catastrophe,”⁸³ a term which soon enough entered public space as an “allowed” speech act. “*Büyük Felaket*,” the literal Turkish translation of “Great Calamity” version, now emerged as a ‘permissible’ term for discussing the genocide.”⁸⁴

Counter-memory initiatives in the late 2000s and early 2010s mobilized the “Great Calamity” discourse. This usage was not only unwarranted as Matiossian’s scholarship makes clear, but, even more seriously, “has been appropriated and superimposed onto the discussion as if those doing so – those who have themselves only lately discovered the term – possess either the moral or the scholarly authority to assert what terms should or should not be used.”⁸⁵ According to Erbal, the adoption of the term was problematic in four respects. First, the term had no resonance among the general population in Turkey. It had not been used previously and very few were knowledgeable about its meaning or connotations. Second, using the term was a means of dodging the political and legal debate around the term genocide. Evoking *Büyük Felaket* also strategically sealed the events it referred to in the past. Third, the campaign organizers, attempting to avoid the overly politicized term “genocide,” mobilized a previously non-politicized term. Fourth, the term generalized the Armenian suffering and broke the

⁸³ Vartan Matiossian, “The Self-Delusion of ‘Great Calamity’: What ‘Medz Yeghern’ Actually Means Today,” *Armenian Weekly*, January 12, 2013, <http://armenianweekly.com/2013/01/12/the-self-delusion-of-great-calamity-what-medz-yeghern-actually-means-today/>; Vartan Matiossian, “The Birth of ‘Great Calamity’: How ‘Medz Yeghern’ Was Introduced onto the World Stage,” *Armenian Weekly*, October 25, 2012, <http://armenianweekly.com/2012/10/25/the-birth-of-great-calamity-how-medz-yeghern-was-introduced-onto-the-world-stage/>; Vartan Matiossian, “What I Choose It to Mean: On ‘Yeghern’ as the Armenian Translation of ‘Genocide,’” *Armenian Weekly*, December 17, 2013, <http://armenianweekly.com/2013/12/16/what-i-choose-it-to-mean-on-yeghern-as-the-armenian-translation-of-genocide/>; Ayşe Hür, “1915’e Ad Ver(eme)mek: Aghed, Medz Yeghern, Soykırım,” *Radikal*, April 20, 2014, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/ayse-hur/1915e-ad-verememek-aghed-medz-yeghern-soykirim-1187604/>.

⁸⁴ Matiossian, “The Self-Delusion of ‘Great Calamity.’”

⁸⁵ Marc Mamigonian, “Commentary on the Turkish Apology Campaign,” *Armenian Weekly*, April 21, 2009, <http://armenianweekly.com/2009/04/21/commentary-on-the-turkish-apology-campaign/>.

historic connection between genocide and its denial.⁸⁶ The names in contestation, then, have been an important part of the representational politics of the genocide in Turkey.

Turkish-Armenian journalist Aris Nalcı confirmed the struggles for and against memory inherent in the plethora of unstable terms to mark [and not mark] the genocide.

April 24 has been commemorated in Turkey in the last two years. Those people, who for various reasons did not remember April 24 or spoke about it only behind closed doors, are now “around”. I just look with admiration at people, who did not/could not utter the word “genocide” so far, “commemorate” the “great catastrophe” at the squares. And I get sad.⁸⁷

What Nalcı problematizes here is the lack of self-criticism among the commemorators for perpetuating the denial until 2010. DurDe’s spokesperson Cengiz Alğan was asked what had changed between the 94th and 95th anniversaries of the genocide that led them to organize the commemoration,⁸⁸ he explained that the world and Turkey were changing and conditions conducive for discussion had now emerged. Among these changes, he underlined Hrant Dink’s assassination and the apology campaign as crucial turning points. In a nutshell, Alğan claimed that intellectuals and activists had waited 94 years to memorialize the destruction of the Armenians because society and the conditions had not been ready for a coming to memory of the atrocities.

DurDe’s own elusive choice of name, demonstrating equivocal attitudes, came into sharp relief in the context of İHD’s approach. The İHD press release in 2010 was

⁸⁶ Ayda Erbal, “Mea Culpas, Negotiations, Apologias: Revisiting the ‘Apology’ of Turkish Intellectuals,” in *Reconciliation, Civil Society, and the Politics of Memory: Transnational Initiatives in the 20th and 21st Century*, ed. Birgit Schwelling (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2012), 51–94.

⁸⁷ 24 Nisan 2 yıldır Türkiye’de de anılıyor. Çeşitli şekillerde bugüne kadar 24 Nisan’ı hatırlamayan, ya da sadece kapalı kapılar ardından konuşan insanlar artık “ortalıkta”. Ben sadece hayranlıkla bakıyorum bugüne kadar ağzına “soykırım” sözcüğünü alamayan bu insanların şimdi nasıl meydanlarda “büyük felaketler”i “andığına”. Ve üzülüyorum. Aris Nalcı, “Bu Bir 24 Nisan Mektubudur...,” *Demokrat Haber*, April 22, 2011, <http://www.demokrathaber.net/m/?id=892&t=makale>.

⁸⁸ Alçı, “Konuşmanın Vakti Geldi.”

unequivocal in this regard. The text quoted article 2 of the UNGC that lists acts that are considered genocidal in the legal definition of the term. Then İHD denounced “embargoes of words” and invited all to recognize the genocide; “we invite all to be conscientious in line with this convention and to properly name the events of 1915.”⁸⁹ Further stressing the criminal character of the 1915 events, İHD insisted that genocide is a crime against humanity and mobilized the popular counter-memory phrase “Never Again.”⁹⁰ İHD raised the naming issue in their commemoration as well. As a prelude to her reading the press release, Eren Keskin stated, “friends, today is the anniversary of April 24, 1915. You can call it Great Pain or Great Catastrophe, but we, human rights defenders, want to name it properly once again. 1915 was genocide and genocide is a crime against humanity.”⁹¹ It was, at least, a beginning.

Missing Subjects of the Genocide

“Commemorating the victims would only be half of the act of remembrance if we failed to talk about perpetrators. There are no victims without perpetrators.”⁹²
Joachim Gauck, Federal President of Germany, 2015

The naming of the event is crucial as names invoke different registers, different modes of engagement, and different actions. The commemorations have been slowly converging towards the difficult acknowledgment of the Armenian annihilation as

⁸⁹ “Bu sözleşme doğrultusunda herkesi vicdanlı olmaya ve 1915 olaylarının adını koymaya çağırıyoruz.” İnsan Hakları Derneği, “Bir Daha Asla!,” *İnsan Hakları Derneği*, April 24, 2010, <http://www.ihd.org.tr/bir-daha-asla/>.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ *24 April 2011 İHD/HRA Istanbul, 1915 Anma/Commemoration*, accessed June 23, 2015, <https://vimeo.com/22839004>.

⁹² Joachim Gauck, “Federal President Joachim Gauck at the ‘Ecumenical Service at the Berliner Dom to Commemorate the Genocide Suffered by the Armenians, Aramaeans and Pontian Greeks’” (Federal Presidency, April 23, 2015), https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Reden/2015/04/150423-Gedenken-Armenier-englisch.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.

genocide. But components of the earlier gradualist stand are still discernible in the descriptions of genocidal events that were included in commemorative documents startlingly evasive in its terminology. “They had begun to be ‘deported’ on April 24, 1915. We lost them. They are not here anymore.”⁹³ As there was no subject in these sentences, there was no historical subject or agency deporting the Armenians or causing their annihilation. The text did not attribute responsibility to anybody. Instead of shedding light on the processes and subjects of genocide perpetration, the text adopted a nostalgic and romanticized frame of remembrance and concentrated once more on an abstract and dislocated pain.⁹⁴

This critique attested to the continued push and pull of denial and coming-to-memory still haunted the commemorations. In tandem with withholding the term genocide, commemorators mobilized self-censorship while describing the events. They did not provide an account of the destruction of the Armenians, they did not identify perpetrators, and they certainly did not develop notions of justice or historical responsibility. This “soft terminology”⁹⁵ removed responsibility, crime and guilt from the frame of remembrance in order not to alienate and antagonize the intended audience of the commemorative message.

In Turkey, where there has been a monopoly on an official historiography of events, disseminating information was a crucial component of counter-memory initiatives.

⁹³ “24 Nisan 1915’te ‘gönderilmeye’ başlandılar. Onları kaybettik. Artık yoklar.” DurDe, “Bu Acı Hepimizin.”

⁹⁴ Talin Suciyan, “Toplumsal Anma Pratikleri Şekillenirken İstanbul 24 Nisan 2010,” *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 199 (July 2010): 14–17.

⁹⁵ Orhan Kemal Cengiz, “Is Turkey Overcoming The Armenian Taboo?” trans. Timur Göksel, *Al-Monitor*, April 22, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/04/armenian-genocide-taboo-turkey-anniversary.html>.

When memory work takes on an oppositional thrust, such as when the past is recovered or revised against the established canons, that work's very *raison d'être* lies in its claims to a better, more complete or more honest truth. [...] At the center of claimed or reclaimed truth about the past are hard historical facts-events, people, their actions, their writings. In other words, in large-scale efforts to secure remembrance of once forgotten or once-to-be forgotten elements of collective experience, the operational meaning of truth is that of our common sense notion of "this really happened".⁹⁶

However, DurDe's initial commemoration did not speak to what had really happened during the genocide. Historical truth was not the central issue for the commemorators. In 2011, the subject-less narration of the events continued with slight revisions in which: the Armenians were removed from their homes, deported, and murdered by state coercion (*devlet zoruyla*).⁹⁷ A similar lack of agency and responsibility highlighted by the use of the passive tense throughout the text marked DurDe's commemoration message in 2012 as well. Even though the text used the term "genocide" and there was a more detailed account of the events, there was no *perpetrator* in the text. Horrible things were done or happened to the Armenians, but there was no *doer*.⁹⁸ In 2013 one encounters in the press release a very limited perpetrator group, "hitmen coordinated by the Special Organization".⁹⁹ Clearly, ambivalence about perpetrators, responsibility and even the very notion of crime has been a significance aspect of DurDe's commemorations.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory*, 147.

⁹⁷ Çiçek Tahaoğlu, "24 Nisan 1915 Anması: 'İnkâr Politikalarına Son Vermeliyiz,'" *Bianet*, April 24, 2011, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/azinliklar/129504-inkar-politikalarina-son-vermeliyiz>; "24 Nisan İçin 5 Merkezde Toplantı: 'Bu Acı Hepimizin...,'" *Epress News*, April 20, 2011, <http://www.epress.am/tr/2011/04/20/24-nisan-icin-5-merkezde-toplanti-bu-aci-hepimizin.html>.

⁹⁸ "DurDe'nin 24 Nisan çağrısı," *Agos*, April 17, 2012, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/1159/durdenin-24-nisan-cagrisi>.

⁹⁹ Elif Akgül, "Ermeni Soykırımının 98. Yılı '20. Yüzyılın İlk Soykırımı Bu Topraklarda Gerçekleşti,'" *Bianet*, April 24, 2013, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/yasam/146126-20-yuzyilin-ilk-soykirimi-bu-topraklarda-gerceklesti>.

¹⁰⁰ Talin Suciyan, "Toplumsal Anma Pratikleri Şekillenirken, Bölüm II: İstanbul 24 Nisan 2015," *Azad Alik*, June 21, 2015, <https://azadalik.wordpress.com/2015/06/21/toplumsal-anma-pratikleri-sekillenirken-bolum-ii-istanbul-24-nisan-2015/>.

In the light of these considerations, one can say that the Armenian genocide, as it has been represented in uncritical and many critical public discourses in Turkey, is *genocide without perpetrators*. Other than top level and highly visible members of the Ottoman elites and some other mid-level perpetrators, there is not much written about the subject of genocide actors. There is only a limited amount of scholarly work on the topic.¹⁰¹ The Armenian genocide does not have a study of perpetrators equivalent to Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men*.¹⁰² Perpetrators have been rarely mentioned, even, in counter-memory discourses. When they are discussed, the tendency is to use a very limited group that includes Enver, Talat, and Cemal Pashas, the Central Committee of the Union and Progress, the Special Committee. Or to invoke the usual but never clearly defined villain of Ottoman-Turkish history, the state. When the state is pointed to as an agent of violence, the category of perpetrators is irreversibly diluted. Assigning responsibility for the genocide to the state does not explain much about structures of involvement in the destruction of the Armenians.

Sharing the Pain

No "we" should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people's pain.
Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*.¹⁰³

The discourse of "common/shared pain" or "sharing the pain" was the main frame of remembrance mobilized by DurDe. The banner of the commemorative events in 2010, 2011, and 2012 was *Bu Acı Hepimizin* (*This Pain is All of Ours* or *This Pain Belongs to Us All*) and it was used everywhere including the public calls for the event. Shared pain

¹⁰¹ Uğur Ümit Üngör, "The Armenian Genocide: New Sources and Research Directions," *Haigazian Armenological Review* 31 (2011): 9–32.

¹⁰² Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men : Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

¹⁰³ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2004).

discourse was another field where transformative potentials and containment drives operated simultaneously. This discourse constituted the genocide as suffering and pain and demanded the commemorators open up a space for Armenian pain. In this regard, it cannot be ignored as part of the coming to memory discourse, but its strategic effect must be read critically. However, it also delimited the reach of this discourse. Putting the emphasis on the pain was thoroughly de-politicized. It emotionalized the commemorative discourse and, aside from moving the horror of the annihilation into a vaguely humanistic affective register, it precluded the more radical call to justice.

Oscillation between perceived transgression and its containment crystalized in a public exchange about the increasingly widespread trope of shared pain. In a critical piece entitled “This pain is not ours,” writer Serhat Uyurkulak, highlighted the essential and incompatible subject positions of Armenians, as the victims of the genocide, and the dominant group.¹⁰⁴

One wonders whether the road to hell really is paved with stones of good will. For instance, I’m not exactly sure what kind of a response I’d get from Armenians had I told them with the intention to be a person with a clear conscience that I take what they lived in 1915 as my own pain too. I’m not sure because I know that I belong in a ‘constitutive element’ that has been privileged by a republic which has chosen to espouse the polity that carried out the genocide (call it the forced exile or the Great Catastrophe if you like) rather than severing its ties with it. Even though I don’t see myself as such, this is who I am historically and structurally.¹⁰⁵

He draws a clear line in the sand between the victims of the genocide and its perpetrators and insists on acknowledging the existence of a crime. He asserts that the dominant group has been historically supported and entrusted with privileges by the Republic that sought to justify the genocide.

¹⁰⁴ Serhat Uyurkulak, “This Pain Is Not Ours,” *Azad Alik*, June 1, 2011, <https://azadalik.wordpress.com/2011/06/01/this-pain-is-not-ours/>.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

In this country resembling a gigantic wake-house, the victims are expected to console and comfort everyone else, especially those with ill conscience. That's precisely the reason why I cannot help but say that this pain doesn't belong to all of us but the Armenians. I don't think that saying so would make a person heartless or inhuman. On the contrary, I believe that it's more humane not to appropriate even the suffering of those who have been wiped off the face of the country I'm a citizen of and whose properties I've been using, whose houses I've been living in, and whose wealth I've been taking advantage of even if structurally speaking. What is needed is not that fashionable sentiment called empathy but to assume the responsibility of what happened and to work for justice despite this may be hard or even unbearable to admit. Finally, if 1915 has been our common suffering all along, why did we wait to feel and declare it so until Hrant Dink was assassinated? I really wonder why.¹⁰⁶

Uyurkulak critiques the evasive discourses of empathy and sharing the pain as proposed "methods" of coming to terms with the genocide. He insists that only justice and taking responsibility for historical crimes will enable reconciliation.

Yet, his sharp criticism of what he saw as an evasion of responsibility and justice did not go unanswered. Researcher and artist Tayfun Serttaş published a blog post criticizing Uyurkulak and public figures who voiced critical views about the language of the commemorations.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Uyurkulak's critique of a discourse of empathy that precludes demands for justice can be theorized in terms of wider transgression-containment debates that focus on the way in which ostensibly transgressive moves are often recuperated to the dominant structures they seek to displace.

Uyurkulak's critique of empathy that precludes demands for justice ties to the wider transgression-containment debate that focuses on the inter-involvement of hegemonic and dissident discourses and practices as well as the continuum of subversion and incorporation. See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). Dollimore draws on Sinfield's use of the term "dissident" to highlight the fact that these moves do not, in the end, constitute transgression. What I am arguing here is that many of the discourses and tropes of the Armenian genocide commemorations serve to maintain the status quo. In the language of Sinfield and Dollimore, then, they are *dissident* rather than *transgressive*. Finally, they are complicit with denialist claims, particularly because they refuse the rhetoric – and historical fact – of Turkey's perpetrator status wherever they assign an equivalent suffering to perpetrator and victim.

¹⁰⁷ Tayfun Serttaş, "1915: Bu Acı Hepimizin Değil İse?," May 13, 2011, <http://tayfunserttas.blogspot.ca/2011/05/1915-bu-aci-hepimizin-degil-ise.html>. In this piece,

Another friend called Serhat Uyrkulak left his work aside and dared to decide, in the name of others and doing exactly what he was critical of, what he criticized in his piece, who could mourn for whom; which pain was more sincere; the intimate relationship of pain with hypocrisy; which ceremonies should be undertaken in which way. As if millions of people went out to the streets in order to commemorate and understand what happened in 1915 and the only task left was to analyze how they understood and what kind of problems were included in what they understood.¹⁰⁸

By constructing a clean-cut dichotomy between denial and commemorations, Serttaş argued that problematizing commemorative efforts was merely cynical critique. “Do we not have anything to say about the 96-year long denial of 70 million people, rather than criticizing the commemoration of a handful of people.”¹⁰⁹ He implied that as long as the denial continued, criticizing the commemorators was unfair and counter-productive.

Serttaş’s defensive position regarding the commemoration and its professed goal of sharing the pain of the Armenians can be read in line with Lauren Berlant’s commentary on the compassion of dominant groups in the face of the pain of others.

In the liberal society that sanctions individuality as sovereign, we like our positive emotions to feel well intentioned and we like our good intentions to constitute the meaning of our acts. We do not like to hear that our good intentions can sometimes be said to be aggressive, although anyone versed in, say, the history of love or imperialism knows volumes about the ways in which genuinely good intentions have involved forms of ordinary terror (think about missionary education) and control (think of state military, carceral, and police practices). We do not like to be held responsible for consequences we did not mean to enact. We can feel bad about it; we can feel compassionately toward

Serttaş targeted Khatchig Mouradian, whose criticism of the grammar of the coming to memory was discussed in an earlier chapter, as well. Serttaş accused Mouradian for being racist.

¹⁰⁸ Serhat Uyrkulak isimli bir arkadaş daha işi gücü bırakmış, kimin kime üzüleceğine, hangi acının daha samimi olup olmadığına, acının ikiyüzlülükle olan flörtüne ve hangi seremonilerin ne biçimde gerçekleştirilmesi gerektiğine - hem de tam sözünü ettiği gibi "başka" birileri adına - Serhat Uyrkulak olarak karar vermeye yeltenmiş. Sanki Türkiye’de milyonlarca insan sokağa dökülmüşse 1915’i anmak ve anlamak için, geriye nasıl anladıkları ve anladıkları şeyin ne denli problematikler içerdiğini çözümlemek kalmış. Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ 70 Milyonun 96 yıllık inkarına söylecek sözümüz kalmadı da, bir avuç insanın hatırlamasına mıdır tepkimiz? Bu tepki samimi midir? Ibid.

those who suffer: why isn't it enough to have meant well, or not to have meant badly?¹¹⁰

For Serttaş the Armenian genocide commemorators began to do something unprecedented in a hostile social environment and their intentions were clearly good. Hence, what was the point of challenging or criticizing them for some potential consequences of their memorialization, such as the appropriation of the Armenians' pain?

Serttaş likened the role of the commemorators to witnesses and commemorations to a form of bearing witness.

Speaking about pain is long and hard. However, speaking about witnessing is easy and straightforward. If there is a body on the ground and if some people are willing to bear witness, we cannot legally question their right to do so, even if they are accomplices in the murder. Especially if these people are putting themselves on the line in order to reveal the truth, pontificating on their witnessing should be the last thing to do.¹¹¹

The emphasis fell, for Serttaş, on the fact that commemorations were at least starting to take place in overwhelmingly denialist Turkey. They should be outside of criticism because they signify a major turning point in the breaking of a taboo. Looked at more closely however, Serttaş's analogy between speaking about pain and bearing witnessing functions as a major displacement of the main thrust of the commemorative frame. Also the commemorative message was far from providing even a remotely historical account of what had actually happened to the Armenians.

The stakes in the Uyrkulak- Serttaş exchange about the shareability or ownership of the pain resonate with recent broader cultural discourses about pain. Elaine Scarry

¹¹⁰ Lauren Berlant, "Introduction: Compassion (and Withholding)," in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. Lauren Berlant (New York: Routledge, 2004), 5–6.

¹¹¹ Acı üzerine konuşmak zor ve uzundur. Fakat tanıklık üzerine konuşmak kolay ve nettir. Yerde bir ölü yatıyorsa ve birileri kalkıp bu cinayete tanıklık etmek istiyorsa, bu kişiler cinayetin suç ortağı dahi olsa, hukuki olarak onların tanıklık etme hakları üzerine konuşamayız. Hele ki bu kişiler orada olup biten hakikati açığa çıkartmak için kendilerini siper ediyorsa, son yapacağımız şey olmalıdır onların tanıklıkları üzerine ahkam kesmek. Serttaş, "Tayfun Serttaş."

brilliantly explores the unshareability and inexpressibility of physical pain as well as its political implications: Its presentness, immediacy, and unalienable subjectivity for the body in pain, inaccessible to the body that is *not* in pain.¹¹² A new reading of cultural politics of a political-social pain can be found in critiques such as Lynne Henderson, Martha Nussbaum, Elizabeth Spelman, and Lauren Berlant. These cultural critiques have been at the forefront of this increased multi-disciplinary scholarly interest in pain, compassion, and the politics of emotion. Engaging with compassion, that may take a variety of cognate names such as empathy, pity and sympathy, their works highlight the potentials and limitations of evoking emotions to challenge dominant ideologies, political configurations, discursive formations and structural hierarchies.¹¹³ These inquiries into the circulation of compassion in public discourses, its articulations, and its functions engage with the broad continuum of tropes deployed in the socio-political field. They help to remind us that pain is always situated and singular and discourses of sharing the pain of others must be wary of blurring the differences between pain belonging to different groups that often share an unequal history.

While inviting people to attend the commemoration in 2011, Cengiz Alğan, defined what happened in 1915 as “a hurt we all share.”¹¹⁴ This statement, like the commemorative frame itself, was highly problematic because, in its quest to broaden the potential audience and attendees through an unqualified universalization of the pain, it obliterated crucial boundaries. A year earlier, while commenting on the first commemoration, Alğan underlined that the initial frame of remembrance was “*acınız*

¹¹² Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹¹³ Kathleen Woodward, “Calculating Compassion,” *Indiana Law Journal* 77 (2002): 223–46.

¹¹⁴ “Armenian Genocide to Be Commemorated for Second Time in Turkey as ‘1915 Tragedy,’” *PanArmenian.Net*, April 20, 2011, <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/world/news/67693/>.

acımızdır” (“your pain is our pain”). However, they decided not to use this formulation because it distinguished between Armenians and Turks and continued to “other” the Armenians.¹¹⁵ With this change of message, the line between inclusion and appropriation was crossed as the initial formula at least acknowledged that there might be separate ownerships of the pain.

By “blurring the boundaries between perpetrators and victims,”¹¹⁶ the over-generalized discourse of shared pain undermines the demands to establish the historical specificity of Armenian suffering. Proliferation of “sharing the pain” discourses in contemporary Turkey recoverable in dominant as well as dissident circles, Akçam reminded us, absolve the ethico-political responsibility of the dominant group for the atrocities.

Whenever the subject of the Armenians’ annihilation in 1915 comes up, the civilian Muslim and military losses from the Caucasian and Balkan wars and World War I are presented as an equivalent. Our so-called “liberal” writers engage in the same exercise. Sometimes you can’t get away from all the “mutual suffering” literature being printed everywhere. Since everyone has suffered and everyone needs to understand the other’s suffering, a deep sense of “peace” settles into every corner. One can’t ignore the comfort in replacing “accusations” and “conflicts” and “battles,” with “harmony” and “serenity” and “understanding.” Since “everyone has suffered,” we gain a tremendous sense of peace by “understanding each other’s pain”. Therefore there is no “perpetrator” in our midst, no “malfeator,” and no “victim.” We are all in the same position, so why fight? We need to accept the fact that when “someone is feeling blamed” rather deeply, turning it around and making themselves feel like the victim is actually quite comforting to them. It’s a general rule: When cornered, make yourself the victim and get instant stress relief.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Alçı, “Konuşmanın Vakti Geldi.”

¹¹⁶ Ayda Erbal and Talin Suciyan, “Erbal and Suciyan: One Hundred Years of Abandonment,” *Armenian Weekly*, April 29, 2011, <http://armenianweekly.com/2011/04/29/erbal-and-suciyan-one-hundred-years-of-abandonment/>.

¹¹⁷ Taner Akçam, “What Davutoglu Fails to Understand,” *Armenian Weekly*, May 19, 2010, <http://armenianweekly.com/2010/05/19/akcam-davutoglu/>.

We might conclude that the “shared pain” has, in fact, operated to mute transgressive potentials of the commemorations and to *contain* them in ways never fully challenged the official denialist narrative. It puts Armenian suffering into circulation in Turkey in a discourse that could live side by side with the existing denialist impulses that did not have any problem with acknowledging that the Armenians suffered in the past as long as Turkey, itself, escaped perpetrator status.

In short, appropriating the pain of others in the name of establishing an empathetic bonding, points to the way in which mobilizing compassion can be co-opted for political ends.¹¹⁸ DurDe’s commemorations were sentimentally framed through performative strategies which included the music played, imagery, candles, and bodily performance of sitting. Lauren Berlant reminds us what happens when the sentimentality and politics are merged.

When sentimentality meets politics, it uses personal stories to tell of structural effects, but in so doing it risks thwarting its very attempt to perform rhetorically a scene of pain that must be soothed politically. Because the ideology of true feeling cannot admit the nonuniversality of pain, its cases become all jumbled together and the ethical imperative toward social transformation is replaced by a civic-minded but passive ideal of empathy. The political as a place of acts oriented toward publicness becomes replaced by a world of private thoughts, leaning, and gestures.¹¹⁹

Just like many counter-memory initiatives that preceded it, the frames of remembrance mobilized by DurDe, were too close to this kind of personalization and de-politicization of the commemorations.¹²⁰ The politics of memory in DurDe positioned emotions so

¹¹⁸ Woodward, “Calculating Compassion,” 233.

¹¹⁹ Lauren Berlant, “Poor Eliza,” *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (September 1998): 641.

¹²⁰ In this regard, the discourse of coming to memory, as it was evident in the commemorations, fit with the psychologization, personalization, and emotionalization of the politics in the post-1980s Turkey as observed by cultural critic Nurdan Gürbilek. The military regime’s deep suspicion of organized political activity was one of the major reasons behind the blanket ban on almost all political institutions. However, it is not possible to explain this phenomenon only with

centrally that there was no room for a discourse of justice. Without acknowledging the particularity of the injustice inflicted on the Armenian community the door was opened to advocating an unjust and unfair process in which the dominant ideology was reproduced in its “emotional” disguise.

Proving the Genocide: Armenians as Eternal Witnesses and Victims

The sustained denial and the complex historical trajectory of the coming to memory of the genocide put the Armenians in general and Armenians in Turkey, in particular, into a precarious position with pernicious effects. It could be argued that, in the post-1980 period, when the Turkish state mobilized an aggressive denialist campaign which insisted on aggressive tactics of refuting evidence and insisting on “scientific” evidence proving the genocidal intent of the CUP, there was heightened pressure on Armenians. Counter-memory initiatives ironically reproduced the same double bind for Armenians in Turkey that had existed since the genocide. The claim that the majority of the population in Turkey does not know about the annihilation of the Armenians led to a “moral suasion” strategy in which Armenians were encouraged to tell their “stories” of victimization. Hence, it has become a common practice to invite Armenian citizens, on April 24 to give speeches on Armenian victimization, to narrate “what had happened to them,” effectively performing their status as both Armenians and victims.

Rober Koptaş underlined the arduous task of explaining the unexplainable,

an official ban on organized politics. The transformation of the political discourse was much deeper and fundamental. As mentioned above, the 1980s witnessed the erosion of grand narratives and sharp ideological strives. The political terms of the 1970s such as class conflict and revolution, in its socialist and national democratic variants, had been violently oppressed. These overarching notions were replaced with trustworthiness, persuasiveness, sincerity, and intimacy as the dominant criteria to judge a political figure or organization. The field of politics was opened to personal connection, empathy, and affective resonance. Human touch or warmth came to dominate over principles. A new regime of psychological power began and is still the dominant mode of politics in contemporary Turkey. Gürbilek, *Vitrinde yaşamak*, 111–112.

If the genocide is the biggest tragedy the Armenians experienced, telling the whole world after a hundred years what had happened, seeking to obtain approval again and again, after a hundred years still feeling obliged to secure others' affirmation, is a big drama.¹²¹

As long as the perpetrator's "truth" and the victim's unexplainable truth are positioned as two sides of the argument, Koptaş argued, the Armenians are "subjected to eternal victimhood and being a mere witness".¹²² This inherently violent act attests to one of the major ways the genocidal calculus continues to exist. Hayko Bağdat highlights this aspect of the coming to memory of the genocide and argues that April 24 has become "a day when Armenians beg for recognition of their pain."¹²³ "I know what happened to me, I do not need your approval."¹²⁴ In the aftermath of the twin destruction of the Armenian identity through the genocide and its denial, the coming to memory of the genocide happens in a way that conspicuously inflicts further wounds on the Armenians.

Armenian-French philosopher and cultural critic Marc Nichanian argues that the drive to prove genocide imposes an inability to mourn on Armenians all around the world. Using the term "genocide," a shared name, to refer to a singular and unique event for the Armenians, Nichanian refers to the event as the Catastrophe (the English translation of the Armenian name *Aghed*), alienates the Armenians from their identity and

¹²¹ Soykırım Ermenilerin yaşadığı en büyük trajediye eğer, yaşananları yüz yıl sonra hala ve hala bütün dünyaya anlatmaya, yeniden ve yeniden onay almaya çalışmak, yüz yıl sonra hala başkalarından tasdik görme zorunluluğu hissetmek de, büyük bir dramdır. Rober Koptaş, "24 Nisan ve Anlatılamayani Anlatma Çabası," *Bianet*, April 24, 2010, <https://www.bianet.org/biamag/insan-haklari/121543-24-nisan-ve-anlatilamayani-anlatma-cabasi>.

¹²² "Mağdur sonsuza dek mağdur olarak kalmaya, salt bir tanık olarak kalmaya mahkum edilir." Ibid.

¹²³ Hayko Bağdat, *24 Nisan'da Ne Olmuştu? 19 Ocak'ta Ne Oldu?*, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=baHefQzRCN4>.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

memory that shaped their existence in the last century.¹²⁵ Genocide belonged to a different register than the Catastrophe; a register that evokes proof, evidence and the archive.

What, after all, must be proven? Not that the event was and is a catastrophe. We know that all too well and are obviously not about to prove it to ourselves. No. We have to prove that it is genocide. But the opposite is true as well, and that is what is terrible. It was genocide, and we need to prove it for that reason. We need to enter into the endless game of proving it, to detach ourselves from ourselves in order to come forward as proofs, as so many living proofs of our own death. There is no genocide without denial. More than that: the essence of genocide is denial. Why? Because those who conceived and carried out the extermination conceived and carried out, by the same token, the elimination of every trace of their act. In the Armenians' case, they succeeded rather well. In this sense, genocide is an absolutely, resolutely modern phenomenon. It belongs to an age in which memory is not passed down by stories held in common, by epics, but through archives. It is because the perpetrators had already situated themselves in the modern dimension of the archive that they could contemplate eliminating every trace of their crime. Genocide exists only in this dimension. Inversely, the victim is obliged to appeal to the archive to prove that what was conceived as not having taken place did indeed take place.¹²⁶

If there is pain here, in the Armenian case, it is experienced as a present-past, not only in the sense of traumatic memory, but because the Armenian community is compelled to perform itself as a living archive. It is in this sense that the injunction to literally embody their history can be read as both positive testimonial, an archive, and a violation in that they remain frozen in time as victims rather than equal actors in the national Turkish community. Nichanian argues,

Why is this dimension of the archive terrible, even, in the proper sense of the term, insane? Because it in fact dispossesses the victim, the survivor, the maimed, of every memory that would be his own. No common narrative, no epic, is then possible. This is emphatically not to say that one should or could have made an epic out of the catastrophic events. One must, rather, take note of the impossibility of doing so. From the very first, starting in 1918 with

¹²⁵ Marc Nichanian and David L Kazanjian, "Between Genocide and Catastrophe," in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. David L Eng and David L Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 127.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 133.

Andonian, or even in 1917 with Zabel Essayan, the Armenians knew very well that the problem lay there. They would have to collect eye-witness accounts, not in order to preserve a collective memory by way of a story, but rather in order to transform these accounts straightaway into archives, into so many pieces of evidence. They were the stricken artisans of an “archivization” of memory, of this immediate transformation of memory into archive for the sole purpose of providing proof, that is, of dispossessing the victim of his own memory. Because each time a proof is requested, and a proof is constantly requested, you are again in front of the executioner; you have to give an account of your own torture, your own death under torture. And this is what the executioner wanted. You are totally caught in the logic of the executioner. There is no escape. He is in front of you. He says: speak, say the truth, give the proof.¹²⁷

Each time there is a panel, conference, or commemorative activity around the events of 1915, there is a collective request forcing the Armenians to represent what is unrepresentable. They have to provide the proof of their annihilation; to bear witness to educate the public in Turkey; and to do it in a language that does not accuse Turkey as perpetrator. Is it not time to reverse the question and start asking ourselves what our ancestors did to the Armenians rather than asking the Armenians to tell us what happened to their ancestors?

Unless we take up this historical responsibility and engage in a coming to memory of the Armenian genocide that goes beyond regulating the discourses of memory work, there is a tangible risk of merely reproducing the hegemonic “just memory” discourse, in a new guise. “Just memory” was first formulated by the then Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in 2010 and it lived side by side with the emerging counter-memory initiatives of the Armenian genocide. The minister presented the discourse as an attempt to transcend historic denial: “before there was one-side – maybe from our side as well – we were denying, I mean, denying, nothing happened – no, something happened. But something happened to us as well, to all of us. Now it is time to restore [the truth].

¹²⁷ Ibid.

Therefore, it is a just memory. Ready to discuss everything.”¹²⁸ This new official memory discourse paved the way for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s interpretation of the condolences of 2014 as a victory for civil society in Turkey in which the administration was convinced to change its denialist course. Yet, it is clear that even these ostensibly counter-memory concessions fall dramatically short of recognizing the genocide. DurDe’s commemorations, between 2010 and 2013, mobilized discourses that were not too different from those articulated in the government minister’s text, confirming that what was on display in these commemorations was a highly regulated and compromised coming to memory of the genocide.

The claim that the commemorations prove that Turks were not a community of denialists, but a “great nation” who were able to employ a moral compass when engaging with their past, demands closer scrutiny.¹²⁹ Certainly, the major public memorialization attempts to date have initiated a coming to memory of the genocide which might be read as a modest tear in the fabric of the official narrative. At the same time, as we have seen, they do not yet constitute a serious challenge to dominant discursive formations of Turkishness and its power asymmetries. In their deliberate, or unwitting, complicity with a much larger tradition of denialist impulses in Turkey, they stabilize the mirror of nation at the expense of a wrenching but authentic coming to terms with the past. Caught halfway between a long and highly culpable denialist history and an intensely wished-for future act of recognition of Turkey’s role in the Armenian genocide, what they achieve to date, it might be argued, is only *unjust* memory.

¹²⁸ “Perspectives on Turkish Foreign Policy: An Address by H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey.”

¹²⁹ Çandar, “Tarihi ‘ıslah’ Etmek....”

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Appendices

A – Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 9 December 1948¹

The Contracting Parties,
Having considered the declaration made by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 96 (I) dated 11 December 1946 that genocide is a crime under international law, contrary to the spirit and aims of the United Nations and condemned by the civilized world;
Recognizing that at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity; and
Being convinced that, in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international cooperation is required,
Hereby agree as hereinafter provided:

Article I

The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.

Article II

In the present Convention, genocide means 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.

Article III

The following acts shall be punishable:

- (a) Genocide;
- (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;

¹ <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%2078/volume-78-I-1021-English.pdf>

- (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
- (d) Attempt to commit genocide;
- (e) Complicity in genocide.

Article IV

Persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.

Article V

The Contracting Parties undertake to enact, in accordance with their respective Constitutions, the necessary legislation to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention and, in particular, to provide effective penalties for persons guilty of genocide or of any of the other acts enumerated in article III.

Article VI

Persons charged with genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be tried by a competent tribunal of the State in the territory of which the act was committed, or by such international penal tribunal as may have jurisdiction with respect to those Contracting Parties which shall have accepted its jurisdiction.

Article VII

Genocide and the other acts enumerated in article III shall not be considered as political crimes for the purpose of extradition.

The Contracting Parties pledge themselves in such cases to grant extradition in accordance with their laws and treaties in force.

Article VIII

Any Contracting Party may call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take such action under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate for the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III.

Article IX

Disputes between the Contracting Parties relating to the interpretation, application or fulfilment of the present Convention, including those relating to the responsibility of a State for genocide or for any of the other acts enumerated in article III, shall be submitted to the International Court of Justice at the request of any of the parties to the dispute.

Article X

The present Convention, of which the Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall bear the date of 9 December 1948.

Article XI

The present Convention shall be open until 31 December 1949 for signature on behalf of any Member of the United Nations and of any non member State to which an invitation to sign has been addressed by the General Assembly.

The present Convention shall be ratified, and the instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary General of the United Nations.

After 1 January 1950 the present Convention may be acceded to on behalf of any Member of the United Nations and of any non member State which has received an invitation as aforesaid.

Instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Article XII

Any Contracting Party may at any time, by notification addressed to the Secretary General of the United Nations, extend the application of the present Convention to all or any of the territories for the conduct of whose foreign relations that Contracting Party is responsible.

Article XIII

On the day when the first twenty instruments of ratification or accession have been deposited, the Secretary General shall draw up a procès verbal and transmit a copy thereof to each Member of the United Nations and to each of the non member States contemplated in article XI.

The present Convention shall come into force on the ninetieth day following the date of deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession.

Any ratification or accession effected subsequent to the latter date shall become effective on the ninetieth day following the deposit of the instrument of ratification or accession.

Article XIV

The present Convention shall remain in effect for a period of ten years as from the date of its coming into force.

It shall thereafter remain in force for successive periods of five years for such Contracting Parties as have not denounced it at least six months before the expiration of the current period.

Denunciation shall be effected by a written notification addressed to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Article XV

If, as a result of denunciations, the number of Parties to the present Convention should become less than sixteen, the Convention shall cease to be in force as from the date on which the last of these denunciations shall become effective.

Article XVI

A request for the revision of the present Convention may be made at any time by any Contracting Party by means of a notification in writing addressed to the Secretary General.

The General Assembly shall decide upon the steps, if any, to be taken in respect of such request.

Article XVII

The Secretary General of the United Nations shall notify all Members of the United Nations and the non member States contemplated in article XI of the following:

- (a) Signatures, ratifications and accessions received in accordance with article XI;
- (b) Notifications received in accordance with article XII;
- (c) The date upon which the present Convention comes into force in accordance with article XIII;
- (d) Denunciations received in accordance with article XIV;
- (e) The abrogation of the Convention in accordance with article XV;
- (f) Notifications received in accordance with article XVI.

Article XVIII

The original of the present Convention shall be deposited in the archives of the United Nations.

A certified copy of the Convention shall be transmitted to each Member of the United Nations and to each of the non member States contemplated in article XI.

Article XIX

The present Convention shall be registered by the Secretary General of the United Nations on the date of its coming into force.

B – To Honor the 50th Anniversary of the U.N. Genocide Convention²

We Commemorate the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and Condemn the Turkish Government's Denial of this Crime Against Humanity

² “To Honor the 50th Anniversary of the U.N. Genocide Convention: We Commemorate the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and Condemn the Turkish Government’s Denial of This Crime Against Humanity,” *The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute*, April 24, 1998, <http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/150.php>; Yair Auron, *The Banality of Denial : Israel and the Armenian Genocide* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 303.

On April 24, 1915, the Young Turk government of the Ottoman Empire began a systematic, premeditated genocide of the Armenian people — an unarmed Christian minority living under Turkish rule. **More than a million Armenians were exterminated** through direct killing, starvation, torture, and forced death marches. Another million fled into permanent exile. Thus an ancient civilization was expunged from its homeland of 2,500 years.

The Armenian Genocide was the most dramatic human rights issue of the time and was reported regularly in newspapers across the U.S. **The Armenian Genocide is abundantly documented** by Ottoman court-martial records, by hundreds of thousands of documents in the archives of the United States and nations around the world, by eyewitness reports of missionaries and diplomats, by the testimony of survivors, and by eight decades of historical scholarship.

After 83 years **the Turkish government continues to deny the genocide** of the Armenians by blaming the victims and undermining historical fact with false rhetoric. Books about the genocide are banned in Turkey. The words "Armenian" and "Greek" are nonexistent in Turkish descriptions of ancient or Christian artifacts and monuments in Turkey. Turkey's efforts to sanitize its history now include the funding of chairs in Turkish studies — with strings attached — at American universities.

It is essential to remember that...

When Raphael Lemkin coined the word *genocide* in 1944 he cited the 1915 annihilation of the Armenians as a seminal example of genocide.

The European Parliament, the Association of Genocide Scholars, the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide (Jerusalem), and the Institute for the Study of Genocide (NYC) have **reaffirmed the extermination of the Armenians by the Turkish government as *genocide*** by the definition of the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention.

Denial of genocide strives to reshape history in order to demonize the victims and rehabilitate the perpetrators. Denial of genocide is the final stage of genocide. **It is what Ellie Weisel has called a "double killing".** Denial murders the dignity of the survivors and seeks to destroy remembrance of the crime. In a century plagued by genocide, **we affirm the moral necessity of remembering.**

We denounce as morally and intellectually corrupt the Turkish government's denial of the Armenian genocide. **We condemn Turkey's manipulation** of the American government and American institutions for the purpose of denying the Armenian genocide. **We urge our government officials, scholars, and the media** to refrain from using evasive or euphemistic terminology to appease the Turkish government; we ask them to **refer to the 1915 annihilation of the Armenians as genocide.**

This statement has been signed by more than 150 distinguished scholars and writers, including:

K. Anthony Appiah (Professor of Afro-American Studies & Philosophy, Harvard University); **Michael Arlen** (Writer);

James Axtell (Professor History, College of William & Mary); **Ben Bagdikian** (Former Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism, University of California at Berkeley);

Houston Baker (Professor of English, University of Pennsylvania); **Peter Balakian** (Writer; Professor of English, Colgate University); **Mary Catherine Bateson** (Clarence J. Robinson Professor in English & Anthropology, George Mason University); **Yehuda Bauer** (Professor of Holocaust Studies, Hebrew University, Jerusalem); **Robert N.**

Bellah (Elliott Professor of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley); **Norman Birnbaum** (University Professor, Georgetown University); **Peter Brooks** (Professor of Comparative Literature, Yale University); **Robert McAfee Brown** (Professor of Theology and Ethics Emeritus, Pacific School of Religion); **Christopher Browning** (Professor of History, Pacific Lutheran University); **Frank Chalk** (Professor of History, Concordia University); **Israel W. Charny** (Director, Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide, Jerusalem); **Ward Churchill** (Associate Professor of American Indian Studies, University of Colorado); **Rev. William Sloane Coffin** (Pastor Emeritus, Riverside Church, N.Y.C.); **Vahakn Dadrian** (Director, Genocide Study Project, H.F. Guggenheim Foundation); **David Brion Davis** (Sterline Professor of History, Yale University); **James Der Derian** (Professor of Political Science, University of Massachusetts); **Marjorie Housepian Dobkin** (Writer); **Jean Bethke Elstain** (Laura Spelman Rockefeller Professor of Social and Political Ethics, University of Chicago Divinity School); **Kai Erikson** (Professor of Sociology, Yale University); **Craig Etcheson** (Acting Director, Cambodian Genocide Program, Yale University); **Helen Fein** (Executive Director, Institute for the Study of Genocide, John Jay College of Criminal Justice); **Lawrence J. Friedman** (Professor of History, Indiana University); **William Gass** (David May Distinguished Professor of Humanities, Washington University); **Henry Louis Gates, Jr.** (Professor of Afro-American Studies, Harvard University); **Carol Gilligan** (Patricia Albjerg Graham Professor of Gender Studies, Harvard University); **Langdon Gilkey** (Kennedy Distinguished Visiting Professor of Theology, Georgetown University); **Daniel Goldhagen** (Associate Professor of Government & Social Studies, Harvard University); **Sandor Goodhart** (Director of Jewish Studies, Purdue University); **Vigen Guroian** (Professor of Theology and Ethics, Loyola College); **Geoffrey Hartman** (Sterling Professor of Comparative Literature, Yale University); **Seamus Heaney** (Harvard University; Nobel Laureate for Literature); **Judith Herman** (Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School); **Raul Hilberg** (Professor of Political Science Emeritus, University of Vermont); **Richard G. Hovannisian** (Professor of Armenian and Near Eastern History, UCLA); **Kurt Jonahsson** (Professor of Sociology, Concordia University); **Alfred Kazin** (Writer, Distinguished Professor of English Emeritus, CUNY Graduate Center); **Steven Kepnes** (Director of Jewish Studies, Professor of Religion, Colgate University); **Ben Kiernan** (Professor of History, Yale University); **Robert Jay Lifton** (Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology, John Jay College of Criminal Justice and The Graduate School of the City University of New York); **Deborah E. Lipstadt** (Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish and Holocaust Studies, Emory University); **Norman Mailer** (Writer); **Eric Markusen** (Professor of Sociology, Southwest State University, Minnesota); **Robert Melson** (Professor of Political Science, Purdue University); **Saul Medlovitz** (Dag Hammarskjöld Professor of Law, Rutgers University); **W.S. Merwin** (Writer); **Arthur Miller** (Writer); **Henry Morgenthau III** (Writer); **George L. Mosse** (Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin, Madison; Hebrew University, Jerusalem); **Joyce Carol Oates** (Writer); **Grace Paley** (Writer); **Harold Pinter** (Writer); **Robert A. Pois** (Professor of History, University of Colorado); **Francis B. Randall** (Professor of History, Sarah Lawrence College); **Nicholas V. Riasanovsky** (Sidney Hellman Professor of European History, University of California, Berkeley); **Leo P. Ribuffo** (Professor of History, George Washington University); **David**

Riesman (Henry Ford II Professor of Social Science, Harvard University); **Nathan A. Scott** (William R. Kenan Professor of Religious Studies Emeritus, University of Virginia); **Christopher Simpson** (Professor of Communications, American University); **Roger Smith** (Professor of Government, College of William & Mary); **Susan Sontag** (Writer); **Wole Soyinka** (Nobel Laureate, Woodruff Professor of the Arts, Emory University); **Max L. Stackhouse** (Stephen Colwell Professor of Christian Ethics, Princeton Theological Seminary); **Charles B. Strozier** (Professor of History, John Jay College of Criminal Justice and The Graduate Center, City University of New York); **Rose Styron** (Writer; former Chair Freedom to Write Committee, PEN American Center); **William Styron** (Writer); **Ronald Suny** (Professor of Political Science, University of Chicago); **Raymond Tanter** (Professor of Political Science, University of Michigan); **D.M. Thomas** (Writer); **John Updike** (Writer); **Kurt Vonnegut** (Writer); **Derek Walcott** (Professor of English, Boston University; Nobel Laureate for Literature); **Cornel West** (Professor of Philosophy & Religion, and Afro-American Studies, Harvard University); **Howard Zinn** (Professor Emeritus of History, Boston University). Original emphases.

C – A selected list of Fatma Müge Göçek’s works

(in chronological order):

Single-author book:

Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present and the Collective Violence against Armenians, 1789-2009. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Edited book:

A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire, with Ronald Grigor Suny and Norman Naimark. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Articles and Book Sections:

"Discussing Genocide: Contextualizing the Armenian Experience in the Ottoman Empire." (with Ronald Suny) *The Journal of the International Institute* 9/3 (2002): 1-11,

- "Reconstructing the Turkish Historiography on the Armenian Deaths and Massacres of 1915." Pp. 209-30 in *Looking Backward, Moving Forward*. R. Hovannisian, ed. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers. 2004,
- "Reading Genocide: Turkish Historiography on the Armenian Deportations and Massacres of 1915." Pp. 101-127 in *Middle East Historiographies: Narrating the Twentieth Century*. Israel Gershoni, Amy Singer, Hakan Erdem, eds. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 2006,
- "Defining the Parameters of a Post-Nationalist Turkish Historiography the Case of the Anatolian Armenians." Pp. 86-103 in *Turkey beyond Nationalism: Towards Post-Nationalist Identities*. Hans-Lukas Kieser, ed. I.B. Tauris. 2006,
- "The Armenian Genocide" (with Donald Bloxham). Pp. 344-72 in *The Historiography of Genocide*. Dan Stone, ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2008,
- "Through a Glass Darkly: Consequences of a Politicized Past in Contemporary Turkey." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 617 (May 2008): 88-106,
- 'In Search of the 'Righteous People:' The Case of the Armenian Massacres of 1915.' Pp. 33-50 in *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue* Jacques Semelin, Claire Andrew, Sarah Gensburger, eds. London: Hurst, 2011,
- "Dünyanın Bildiği, Türkiye'nin Bilmediği: Ermeni Meselesindeki Bilgi Birikimine Sosyolojik Bir Yaklaşım (What the World Knows but Turkey Does Not: A Sociological Analysis of the Accumulation of Knowledge on the Armenian Issue. " Pp. 43-56 in *İmparatorluğun Çöküş Döneminde Osmanlı Ermenileri: Bilimsel Sorumluluk ve Demokrasi Sorunları (Ottoman Armenians during Imperial Decline: Democratic Issues and Scientific Responsibility)* İstanbul: Bilgi University Publications, 2011.

D – A selected list of Akçam's works

(in chronological order)

Books:

- The Armenian Question in History: The Turkish National Movement and the Istanbul Trials, 1919–22 (Armenien und die Völkermord. Die Istanbul Prozesse und die türkische Nationalbewegung). Hamburg: Verlag Hamburger Edition, 1996 (in German),
- The Armenian Question and Human Rights in History: From the Party of Union and Progress to the Turkish War of Independence (İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu – İttihat ve Terakki'den Kurtuluş Savaşına). Ankara: İmge Yayınları, 1999 (in Turkish),
- The Armenian Taboo Exposed (Ermeni Tabusu Aralanırken). Ankara: Su Yayınları, 2000 (in Turkish)
- Dialogue across an International Divide: Essays towards a Turkish-Armenian Dialogue. Toronto: The Zoryan Institute of Canada, 2001,

- From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide. London: Zed Books, 2004,
- A Shameful Act: Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility. New York: Metropolitan Books, November 2006,
- “Armenian Problem is solved” The Policies towards Armenians during the War Years According to Ottoman Documents (“Ermeni Meselesi Hallolmuştur” Osmanlı Belgelerine Göre Savaş 3 Yıllarında Ermenilere Yönelik Politikalar) İletişim Publishing House, January 2008 (in Turkish),
- “Deportation and Massacres, Protocols of Military Tribunal, Trial of Union and Progress Party (1919-1922)” (Tehcir ve Taktik Divan-ı Harb-i Örfi Zabıtları / İttihad ve Terakki'nin Yargılanması (1919-1922) With Vahakn N. Dadrian, Bilgi University Publication, Istanbul 2009 (in Turkish),
- “Essays on 1915” (1915 Yazıları), İletişim Publishing House, January 2010 (in Turkish),
- Judgment at Istanbul: The Armenian Genocide Trials, with Vahakn Dadrian, Berghahn Books, New York 2011
- ‘Young Turks’ Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire, Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Articles and Book Sections:**
- “Turks and Armenians: Toward a discussion of the Armenian massacres” (Wir Türken und die Armenier. Plädoyer für die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Massen Mord. In Armenians and the Republic of Armenia: Homeland and Exile (Armenier und Armenien: Heimat und Exil). Tessa Hofmann ed. Hamburg: RoRoRo Verlag, 1994 (in German),
- “The Armenian Genocide (Der Völkermord an den Armeniern).” Journal of the Hamburg Social Sciences Institute (Mittelweg 36) 4, April–May 1995 (in German),
- “The Causes of the Turkish Silence on the Armenian Genocide” (Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Gründe des türkischen Schweigens). In Phoenix from the Ashes: Armenians 80 Years after the Genocide (Phoenix aus der Asche, Armenien 80 Jahre nach dem Genozid). German-Armenian Association, ed. Frankfurt a.M.: GAA Verlag, 1996 (in German),
- “The Genocide of the Armenians and the Silence of the Turks.” In Problems of Genocide, ed. Zoryan Institute. Toronto: ZI Press, 1997,
- “Anatomy of a Crime: The Turkish Historical Society’s Manipulation of Archival Documents.” Journal of Genocide Research 7, no. 2 (June 2005),
- “Anatomy of Genocide Denial: Academics, Politicians, and the ‘Re-Making’ of History.” Occasional paper. University of Minnesota Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. 2005,
- “The Ottoman Documents and the Genocidal Policies of the Committee for Union and Progress (İttihat ve Terakki) toward the Armenians in 1915.” Genocide Studies and Prevention, no. 2 (September 2006): 127–148,
- “Deportation and Massacres in the Cipher Telegrams of the Interior Ministry in the Prime Ministerial Archive (Başbakanlık Arşivi).” Genocide Studies And Prevention An International Journal Official Journal of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, (January 2007): 306-325,
- “Denial as a Security Concept”, Cardoza Journal of Conflict Resolution, Volume 10, No: 1, Fall 2008.

E – List of works published by Belge Publishing House

- Margaret Ajemian Ahnert, *Amasya'nın Dikenleri (The Knock at the Door: A Mother's Survival of the Armenian Genocide)* (2009)
- Verjine Svazlian, *Ermeni Soykırımı ve Toplumsal Hafıza (The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors)* (2005)
- Leon Fermanian and Vartkes Yeghiayan, (eds.), *Rafael Lemkin'in Ermeni Soykırımı Dosyası (Raphael Lemkin's Dossier on the Armenian Genocide)* (2009)
- Hampartsum Cıtcıyan, *Ölüme Kıl Payı: Ermeni Soykırımından Kurtulmuş Birinin Anıları (A Hair's Breadth from Death: The Memoirs of Hampartzoum Mardiros Chitjian: Memoirs of a Survivor of the Armenian Genocide)* (2009)
- Ragıp Zarakolu's edition of Vahakn N. Dadrian's articles *Türk Kaynaklarında Ermeni Soykırımı: Toplu Makaleler (The Armenian Genocide in Turkish Sources: Collected Articles)* (2005)
- Wolfgang Gust, (ed.), *Alman Belgeleri Ermeni Soykırımı 1915-16: Alman Dışişleri Bakanlığı Siyasi Arşiv Belgeleri (The Armenian Genocide: Evidence from the German Foreign Office Archives, 1915-1916)* (2012)
- Vahakn N. Dadrian, *Ermeni Soykırımı Tarihi: Balkanlardan Anadolu ve Kafkasya'ya Etnik Catışma (The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus)* (2008)
- Gülçiçek Günel Tekin, *Beni Yıkamadan Gömün: Kürtler Ermeni Soykırımı Anlatıyor (Bury Me without Washing: Kurds Tell the Armenian Genocide)* (2013)
- Yves Ternon, *Bir Soykırım Tarihi: 20 Yıl Sonra "Ermeni Tabusu" Davası (Armenians, History of a Genocide)* (2012)
- Raymond H. Kevorkian, *Soykırımın İkinci Safhası: Sürgüne Gönderilen Osmanlı Ermenilerinin Suriye-Mezopotamya Toplama Kamplarında İmha Edilmeleri, 1915-1916 (The Second Phase of the Genocide: The Annihilation of Deported Ottoman Armenians at Concentration Camps in Syria-Mesopotamia, 1915-1916)* (2011)
- Nevzat Onaran, *Emval-i Metruke Olayı: Osmanlı'da ve Cumhuriyette Ermeni ve Rum Mallarının Türkleştirilmesi (The Case of Abandoned Properties: The Turkification of Armenian and Greek Properties during the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic)* (2010)
- Harry Yeseyan, *Türkiye'den Kovulmak: Hacı Bey'in İzmir Günleri (Being Expelled from Turkey: Hacı Bey's Days at Izmir)* (2011)
- Kirkor Ceyhan, *Kapıyı Kimler Çalıyor (Who Knocks the Door)* (1999)
- Peter Balakian, *Kaderin Kara Küpeği (Black Dog of Fate: A Memoir)* (2005)
- Gülçiçek Günel Tekin, *İttihat ve Terakki'den Günümüze Yek Tarz-ı Siyaset: Türkleştirme (A Single Political Style from the Union and Progress to the Present: Turkification)* (2011)

- Vartkes Yeghiayan, *Malta Belgeleri: İngiltere Dışişleri Bakanlığı "Türk Savaş Suçluları" Dosyası (Malta Documents: British Foreign Dossiers on Turkish War Prisoners)* (2007)
- George Jerjian, *Gerçek Bizi Özgür Kılacak: Ermeni ve Türk Barışması (The Truth Will Set Us Free: Armenians and Turks Reconciled)* (2004)
- Aram Andonyan, *Gomidas Vartabed ile Çankırı Yollarında. Ek: Naim Bey'in Anıları (On the Road to Cankiri with Gomidas Vartabed. Addendum: Memoirs of Naim Bey)* (2012)
- Jakob Künzler, *Kan ve Gözyaşları Ülkesinde: Dünya Savaşı Sırasında Mezopotamya'da Yaşananlar, 1914-1918 (In the Land of Blood and Tear: The Events that Took Place in Mesopotamia during the World War, 1914-1918)* (2012)
- Henry Morgenthau, *Büyükelçi Morgenthau'nun Öyküsü (Ambassador Morgenthau's Story)* (2005)
- Gülçiçek Günel Tekin, *Kara Kefen: Müslümanlaştırılan Ermeni Kadınlarının Dramı (Black Cerement: The Drama of the Islamicized Armenian Women)* (2011)
- Teodik, *11 Nisan Anıtı (Memorial for April 11)* (2010)
- Garin K. Hovannisian, *Anıların Gölgesinde: Bir Ermeni Ailesinin Yüzyılı (In the Shade of Memories: Hundred-Years of an Armenian Family)* (2012)
- Franz Werfel, *Musa Dağ'da 40 Gün (The Forty Days of Musa Dagh)* (1997)
- Tessa Hofmann, (ed.), *Takibat, Tehcir ve İmha: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda 1912-1922 Yılları Arasında Hristiyanlara Yönelik Yaptırımlar (Prosecution, Deportation, and Annihilation: Sanctions Against the Christians in the Ottoman Empire Between 1912 and 1922)* (2013).

F – Ottoman Armenians during the Decline of the Empire:

Issues of Scientific Responsibility and Democracy23-25

September 2005

The Organizing Committee of the conference consisted of: Murat Belge (chair, Comparative Literature Department, İstanbul Bilgi University), Halil Berktaş (coordinator, History Program, Sabancı University), Selim Deringil (chair, History Department, Boğaziçi University), Edhem Eldem (History Department, Boğaziçi University), Hakan Erdem (History Program, Sabancı University), Çağlar Keyder (Sociology Department, Boğaziçi University), Cemil Koçak (History Program, Sabancı University), and Akşin Somel (History Program, Sabancı University).

The Consulting Committee members were: Fikret Adanır (Bochum Ruhr University, Germany), Engin Akarlı (Brown University, USA), Taner Akçam (University of Minnesota, USA), Ayhan Aktar (Marmara University, Turkey), Seyla Benhabib (Yale University, USA), Üstün Ergüder (Director of Istanbul Policy Center at Sabancı

University, Turkey), Fatma Müge Göçek (University of Michigan, USA), Nilüfer Göle (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, France), Cemal Kafadar (Harvard University, USA), Metin Kunt (Sabancı University, Turkey), Şerif Mardin (Sabancı University), Oktay Özel (Bilkent University, Turkey), İlhan Tekeli (Middle East Technical University, Turkey), Mete Tunçay (Bilgi University, Turkey), Stefanos Yerasimos (Université Paris VIII, France).

Participants other than the Organizing and Consulting Committees: Hülya Adak, (Comparative Literature, Cultural Studies, Sabancı University), Şahin Alpay (Political Scientist, Bahçeşehir University, Columnist at *Zaman*), Ayşe Gül Altınay, (Anthropology, Cultural Studies, Sabancı University), Cevdet Aykan (MD, former Member of Parliament and the Minister of Health), Ali Bayramoğlu (Columnist at *Yeni Şafak*), Yavuz Baydar (Columnist at *Sabah*), İsmet Berkan (Columnist at *Radikal*), Melissa Bilal (Doctoral Candidate, University of Chicago), Kürşat Bumin (Columnist at *Yeni Şafak*), Ahmet Hakan Coşkun (Columnist at *Hürriyet*), Oral Çalışlar (Columnist at *Cumhuriyet*), Fethiye Çetin (Lawyer, Writer), Hrant Dink (Editor-in-chief at *Agos*), Fuat Dündar (Doctoral Candidate, at Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales), Hakan Erdem (History, Sabancı University), Selçuk Esenbel (History, Boğaziçi University), Ahmet İnsel (Economy, Galatasaray University), Temel İskit (Retired Ambassador), Aykut Kansu (History, İstanbul Bilgi University), Karin Karakaşlı (Columnist at *Agos*), Ferhat Kentel (Sociology, İstanbul Bilgi University), Rober Koptaş (Graduate Student, Boğaziçi University), Fehmi Kuru (Columnist at *Yeni Şafak*), Osman Köker (Editor at Bir Zamanlar Publishing), Erol Köroğlu (Literature, Cultural Studies, Sabancı University), Ahmet Kuyuş (History, Political Science, Galatasaray University), Etyen Mahçupyan (Columnist at *Zaman*), Nazan Maksudyan (Doctoral Candidate, Sabancı University), Baskın Oran (Political Science, Ankara University), Ayşe Öncü (Sociology, Cultural Studies, Sabancı University), Ferhunde Özbay (Sociology, Boğaziçi University), Cem Özdemir (Member of Parliament, Green Party, Germany), Günay Göksu Özdoğan (Political Science and International Relations, Marmara University), Murat Paker (Psychology, İstanbul Bilgi University), İrfan Palalı (Neurophysiology, Ege University), Taha Parla (Political Science and International Relations, Boğaziçi University), Sarkis Seropyan (Columnist at *Agos*), Elif Şafak (Novelist, writer, Near East Studies, University of Arizona), Nesim Şeker (History, Middle East Technical University), Turgut Tarhanlı (International Law, İstanbul Bilgi University), Meltem Toksöz (History, Boğaziçi University), Füsun Üstel (Public Administration, Marmara University), Gündüz Vassaf (Psychology, Columnist at *Radikal*), Ragıp Zarakolu (Editor at Belge Publishing).

Conference Program

Selim Deringil Introductory Note

Session 1. A Collective View of the Issues

Şerif Mardin, Session Chair

Halil Berktaş "What Does the Official Narrative Comprise?"

Selim Deringil "Archives and the Armenian Question: 'Grabbing the Document by the Throat'"

Murat Belge "Armenian Problem from the Viewpoint of Democracy"

Session 2. What the World Knows and Turkey Does Not Know

Üstün Ergüder, Session Chair

Osman Köker "Armenian Presence in the Ottoman State before the Deportation"

Fikret Adanır "Massacre, Genocide and the Historical Profession"

Fatma Müge Göçek "The Chicago-Salzburg Process as an Accumulation of Knowledge"

Nazan Maksudyan "The 1915-1916 Events according to the 20th century and world historians"

Session 3. The 'Old Order' before 1914: inequalities, pressures, rebellion and massacres

Hakan Erdem, Session Chair

Akşin Somel "Armenian Schools and the Regime of Abdulhamid (1876-1908)"

Oktay Özel "Locals, Refugees and non-Muslims: some observations on the boundaries of social harmony in the Black Sea Region during the late Ottoman period"

Edhem Eldem "The Istanbul Armenian Incidents of 1895-96"

Meltem Toksöz "Armenians of Adana and the 1909 'Disturbance'"

Session 4. The Breaking Point

Halil Berktaş, Session Chair

Stefanos Yerasimos "Approaching 1915: Armenian Autonomy and the Zeytun and Van Incidents"

Nesim Şeker "The Armenian Question and 'Demographic Engineering'"

Rober Koptaş "The Unionist-Tashnak Negotiations and the 1914 Armenian Reform from the pens of Krikor Zohrab, Vahan Papazyan and Karekin Pastirmacıyan"

Elif Şafak "Zabel Yesayan and the list of 'marked Armenian intellectuals'"

Session 5. Deportation and Massacres

Taha Parla, Session Chair

Fuat Dündar "The Settlement Policy of the Union and Progress (1913-1918)"

Taner Akçam "The Intent and Organization of Genocide, with the survivors and the destroyed, among the leaders of the Union and Progress in light of Ottoman documents"

Cemil Koçak "How Do You Know the Special Secret Organization (Teskilât-i Mahsusa)?"

Session 6. Tales of Tragedy and Escape

Ferhunde Özbay, Session Chair

Sarkis Seropyan "Landscapes of conscience from within a Painful History"

Fethiye Çetin "From Heranus to Seher, the tale of a 'liberation'"

İrfan Palalı "The Child of Deportation: Mother Fatma"

Aykut Kansu "Thinking through the Tales of Those Who Survived the Deportation"

Session 7. Witnesses and Memories

Ayşe Öncü, Session Chair

Hülya Adak "The Armenian Question in Memoirs"

Ahmet Kuyaş "What Do the Unionists Say?"

Cevdet Aykan "The Meaning of Memories and The Responsibility of Politics and the Times"

Gündüz Vassaf "Armenians and 1915 in the Educational Calendar (Saatli Maarif Takvimi)"

Session 8. From the Threshold of the First Confession to the Formation of Taboos

Selçuk Esenbel, session chair

Ayhan Aktar "The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Assembly, November-December 1918"

Erol Köroğlu "Examples of Remembrance and Forgetting in Turkish Literature: the Different Breaking Points of Taciturnity"

Baskın Oran "The Roots of a Taboo: the Historical-Psychological Suffocation of Turkish Public Opinion on the Armenian Problem"

Session 9. States of Being an Armenian

Nükhet Sirman, session chair

Hrant Dink "The New Sentences of Armenian Identity in Turkey and the World"

Ferhat Kentel "Societies of Turkey and the Armenian Republic: Boundaries and Prejudices"

Karin Karakaşlı, Ferhat Kentel, Günay Göksu Özdoğan, Füsun Üstel "To Be an Armenian in Turkey: community, individual, citizen"

Melissa Bilal "An Identity Trapped In Between the Past and Present: the Experience of Being an Armenian in Turkey"

Ayşe Gül Altınay "Two Books and an Exhibit: The Rediscovery of Turkish Armenians"

Session 10. Armenian Problem and the Turkish Democracy

Murat Belge, session chair

Ali Bayramoğlu "Views and Approaches to the Armenian Question in Turkey"

Etyen Mahçupyan "The Connection of Historical Perception and Mentality as a Founding Factor of the Turkish National Identity"

Ahmet İnsel "The Armenian Question and the Concept of the Enemy Within in Turkish Politics"

Murat Paker "Turkish Armenian Issue in the Context of a Psychoanalytic Evaluation of Turkey's Dominant Political Culture"

Şahin Alpay "What Can Be Done to Reconstitute Turkish-Armenian Friendship?"

Panel 1. The Armenian Problem and the Freedom of the Press

İsmet Berkan, session chair

Yavuz Baydar (Sabah)

Ahmet Hakan (Hürriyet)

Oral Çalışlar (Cumhuriyet)

Kürşat Bumin (Yeni Şafak)

Fehmi Kuru (Yeni Şafak)

Panel 2. Today and the Future

Halil Berktaş, session chair

A Politician: Cem Özdemir

A Diplomat: Temel İskit

A Publisher: Ragıp Zarakolu

A Lawyer: Turgut Tarhanlı

A Historian: Mete Tunçay

G – List of books published by Aras Publishing.

Memoirs:

- Torkom Manugyan, *Orakrutyun Sargavaki Karasunk Tsernatrutyan* (2001)
Şavarş Kahana Balımyan, *U Yes Gertam* (2005)
Charles Aznavour, *Charles Aznavour: Geçmiş Zaman Olur Ki* [*Charles Aznavour: Once Upon A Time*] (2005)
Bedros Zobyany, *Tebi Bitlis William Saroyani Hed* (2007)
Vahan Acemyan, *Huşer Arants Puşeru* (2008)
Ferman Toroslar, *Sürgün: İsyen Ateşinden Geçen Mutkili Bir Ermeni Aile* [*Exile: An Armenian Family from Mutki Who Went through the Fire of Revolt*] (2013)
Apraham Kasapyan, *Kaç Kişisiniz Boğos Efendi? Bir Ermeni'nin hatıra defteri, 1902 – 1969* [*How Many People Are You Boğos Effendi: Diary of an Armenian, 1902-1969*] (2015)

Narrative:

- Hraç Norşen, *Çileli Ağavni* [*Suffering Ağavni*] (2011)
Flavia Amabile and Marco Tosatti, *Halep'in Baronları: Suriye'de bir otel, bir aile ve Ortadoğu'nun son yüz yılı* [*Barons of Aleppo: A Hotel in Syria, A Family and the Last Century of Middle East*] (2015)

Biography:

- Mélinée Manouchian, *Manuşyan: Bir Özgürlük Tutsağı* [*Manouchian*] (2010)
Nouritza Matossian, *Arshile Gorky: Kara Melek* [*Black Angel: The Life of Arshile Gorky*] (2011)

Essay:

- Oşin Çilingir, *İçimizdeki Kara Delik* [*The Black Hole inside Us*] (2002)
Ara Koçunyan, *Voğçuyn Amenkin: Temker yev Tebker* (2008)
Mıgırdiç Margosyan, *Kürdan* [*Toothpick*] (2010)
Mıgırdiç Margosyan, *Çengelliğne* [*Safety Pin*] (2010)
Şeyhmus Diken, *Gittiler İşte* [*Here They Are Gone*] (2011)
Mıgırdiç Margosyan, *Kirveme Mektuplar* [*Letters to My Godfather*] (2011)
Mıgırdiç Margosyan, *Zurna* [*Shrill Pipe*] (2012)

Armenian composers:

- Karnik Garmiryan, *Karnik Garmiryan: Hayatı ve Eserleri* [*Karnik Garmiryan: His Life and Work*] (2004)
Sarkis Suciyan, *Kemani Sarkis Efendi Suciyan: Hayatı ve Eserleri* [*Kemani Sarkis Effendi Suciyan: His Life and Work*] (2012)

Photo-interview: Ara Güler, *Kumkapı Ermeni Balıkçıları 1952* [*Armenian Fishermen at Kumkapı 1952*] (2011).

Travel: Antranik (Yeritsyan), *Dersim: Seyahatname* [*Dersim: Travels*] (2012).

Journal/Diary: William Saroyan, *Paris-Fresno Güncesi 1967-1968: Ölüm Dirim veya Aya Kaçış* (2001).

Research:

Boğos Levon Zekıyan, *Ermeniler ve Modernite* [*Armenians and Modernity*] (2002)

Kevork Pamukciyan, *İstanbul Yazıları: Ermeni Kaynaklarından Tarihe Katkılar-I* [*İstanbul Writings: Contributions to History from Armenian Sources, volume I*] (2002)

Kevork Pamukciyan, *Ermeni Harfli Türkçe Metinler: Ermeni Kaynaklarından Tarihe Katkılar-II* [*Turkish Texts in Armenian Letters: Contributions to History from Armenian Sources, volume II*] (2002)

Kevork Pamukciyan, *Zamanlar, Mekânlar, İnsanlar: Ermeni Kaynaklarından Tarihe Katkılar-III* [*Times, Places, People: Contributions to History from Armenian Sources, volume III*] (2003)

Kevork Pamukciyan, *Biyografileriyle Ermeniler: Ermeni Kaynaklarından Tarihe Katkılar-IV* [*Armenians with their Biographies: Contributions to History from Armenian Sources, volume IV*] (2003)

Vartan Artinian, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeni Anayasası'nın Doğuşu, 1839-1863* [*The Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1863: A Study of its Historical Development*] (2004)

Krikor H. Basmacıyan, *Şark'ta Toplumsal ve Dinsel Hayat* [*Social and Religious Life in the Orient*] (2005)

Anahide Ter Minassian, *Ermeni Kültürü ve Modernleşme* [*Armenian Culture and Modernization*] (2006)

Melisa Bilal and Lerna Ekmekçioğlu (eds.), *Bir Adalet Feryadı: Osmanlı'dan Türkiye'ye Beş Ermeni Feminist Yazar* [*A Cry for Justice: Five Armenian Feminist Authors from the Ottoman Empire to Turkey*] (2010)

Keğam Kerovpyan, *Mitolojik Ermeni Tarihi* [*Mythological Armenian History*] (2012)

Susie Hoogasian Villa and Mary Kilbourne Matossian, *1914 Öncesi Ermeni Köy Hayatı: Anlatılar ve Fotoğraflarla* [*Armenian Village Life before 1914*] (2012)

Kevork B. Bardakjian, *Modern Ermeni Edebiyatı* [*A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500-1920: With an Introductory History*] (2013)

Hagop L. Barsoumian, *İstanbul'un Ermeni Amiralar Sınıfı* [*The Armenian Amira Class of İstanbul*] (2013)

Gaidz F. Minassian and Arsen Avagyan, *Ermeniler ve İttihat ve Terakki: İşbirliğinden Çatışmaya* [*Armenians and the Union and Progress: From Cooperation to Confrontation*] (2013)

William Saroyan, *Amerika'dan Bitlis'e William Saroyan* [*From America to Bitlis William Saroyan*] (2014)
Zakarya Mildanoğlu, *Ermenice Süreli Yayınlar 1794-2000* [*Armenian Periodicals 1794-2000*] (2014)
Michel Marian, *Ermeni Soykırımı: Siyasette adalete, tarihte ahlaka yer açmak* [*Armenian Genocide: Making room for justice in politics and for ethics in history*] (2015)
Ronald Grigor Suny, *Ararat'a Bakmak: Modern Tarihte Ermenistan* [*Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*] (2015)
Ari Şekeryan (ed.), *1909 Adana Katliamı: Üç Rapor* [*1909 Armenian Massacre: 3 Reports*] (2015)
Janine Altounian, *Geri Dönüşü Yok: Bir Babanın Güncesinde ve Kızının Belleğinde Ermeni Soykırımı* [*There Is No Return: Armenian Genocide in a Father's Diary and His Daughter's Memory*] (2015)

Comics:

Aret Gıcır, *Azınlıkyan* (2001)
Aret Gıcır, *Ben Topik Değilim! Yerevan Güncesi* [*I am not Topik! Yerevan Diary*] (2005)
Sarkis Paçacı, *Kalppler Birleşmez Hatıralarda* [*Hearts Do Not Unite in Memories*] (2006)
Aret Gıcır, *19 Ocak Öncesine Dönmek İstiyorum!* [*I Want to Go Back to Before January 19th*] (2008)
Ohan, Placebo (2010)

Humor:

Hagop Ayvaz, *Lutsika Dudu* (2003)
Yervant Odyan, *Yoldaş Pançuni* [*Comrade Pançuni*] (2013)

Monograph:

H. C. Siruni, *Karekin Badriark Haçaduryan* (2003)
Valantin Mazlum, *Tasdiarag Taşnagaharı: Valantin Mazlum* (2008)

Play:

William Saroyan, *Yüreğim Dağlardadır: Yaşamak Vakti* [*My Heart's in the Highlands: Time to Live*] (2003)
Hagop Baronyan, *Şark Dişçisi* [*The Eastern Dentist*] (2012)

Short story:

Ara Güler, *Papelonen Verç Bidi Abrink* (1995)
Antan Özer, *Yaşamı Beklerken* [*Waiting for the Life*] (1997)
Kirkor Ceyhan, *Atını Nalladı Felek Düştü Peşimize* [*Fate Got on a Horse in Hot Pursuit*] (2000)
Ara Güler, *Babil'den Sonra Yaşayacağız* [*We'll Live After Babylon*] (2000)

Yervant Gobelyan, *Memleketini Özleyen Yengeç* [*The Crab that Misses His Homeland*] (2000)
Hagop Mintzuri, *Atina, Tuzun Var Mı?* [*Athens, Do You Have Salt?*] (2000)
Raffi Kebabcıyan Kantyan, *Konuş Halil Bey Konuş* [*Speak Mr. Halil Speak*] (2000)
Yeruğan, *Balıkçı Sevdası* [*Fisherman's Yearning*] (2000)
Krikor Zohrab, *Krikor Zohrab-Öyküler: Osmanlı Meclisinde Bir Ermeni Mebus* [*Kirkor Zohrab-Stories: An Armenian Deputy in the Ottoman Assembly*] (2001)
Hagop Mintzuri, *Kapandı Kirve Kapıları* [*The Doors to Godfather Are Closed*] (2002)
Hagop Mintzuri, *Armıdan: Fırat'ın Öte Yanı* [*Armıdan: The Other Side of the Euphrates*] (2003)
Jaklin Çelik, *Yılanın Yolu* [*The Snake's Path*] (2003)
Yervant Gobelyan, *Giyanki Lusantsken* (2003)
Hagop Mintzuri, *Küğü Gabri İm Mecis* (2005)
Vahram Burmayan, *Hek Tuğti Gıdornı* (2005)
Rupen Maşoyan, *Yev Aysbes Abretsank* (2006)
Arpiar der Markaryan, *Artsakank Yev Antsortı* (2006)
Vahram Mavyan, *Her Yerde Ermeni Var* [*There Are Armenians Everywhere*] (2007)
Esther Heboyan, *İstanbul Yolcuları* [*Passengers from İstanbul*] (2007)
Jaklin Çelik, *Kum Saatinde Kumkapı* [*Kumkapı in a Hourglass*] (2008)
Kirkor Ceyhan, *Seferberlik Türküleriyle Büyüdüm* [*I Grew Up with War Songs*] (2008)
William Saroyan, *Ödlekler Cesurdur* [*Cowards Are Brave*] (2010)
William Saroyan, *Yetmiş Bin Süryani* [*Seventy Thousands Assyrians*] (2010)
Mıgırdiç Margosyan, *Dikrisi Aperen* (2010)
Mıgırdiç Margosyan, *Gavur Mahallesi* [*Infidel Quarter*] (2011)
Mıgırdiç Margosyan, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen?* [*Tell Margos, Where Are You From?*] (2011)
Mıgırdiç Margosyan, *Mer Ayt Goğmerı* (2011)
Hamasdeğ, *Güvercinim Harput'ta Kaldı* [*My Pigeon Was Left in Kharpert*] (2011)
Hagop Mintzuri, *Turna Nereden Gelirsin* [*Crane, From Where Do You Come?*] (2012)
Mıgırdiç Margosyan, *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* [*To İstanbul Were Our Tickets Issued*] (2012)
Sarkis Srents, *Ermeni Edebiyatı Numuneleri* [*Examples from Armenian Literature*] (2012)
Pakrat Estukyan, *Bantukhd Yerker (Gurbet Şarkıları)* [*Bantukhd Yerker (Songs of Homesickness)*] (2013)
Mahir Özkan, *Hemşin Öyküleri* [*Hemshin Stories*] (2014)

Novel:

Vahan Totovents, *Yitik Evin Vârisleri* [*The Heirs of the Lost House*] (2002)
Jean Kehayan, *Vatansız* [*Stateless/Heimatlos*] (2005); Zaven Biberyan, *Mırçünneru Verçaluyisi* (2007)
Ara Aginyan, *Hayrig Hayrig* (2012); Mıgırdiç Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* [*Beads of a Prayer Bead*] (2012)
Ara Aginyan, *Medz Badriarkı* (2013)
Zaven Biberyan, *Babam Aşkale'ye Gitmedi* [*My Father Did Not go to Aşkale*] (2013)

Zaven Biberyan, *Yalnızlar* [*The Lonely Ones*] (2014)

Art:

Tayfun Serttaş, *Stüdyo Osep* [*Studio Osep*] (2009)

Osep Tokat, *Ermeni Gümüş Ustaları* [*Armenian Master Silversmiths*] (2010)

Tayfun Serttaş, *Foto Galatasaray: Studio Practice by Maryam Şahinyan* [*Photo Galatasaray: Studio Practice by Maryam Şahinyan*] (2011)

Norair Chahinian, *Boşluğun Gücü: Tarihi Ermenistan'da Taşlarla Konuşmak* [*The Power of Emptiness: Talking to Stones in Historical Armenia*] (2015)

Interview: Mayda Saris, *İzi Kalır Hatıraların* [*Memories Leave Traces*] (2007).

Poetry:

Aram Pehlivanian, *Özgürlük İki Adım Ötede Değil* (1999)

Vercihan Ziflioğlu, *Ananın Yeraz* (2000)

Anel, *İ Lrumin Jamanagi* (2002)

S. K. Zanku, *Zarmanali Aşkharh* (2003)

Zahrad, *Panasdeğdzutyunner* (2006)

Vercihan Ziflioğlu, *Hanelug* (2007)

Zahrad, *Titumi Ham* (2009)

Karin Karakaşlı, *Benim Gönlüm Gümüş* [*My Heart Is Silver*] (2009)

Karin Karakaşlı, *Her Kimsen Sana* [*Whoever You Are This Is For You*] (2012)

Zahrad, *Ferah Tut Yüreğini* [*Keep Your Heart Pure*] (2015)

Karin Karakaşlı, *İrtifa Kaybı* [*Loss of Altitude*] (2015)

Testimony:

Toros Toranyan, *İstanbulahayeri Gı Gançen* (1997)

Agop Arslanyan, *Adım Agop Memleketim Tokat* (2012)

Zabel Yesayan, *Averagnerun Meç* (2012)

Zabel Yesayan, *Yıkıntılar Arasında* [*Among the Ruins*] (2014)

Avedis Cebeciyan, *Bir Ermeni Subayın Çanakkale ve Doğu Cephesi Günlüğü, 1914-1918* [*An Armenian Officer's Diary of Gallipoli and Eastern Fronts*] (2015)

Arménouhie Kévonian, *Gülizar'ın Kara Düğünü* [*Gülizar's Black Wedding*] (2015)

History:

Aram Andonyan, *Balkan Savaşı* [*The Balkan War*] (2002)

René Grousset, *Ermenilerin Tarihi: Başlangıcından 1071'e* [*History of Armenia from its Origins to 1071*] (2006)

George A. Bournoutian, *Ermeni Tarihi: Ermeni Halkının Tarihine Kısa Bir Bakış* [*A Concise History of the Armenian People*] (2011)

Raymond H. Kévorkian and Paul B. Paboudjian, *Ermeniler: 1915 Öncesinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda* [*The Armenians: In the Ottoman Empire before 1915*] (2013)

Food/Culinary:

Boğos Piranyan, *Aşçının Kitabı* [*The Book of the Chef*] (2008)

Vağınag Pürad, *Mükemmel Yemek Kitabı* [*The Perfect Cookbook*] (2011)

Food-Memoir: Takuhi Tovmasyan, *Sofranız Şen Olsun: Ninelerimin Mutfağından*

Damağımda, Aklımda Kalanlar [*May Your Table Be Jolly: What Is Left in My Mind and*

Mouth From the Kitchens of My Grandmothers] (2011).

H – İHD Press Releases (2005 and 2006)

İHD Basın Açıklaması – 24 Nisan 2005

90. Yılında Ermeni Halkının Acısına Saygı Gösterilmelidir³

Bugün 24 Nisan. 90 yıl önce bugün, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun son günlerinde

iktidardaki İttihat ve Terakki Partisi İstanbul’da yaygın tutuklamalar başlattı.

Tutuklananlar, bugün Genel Kurmay’dan bakanlıklara kadar devletin internet sitelerinde

“Ermeni Komitacılar” şeklinde tanıtılıyor. Oysa bu kişilerin çoğu, zamanın Ermeni

toplumunun seçkin aydınlarıydı; milletvekilidiler, yazardılar, şairdiler, müzisyen,

sanatçı, doktor, avukattılar. Hemen hiçbiri sağ dönmedi. Bunu kitlesel sürgünler takip

etti. 24 Nisan tutuklamaları 1915 ve 16 yıllarında süren etnik temizliğin simgesi oldu:

Sonuçta, 20. Yüzyılın başında Anadolu’da yaşayan her beş kişiden biri, yani nüfusun

yaklaşık yüzde yirmisi gayrimüslimken bu oran bugün binde ikilere düşmüş durumda.

90 yıl sonra bugün soykırımın tanınması taleplerine karşı yürütülen yoğun çarpıtma

kampanyası çıplak gerçeğin üzerini örtemiyor. Çıplak gerçek, bir zamanlar Anadolu

uygarlığının temel taşlarından olan Ermenilerin, bugün 70 milyonluk bir nüfus içinde,

ağırlıklı olarak İstanbul’daki 60 bin kişilik bir topluluğa dönüşmüş olması, zengin

tarihinin izlerinin bile silinmiş olmasıdır.

90 yıldır Türkiye tarihiyle yüzleşmeyi başaramadı. Tarihiyle yüzleşmek bir yana, bugün

çeşitli biçimlerde ve dozlarda, hak etmişlerdi, bugün olsa yine yaparız mesajları veriliyor.

Yürütülen saldırgan kampanya Ermenilere düşmanlık ve nefret duygularını kışkırtıyor,

onların kişilik haklarını, haysiyetini çiğniyor, kendi yurdunda güven içinde yaşama

hakkını elinden alıyor.

³ Ragıp Zarakolu, ed., *Sivil Toplumda Türk Ermeni Diyaloğu* (İstanbul: Pencere, 2009), 207–209.

O derece ki, Türkiye Ermenileri Patrikhanesi, bugün meydana gelmesi olası saldırılara karşı İstanbul Valiliği'nden Patrikhane binasının, okullarının, kiliselerinin mezarlıklarının korunmasını talep etmek durumunda kalmıştır.

Türkiye'nin tarihin sorgulanması ve tartışılması konusunda izlediği yasakçı politika, aynı zamanda tüm topluma karşı bir hak ihlalidir. Bilgilenme, tarihi öğrenme, özgürce araştırma, tartışma ve düşüncesini ifade etme hakkının yok edilmesidir. Cumhuriyet tarihinde kanlı örneklerini gördüğümüz gibi, resmi görüşün gönüllü savunucuları ve harekete geçirdiği karanlık güçler devlet politikalarını sokakta hayata geçirebilmekte, 90 yıl önce yaşananlara ilişkin farklı görüş belirtenlere karşı linç kampanyaları açılmaktadır. Bilgilenme özgürlüğünün yaşanmadığı bu ülkede devlet propagandası yanlışları doğru diye aktarmakta, tarihi özgürce çarpıtabilmektedir.

Örneğin, her yerde, emekli büyükelçilerden, üniversite öğretim üyelerine ve devletin resmi internet sitelerine kadar 1915'te çıkarılan tehcir kanununun Rus sınırında, Ruslarla işbirliği yapan Ermenilere yönelik olduğu anlatılmaktadır. Oysa bunu söyleyenler de, yazanlar da biliyorlar ki, resmi Osmanlı belgelerinde de yer aldığı gibi, tehcir emir Anadolu'nun İzmir ve İstanbul dışında her yerinde uygulamaya konulmuştur. Çorlu, İzmit, Bandırma, Adapazarı, Eskişehir, Bilecik, Bursa, Kütahya, Afyon, Konya, Ankara, Kastamonu, Çorum, Çankırı, Amasya, Kırşehir, Kayseri yüzbinlerce kişinin ölüme doğru yola çıkarıldığı şehirlerin bazılarıdır. Bu ve birçok gerçek Türkiye'de insanların bilgisiz bırakılmasından ve bilgisi olanların da korkutulmasından güç alınarak hiçbir mahcubiyet duyulmadan çarpıtılmaktadır.

Tarihin tahrif edilmesini güvence altına almak için soykırım sözcüğüne uygulanan yasak, yasa gerekçesi yapılmıştır. Reform sözleri veren AKP hükümetinin meclisten geçirdiği yeni Türk Ceza Yasası'nın 305. Maddesinin gerekçesinde Ermenilere soykırım yapıldığını ifade etmek suç kapsamına alınmış, "temel milli yarar"a aykırı hareket etmenin somut örneği olarak gösterilmiştir.

Ölçülerin ne kadar şaştığı ise yurtdışına verilen mesajlarda görülüyor. Türkiye, sanki yurt içinde konunun tartışılmasına bile izin vermeyen ve resmi/gayri-resmi kanallardan yaygın bir baskı, yıldırma, tehdit kampanyası yürüten kendisi değilmiş gibi, yurtdışına "gelin komisyonlar kuralım, tartışalım, arşivlerimiz açık" şeklinde davetler yapıyor.

Öte yandan özgür araştırma ve bilimsel çalışmaya izin verilmeyeceği, resmi görüş sözcülüğünü yapan köşe yazarları aracılığıyla kamuoyuna iletiliyor. Bilim insanlarına gözdağı veriliyor, tarihçiler devlet tezlerini aktif bir şekilde savunmak üzere göreve çağırılıyor, resmi tezlere karşı çıkmak bir yana, görüş belirtmeyenlere bile suskun kaldı için saldırılıyor.

Biz insan hakları savunucuları bu faşizan kampanyadan vazgeçilmesini, soykırım sözcüğü etrafında antidemokratik yasalarla, tehdit ve gözdağı ile örülen yasaklamaya son verilmesini, TCK 305. Madde gerekçesinden, Türkiye toplumunun tarihiyle yüzleşmesini engelleyen Ermeni Soykırımı ile ilgili bölümün çıkarılmasını talep ediyoruz.

1915'te yaşananlar, uluslararası hukuktaki soykırım tanımına ne kadar uyuyor/uymuyor tartışmalarına, hesaplamalara ve pazarlıklara sığmayacak kadar ağırdır ve insanlığın vicdanında soykırım olarak yerini almıştır.

24 Nisan 1915'in 90. Yılında insan hakları savunucuları olarak gerek Türkiye'nin Ermeni yurttaşlarının, gerekse yurtlarından edilmiş, en yakınlarının katline tanıklık etmiş Ermenilerin, dünyanın dört bir yanına dağılmış çocuklarının, torunlarının acısını yürekten

paylaşıyoruz. Onlara, “acınız bizim acımızdır, bir daha hiç tekrarlanmaması için, yaşananları biz de hiç unutmayacağız,” diyoruz.

Yürütülen saldırgan kampanyayı kınıyor ve devlet yetkililerini, devlet tezlerini savunan yazılı ve görsel basını, bilim insanlarını ve herkesi Ermeni halkının acısına saygı göstermeye çağırıyoruz.

İHD. İstanbul Şubesi

İHD İstanbul Branch Press Release – April 24, 2005

In its 90th Anniversary the Pain of the Armenians Should Be Respected

Today is April 24. 90 years ago today, the Party of Union and Progress, which governed the Ottoman Empire during its last days, began mass arrests in İstanbul. Those arrested are now labeled as “Armenian Komitadjis” on the official websites of Turkish ministries and the General Staff. However, the majority of the arrested were notable intellectuals of the Armenian community; they were deputies, writers, poets, musicians, artists, doctors, and lawyers. Almost none of them survived. Mass exiles followed the arrests. The arrests on April 24 became the symbol of the ethnic cleansing that took place during 1915 and 1916. As a result, while every one in five people (or 20% of the population) in Anatolia was non-Muslim at the beginning of the twentieth century, this ratio has reduced to two in thousand now.

After 90 years, the intense campaign of distortion against the demands for genocide recognition would not cover the truth anymore. The bare fact is that the Armenians, who were once one of the building blocks of the Anatolian civilization, are now reduced to 60,000 people, mostly living in İstanbul, in a population of 70,000,000. Even the traces of their rich history have been erased.

Turkey has been unable to come to terms with its past for the last 90 years. Let alone confronting the past, the arguments claiming that the Armenians deserved it or we would do it again today if need be are still voiced in various forms and degrees. The aggressive campaign incites hatred and animosity against the Armenians. It violates their personal rights and dignity and it deprives them of their right to live in security in their homeland. The aggression is so rampant that the Armenian Patriarchate of İstanbul had to ask the Governorship of İstanbul for protection of the Patriarchate building, schools, churches, and cemeteries.

The prohibitive policy that Turkey imposes when it comes to investigating and debating the history is also a violation of rights committed against the society. It amounts to the destruction of the right to get information, to learn one’s history, and to research, discuss, and express one’s opinion freely. As we have already seen in many bloody instances of the Republican history, the ardent supporters of the official perspective and the dark forces mobilized by that perspective put the state policies into practice on the streets and they undertook lynching attempts targeting those who raised a dissident voice about what had happened 90 years before. In the absence of the freedom to get informed, state propaganda could impose false arguments as correct and could easily manipulate the history.

For example, we encounter the argument that the deportation law was enacted only against the Armenians who collaborated with Russians along the Russian border. Retired

ambassadors, scholars, and official state websites are all reiterating this narrative. However, they know very well that, as the official Ottoman documents reveal, the deportation order was put into practice in all Anatolia except İzmir and İstanbul. Çorlu, İzmit, Bandırma, Adapazarı, Eskişehir, Bilecik, Bursa, Kütahya, Afyon, Konya, Ankara, Kastamonu, Çorum, Çankırı, Amasya, Kırşehir, Kayseri are among the cities from which thousands were sent to their deaths. This and many other facts are easily distorted because of the imposed ignorance of people and of the intimidation of those who have knowledge.

To secure the manipulation of history the ban on “genocide” has become a justification for a law clause. Even though the AKP government made promises of reform, the 305th article of the new Turkish Penal Code, that the National Assembly just passed, declared the recognition of genocide as a crime. The recognition was introduced as an example of the acts against “essential national interests.”

Messages sent to the exterior demonstrate the extent to which things are disproportionate. Turkey, as if it does not prevent any domestic debate on the topic, or undertake an official and semi-official campaign of oppression, intimidation, and threat, sends invitations abroad such as “let us establish joint commissions, discuss, our archives are open.”

On the other hand, columnists voicing the official perspective inform the public that free research and scholarly investigation will not be permitted. Scholars are intimidated, historians are called on duty to defend the official narrative, and even those who remain silent are attacked for not supporting the official thesis.

We, the human rights defenders, demand the relinquishing of this fascistic campaign, the end of prohibition built around the term “genocide” through antidemocratic laws, threats, and intimidations, the dropping of the part related to the Armenian Genocide from the 305th article of the Turkish Penal Code. This part prevents people to confront their history.

What had happened in 1915 is so grave that it cannot be made part of a protracted debate whether it is called genocide as defined in international law, or of calculations and negotiations. Also the conscience of humanity accepts it as genocide.

On the 90th anniversary of April 24, 1915, as human rights defenders, we share the pain of both the Armenian citizens of Turkey and the children and grandchildren of the Armenians who witnessed the massacres of their loved ones and who are exiled to various parts of the world. We say them, “your pain is our pain, we will never forgive what had happened, so that it does not happen again.”

We condemn the aggressive campaign and we call state officials, media organizations that support the official thesis, scholars, and everybody to respect the pain of the Armenian people.

İHD İstanbul Branch

24 Nisan 2006⁴

Bugün, 24 Nisan, bütün dünyada Ermeni Soykırımı'nı simgeleyen tarih olarak kabul ediliyor. Ancak 24 Nisan Türkiye'de bir tabunun tarihi. Devletin bütün olanakları bugünün anlamını inkâr etmeye seferber edilmiş durumda.

Diplomatik platformlarda resmi ağızlar ve yandaşları, yaşananların büyük bir trajedi olduğunu kabul ettiklerini, yalnızca "soykırım" sözcüğüne karşı çıktıklarını iddia ederler. Bu doğru değildir. Her yerde, her vesileyle söylenen, yalnızca soykırımın değil, yaşanan büyük acının da inkârıdır, soykırıma gerekçeler ileri sürmektir, yapıları haklı çıkarmaktır.

Daha geçen ay, İstanbul Üniversitesi'nde düzenlenen konferansta devletin resmi tezleri bir kez daha resmi geçit yaptı. Her biri, bu memleketin Ermeni yurttaşlarını rencide edecek, aile büyüklerinin anılarına saygısızlık oluşturan cümleler kürsüden yüksek sesle ifade edildi. Bilim adına yalanlar söylendi. "Ermeniler efendilerini satmışlardır", "tehcir bir kriz yönetimi şeklidir", "tehcirden ölenler gripten ölenler kadardır", "Türkler kadar asil millet dünyada yoktur; böyle bir milletin soykırım yapması mümkün değildir" denildi. "Ermenilerin hep efendileri olmuştur. Ermeniler tarihte efendilerini hep satmışlardır" diye bilimde, sanatta, edebiyatta çağının en ileri halklarından biri olan bütün bir halk aşağılandı.

Soykırımın inkârı, soykırımın sürekli kılınmasıdır, soykırımın parçasıdır. Soykırımın inkârı bir insan hakları ihlalidir. Çünkü politik tercihine bakmadan her meslekten, her yaştan, her sınıftan, kadın, erkek, genç, yaşlı, çocuk, kundaktaki bebek demeden salt Ermeni oldukları için etnik temizliğe tabi tutulan bir halkın özgürce yas tutmasını engellemektir, ölümlere saygısızlıktır. Ama belki de en önemlisi "bir daha asla" taahhüdünde bulunmamaktır.

Nitekim İttihat Terakki'den bu yana Türkiye, bir arada yaşama, demokrasi, insan hakları, sivilleşme alanında bugün bir arpa yol bile gidememiş durumdadır. Sorunların çözümü o zaman da imha ve inkârdı, bugün de imha ve inkâr. Soruların cevabı o zaman da namlunun ucundaydı, şimdi de. Yakılan boşaltılan köyler, büyük nüfus hareketleri, zorla yer değiştirmeler, aynı toplum mühendisliği anlayışının sonuçları. Ermenilerin anayurdunda 1915'ten sonra da hep kan aktı. Faily meçhuller, gözaltında kayıplar, tecavüz edilen kadınlar, toplu gözaltılar, toplu kayıplar soykırımdan pişmanlık duyma kültürüne sahip olmayan bir devlet geleneğinin doğal refleksi idi. Askere soru sormaya kalkan savcının meslekten men edilmesi, "orduya dil uzatanın dili koparılır, el uzatana eli kırılır" tehdidinin hayata geçirilmesidir. Cumhuriyet öncesinden bu yana yaşanmakta olan ve büyük kayıplara mal olan Kürt sorununda bugün, hâlâ çareyi 250 bin kişilik orduyla yığınak yapmada bulan zihniyet, silahtan başka çözüm yolu bilmeyen yönetim anlayışının devamıdır.

Türkiye İttihat ve Terakki'den günümüze kadar gelen devlet anlayışının sürekliliğe bir son vermeden demokrasi yolunda bir adım ilerleyemeyecektir. Soykırım kurbanlarının anısı önünde saygıyla eğildiği, çocuklarının torunlarının acılarının paylaşıldığı, suçun kabul edildiği bir ortam yaratılmadan insan hakları ihlalleri son bulmayacaktır. Kürtleri isyan ettiren, isyanı kanla bastıran kısır döngü kırılmayacaktır.

İnsan hakları savunucuları olarak bizler, soykırımın 91. yılında Türkiye'deki ve dünyanın her yerindeki Ermenilere buradan sesleniyor ve diyoruz ki, acınızı paylaşıyor,

⁴ "İHD İstanbul Şubesinin Basın Açıklaması," *AZG Armenian Daily*, April 26, 2006, http://www.azg.am/wap/?nl=TR&id=2006042602&Base_PUB=0.

kayıplarınızın anısı önünde saygıyla eğiliyoruz, çünkü onlar bizim de kayıplarımız. Burada verdiğimiz insan hakları mücadelesi, aynı zamanda ortak kayıplarımızın için tuttuğumuz yas, anıları önünde saygı duruşumuzdur.

HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION ISTANBUL BRANCH PRESS RELEASE⁵

24th April 2006

Today, 24th of April, is worldwide recognised as the date signifying the Armenian Genocide. Only in Turkey it indicates a taboo. The Turkish state mobilises all its resources to deny the meaning of this date.

At diplomatic platforms Turkish officials and their advocates claim that they recognise the "big tragedy" and they only object to its being named as a "Genocide". That's not true. At every occasion in Turkey not only the Armenian Genocide, but also the great agony of the Armenian people is denied and attempts are made to justify the genocide.

It was only last month that during a Symposium on the Armenian-Turkish relations the denialist official theses were voiced one after another, offending the Armenians in Turkey and elsewhere and insulting the memory of their grandparents. Lies were told in the name of "science"., like "Armenians have always sold their masters", "deportation was a means of crisis management", "death toll of deportation is comparable to the death toll of flu epidemic in England that time", "there is no other people as noble as the Turkish nation in the world, it is impossible for them to commit a genocide", and many more, humiliating a people who was one of the most advanced in science, art, literature, and in all other aspects.

Denial is an constituent [*sic.*] part of the genocide itself and results in the continuation of the genocide. Denial of genocide is a human rights violation in itself. It deprives individuals the right to mourn for their ancestors, for the ethnic cleansing of a nation, the annihilation of people of all ages, all professions, all social sections, women, men, children, babies, grandparents alike just because they were Armenians regardless of their political background or conviction. Perhaps the most important of all, it is the refusal of making a solemn, formal commitment and say "NEVER AGAIN".

Turkey has made hardly any progress in the field of co-existence, democracy, human rights and putting an end to militarism since the time of the Union and Progress Committee. Annihilation and denial had been and continues today to be the only means to solve the problem. Villages evacuated and put on fire and forced displacements are still the manifestation of the same habit of "social engineering". There has always been bloodshed in the homeland of Armenians after 1915. Unsolved murders, disappearances under custody, rapes and arrests en masse during the 1990's were no surprise, given the ongoing state tradition lacking any culture of repentance for past crimes against humanity.

⁵ "Human Rights Association Istanbul Branch Press Release," *Armenian National Institute*, April 24, 2006, http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.362/current_category.5/affirmation_detail.html.

Similarly the removal of a public prosecutor and banning him from profession just for taking the courage to mention an accusation against the military, a very recent incident, is the manifestation of an old habit of punishing anybody who dares to voice any objection to the army. And today's ongoing military build up of some 250,000 troops in the southeast of Turkey is the proof of a mindset who is unable to develop any solution to the Kurdish question other than armed suppression [*sic.*].

Turkey will not be able to take even one step forward without putting an end to the continuity of the Progress and Union manner of ruling. No human rights violation can be stopped in Turkey and there will be no hope of breaking the vicious circle of Kurdish uprisings and their bloody suppression unless the Turkish state agree to create an environment where public homage is paid to genocide victims, where the sufferings of their grandchildren is shared and the genocide is recognised.

Today we, as the human rights defenders, would like to address all Armenians in Turkey and elsewhere in the world and tell them "we want to share the pain in your hearts and bow down before the memory of your lost ones. They are also our losses. Our struggle for human rights in Turkey, is at the same time our mourning for our common losses and a homage paid to the genocide victims".

I - İHD Commemoration Announcements and Press Releases

(2010 – 2013)

2010

BİR DAHA ASLA!⁶

24 Nisan 1915'de İstanbul'da Ermeni toplumunun önde gelen aydınları, milletvekilleri, yazarları, doktorları, müzikologları, hukukçuları, şairleri, kısaca bir gecede yaklaşık 220 aydın tutuklandı ve Haydarpaşa İstasyonu'ndan Anadolu'nun içlerine doğru yola çıkarıldı. Bu yolculuktan çok azı sağ çıktı. İstanbul tutuklamaları tüm Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ermeni varlığına son verilmesinin habercisiydi.

İnsan Hakları Derneği İstanbul Şubesi olarak 95. yıldönümünde 24 Nisan kurbanlarını anmak ve BİR DAHA ASLA demek için, 1915 utancını yüreğinde duyan herkesi 24 Nisan 2010 Cumartesi günü Haydarpaşa Garı'nın girişinde düzenlenecek anma

⁶ "İHD: Bir Daha Asla" Demek İçin Haydarpaşa Gar'ına [*sic.*] Bekliyoruz!," *Savaş Karşıtları*, April 20, 2010, <http://savaskarsitlari.org/arsiv.asp?ArsivTipID=9&ArsivAnaID=57084>.

buluşmasına davet ediyoruz.

Bugüne değin ırkçılığa ve ayrımcılığa karşı tutumunuzla her zaman yanımızda hissettiğimiz sizlerin bu buluşmaya mümkün olduğunca aktif katılımı bize ve etkinliğimize güç katacak, çok değerli bir katkıda bulunacak.

24 Nisan 2010 Cumartesi günü saat 13.30'da Haydarpaşa Garı girişinde birlikte olmak umuduyla, bir kez daha BİR DAHA ASLA demek üzere katılımınızı bekliyoruz.

İnsan Hakları Derneği

İstanbul Şubesi

İrkçılık ve Ayrımcılığa Karşı Komisyon

YER : HAYDARPAŞA GARI GİRİŞİ

TARİH : 24 Nisan 2010-CUMARTESİ

SAAT : 13.30

Commemoration Announcement – My translation to English

NEVER AGAIN!

On April 24, 1915, in İstanbul, 220 leading Armenian notables, including intellectuals, members of parliament, authors, doctors, musicologues, lawyers, poets, were arrested en masse and were deported to the inner Anatolia from the Haydarpaşa train station. Few survived this journey. İstanbul arrests were the harbinger of the annihilation of Armenian presence in the Ottoman Empire.

Human Rights Association's İstanbul Branch invites all those who feel the shame of 1915 in their hearts to the commemoration meeting that will be held at the Haydarpaşa train station on April 24, 2010, to commemorate the victims of April 24 and to say NEVER AGAIN at the 95th anniversary of the events.

Your active attendance at the event will empower us and be a valuable contribution. Until now we felt your continuous support through your anti-racist and anti-discriminational attitude.

We are hoping to see you at the entrance of the Haydarpaşa station at 13:30 on April 24, 2010 to say NEVER AGAIN.

Human Rights Association

İstanbul Branch

The Commission Against Racism and Discrimination

VENUE: The Entrance of Haydarpaşa Train Station

DATE: Saturday April 24, 2010

TIME: 13:30

Press Release – Original in Turkish

BİR DAHA ASLA!⁷

⁷ İnsan Hakları Derneği, "Bir Daha Asla!," *İnsan Hakları Derneği*, April 24, 2010, <http://www.ihd.org.tr/bir-daha-asla/>.

24 Nisan 1915’de İstanbul’da zamanın Osmanlı toplumunun sanat, edebiyat düşünce ve kültür dünyasının en üretken temsilcilerinin de aralarında bulunduğu 220 Ermeni aydın gözaltına alındılar.

Önce, merkez cezaevi olarak kullanılan Mehterhane’ye, ertesi gün Sarayburnu’na götürülerek orada kendilerini bekleyen bir gemiye bindirilip Haydarpaşa tren istasyonuna götürüldüler. Oradan da nereye götürüleceklerine ilişkin hiçbir bilgi verilmeksizin Anadolu’ya doğru yola çıkarıldılar. Bir grup Ayaş’a, bir grup Çankırı’ya götürüldü. Ayaş’a götürülen 70 kişiden 58’i, Çankırı’ya götürülen 150 kişiden 81’i öldürüldü. Öldürülenler arasında dönemin önde gelen entelektüelleri vardı. Onlar ellerine kalemden başka bir şey almamış ve geriye bir mezar taşı bile bırakmadan yok olup gitmişlerdi. Bu vahşet onlarla sınırlı kalmadı. Dönemin yöneticileri olan İttihat ve Terakki Partisi ve onun tetikçi örgütü Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa aracılığı ile Anadolu’daki Ermeni varlığına, tüm tarihsel, ekonomik ve sosyal dokusuyla birlikte son verildi.

Söz konusu ırkçı anlayış ve uygulamalar sonucunda, Ermenilerin sadece canlarına kast edilmedi. Mallarına, mülklerine, paralarına, hatıralarına, tarihlerine el konuldu.

Bir uygarlık, binlerce yıllık anayurdundan silinip yok edildi.

Bu anlayışı sürdürenler bizlere yalana dayalı bir resmi tarihi dayatarak gerçeği unutturmaya çalışıyorlar.

Ne yazık ki toplumun büyük bir çoğunluğunu bu yalana inandırdılar.

Ancak, bizler insan hakları savunucuları olarak, 95 yıldır bize dayatılan bu yalana inanmıyoruz.

Biz gerçeğin ortaya çıkmasını istiyoruz!

Biz bu acının ağırlığı altında ezilmek istemiyoruz!

Sözcüklere konulan ambargolara hayır diyoruz!

Uluslararası hukukun halkların haklı talepleri doğrultusunda uygulanmasını istiyoruz.

Herkesi, 1948 tarihli Birleşmiş Milletler “Soykırım Suçunun Önlenmesi ve Cezalandırılması Sözleşmesi”ni dikkatle okumaya çağırıyoruz.

Sözleşmenin 2. maddesi soykırım suçunu şöyle tanımlıyor;

- **Gruba mensup olanların öldürülmesi,**
- **Grubun mensuplarına ciddi surette bedensel veya zihinsel zarar verilmesi,**
- **Grubun bütünüyle veya kısmen fiziksel varlığını ortadan kaldıracak hesaplanarak, yaşam şartlarını kasten değiştirmek,**
- **Grup içinde, doğumları engellemek amacıyla tedbirler almak,**
- **Gruba mensup çocukları zorla bir başka gruba nakletmek.**

Söz konusu madde, bu koşullardan herhangi birinin gerçekleşmiş olmasını, yapılanın soykırım olarak tanımlanması için yeterli sayıyor.

Evet, bu sözleşme doğrultusunda herkesi vicdanlı olmaya ve 1915 olaylarının adını koymaya çağırıyoruz.

İnsan hakları savunucuları olarak bir kez daha **SOYKIRIM İNSANLIK SUÇUDUR** ve **BİR DAHA ASLA** diyoruz.

İHD İstanbul Şubesi

İrkçilik ve Ayrımcılığa Karşı Komisyon

Press Release – My translation to English

NEVER AGAIN!

On April 24, 1915, 220 Armenian intellectuals, who were among the most productive members of the Ottoman artistic, literary and intellectual world, were arrested.

First, they were taken to Mehterhane, which was used as a central prison; the next day they were taken to Sarayburnu to be embarked on a boat that would take them to the Haydarpaşa train station. From there they began their journey towards Anatolia, ignorant of where they were to be taken. One group was taken to Ayaş and the other to Çankırı. 58 of the 70 people who were sent to Ayaş and 81 of 150 who were sent to Çankırı were killed.

Among those killed were leading intellectuals of the time. They held nothing but a pen in their lifetimes. They disappeared without even leaving gravestones.

The atrocity was limited to the Armenian intellectuals. The Armenian presence in Anatolia, with all its historical, economic, and social tissues, was destroyed through the Committee of Union and Progress and its gunman organization *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* (The Special Organization).

As a result of racist ideas and policies, Armenians were not only killed but also their properties, money, memories and histories were confiscated.

A civilization was wiped out of its motherland of thousands of years and exterminated. Those who have the same mentality are trying to make us forget by imposing an official history based on lies.

Unfortunately, they managed to convince the majority of Turkish society.

However, we, human rights defenders, do not believe in this lie imposed on us for 95 years.

We want the truth to emerge/prevail!

We do not want to be crushed under this burden/weight of pain!

We say no to embargoes on words!

We want the international law to be implemented in line with peoples' righteous demands.

We invite everybody to carefully read the United Nations' "The Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," dated 1948.

Article 2 of the convention defines genocide as:

- **Killing members of the group**
- **Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group**
- **Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part**
- **Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group**
- **Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group**

The abovementioned article takes any of these acts as sufficient to define events as genocide.

We invite all to be conscientious in line with this convention and to properly name the events of 1915.

As human rights defenders we say once again, **GENOCIDE IS A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY and NEVER AGAIN.**

İHD İstanbul Branch

The Commission Against Racism and Discrimination

2011

Commemoration Announcement – Original in Turkish

BASINA VE KAMUOYUNA

24 Nisan 1915'te İttihat ve Terakki Hükümeti'nin emriyle İstanbul Ermeni toplumunun siyaset, bilim, edebiyat, sanat ve diğer alanlardaki önde gelen temsilcileri evlerinden toplandı. Amaç, Ermeni toplumunun düşünsel önderlerini yok etmektir. Çünkü karar verilmişti; kısa bir süre sonra Anadolu'nun dört bir yanından Ermeni nüfus binlerce yıllık köklerinden sökülüp atılacak, açlık, sefalet, katliamlar sonucu yok edilecekti. O zaman geldiğinde mümkün olan en az pürüzle karşılaşılması için, sesini yükseltecek kimsenin kalmaması için, Osmanlı Ermeni toplumunun önderlerinin ortadan kaldırılması gerekiyordu.

Bu nedenle 24 Nisan, Ermeni aydınlarının imhasıyla başlayan soykırım sürecinin ilk aşamasını temsil eder.

Ama 24 Nisan yalnızca Ermeni ve Süryani soykırımının simgesi değildir. Bir ülke tarihinin yeniden ve yalanlara dayanarak yazılmasını, bir halkın varlığının, köklü bir uygarlığın bütün tarihsel mirasıyla birlikte tüm izlerinin silinmesini de simgeleyen bir gündür.

Türkiye'de kentler sır gibi saklanan bir tarihi gizler. İnsanlar hiç bilmeden birçok "suç mahalli"nin önünden geçer. İşte bunlardan biri de, kurtulanların ayrıntılı anılarında geçen Mehderhane, yani İbrahim Paşa Sarayı, yani bugün Sultanahmet meydanındaki "İslam Eserleri Müzesi"dir.

Burası, 24 Nisan gecesi evlerinden alınan şair, yazar, gazeteci, doktor, eczacı, hukukçu Ermeni aydınların, Pangaltı karakolu'nda toplandıktan sonra götürüldüğü ve Haydarpaşa'dan Anadolu'nun içlerine yola çıkarılıncaya kadar tutuldukları Merkez Cezaevi'dir.

Bu yıl İnsan Hakları Derneği İstanbul Şubesi olarak 24 Nisan 1915'te tutuklanan ve büyük çoğunluğundan bir daha haber alınamayan Ermeni aydınlarını, İbrahim Paşa Sarayı, bugünkü "İslam Eserleri Müzesi" önünde anacak ve "işte" diyeceğiz, "Ermeni aydınlar, ölüm yolculuğuna çıkarılmadan önce burada hücrelerde ve koğuşlarda tutuldu. Burası İstanbul'un suç mahallerinden biridir!"

Kentin gerçek tarihine işaret etmek, 24 Nisan'da ölüme gönderilen Ermeni aydınlarını anmak, adaletin yerini bulması mücadelesine katkıda bulunmak isteyen herkesi 24 Nisan 2011 Pazar günü saat 14.00'te İslam Eserleri Müzesi'nin önünde bizimle birlikte, soykırım kurbanlarının anısı önünde saygıyla eğilmeye çağırıyoruz.

İnsan Hakları İstanbul Şubesi

İrkçilik ve Ayrımcılığa Karşı Komisyon

TARİH: 24 NİSAN 2011(PAZAR)

SAAT : 14.00

YER : İSLAM ESERLERİ MÜZESİ

(İbrahim Paşa Sarayı, At Meydanı, Sultanahmet / Eminönü / İstanbul)

Çukurlu Çeşme Sokak, No 10/1, Taksim - İSTANBUL, Telefon (0212) 244 44 23-
(0212) 251 00 85 Faks : (212) 251 35 26

İnternet: www.ihdistanbul.com - E-mail : istanbul@ihd.org.tr

Commemoration Announcement – My translation to English

TO MEDIA AND PUBLIC

On April 24, 1915, following the order of the Union and Progress government, leading politicians, scientists, writers and artists of the İstanbul Armenian community were arrested. The goal was to annihilate the intellectual leaders of the community. Thanks to the decision that had been made, a little while later the Armenian population of Anatolia would be uprooted and exterminated through hunger, misery and massacres. In order to minimize the obstacles and to mute dissident voices, Armenian leaders had to be exterminated.

For this reason, April 24 signifies the first stage of the genocide, which began with the destruction of the leaders.

Nevertheless, April 24 is not only the symbol of Armenian and Assyrian genocide. It also signifies the re-writing of the country's history based on lies and the destruction of a community's existence together with its historical heritage without a trace.

In Turkey, cities hide a very well kept history. People pass by many "crime scenes" without being aware of them. One of these scenes, referred to in the surviving Armenians' accounts as Mehderhane or İbrahim Paşa Sarayı, is the "Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum" at Sultanahmet Square.

This is the Central Prison where the arrested Armenian poets, writers, journalists, doctors, pharmacists, and lawyers were kept until being sent to inner Anatolia from the Haydarpaşa train station.

This year, as the Human Rights Association, we will commemorate the Armenian leaders in front of the Museum and we will say, "Here, the Armenian leaders were kept in these cells and wards before their fatal journey. This is one of İstanbul's crime scenes."

We invite everybody who is willing to point to the true history of the city, to commemorate the Armenian leaders, and to contribute to the struggle to re-establish justice to join us in bowing down before the memory of genocide victims in front of the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum on Sunday April 24, 2011, at 14:00.

The Human Rights Association İstanbul Branch

The Commission against Racism and Discrimination

DATE: APRIL 24, 2011 (SUNDAY)

TIME: 14:00

VENUE: THE TURKISH AND ISLAMIC ARTS MUSEUM

(İbrahim Paşa Palace, Hippodrome, Sultanahmet/Eminönü/İstanbul)

Çukurlu Çeşme Street, No 10/1, Taksim - İSTANBUL, Telephone: (0212) 244 44 23-
(0212) 251 00 85 Fax : (212) 251 35 26

Internet: www.ihdistanbul.com - E-mail : istanbul@ihd.org.tr

Press Release

[The press release was video recorded. The recording can be reached at:
<https://vimeo.com/22839004>]

Press Release – English translation

[The English version below is based on the translated version published on AzadAlik website with my revisions]

Friends, today is the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. You can call it the Great Pain or Great Catastrophe, but we, human rights defenders, want to name it once again. 1915 is genocide and genocide is a crime against humanity. Now I proceed to read the press release.

Once again, we are gathered here to commemorate the leading members of the Armenian community who were arrested on Saturday night, April 24, 1915. This old building, which now serves as the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum, is the Ibrahim Pasa Palace. The palace was used for long years as a prison including juvenile inmates. Armenian leaders arrested on April 24, 1915, were detained before being sent to the Haydarpasa train station to be taken to the inlands of Anatolia and then to their death.

Today the websites of state institutions, of the Turkish General Staff and of other partisan organizations, host the same account on those arrested Armenian leaders, as if the same person wrote them. According to this account the arrested were "komitacis," i.e. rebels engaged in activities against the state. All these institutions lie.

The vast majority of those arrested on Saturday night April 24 were the leaders of the Istanbulite Armenian community representing its mind, conscience, intellectual and artistic life. They were poets, writers, deputies, scientists, doctors. Among them was a monumental figure, Gomidas Vartabed, who was one of the leading ethnomusicologists of his time. Vartabed collected and scored thousands of Turkish, Armenian and Kurdish folk songs travelling extensively in Anatolia village by village.

Let's remember some of these names:

Armen Dorian - A graduate of the Sorbonne University, poet. He was 23 years old.

Yervant Chavushian - University professor, writer, journalist.

Roupen Zartarian - Poet, writer, teacher, and translator.

Diran Kelekian - Professor of political history at the Mekteb-i Mulkiye, writer, publisher, and translator. He was the editor in chief of the Turkish daily Sabah.

Yervant Sirmakeshanlian - Pedagogue, translator, journalist.

Roupen Sevag Chilingirian - Poet, doctor.

Nazaret Dagharvarian - Deputy from Sivas, doctor, and agricultural engineer.

Levon Kirishchian - Poet, translator, writer, university professor.

Taniyel Varujan - Pedagogue, great Armenian poet.

Siamanto (Atom Yercanian) - One of the greatest poets of Armenian literature.

However, there were ordinary Armenians among the arrested. For example, the butcher Arabed Agha, who did not even have the time to take off his apron and knife sharpener attached to his belt and to close down his store. Poor, illiterate Artin Asadurian, who made a living by collecting street dogs and got paid 3 kurush per dog, was also arrested. The arrests were carefully organized and executed. All the policemen uttered very politely the same thing: "It is not important. We need your information on a certain

subject. It will take only 5 minutes. Then you will return to your homes." The goal was not to cause panic and to prevent household members from alerting others to be arrested. Most of those arrested believed this. Many came to the prison in their night attire, without socks or slippers.

The arrested were brought to the police stations in Pangalti or in other districts. Then they were taken to the Ibrahim Pasa Palace, which was called Mehderhane back then, on red fire brigade vehicles to camouflage the operation. There "Chetebashi" Ibrahim was waiting for them. Ibrahim was later notorious for his atrocities against the Armenians in Adapazari including filling a church with the Armenians and torturing them for days. He was one of the criminals released from the prison to join Teskilat-i Mahsusa to organize massacres against the Armenians.

Historian and writer Aram Andonian was among the few who survived the April 24 arrests. Andonian narrated the detainees' experiences in the prison in a detailed manner including the courtyard where they communicated, and the guards who over-charged for the daily needs of the inmates such as blankets and mattresses.

Around 220 prisoners were then taken to Sarayburnu to take the boat to Haydarpaşa. They were loaded onto trains and sent to Anatolia. They had no information about their destination. They spent one night in Eskisehir. Then the group divided in two. One group was taken to Ayaş and the other to Çankırı. 58 of the 70 taken to Ayaş and 81 of the 150 taken to Çankırı were killed.

The atrocity was not limited to them. The government of the Committee of Union and Progress and its death squad, the Special Organization, decided to exterminate the Armenian presence in Anatolia with all its historical, economic, and social texture. Not only did they kill the Armenians, they also confiscated their property and appropriated their history and memory. A civilization was wiped away from its homeland of many millennia.

In this genocidal process, other non-Muslim communities of Anatolia, such as Greeks, Assyrians and Ezidis, were also annihilated alongside the Armenians.

We, the Istanbul Branch of the Human Rights Association, have been expressing the demand every April 24 since 2005. The denial of the genocide is the perpetuation of the genocide. End the genocide denial. Accept the crime with all its legal consequences. Only then, would the dead without graves, the dead who were carried away by the rivers, who were piled in valleys, who drowned in the seas, who were thrown from cliffs, receive the proper burial that they deserve and that is in line with their dignity. Only then will their souls rest in peace and justice be re-established.

The Human Rights Association Istanbul Branch, the Commission against Racism and Discrimination.

2012

Commemoration Announcement – Original in Turkish

BASINA VE KAMUOYUNA⁸

⁸ "İHD 24 Nisan Anma Duyurusu," *Nor Zartonk*, February 21, 2012, <http://www.norzartonk.org/ihd-24-nisan-anma-duyurusu/>.

24 Nisan 1915'te İttihat ve Terakki Hükümeti'nin emriyle İstanbul Ermeni toplumunun siyaset, bilim, edebiyat, sanat ve diğer alanlardaki önde gelen temsilcileri tutuklanarak evlerinden toplandı. Tutuklamalar, Anadolu'nun dört bir yanında Ermeni nüfusunun binlerce yıllık köklerinden sökülüp atılmasıyla, açlık, sefalet, katliamlar sonucu yok edilmesiyle sonuçlanan soykırım sürecinin başlangıcıydı.

İnsan Hakları Derneği İstanbul Şubesi, İrkçılık ve Ayrımcılığa Karşı Komisyon olarak, geçen yıl, 24 Nisan'da tutuklananları ve Soykırım kurbanlarını, o tarihte cezaevi olarak kullanılan Türk İslam Eserleri Müzesi'nin önünde anmış, yaptığımız basın açıklamasında, "Ermeni aydınlar, ölüm yolculuğuna çıkarılmadan önce buradaki hücrelerde ve koğuşlarda tutuldu. Burası İstanbul'un suç mahallerinden biridir!" demiştik.

Bu açıklamayı yaptığımız sırada, Batman'da zorunlu askerlik yapmakta olan Sevag Şahin Balıkçı, vurularak öldürüldü. Bu yıl, 24 Nisan 2012'de basın açıklamamızı yine aynı yerde yapacağız ve bu defa Ermeni soykırımı kurbanlarıyla birlikte Sevag'ı da anacağız. Basın açıklamamızda yüzlerce yıllık geçmişe sahip olduğu Adana Kozan'dan Soykırım sonucu kovularak Beyrut'a sürülen Kilikya Katolikosluğu ile Eçmiyadzin Tüm Ermeniler Katolikosluğu'na göndereceğimiz iki mektubu Türkiye ve dünya kamuoyu ile paylaşacağız. Mektuplarımızla Türkiye'deki insan hakları savunucularının sesini Ermeni toplumunun en yüksek iki ruhani temsilcisi nezdinde dünyadaki tüm Ermenilere duyuracağız.

Açıklamamızın ardından yas geleneğine uygun olarak, sessiz bir yürüyüşle Sirkeci Postanesi'ne gidecek ve mektuplarımızı postaya vereceğiz. Daha sonra Sevag Şahin Balıkçı'nın Şişli Ermeni Mezarlığı'ndaki mezarını ziyaret edecek ve insan hakları savunucuları, ırkçılık ve ayrımcılık karşıtları olarak anısına saygı duruşunda bulunacağız. Soykırımın tanınmasını gerçek demokrasinin ve adaletin gereği olduğuna inanan herkesi 24 Nisan 2012'de saat 13:00'te Türk İslam Eserleri Müzesi'nin önünde bir araya gelmeye davet ediyoruz.

İNSAN HAKLARI DERNEĞİ İSTANBUL ŞUBESİ
İRKÇILIK VE AYRIMCILIĞA KARŞI KOMİSYON

Commemoration Announcement – My translation to English

TO MEDIA AND PUBLIC

On April 24, 1915, the Istanbul Armenian community's leaders in politics, science, literature, arts, and other fields were arrested in their homes on the orders of the Union and Progress government. Arrests were the beginning of the genocide process that removed the roots of the Armenians in Anatolia which extended thousands of year back and that resulted in their annihilation through hunger, misery and massacre.

Last year, we, the Commission against Racism and Discrimination at the Human Rights Association Istanbul Branch, commemorated the Armenian leaders arrested on April 24, 1915, and genocide victims outside the Turkish Islamic Arts Museum which was then used as a prison. In our press release we announced, "The Armenian intellectuals were kept in these cells and wards before starting their deadly journey. This is one of Istanbul's crime scenes."

While we read this statement, Sevag Şahin Balıkçı, who was doing his obligatory military services in Batman was murdered. This year, on April 24, 2012, we will read our press release at the same location and we will commemorate Sevag together with the genocide victims.

In our press release, we are going to share with Turkish and world public two letters we are going to post to the Catholicate of the Great House of Cilicia, that was exiled to Beirut from Adana Kozan as a result of the genocide, and to the Catholicate of All Armenians Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. Through our letters, we are going to send the message of human rights defenders to these highest religious representatives of the Armenians all over the world.

After the press release, following the mourning tradition, we will walk silently to the Sirkeci Post Office and mail our letters. Then we will visit Sevag Şahin Balıkçı's tomb at the Şişli Armenian Cemetery. There, as human rights defenders, opponents of racism and discrimination, we will observe a moment of silence.

We invite everybody who believes that recognizing the genocide is a must for democracy and justice to gather together outside the Turkish Islamic Arts Museum on April 24, 2012, at 13:00.

Human Rights Association Istanbul Branch
The Commission Against Racism and Discrimination

Press Release

[Instead of a separate press release, Melda Çılgin read the letters below on behalf of the commission.]

24th April 2012

His All Holiness Karekin II
Catholicos of All Armenians
Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin
ARMENIA

Your Holiness,

Today is the 24th of April, 2012, the 97th anniversary of the arrests of the Armenian intellectuals of Istanbul, which represents the beginning of the Armenian Genocide.

We are writing this letter to the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, which represents all the Armenians in the world, in order to say that we bow in shame and in respect before the memory of the Ottoman Armenians who were massacred and dispossessed of all their riches, of all their richness of every kind, and effectively, even of the vestiges of their past. We are addressing our letter to you to declare that we remain the defenders of the usurped rights of the children and the grandchildren of the victims who survived massacre and were dispersed to all corners of the earth.

The denial of the Genocide by Turkey has lasted for 97 years, not only as a state policy but also as a socially pervasive view. We are writing this letter to you so as to declare that

the denial of a crime against humanity, such as Genocide, is a transgression of human rights, which itself leads to other transgressions and feeds enmity and hate.

You visited Istanbul in 2006 on the invitation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople. Your visit met with attacks against your person and your See by proponents of hate in Turkey, due especially to a reply you gave in the press conference. You said, "For our people, the Genocide is not a matter of investigation; it is a factual event that took place, and must be recognized as such." Your words were themselves subjected to an investigation under article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, whose legitimacy we contest in the most absolute terms.

We are writing you this letter to state that we share the views you voiced in the press conference in their entirety. As defenders of human rights, we deem the campaign against you by proponents of enmity and hate, as well as the investigation initiated by the Turkish judiciary, to be an attack against human rights.

On April 24, 2011, the same day that we were commemorating in Istanbul the 96th anniversary of the arrest of the Armenian intellectuals, Sevgi Şahin Balıkcı was shot dead while on mandatory military duty in the city of Batman. Officials gave misleading information and manipulated witnesses in order to declare the death an accident. Further inspection and investigations have since pointed to premeditated murder. The murder of Sevgi Şahin Balıkcı is evidence that there has been no life security for Armenians since 1915, that the process of genocide is ongoing, and that the denialism of 97 years perpetuates genocide.

In the 97th year of the process of genocide, which began with the arrests in Istanbul on April 24, 1915, and which included the annihilation of the Armenians as well as the Assyrians and Greeks of Anatolia, we are writing this letter to directly address you and the children of the victims of the Armenian genocide around the world, whom you represent. We hereby declare our belief that it is only after the recognition of the Genocide and the restitution of and/or compensation for the confiscated property of Armenians that justice can be established.

Truly yours,

**Human Rights Association,
Istanbul Branch
Committee Against Racism and Discrimination
TURKEY**

**His Holiness Aram I
Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia
Antelias
LEBANON**

Your Holiness,

Today is the 24th of April, 2012, the 97th anniversary of the arrests of the Armenian intellectuals of Istanbul, which represents the beginning of the Armenian Genocide.

As a result of the process of genocide which began with the arrests in Istanbul on April 24, 1915, the Cilicia Catholicosate, which has not only been one of the spiritual centers of the historic Western Armenia for hundreds of years but which also represents its cultural

and social identity, was forcibly displaced to Lebanon from the lands where it belonged. As defenders of human rights in Turkey, we are writing this letter to you to express our belief that it is in these lands that your Catholicosate belongs.

We are writing this letter to you in order to say that we bow in shame and in respect before the memory of the Ottoman Armenians who were massacred and dispossessed of all their riches, of all their richness of every kind, and effectively, even of the vestiges of their past. We are addressing our letter to you to declare that we remain the defenders of the usurped rights of the children and the grandchildren of the victims who survived massacre and were dispersed to all corners of the earth.

On August 31, 2011, you sent a letter to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey regarding the legislative changes concerning the restitution of some of the properties of non-Muslim foundations. You wrote, "The Armenian people will remain the rightful owners of the innumerable churches, hospitals, nursing homes, orphanages, cemeteries, and various religious and public properties confiscated by the Turkish state in the days of Genocide in 1915." You then added, "The Armenian people will remain the rightful owners of the houses, businesses, and properties of their ancestors who were victims of the Genocide which was planned and perpetrated by the Ottoman Turkish government." In your letter, you declared that the Armenian people will never abdicate their demands on Turkey for justice regarding the Armenian Genocide, and for the restoration of human rights. You wrote, "Dear Prime Minister, your declarations regarding justice and human rights will only be documented when you recognize the Armenian Genocide."

We are writing this letter to address you and thus all the Armenians in the world, to state that your demands voice the requirements of the most basic human rights, and that they are also our demands.

On April 24, 2011, the same day that we were commemorating in Istanbul the 96th anniversary of the arrest of the Armenian intellectuals, Sevgi Şahin Balıkcı was shot dead while on mandatory military duty in the Turkish army in the city of Batman. Officials gave misleading information and manipulated witnesses in order to declare the death an accident. Further inspection and investigations have since pointed to premeditated murder. The murder of Sevgi Şahin Balıkcı is evidence that there has been no life security for Armenians since 1915, that the process of genocide is ongoing, and that the denialism of 97 years perpetuates genocide.

In the 97th year of the process of genocide, which began with the arrests in Istanbul on April 24, 1915, and which included the annihilation of the Armenians as well as the Assyrians and Greeks of Anatolia, we are writing this letter to directly address you and the children of the victims of the Armenian genocide around the world, whom you represent. We hereby declare our belief that it is only after the recognition of the Genocide and the restitution of and/or compensation for the confiscated property of Armenians that justice can be established.

Your humble servants,

**Human Rights Association,
Istanbul Branch
Committee Against Racism and Discrimination
TURKEY**

2013

Commemoration Announcement – Original in Turkish

BASINA VE KAMUOYUNA DUYURU⁹

24 NİSAN 2013 – İSTANBUL

İHD İSTANBUL ŞUBESİ İRKÇILIK VE AYRIMCILIĞA KARŞI KOMİSYON

İnsan Hakları Derneği İstanbul Şubesi, İrkçılık ve Ayrımcılığa Karşı Komisyonu olarak, Şube yöneticilerimiz, aktivistlerimiz ve tüm soykırım karşıtlarıyla birlikte bu yıl da 24 Nisan Ermeni Soykırımı'nı anıyoruz.

Anma programımız dahilinde 23 Nisan 2013 Salı günü saat 19.00'da '1915 Öncesi Osmanlı'da Süryani Yaşamı' başlıklı bir sergiyi Dernek salonumuzda açacağız. 1915 yalnızca Ermeni Soykırımı'nı değil, aynı zamanda Süryanilerin de 'Seyfo' adını verdiği Süryani Soykırımı'nı temsil ediyor.

24 Nisan 2013 Çarşamba günü etkinliklerimiz bir mezar ziyareti ile başlayacak.

Konuğumuz olarak İstanbul'a gelen Londra'daki Gomidas Enstitüsü Direktörü tarihçi Ara Sarafian, saat 11.00'de insan hakları savunucuları ve ırkçılık karşıtlarının eşliğinde Zincirlikuyu Mezarlığı'nda Kütahya Mutasarrıfı Faik Ali Bey'in (Ozansoy) mezarını ziyaret edecek. Faik Ali Bey, 1915'te merkezi hükümetin tehcir kararını Kütahya vilayetinde uygulamamış, zorla din değiştirme uygulamasını da reddederek vilayetinin Ermeni toplumunu korumuştur.

Ara Sarafian, İstanbul'dan önce 21-23 Nisan tarihlerinde Diyarbakır'da, Belediye Başkanı Osman Baydemir'in ve Diyarbakır Barosu'nun konuğu olarak ve İHD Diyarbakır şubemizin desteğiyle gerçekleşecek anma ve etkinliklere katılacak.

24 Nisan Çarşamba günü İstanbul'da Saat 12.30'da Sultanahmet'te, 1915'te Merkez Cezaevi olarak kullanılan, ölüme gönderilecek Ermeni aydınların bir süre tutulduğu, şimdiki 'Türk-İslam Eserleri Müzesi'nin önünde Soykırım'ı anma etkinliğimiz başlayacak.

Etkinliğimiz Soykırım'da yok edilen Anadolu'ya yayılmış Ermeni toplumunun yaşadığı 2300 köy ve kasabanın isimleri bir panoyla sergilenecek ve isimler tek tek okunacak.

Liste, dönemin tanınmış İstanbullu Ermeni entelektüellerinden yazar, yayıncı Teotig'in (Teotoros Lapçinciyan) verilerine dayanarak hazırlandı.

Tarihçi Ara Sarafian burada Türkçe'ye çevrilecek olan kısa bir Ermenice konuşma yapacak. Yanı sıra Süryani toplumundan bir katılımcı, 1915'te Süryanilerin yaşadıklarına ilişkin bir konuşma yapacak ve konuşma Süryanice tekrarlanacak.

Kürt siyasi hareketini temsilen, yoğun barış süreci nedeniyle adı ancak daha sonra duyurulacak bir konuşmamız da anma sırasından söz alacak.

Anmamızdan sonra, saat 14.00'te hep birlikte 24 Nisan 2011 günü askerlik yaptığı Diyarbakır'da öldürülen Sevag Balıkcı'nın Şişli Ermeni Gregoryan Mezarlığı'ndaki kabrini ziyaret edecek ve Ermenilere, diğer Müslüman olmayanlara karşı nefret suçlarını ve cinayetlerini bir kez daha kınayacak, Sevag'ın ve diğer nefret cinayeti kurbanlarının anısı önünde saygı duruşunda bulunacağız.

Basın mensupları ve tüm soykırım karşıtları etkinliklerimizin davetlisidir.

Commemoration Announcement – My translation to English

⁹ "İHD: 24 Nisan 1915 Ermeni Soykırımı'nı Anıyoruz," *Nor Zartonk*, April 20, 2013, <http://www.norzartonk.org/ihd-24-nisan-1915-ermeni-soykirimini-aniyoruz/>.

ANNOUNCEMENT TO MEDIA AND PUBLIC

APRIL 24, 2013 – İSTANBUL

HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION İSTANBUL BRANCH THE COMMISSION
AGAINST RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

We the Human Rights Association İstanbul Branch the Commission Against Racism and Discrimination, we commemorate the April 24 Armenian genocide with our branch management, activists, and all genocide opponents.

As part of the commemoration program, we are going to open the exhibition entitled “Assyrian Life in the Ottoman Empire before 1915” on Tuesday April 23, 2013 at 19:00 in our saloon at the association. 1915 symbolizes not only the Armenian genocide, but also the Assyrian genocide, called Seyfo.

On April 24, 2013, our activities will begin with a visit to a tomb. Ara Sarafian, the director of the Gomidas Institute in London, will visit the tomb of Kutahya mutassarif Faik Ali (Ozansoy) at Zincirlikuyu Cemetery at 11:00am. Human rights defenders and opponents of racism will accompany Sarafian who is here as our guest. Faik Ali Bey refused to implement the deportation orders coming from the government in 1915 and he also rejected forced Islamization. He protected the Armenian population of the province. Ara Sarafian will attend commemorative activities and other events taking place in Diyarbakır with the support of the İHD Diyarbakır Branch. Sarafian will be the guest of the mayor Osman Baydemir and the Diyarbakır Bar.

On Wednesday April 24, our event will begin with outside of the Turkish Islamic Arts Museum, that was used as a prison where the arrested Armenian intellectuals were held in 1915 before departing for their death.

We will have a board with the names of 2,300 Anatolian villages and towns inhabited by the Armenian community destroyed during the genocide and the names of arrested Armenian leaders will be read one by one. The list of names is prepared on the basis of data compiled by famous Armenian intellectual, writer, and publisher Teotig (Teotoros Lapçinyan).

Here historian Ara Sarafian will deliver a speech in Armenian. The speech will be interpreted in Turkish. In addition, we will have a speaker from the Assyrian community to deliver a speech about the 1915 experiences of the community. The speech will be repeated in Assyrian.

We will have a representative of the Kurdish movement. The name of this representative will be announced later due to intense peace negotiations between the movement and the government.

After the commemoration, we visit Sevag Balıkçı’s tomb in the Şişli Gregorian Armenian Cemetery. He was murdered in Diyarbakır while doing his military service. There we will condemn hate crimes and murders of the Armenians and non-Muslims one more time. We will also take a minute of silence to honor the memory of the victims of hate murders.

Media and all opponents of genocide are invited.

J – DurDe Press Releases (2010-2012)

2010

[Original in Turkish]

Bu Acı Hepimizin¹⁰

1915'te, nüfusumuz henüz 13 milyonken, bu topraklarda 1,5 – 2 milyon Ermeni yaşıyordu. Trakya'da, Ege'de, Adana'da, Malatya'da, Van'da, Kars'ta... Samatya'da, Şişli'de, Adalar'da, Galata'da...

Mahalle bakkalımız, terzimiz, kuyumcumuz, marangozumuz, kunduracımız, yan tarladaki rençberimiz, değirmencimiz, sınıf arkadaşımız, öğretmenimiz, subayımız, emir erimiz, milletvekilimiz, tarihçimiz, bestekârımız... Arkadaşlarımızdılar. Kapı komşularımız, dert ortaklarımızdılar. Trakya'da, Ege'de, Adana'da, Malatya'da, Van'da, Kars'ta... Samatya'da, Şişli'de, Adalar'da, Galata'da...

24 Nisan 1915'te "gönderilmeye" başlandılar. Onları kaybettik. Artık yoklar. Çok büyük çoğunluğu aramızda yok. Mezarları bile yok. "Büyük Felaket"ın vicdanlarımıza yüklediği "Büyük Acı" ise olanca ağırlığıyla VAR. 95 yıldır büyüyor.

Bu "Büyük Acı"yı yüreğinde hisseden bütün Türkiyelileri 1915 kurbanlarının anısı önünde saygıyla eğilmeye çağırıyoruz. Siyahlar içinde, sessizce. Ruhlarına yakacağımız mumlarla, çiçeklerle...

Çünkü bu acı BİZİM acımız. Bu yas HEPİMİZİN.

24 Nisan 2010

19.00

Taksim Meydanı, Tramvay Durağı

Çağrıcılar:

Ahmet İnsel, Ali Bayramoğlu, Aslı Erdoğan, Avi Haligua, Ayhan Bilgen, Ayla Yıldırım, Aysın Yeşilay İnan, Ayşe Batumlu, Ayşegül Devecioğlu, Baskın Oran, Cafer Solgun, Cengiz Aktar, Cengiz Alğan, Deniz Zarakolu, Dilek Gökçin, Doğan Tarkan, Eren Keskin, Erol Köroğlu, Ferhat Kentel, Fethi İnan, Fethiye Çetin, Garo Paylan, Gülten Kaya, Hakan Tahmaz, Halil Berktaş, Hayko Bağdat, Hilal Kaplan, Hürriyet Şener, İpek Çalışlar, İsmail Erdoğan, Jale Mildanoğlu, Kadir Cangızbay, Kerem Öktem, Kutluğ Ataman, Lale Mansur, Leman Yurtsever, Levent Şensever, Mahir Günşiray, Mehmet Demir, Mithat Sancar, Neşe Düzel, Nil Mutluer, Orhan Miroğlu, Osman Köker, Öztürk Türkdogan, Perihan Mağden, Roni Margulies, Semra Somersan, Sezgin Tanrıkuu, Sırrı Süreyya Önder, Şanar Yurdatapan, Şenol Karakaş, Tamar Nalcı, Tanıl Bora, Turgay

¹⁰ "Bu Acı BİZİM Acımız. Bu Yas HEPİMİZİN./This Is OUR Pain. This Is a Mourning for ALL OF US.," *Deutsch Armenische Gesellschaft*, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://www.deutscharmenischegesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/This-is-OUR-pain.-This-is-a-mourning-for-ALL-OF-US.-20100424.pdf>.

Oğur, Ufuk Uras, Ümit Kardaş, Ümit Kıvanç, Vivet Kanetti, Yalçın Ergüdoğan, Yaman Yıldız, Yasemin Çongar, Yıldız Önen, Zeynep Gambetti, Zeynep Tanbay.
<http://www.buacihepimizin.org/>

[I used the English translation provided at the above source with minor changes.]

This is OUR pain. This is a mourning for ALL OF US.

In 1915, when we had a population of only 13 million people, there were 1.5 to 2 million Armenians living on this land. In Thrace, in the Aegean, in Adana, in Malatya, in Van, in Kars... In Samatya, in Şişli, in the Islands, in Galata...

They were the grocer in our neighborhood, our tailor, our goldsmith, our carpenter, our shoemaker, our farmhand, our millwright, our classmate, our teacher, our officer, our private, our deputy, our historian, our composer... Our friend. Our next-door neighbors and our companions in bad times. In Thrace, in the Aegean, in Adana, in Malatya, in Van, in Kars.... In Samatya, in Şişli, in the Prince Islands, in Galata...

On April 24th, 1915 they were “rounded up.” We lost them. They are not here anymore. A great majority of them do not exist anymore. Nor do their graveyards. There EXISTS the overwhelming “Great Pain” that was laid upon the qualms of our conscience by the “Great Catastrophe.” It has grown deeper and deeper for the last 95 years.

We call upon all the peoples of Turkey who share this heartfelt pain to commemorate and pay tribute to the victims of 1915. In black, in silence. With candles and flowers...

For this is OUR pain. This is a mourning for ALL OF US.

April 24th, 2010

19:00

Taksim Square, Tramway Station

Invited:

Ahmet İnel, Ali Bayramoğlu, Aslı Erdoğan, Avi Haligua, Ayhan Bilgen, Ayla Yıldırım, Aysın Yeşilay İnan, Ayşe Batumlu, Ayşegül Devocioğlu, Baskın Oran, Cafer Solgun, Cengiz Aktar, Cengiz Alğan, Deniz Zarakolu, Dilek Gökçin, Doğan Tarkan, Eren Keskin, Erol Köroğlu, Ferhat Kentel, Fethi İnan, Fethiye Çetin, Garo Paylan, Gülten Kaya, Hakan Tahmaz, Halil Berktaş, Hayko Bağdat, Hilal Kaplan, Hürriyet Şener, İpek Çalışlar, İsmail Erdoğan, Jale Mildanoğlu, Kadir Cangızbay, Kerem Öktem, Kutluğ Ataman, Lale Mansur, Leman Yurtsever, Levent Şensever, Mahir Günşiray, Mehmet Demir, Mithat Sancar, Neşe Düzel, Nil Mutluer, Orhan Miroğlu, Osman Köker, Öztürk Türkdogan, Perihan Mağden, Roni Margulies, Semra Somersan, Sezgin Tanrıku, Sırrı Süreyya Önder, Şanar Yurdatapan, Şenol Karakaş, Tamar Nalcı, Tanıl Bora, Turgay Oğur, Ufuk Uras, Ümit Kardaş, Ümit Kıvanç, Vivet Kanetti, Yalçın Ergüdoğan, Yaman Yıldız, Yasemin Çongar, Yıldız Önen, Zeynep Gambetti, Zeynep Tanbay.

<http://www.buacihepimizin.org/>

2011

[Original in Turkish]

Bu acı hepimizin¹¹

24 Nisan 1915, asırlardır bu ülkenin diğer halkları ile birlikte yan yana yaşamakta olan Ermeni halkının; kadın, çocuk, ihtiyar, hasta ayırt edilmeksizin, sırf Ermeni oldukları için; yurdundan, evinden, tarlasından, işyerinden, mesleğinden devlet zoruyla koparılıp yüz binlercesinin öldüğü, öldürüldüğü, sürüldüğü ve her türlü zulme maruz kaldığı felaketin başladığı gündür.

O tarihten bu yana devlet ve hükümetler, bu korkunç olayın üstünü örtmeye, olmadı hafifsetmeye, dahası -isyan gibi nedenlerle- meşru göstermeye çalıştı. Oysa hiçbir gerekçenin haklı gösteremeyeceği bu ölümcül sürgün açıkça insanlığa karşı işlenmiş bir suçtur.

Ancak bilinmelidir ki;

Devletin bu suçu inkâra dayalı resmi politikası sürdükçe o tarihten beri bu ülke insanların yüreğinde gizli gizli kanayan yara derinleşmekte; aklımızı, vicdanımızı, hak-adalet duygumuzu daha fazla felç etmektedir.

Ama artık buna bir son vermeliyiz. O nedenle, bu ülkenin alını ve vicdanı ak insanlar ülkesi olmasını yürekten isteyen herkesi çok gecikmiş bir insanlık görevine davet ediyoruz. 24 Nisan'ın işaret ettiği o ağır suçun, insanlığın asli değerleri temelinde birleşen hepimizin ortak acısı olduğunu ilan etmeye çağırıyoruz.

24 Nisan 1915'ten başlayarak kaybettiğimiz Ermeni yurttaşlarımızı karanfillerimiz ve mumlarımızla anıyoruz.

Anma düzenlenecek yerler:

İstanbul

17:00, Taksim Meydanı

Ankara

17:00, Sakarya Meydanı

İzmir

14:00, Fuar Basmane Kapısı önü

Diyarbakır

17:00, İnsan Hakları Parkı

Bodrum

17:00, Belediye Binası önü

İrkçılığa ve Milliyetçiliğe DurDe Girişimi

[My translation to English]

This Pain is Ours...

¹¹ “24 Nisan’da Ermeni Soykırımını Anmaları: Bu Acı Hepimizin,” *Marksist.org*, April 20, 2011, <http://www.marksist.org/haberler/3485-24-nisanda-ermeni-soykirimi-anmalari-bu-aci-hepimizin>; “24 Nisan İçin 5 Merkezde Toplantı: ‘Bu Acı Hepimizin...,’” *Epress News*, April 20, 2011, <http://www.epress.am/tr/2011/04/20/24-nisan-icin-5-merkezde-toplanti-bu-aci-hepimizin.html>.

April 24, 1915, was the beginning of the catastrophe during which the Armenian people, women, youth, elders, and sick alike, were torn away from their homeland, homes, fields, workplaces, and professions by state coercion. Hundreds of thousands of them were dead, massacred, displaced, subjected to all sorts of cruelties, just because they were Armenian. Since that date, the state and governments attempted to cover up this horrible event, if not, to diminish its gravity, and even to justify it, on the grounds of Armenian "rebellion". However, this deadly exile, which cannot be justified on any grounds, is clearly a crime committed against humanity.

Nevertheless, it should be known that:

As long as the official denial of this crime continues, the wound that secretly bleeds in the hearts of Turkey's people gets deeper and our mind, conscience, and sense of right-justice is even more paralyzed.

But we must put an end to this. Therefore, we invite everybody who wants Turkey to be a country of people with clean consciences to fulfill an already belated duty of humanity.

We call them to announce that the crime that April 24 refers to constitutes a common pain for those of us united around the fundamental values of humanity.

We are commemorating with carnations and candles our Armenian citizens whom we began to lose starting with April 24, 1915. Locations of commemorative events:

İstanbul: 17:00 Taksim Square

Ankara: 17:00 Sakarya Square

Diyarbakır: 17:00 Human Rights Park

Bodrum: 17:00 Municipality Square

Abdullah Demirbaş, Adil Kurt, Ahmet Faruk Ünsal, Ahmet İnel, Ahmet Kardam, Ahmet Türk, Ali Bayramoğlu, Ali Ertem, Alper Görmüş, Altan Tan, Atilla Dirim, Atilla Tuygan, Aydın Engin, Ayhan Bilgen, Aysel Tuğluk, Ayşe Hür, Baskın Oran, Bekir Berat Özipek, Betül Tanbay, Bülent Atamer, Büşra Ersanlı, Cafer Solgun, Cengiz Aktar, Cengiz Alğan, Cercüş Taş, Demir Çelik, Doğan Tarkan, Emine Ayna, Emrullah Beytar, Emrullah Bingöl, Erol Köroğlu, Ertuğrul Kürkçü, Esra Mungan, F. Levent Şensever, Faik Karadaş, Faruk Alpkaya, Fatma Nevin Vargün, Ferda Keskin, Ferhat Kentel, Ferhat Tunç, Fethi İnan, Fethiye Çetin, Garo Paylan, Gaye Boralıoğlu, Gençay Gürsoy, Gülten Kaya, Gülten Kışanak, Hacı Mehmet Bozdağ, Halil Aksoy, Halil Berktaş, Haluk İnanıcı, Hasan Yalçınkaya, Hayko Bağdat, Hidayet Şevkatli Tuksal, Hilal Kaplan, Hüseyin Tanaş, İdris Balukan, İhsan Coşkun, İhsan Nergiz, İnci Hekimoğlu, İpek Çalışlar, Jale Mildanoğlu, Kadir Cangızbay, Kerem Tosun, Lale Mansur, Levent Tüzel, Leyla İpekçi, Mazhar Zümrüt, Mehmet Bekaroğlu, Mehmet Demir, Mehmet Tanhan, Mesut Yeğen, Metin Alğan, Mithat Sancar, Muhammet Akar, Murat Bozlak, Murat Çelikkın, Murat Paker, Mustafa Avcı, Nabi Yağcı, Nazmi Gür, Necmiye Alpay, Nil Mutluer, Nizamettin Öztürk, Oktay Etiman, Oral Çalışlar, Orhan Miroğlu, Osman Baydemir, Osman Köker, Oya Baydar, Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, Ömer Laçiner, Özdal Üçer, Özden Dönmez, Pervin Buldan, Ragıp Duran, Ragıp Zarakolu, Roni Margulies, Sadrettin Güvener, Sait Çetinoğlu, Sebahat Tuncel, Selim Deringil, Semra Somersan, Serkan Akyıldırım, Sırrı Süreyya Önder, Şebnem Korur Fincancı, Şehbal Şenyurt, Şenol Karakaş, Şeyhmus Diken, Temel İskit, Tuna Kuyucu, Turan Cengiz, Ufuk Uras, Ümit Fırat, Ümit Karadaş,

Ümit Kıvanç, Ümit Şahin, Ünal Ünsal, Üstün Bol, Yakup Kadri Karabacak, Yalçın Ergündoğan, Yasemin Göksu, Yıldırım Oğur, Zeynep Tanbay, Zozan Özgökçe.

2012

[Original in Turkish]

Bu acı hepimizin...¹²

“24 Nisan bir kin günü değil. Bir küfür günü de değil. Gelin, önce o gün ne oldu, onu paylaşalım.

1915 yılının o gününde Anadolu’nun en eski halklarından Ermenilerin 250 kadar aydını apar topar evlerinden alınıp Çankırı Ayaş’a, dönüşü olmayan bir yola sürüldü. Mebusu, doktoru, çevirmeni, öğretmeni, gazetecisi, yazarı, sanatçısı bütün bu insanlar bir halkın sesiydi. Meşrutiyet sonrasının özgür ve eşit günlerine inanmıştı. Düşleri, dönüşsüz yollarda kendileriyle birlikte kayboldu gitti.

Sesini yitiren bir toplumun başka neyi kalır ki geriye? Çoluk çocuk, genç yaşlı kabilelerle Ermeni halkı Anadolu’nun dört bir bucağından çöllere sürüldü. Evin erkekleri öldürüldü, kiliseler, okullar harabeye döndü. Mal mülk el değiştirdi. O korkunç soykırımın sonunda Ermenilerin varlığından geriye sadece yasaklı fısıltılar kaldı.

Susulunca unutulmadı ama. İnkâr edildikçe yok olmadı. Aksine yara iltihaba döndü, çözümsüzlükte kemikleşti. Birçok vicdanlı Müslüman ellerinden geldiğince Ermeni komşularını kurtarmaya çalıştıysa da Anadolu’daki tahribat kalanlar için büyük oldu. Bu topraklar bir daha iflah olmadı.

Ömrünü Anadolu halklarının barışına adayan ve bu uğurda canından olan Hrant Dink, yarayı sarmanın gereğini hatırlatmış, “Bugün hâlâ unutmayı savunanlar, aslında sadece geçmişten değil, gelecekte korkanlardır. Unutulmamış geçmiş, geleceğin de teminatıdır” demişti. Bir de hayali vardı: “Bir 24 Nisan’da bu topraklarda hep birlikte tüm bu insanları hatırlamak, ruhları şad etmek, acıda ortaklaşarak sevinçler üretebilmek, yalnızca Ermeni halkının duyduğu ıstırapı dindirmekle kalmayacak, Türkiye’nin de demokratikleşmesinin ta kendisi olacaktır.

Geleceğimiz için el ele yapabileceklerimiz var. Gelin, bu 24 Nisan’da meydanları dolduralım. Geçmişteki bu büyük acıya ortak bir yasla sahip çıkalım. Ve bir kez de ortak yastan çıkan umutta buluşalım.”

24 Nisan, 19:15’te, Taksim’de

[I used Ekin Karaca’s partial translation of the press release¹³ with some modifications and translated the rest of the release.]

¹² “DurDe’nin 24 Nisan çağrısı,” *Agos*, April 17, 2012, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/1159/durdenin-24-nisan-cagrisi>.

¹³ Ekin Karaca, “97th Anniversary of Genocide and the Tradition of Unsolved Murders,” *Bianet.org*, April 25, 2012, <http://www.bianet.org/english/minorities/137858-97th-anniversary-of-genocide-and-the-tradition-of-unsolved-murders>.

This Pain Belongs to Us All...

April 24 is not a day of grudge/animosity/hatred or a day of insult/curse. Let us first share what had happened on that day.

On that day of 1915 around 250 notables of one of the most ancient communities of Anatolia were arrested in their homes to be sent to Çankırı and Ayaş, on a one-way road. These people, deputies, doctors, translators, teachers, journalists, writers, artists, were the voice of the Armenian community. They all believed in constitutional freedom and equality. Their dreams disappeared with them.

What is left to a community that lost its voice? The Armenian people from all corners of Anatolia were deported to deserts. Men were killed; churches and schools were destroyed. Their property changed hands. Only forbidden whispers about the Armenians' property were left at the end of the genocide.

Silence did not bring forgetting. Denial did not erase it. On the contrary, the wound turned into inflammation and ossified in deadlock. Although many conscientious Muslims did their best to save their Armenian neighbors, the destruction was huge for the rest. These lands have not been able to recover since then.

Hrant Dink, who devoted his life to the peace of Anatolian people and who was murdered for this, reminded us of the necessity of covering the wound. He said, "those who still defend forgetfulness are afraid not only afraid of the past but also of the future. An unforgotten past is the guarantee/assurance of the future." He had a dream, "On one April 24, as the peoples of this lands, being able to remember all the victims, to beatify the souls, to generate happiness by sharing the pain, would not only alleviate Armenians' agony, but would the true democratization of Turkey."

There are things that we can do hand in hand for our future. Let's fill the squares on this April 24. Let's adopt this tremendous pain with a shared mourning. And let's meet once again in the hope arising from shared mourning.

To Taksim, on April 24, at 19:15

Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism