



NEWS BULLETIN

Embassy of the Republic of Armenia
of Tsitsernakaberd to lay flowers and wreaths at the Genocide Memorial. Streams

Bulletin # 4, April 2005

- **Genocide Commemoration** [*in Armenia, p. 1; in the UK, p. 2; other locations, p. 3*]
- **Embassy News** [*Armenian FM meets OSCE Minsk Co-Chairs in London, p. 4; Ambassador's interviews to BBC World Service p. 4; Ambassador's lecture at Oxford University, p. 5; Receptions p.4-5.*]
- **Other News** [*the launch of the "Chilterns Armenian Society", p. 5*]
- **Announcements...** [*[New telephone codes in Armenia, p.5](#)*]

Commemoration of the Genocide 90th Anniversary



At the monument to the victims of the 1915 Genocide in Tsitsernakaberd in Yerevan

April 24 2005 is the 90th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Turkish Government in 1915-23. Armenians all over the world pay their respect to the victims of the first genocide of the 20th century and mark this Anniversary by commemorative events, such as international conferences, symposia, forums, etc to re-evaluate the phenomenon of Genocide and to discuss the moral and political implications of its denial. More and more Governments worldwide demonstrate solidarity with their Armenian communities and organise official events to commemorate this Anniversary.

In Armenia

24 April. About a million people in Yerevan took the solemn traditional march up the hill

of people kept flowing towards the eternal fire from early morning till late evening. A formal minute of silence was observed at seven p.m. local time, nationwide, as well as among the Armenian Diaspora.

President Robert Kocharyan, Catholicos of All Armenians Garegin II, and other dignitaries visited the Armenian Genocide Memorial to pay their respect to the 1.5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide.

His Holiness Garegin II served a Requiem Mass at the Memorial.

Late on the eve of April 24, 1, 500 torches had been lit on the Republican Square in central Yerevan to symbolise the memory of the 1, 5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide.

Over half a million people laid wreaths and flowers at monuments the victims of the 1915 Genocide in other cities and towns of Armenia.

20-21 April. "Ultimate Crime, Ultimate Challenge" a two-day international Conference on the Armenian Genocide of 1915 was held in Yerevan. Over 50 scholars, historians and experts from 50 countries participated in the conference.

On April 20th **President of Armenia Robert Kocharyan** addressed the Conference with an opening speech, where he stated:

"....Today it becomes obvious that the Armenian question step by step relinquishes to be kept a hostage to geopolitical interests, and the very existence of the Republic of Armenia is the best guarantee of achieving success on the way to safeguarding our legitimate interests.

....The Republic of Armenia, as an independent state, has made its position clear: recognition of the Armenian Genocide is also important for prevention of future possible genocides. Recognition is important for Armenian-Turkish relations, since it could

give answers to many questions that exist between our two peoples, it would allow to look ahead.

We remember the past with pain, but without hatred. For us it is difficult to comprehend the response of the Turkish side, which is represented not only by the denial of the past, but also by the blockade of today's Armenia. We have come across a paradox that still needs to be understood. The perpetrator, not the victim is furious with the past."

(Please see President Kocharyan's full address in Appendix 1 on page 7)

On 21 April Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian made closing remarks at the Conference. He, in particular, stated:

"...There is no national history in a vacuum. No nation can escape its history entirely, it can only transcend it. But to transcend, one must confront history, both internally and in relation to others. And those others, too, must also jointly confront theirs.

In other words, Armenia and Turkey must confront their histories. Individually and together. Armenia believes Turkey must put excuses aside and enter into normal relations with a neighbour that is neither going to go away nor forget its history.

...But we can only do so if the demons of the past have been rejected by our neighbour, too. You notice, I didn't say 'by the perpetrator.' Armenians are able to distinguish between the perpetrators and today's government of Turkey. Two-thirds of the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire were massacred or deported between 1915 and 1918. Today's Republic of Turkey must be able to condemn these acts for what they are. The evidence is overwhelming, clear, unavoidable

....On the contrary, Turkey spends untold amounts to deny, dismiss, distort history. Not just money, either. Today, their continued insistence on rejecting and rewriting history costs them credibility and time. One does not knock on Europe's door by blindfolding historians and gagging writers. Especially when the subject at hand is one as grave and consequential as genocide. The Turkish parliament's recent call to revisit, review, revise the documents gathered by Arnold Toynbee and James Bryce for the British Blue Book series brought the revisionist efforts to a new low. Turkey has moved on from trying to rewrite its own history to thinking it can convince others to rewrite theirs.

...By default, people assume that we're opposed to Turkey's membership in the EU. They're wrong on this one too. Of course we would like to see Turkey become an EU member. Of course we'd like to see that Turkey meets all European standards. We'd like to see that Turkey resemble Belgium, Italy and others. We'd like to see Turkey become an EU member so that our borders will be open, so that our compatriots and Turkish scholars will speak more freely about Genocide. We would like to see Turkey as a member so that our churches and properties will be protected and restored.

....In this context, it is essential that the international community doesn't bend the rules, doesn't turn a blind eye, doesn't lower its standards, but instead consistently extends its hand, its example, its own history of transcending, in order for Armenians and Turks, Europeans all, to move on to making new history. "

(Please see Minister Oskanian's full address in Appendix 2 on page 9)

In the UK

London, 11 April. Wigmore Hall hosted a **Spring Remembrance Concert**, in memory of the Armenian Victims of 1915. The event was co-sponsored by the Embassy of Armenia in London, and attended by the diplomatic corps, representatives of the UK Government, local authorities, NGOs and the media. The programme included *Shostakovich & Bartok No.4* performed by the ConTempo String Quartet, winner of a record number of 13 international prizes, as well as a rich repertoire of songs & areas by *Puccini, Leoncavallo, Bellini, Verdi* and *Komitas*, performed by Gegham Grigorian, one of the leading tenors of the Mariinsky Opera Theatre and the Artistic Director of the National Opera Theatre in Armenia, and by Asmik Grigorian, Lithuanian-Armenian opera singer.

A minute of silence was observed in memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

London, 24 April. A Memorial Service was held at St Yeghiche Armenian Church in London, attended by HE Ambassador of Armenia and Mrs. Gabrielyan. Representatives of Anglican, Roman Catholic and several Orthodox Churches

were present and read out addresses on behalf of their respective churches.

The Service was followed by a Commemoration March, led by the **Committee for the Commemoration of the 90th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide**. A reported 1,800 British Armenians marched through the streets of London from St. Yeghishe Church in Kensington to the Cenotaph, Whitehall. En route a 30 minutes Vigil was held in front of the Turkish Embassy. A wreath-laying ceremony took place at the Cenotaph, followed by prayers.

Events organised by the UK Genocide Commemoration Committee included:

- A commemoration event marking the 90th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on 20 April, at the Temple of Peace in Cardiff, Wales.
- A Commemorative Cultural Evening at the Ealing Town Hall, London officially opened by Deputy Mayor of Ealing Mr Michael Elliot, on 22 April.
- A series of other events have preceded these and others are to follow in due course. More information is available on the Armenian Community and Church Council and CRAG websites (www.accc.org.uk and www.crag.org.uk).

Other Locations

Montevideo, 30 March. Uruguay capital's city council passed a decision to name a broad strip in the central Montevideo "*the Square of the Armenian People's Genocide*".

Under the same decision, a monument will also be erected in the square.

Uruguay was the first country to recognize the Armenian Genocide in 1965, on the eve of the Genocide's 50th anniversary.

Los Angeles, 1-3 April. An International Conference Series in Armenian Studies held by the University of California, LA, commemorated the 90th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

Speaking at the Conference, entitled "**After Nine Decades: The Enduring Legacy of the Armenian Genocide**," Professor Gocek of the Michigan University and an ethnic Turk, apologized to the Armenian people for the Genocide perpetrated by Ottoman

Turkey.

He also reminded that people in Turkey are not aware of the historic truth so they believe no genocide has happened.

Denver, Colorado, April 6. The Colorado State Legislature unanimously passed a joint resolution commemorating the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923. Senator Lois Tochtrop and Speaker Andrew Romanoff were the co-sponsors of the resolution describing the Armenian atrocities and continued denial of the events by the current Turkish government. By the resolution, the State of Colorado urges the United States Congress to likewise commemorate the Armenian Genocide.

Ottawa, 8 April. An event to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide was held at the Ottawa University.

Organized by the Armenian students unions of the Ottawa and Carlton universities, the event was sponsored by the Armenian Embassy in Canada and the Armenian community of Canada.

The participants, among them many non-Armenians, were given a unique opportunity to view "The Armenian Genocide," a documentary by well-known British director Mike Connorsy.

Moscow, 13 April. A conference entitled "**Genocide is a Crime Against Humanity**" was held at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. The conference was dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

Vahan Hovhannisian, Armenian National Assembly Vice-Speaker, addressed the conference and read out Armenian Prime Minister Andranik Margarian's message.

Professor Yuri Pivovarov of the Russian Academy of Sciences, professor Yuri Barseghov, Director of the Armenian Institute for International Law and Political Science, Vasil Manich of Serbian Science Association, Italian historian Giovanni Guaita were among the scholars who delivered speeches.

Ottawa, 15 April. The Diocese of the Armenian Church of Canada held an Ecumenical and interfaith prayer and commemoration service at Notre Dame Cathedral.

This commemoration received broad coverage from the media, including CTV Night News, in depth articles in *The Ottawa Citizen*, interviews on local radio stations and many Ottawa area community newspapers.

Ed Broadbent, former leader of the New Democratic Party, first president of the International Human Rights Centre, and current MP for Ottawa Centre, delivered a powerful speech.

Spiritual leaders from 28 different Church denominations and interfaith groups offered their prayers for the victims of genocide and all violence.

California, 22 April. Hundreds of Armenians who had started from Fresno a **March for Humanity** across California, reached Sacramento. They marched to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in Turkey. After travelling 215 miles in 19 days, the marchers joined several state lawmakers at the capital of California State.

State Senator Jackie Spyer, who is of Armenian origin, joined the marchers at the last two-kilometre portion of the road. Spyer has introduced an Armenian Genocide resolution in the State Senate.

Warsaw, 20 April. The Polish Sejm, the main Chamber of the Parliament, has recognised the Armenian Genocide, despite the efforts of the Turkish Embassy in Poland. Thus Poland became another EU country recognising the Genocide.

Washington D.C., 24 April. In his annual April 24th address to the American-Armenians, President George W. Bush spoke of the tragic events of the Armenian Genocide. Although, contrary to his public pledge to characterise the Genocide properly, President Bush failed to use the word 'genocide', he did refer to the opinion of the International Centre for Transitional Justice, which had clearly stated in a legal opinion in 2003 that the massacres and deportations of Armenians in Turkey in 1915-23 were to be classified as genocide.

A full list of events commemorating the 90th anniversary of the Genocide is available also on the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Armenia website:

<http://www.armeniaforeignministry.com> and other sites devoted to the 1915 Genocide.

Embassy News

London, 5 April. H.E. Ambassador Vahe Gabrielyan paid a visit to the publishers of the **Voice of Nor Serund**, the Armenian monthly in the UK. He familiarised himself with the publication mechanisms and possibilities, met with Mr. Yeghia Yeghiasarian, Head of the **Nor Serund Cultural Union**, and Mr. Manvel Adamian, Editor of the monthly. Future cooperation between the Embassy of Armenia and the periodical was the focus of the discussions.

London, 14-15 April. During a brief visit to London, Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian met with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to discuss issues related to the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and to prepare ground for a possible meeting between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

London, 15 April. On the occasion of the **Mother's and Beauty Day**, Mrs. Hasmik Gabrielyan, spouse of Ambassador of Armenia in the UK, hosted a Ladies' Reception at the Armenian House.



Mrs. Hasmik Gabrielyan with Counsellor Karine Khudaverdian, Loretta. Shekerdumian and Regina Pargev



Guests enjoyed classical Armenian music and delicious cuisine of Armenia. *The Mother's and Beauty Day is a national holiday celebrated in Armenia on 7th April.*

London, 17 April. Ambassador Vahe Gabrielyan hosted a reception for the Armenian students currently studying at various universities and colleges across the United Kingdom.

Meetings with Armenian students are held at the Embassy on a regular basis in order to maintain ties between the young scholars/professionals and the Embassy and work out routes for possible cooperation.



Students with H.E. Ambassador Vahe Gabrielyan

Ambassador Gabrielyan welcomed the recent creation of the **Armenian Students' Association of the UK** and stated that the Embassy looked forward to work closely with it.

London, 22 April. In a live broadcast on BBC World Service "The World Today" program, H.E. Ambassador Vahe Gabrielyan had a debate on the Genocide of Armenians with Ambassador Akin Alptuna of Turkey. He called the Turkish claims that no genocide has taken place unsubstantiated and argued that the Turkish call to establish a joint commission of historians to discuss the matter was not genuine. He said that Armenian-Turkish relations were not an issue for historians, but politicians.

Ambassador Gabrielyan said that the fact of Genocide cannot be questioned or disputed and any discourse between Armenia and Turkey at this point should be on a political level. He reiterated Armenia's position that all issues should be resolved through a dialogue and that diplomatic relations should be established and borders opened between the two neighbours for such a dialogue to start.

Oxford, 26 April. On the invitation of the Calouste Gulbenkian Chair of Armenian Studies, University of Oxford, Professor Teo Van Lint, Ambassador HE Dr. Vahe Gabrielyan delivered a lecture entitled "**Armenia at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century**" in Pembroke College, Oxford.



Ambassador Gabrielyan addresses the audience at Oxford. Professor Teo Van Lint is at the right.

The Ambassador, in particular, analyzed the current economic, political and social situation in Armenia, the achievements in various areas, Armenia's performance in fulfilling its international obligations, as well as Armenian culture and identity. He also dwelled on the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, the recognition of the Armenian Genocide and Turkish-Armenian relations, as key challenges to modern Armenia.

During his visit Ambassador Gabrielyan, as well as Mrs. Gabrielyan and Embassy staff were hosted by the Master of the Pembroke College, Giles Henderson and his spouse.

London, 27 April. In interviews to the BBC World -- Russian, Turkish and Azeri Services, Ambassador Gabrielyan answered questions submitted by readers of the BBC Russian web-page, those of a journalist from the BBC Turkish Service, and BBC Azeri journalists asking questions on behalf of their listeners and readers. The overwhelming majority of questions related to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and the peace process, and the Armenian Genocide. The Ambassador reiterated Armenia's official position on these issues.

The link to the Ambassador's interview is: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/russian/talking_point/newsid_4461000/4461675.stm

London, 29 April. Another interview with H.E. Dr. Vahe Gabrielyan on the problems of recognition of the Armenian Genocide was published by *London - INFO*, a Russian weekly newspaper in London.

Other News

Beaconsfield, England, 10 April. St. Mary's Church in Beaconsfield hosted the launch of the "Chilterns Armenian Society". The Armenian community and guests audienced a Holy Mass, delivered by Reverend John Wynburne of St. Mary's

Church. During his speech the Reverend demonstrated awareness of the Armenian history and faith, and expressed a sincere sympathy for the Armenians living in Beaconsfield. Three Armenian liturgic songs were performed during the Holy Mass.



Ambassador Gabrielyan with Dominic Grieve, MP (left) and Beaconsfield Mayor Alan Walters(right)

The Mass was followed by an inaugural ceremony with congratulatory addresses delivered by H. E. Dr. Vahe Gabrielyan, Ambassador of Armenian in the UK, the Worshipful Mayor Alan Walters, Beaconsfield District Council, Mr. Dominic Grieve, Beaconsfield MP, Shadow Attorney General and Mrs Odette Bazil, Chair of the Society. Present were representatives of the local Government, dignitaries, Members of the Armenian and British Communities and the media.



Dominic Grieve, MP talks to Odette Bazil, Chair of the Chiltrens Armenian Society (centre) and H.E. Ambassador Vahe Gabrielyan

Announcements

1. A bank account has been opened for donations to alleviate living conditions of the six **Armenian pilots imprisoned in Equatorial Guinea**, and to assist their families in Armenia.

The details of the bank account are as follows:

“UNIBANK” CJSC, Yerevan, Armenia:
USD: 241021106570
EURO: 241021506571
RUR: 241021206578

AMD: 241021006572

2. New Telephone Codes to Armenia

“ArmenTel”, the telecommunications company in Armenia, has introduced new dialling codes effective from 1st May, 2005. Dialling from abroad to Armenia is as follows:

To a landline in Yerevan: **00 + 374 +10 + subscriber’s number;**

To landline numbers in the regions (marzes): **00 + 374 + area code of city/town+ subscriber’s number;**

To ArmenTel mobile network: **00 + 374 +91 + mobile subscriber number.**

A complete list of new codes and dialing plans is available upon request form the Embassy of Armenia in London, or can be downloaded from either the Armentel site at <http://www.armentel.com/eng/news/newsshow.php?aid=40> or from an alternative site: <http://www.hayastan.com/armenia/phonecodes/>.

3. The annual **International Spring Fair** will be held on May 11, 2005 at the Kensington Town Hall, Horton Street, W8. More than 100 diplomatic missions represented in London will sell goods from around the world, representing their cultures and promoting their products. As usual, the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia, will be represented as well. The Armenian stall will promote agricultural products, sweets and beverages made in the Republic of Armenia.

Armenian Embassy

25A Cheniston Gardens, London W8 6TG
Tel.: 0207 938 5435
Fax: 0207 938 2595

E-mail :
armemb@armenianembassyuk.com
consular@armenianembassyuk.com

Appendix 1.

Statement by President of the Republic of Armenia Robert Kocharyan at the “Ultimate Crime, Ultimate Challenge” International Conference on genocide and human rights

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We pay tribute to the memory of vanished victims as we commemorate the 90th anniversary of the tragic events. We do it with doubled pain, since we are still bound to continue the struggle for the international recognition of the committed crime.

The First World War aimed at global re-distribution of the world and the big ideological controversy of the 20th century that followed became the major obstacles to recognition of the legitimate rights of the Armenian people. We became victims of the First World War even though we were not the initiators of that war. And our right for memory was sacrificed to the Cold War even though we were not its masterminds.

When the planned policy of extermination of the Armenian nation was executed the term “genocide” did not exist. Nor was it defined. There were no international structures that could serve as a floor for discussions to give a united response to that crime of genocide. Obviously the world is changing. It took time for the world to treat genocides as crimes against humanity with all the relevant consequences. It took time to prevent the practice of sacrificing fundamental humanitarian values to the geopolitical interests of great powers and to include the moral considerations into foreign policy making of the civilized world. The avenue of that change was tragic for many peoples. For the Armenian people the price of that change equals one and a half million of human lives.

Today it becomes obvious that the Armenian question step by step relinquishes to be kept a hostage to geopolitical interests, and the very existence of the Republic of Armenia is the best guarantee of achieving success on the way to safeguarding our legitimate interests. Dear friends, modern technologies allow watching live the military operations unfolding in different parts of the world, the term “genocide” is well defined, and numerous regional and universal international organizations are put in place. Countries are more determined in responding to a threat or attempt to commit genocide in any part of the world. However, all this did not protect the humanity from new genocides. Yugoslavia, Rwanda, East Timor, Sumgait – in all these places once again innocent people were slaughtered. This comes to prove that there is a need to amplify the efforts aimed at effective suppression of the genocidal attempts.

That is exactly why the recognition and condemnation of genocides is so crucial. Recognition bears in it a huge potential for adequate response. Prevention of that crime is particularly important.

Condemnation of genocides committed in the past is also very important. It first of all comes to prove that the crime has no expiration clause, and those guilty will be brought to justice in any case. It is important in terms of containment of future genocidal intentions. It is through recognition and condemnation that states educate their citizens. The lesson is: the state machinery shall not become a tool in implementation of that terrible crime. We have the duty of establishing atmosphere that would exclude any extremist divisions based on the nationality, ethnos, and religion or along any other dividing lines, any propaganda of hatred by one group against another.

Another important component is the future fate of a people that has survived genocide. The Armenian people, due to genocide, were displaced, became a refugee people and were scattered across the globe. International recognition of the Armenian Genocide and necessity of restoration of historic injustice were sacrificed to the grand politics. Most of the criminals who planned and implemented the genocide escaped the punishment. Moreover, the remains of Talaat pasha who was assassinated in Berlin, were returned to Turkey and buried with

honours in Istanbul. It was a sad evidence of carrying on the baton in relay race of impunity. Humanity pays a tremendously high price for forgetting such crimes.

Using this opportunity I would like to thank all those countries, which at different levels have addressed the issue of the Armenian Genocide and have recognized it, as well as all those individuals and organizations that have contributed towards that recognition. The role of Diaspora in that regard is absolutely inestimable. By such recognition states also say "no" to all possible future genocides. The number of victims of the Armenian genocide could be incomparably higher and the fate of survivors much more severe if not for a number of outstanding individuals, including Morgenthau, Bruce, Nansen, Verfel, Briusov, Wegner, Lepsius, and many others who stood by our people in those terrible days.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Republic of Armenia, as an independent state, has put its position straight forward: recognition of the Armenian Genocide is also important for prevention of future possible genocides. Recognition is important for Armenian-Turkish relations, since it could give answers to many questions that exist between our two peoples, it would allow to look ahead. We remember the past with pain, but without hatred. For us it is difficult to comprehend the response of the Turkish side, which is represented not only by the denial of the past, but also by the blockade of today's Armenia. We have come across a paradox that still needs to be understood. The perpetrator, not the victim is furious with the past. We are confident that international recognition of the Genocide will help Turkey to come to terms with its own past and to overcome the complex which is inherited from generation to generation and which creates additional complexities in the relations of our neighbouring nations.

I once again welcome all of you and wish you effective work. Thank you.

Appendix 2

Ultimate Crime, Ultimate Challenge

An International Conference on the 90th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide

Closing address by **Vartan Oskanian**

Minister of Foreign Affairs Republic of Armenia

On behalf of the National Commission, I wish to publicly express our sincere appreciation to everyone who has participated in this conference. I want to thank the Zoryan Institute for their professional and organizational counsel. I especially wish to thank the scholars, writers, professors - all with serious work and time commitments - who travelled to Armenia to be here with us at this time, this year. The symbolism is not lost on anyone. We are here 90 years later calling for recognition and prevention so that in 2015 we can gather together only for remembrance.

Over these two days, each of our speakers has found various eloquent ways of saying the following:

Genocide is the ultimate crime against humanity. It is the extreme abuse of power. It is a betrayal of the responsibility of custody by the very people entrusted with insuring the security of their own population. The human rights challenge facing all of us is to be able to recognize that a government has the capacity for such immorality and inhumanity, and that particular governments have indeed committed genocide.

There is no national history in a vacuum. No nation can escape its history entirely, it can only transcend it. But to transcend, one must confront history, both internally and in relation to others. And those others, too, must also jointly confront theirs.

In other words, Armenia and Turkey must confront their histories. Individually and together. Armenia believes Turkey must put excuses aside and enter into normal relations with a neighbour that is neither going to go away nor forget its history.

We are not the only neighbors in the world who have had, and who continue to have, a troubled relationship. Troubled memories, a tortured past, recriminations, unsettled accounts and the enduring wounds of victimhood, plague the national consciousness of peoples on many borders. In our case, some distance between our two countries might have allowed us to put distance between our past and our future. But we have no such luxury. There is no space, no cushion, between us. We live right here, close by, reminded at all times of the great loss that we incurred. Yet it is because we live right next door that we must be willing and prepared to transcend the past.

But we can only do so if the demons of the past have been rejected by our neighbour, too. You notice, I didn't say 'by the perpetrator.' Armenians are able to distinguish between the perpetrators and today's government of Turkey. Two-thirds of the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire were massacred or deported between 1915 and 1918. Today's Republic of Turkey must be able to condemn these acts for what they are. The evidence is overwhelming, clear, unavoidable.

Armenians were one of the largest minorities of the Ottoman Empire. Where did they go? Is it possible that all our grandmothers and grandfathers colluded and created stories? Where are the descendants of the Armenians who built the hundreds of churches and monasteries whose ruins still stand in Turkey? Is US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau's account of the atrocities that he witnessed a lie? Why was a military tribunal convened at the end of World War I, and why did it find Ottoman Turkish leaders guilty of ordering the mass murder of Armenians? How does one explain the thousands and thousands of pages in the official records of a dozen countries documenting the plans to exterminate the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire? If it wasn't genocide and they were simply 'war time deportations' of so-called rebellious Armenian populations near the eastern border with the Russian Empire, as Turkish apologists sometimes claim, why were the homes of Armenians in the western cities looted and burned? Why were the Armenians of the seacoast towns of Smyrna and Constantinople deported? Boatloads of people were dumped in the sea - is that what deportation is all about? Could rounding up scores of intellectuals on a single night and killing them be anything but premeditation?

When a government plans to do away with its own population to solve a political problem - that's genocide. At the turn of the 20th century, the Ottoman Empire was shrinking, it was losing its hold over its subjects along the periphery of the empire. For fear that in Anatolia, too, the Armenian minority would agitate for greater rights and invite foreign powers to exert pressure, the Ottoman leadership used the cover of World War I to attempt to wipe out the Armenians, beginning with the leadership, following with the men, and finally deporting women, children and the elderly.

This fits neatly into the definition of genocide: The perpetrator did cause a multitude of deaths; these persons did belong to a particular national, ethnical, racial or religious group. The perpetrator intended to and in fact did destroy, in whole or in part, that national, ethnical, racial or religious group, and this destruction followed a consistent pattern. In fact, US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau called what he witnessed, the Murder of a Nation. Others called it 'race murder'. They did so because there was no term Genocide yet. When the word was finally coined in 1944 by Raphael Lemkin, it was done with clear reference to genocidal acts prior to that date, the Armenian Genocide included. There is no doubt that if the word genocide had existed in 1915, every one of the hundreds of articles in the NY times or elsewhere, would have used the term. Look how frequently the word 'genocide' is used today to describe events and cases where the scale and depth of the atrocities are incomparable. Armenians continue to live with the memory of suffering unrelieved by strong condemnation and unequivocal recognition.

On the contrary, Turkey spends untold amounts to deny, dismiss, distort history. Not just money, either. Today, their continued insistence on rejecting and rewriting history costs them credibility and time. One does not knock on Europe's door by blindfolding historians and gagging writers. Especially when the subject at hand is one as grave and consequential as genocide. The Turkish parliament's recent call to revisit, review, revise the documents gathered by Arnold Toynbee and James Bryce for the British Blue Book series brought the revisionist efforts to a new low. Turkey has moved on from trying to rewrite its own history to thinking it can convince others to rewrite theirs. This only frustrates the process, exacerbates the emotions and refuels the fury. Worse, such cynical moves embolden those who do not believe in reconciliation, understanding its great risks and costs.

Elie Wiesel has said that denial of genocide is the final stage of genocide because it "strives to shape history in order to demonize the victims and rehabilitate the perpetrators." That is what Turkey - not the people but the government - is trying to do. Today's Turks do not bear the guilt of the perpetrators, unless they choose to defend and identify with them. Armenians and Turks, together with the rest of the modern world, can reject the actions and denounce the crimes of the Ottoman Empire.

Turkey must also de-link history from politics. The excuses about what might follow genocide recognition are just that - excuses. Why are they surprised that Ararat is on our state seal? Armenians have lived on these lands for thousands of years, and Armenia's borders have changed a great deal over the millennia. That's a historical fact. The Armenian kingdom stretched from sea to sea. That's a historical fact. The last change came at the beginning of the 20th century. That, too, is a historical fact. By the provisions of the Treaty of Sevres, the territory of Armenia was ten times what it is today. That is a historical fact as is the fact that Turkey defied the treaty which had been signed by its own government, and by force, created a new de facto situation, which led to the signing of another agreement, without the same signatories. This new agreement delineated, more or less, today's borders. That too is historical fact.

But it is a political reality that both Turkey and Armenia exist today in the international community with their current borders. It is a political reality that we are neighbours and we will live alongside each other. It is a political reality that Armenia is not a security threat to Turkey. And finally, it is a reality that it is today's Armenia that calls for the establishment of diplomatic relations with today's Turkey.

For these reasons, anything beyond genocide recognition has not been and is not on Armenia's foreign policy agenda.

Yesterday I was being interviewed by a Turkish television crew. I was surprised at the amount of misinformation that they had. They were surprised that the Armenian-Turkish border is open from the Armenian side, that it is Turkey that keeps it closed. They were surprised that Armenia has no pre-conditions for establishing diplomatic relations with Turkey. They were highly surprised that even the recognition of Genocide is not a precondition. They were also surprised that the Kars Treaty has not

been denounced or revoked by the Government of Armenia. Now I'm surprised that official Turkish propaganda has taken over and blurred the views of many.

There's another misunderstanding. By default, people assume that we're opposed to Turkey's membership in the EU. They're wrong on this one too. Of course we would like to see Turkey become an EU member. Of course we'd like to see that Turkey meets all European standards. We'd like to see that Turkey resemble Belgium, Italy and others. We'd like to see Turkey become an EU member so that our borders will be open, so that our compatriots and Turkish scholars will speak more freely about Genocide. We would like to see Turkey as a member so that our churches and properties will be protected and restored.

Armenia believes that, at exactly this time, when Turkey is having to reconsider human and civil rights, freedom of expression and religion, it must be encouraged, and persuaded, to acknowledge its past. Such encouragement and persuasion must come from both outside - and more importantly, as Hrant Dink stressed yesterday - from within Turkish society.

Turkish writers and politicians have begun that difficult process of introspection and study. Some are doing so publicly and with great transparency. We can only assume that Europe will expect that a Turkey which is serious about EU membership, which is indeed able to juggle the complex relationships that EU membership entails, will have to come to terms with its past.

In this context, it is essential that the international community doesn't bend the rules, doesn't turn a blind eye, doesn't lower its standards, but instead consistently extends its hand, its example, its own history of transcending, in order for Armenians and Turks, Europeans all, to move on to making new history.