

Remarks by President Serzh Sargsyan in Deir ez Zor

24.03.2010

Your Eminencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am here today since I could not but be here. It is the greatest grief of my nation that has brought me here, the grief of the first genocide of the 20th century and the greatest disgrace of the civilized humanity. Up to this moment, in the 21st century, the stigma of that disgrace still remains on the foreheads of all those who have turned the denial of the evident facts into their policy, turned it into their bargaining chip and into their lifestyle and norm of behaviour.

In the desert of Deir ez Zor the most monstrous acts of the tragedy had taken place, and it is neither possible to articulate the particulars of that tragedy in the language of human beings, nor am I going to do that since these particulars are well-known even to those who publicly deny the veracity of the Genocide. Bereft of home and property, bereft of children and parents, bereft of health and the last hope, and finally bereft of the most important – their homeland, these people were doomed to lose the last thing they had – their life in accordance with the state orchestrated and meticulously developed plan of extermination.

Quite often historians and journalists soundly compare Deir ez Zor with Auschwitz saying that “Deir ez Zor is the Auschwitz of the Armenians”. I think that the chronology forces us to formulate the facts in a reverse way: “Auschwitz is the Deir ez Zor of the Jews”. Only a generation later the humanity witnessed the Deir ez Zor of the Jews. Today, as the President of the Republic of Armenia, the homeland of all Armenians, I am here to ask: “Where and when will be held our Nuremberg?”

I'm here to commemorate and to pray for the vast majority of my slaughtered nation that had suffered both physical and cultural extermination. I will elaborate neither on the quality, nor on the quantity of the loss. Let me recall a single fact: as a result of the Genocide the greatest share of the dialects of one of the most ancient Indo-European languages - the Armenian – had been irreversibly eradicated along with its speakers.

In spite of all that happened, we say that we are ready to establish normal diplomatic relations with modern Turkey, we are ready to have open borders and economic relations, we are ready to make efforts towards building confidence between the peoples of Armenia and Turkey, we are ready to bring closer the two societies by breaking stereotypes and myths that have nothing to do with the reality and developed in decades of dearth of any sensible contacts.

We do this sincerely since we believe that there is no alternative to the living and development between the neighbours through implementation of what is proposed and still at the table, at least to start it up. The signing of the Armenian-Turkish protocols presented us with an historic opportunity that should have a logical destiny.

We, however, do not accept the style of references to the Armenian-Turkish dialogue in attempts to avoid the recognition of the Genocide. I do not think it helps the process. Moreover, it is irrelevant to cite some Commission of Historians, since the Armenian-Turkish protocols provide for merely a governmental sub-commission on historic dimension. I assume everyone understands what it means and what the difference is. I ask all those who will have an occasion to elaborate or express themselves on the topic of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide: remember of this dessert, millions of ruined human fortunes and this ancient people deprived of their motherland and with pain in their hearts, before you make up your minds.

In 1915 the greatest Armenian poets of the 20th century - 35 years old Daniel Varuzhan and 37 years old Atom Yarjanian (Siamanto) had also been slaughtered. Before being tortured to death, they were undressed, because they wore European clothes. In those times and places

European clothes were quite expensive. The executioners dressed up into the European clothes - stolen from the Armenian geniuses encompassing millennia old civilization, stolen from ordinary Armenians.

I would not interpret symbols signified in these images but I am unequivocally convinced: while preaching European apparel, manners or values no one has a right to cast these images in oblivion.

I am here to remind of the well-known words: "It is impossible to kill a nation that does not want to die". We mean to live and to grow. It is no more possible to intimidate or blackmail us since we have seen the most horrible. We shall continue to live and create with double vigour for us and for our innocent victims. We look forward since we have a lot to say and to share with each other, a lot to say and to share with the world: the brightness and glow that Daniel Varuzhan and Atom Yarjanian had no chance to share.

And here, in Deir ez Zor, we firmly and loudly say over and over again that we are, shall exist and will flourish.