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Armenian National Committee of America
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To: Foreign Affairs LA
From: Kate Nahapetian, Government Affairs Director
Date: May 9, 2005

**Re: Commentary in *The Washington Times* calls on Turkey
to recognize the Armenian Genocide**

I thought you would find the attached *Washington Times* commentary on the Armenian Genocide by Prof. Reese Cleghorn of interest. Prof. Cleghorn is the former Dean of and a current professor of journalism at the University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism.

In this informative and insightful piece, Prof. Cleghorn notes that:

“[T]he Turkish government still rigidly clings to its unseemly denial of the Armenian massacres of 1915, the first genocide of the 20th century, even as it seeks admission to the European Union Can we imagine Germany as a EU member if it denied the Holocaust and asked equal sympathy for Germans and Jews because of what happened?”

Please feel free to contact me at (202) 775-1918 with any questions or concerns.

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Forum: Bitter remembrances of Armenia

Last Tuesday's Commentary contribution by Turkish Ambassador O. Faruk Logoglu was a vivid reminder the Turkish government still rigidly clings to its unseemly denial of the Armenian massacres of 1915, the first genocide of the 20th century, even as it seeks admission to the European Union.

Moreover, the ambassador seeks sympathy for Turks as if they were equally wronged. It was all a result of wartime diseases and famine and "the Armenian revolt in the Eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, in which hundreds of thousands of Turks and Armenians died." And then this, an astonishingly mendacious thing to write: "We should ... acknowledge the grief and sadness felt by present generations of Armenians over the terrible losses suffered by their parents and grandparents. The same compassion must be extended to the Turkish people."

Mr. Logoglu certainly knows better. Even the Turkish government archives show how the Ottoman Turkish government planned and carried out the massacres of the Armenians because of their race and Christian religion, "ethnically cleansing" the heavily Armenian provinces in the East and other parts of Turkey, including Istanbul, with the loss of an estimated 1.5 million Armenian lives.

The ambassador mentions some Armenian revenge assassinations of Turkish officials in the 1970s and '80s — abominable events, to be sure. He does not mention assassinations of guilty Turkish officials more than a half-century earlier. The story of Soghomon Tehlirian suggests why.

He shot and killed the former interior minister and planner of the genocide, Talaat Pasha, in Berlin in 1921. Tehlirian's sisters had been raped and his brother beheaded; his parents had died on a death march that killed tens of thousands of Armenians. Before shooting Talaat, he shouted: "This is to avenge the death of my family."

He was exonerated by a German jury that found "the official Turkish documents... proved beyond question that Talaat Pasha and other officials had ordered the wholesale extermination of the Armenians." I wrote about Tehlirian in my California weekly newspaper almost 40 years later. I found him still careful to be as invisible as possible for fear of Turkish reprisal (justified or not), and my story said nothing of where and how he lived. He was buried by the Armenians as a hero. We might have done something similar if an American had assassinated Adolf Hitler.

Hitler, by the way, told his top generals as they prepared to invade Poland and the Nazis pressed on with the Holocaust: "Who today, after all, speaks of the annihilation of the Armenians?"

Many Americans knew what was happening in 1915 and thereabouts and tried to help, but too late. They included Theodore Roosevelt, who criticized Woodrow Wilson for not sending troops into Turkey to fight to save the Armenians. "The Armenian massacre was the greatest crime of the war," he said, "and failure to act against Turkey is to condone it."

That failure, he said, "means that all talk of guaranteeing the future peace of the world is mischievous nonsense." America's failure, he said, showed "our announcement that we meant 'to make the world safe for democracy' was insincere claptrap."

Others who spoke out and raised funds for rescue of the Armenians over the next few years included John D. Rockefeller, William Jennings Bryan, Clara Barton, Julia Ward Howe, William Lloyd Garrison Jr., Stephen Crane, H.L. Mencken, Ezra Pound and (despite Roosevelt's words) Woodrow Wilson. They all knew this was genocide.

Henry Morgenthau, ambassador to Turkey during the massacres, confronted the Turkish government about its treatment of the Armenians and led our diplomats' valiant efforts to help Armenians escape. He wrote when he left in 1916: "My failure to stop the destruction of the Armenians had made Turkey for me a place of horror."

Religious organizations speaking out included the Central Conference of American Rabbis (which earlier appealed to Europe in 1909 to protect the Armenians from barbarism in Turkey), Protestant missionaries (numerous in Turkish Armenia, witnesses to the atrocities and sometimes rescuers and victims) and leading American Catholics.

In due time, I hope, Turkey will be a member of the EU and by then will have firmly emplaced democratic government and First Amendment freedoms. But it would be another atrocity if that happens before Turkey accepts, as any European nation should, its responsibility for the massacres. Can we imagine Germany as a EU member if it denied the Holocaust and asked equal sympathy for Germans and Jews because of what happened?

America once stood tall in response to the Armenian massacres. The pursuit of oil and influence in the Middle East changed that soon after World War I. It was easier to end the humanitarian clamor. Today some politicians even refuse (though not President Bush) to use the word "genocide" lest they offend Turkey. Americans in general do not even know of these atrocities, although in one of their finest hours Americans had cried out for the Armenians and for holding nations accountable for genocide.

Maybe Hitler was right. But I have many Armenian and Turkish friends who do know (the latter silent just now, because of Turkish suppression of the truth). I believe young people in Turkey may change this some day if they have a chance, if they even learn what happened.

Ambassador Logoglu believes this stain will just go away. We must make sure lies do not corrupt history as they now corrupt the Turkish government.

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