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Armenian National Committee of America  
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

To: Foreign Affairs LA  
From: Kate Nahapetian, Government Affairs Director  
Date: May 31, 2005

**Re: Members of Congress criticize Turkey's  
attack on freedom of speech**

Please see the attached comments of Members of Congress expressing outrage and disappointment at the Turkish Government's recent decision to block a planned academic conference on the Armenian Genocide.

The event, organized by Turkish scholars from Turkey's Bilgi, Bogazici and Sabanci Universities, was scheduled to take place May 25-27 in Istanbul, Turkey. The government crackdown on the conference is the most recent chapter in the Turkish government's 90-year campaign of genocide denial, which includes criminalizing speech concerning the Armenian Genocide. Turkey's Justice Minister Cemil Cicek, in a speech before the Turkish Parliament on May 24, accused the participants of the conference of "treason."

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## **Reaction to Turkey's Cancellation of Armenian Genocide Conference:**

### **Rep. George Radanovich (R-CA):**

“Turkish government pressure on historians from Bilgi, Bogazici and Sabanci Universities to cancel the Armenian Genocide conference is yet another indication of the Turkish government’s repression of freedom of speech and lack of respect for academic freedom. The action exposes as a hollow gesture Prime Minister Erdogan’s call for a dialogue between Turkish and Armenian historians. The Turkish government’s labeling of Turkish academics as ‘traitors’ simply for discussing the Genocide amongst themselves underscores the need for those of us here, in the United States, to call on Ankara to end its campaign of genocide denial.”

### **Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues Co-Chair Joe Knollenberg (R-MI):**

“When the Turkish government cancels an academic conference like this and calls the participants traitors, it becomes very clear that they have not made a sufficient commitment to protecting free speech. These actions seriously undermine Turkey’s credibility.”

### **Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues Co-Chair Frank Pallone (D-NJ):**

“With the cancellation of this conference, we find that the Government of Turkey will go to any length to avoid facing its bloody past. . . To bring this development into perspective, consider that according to current law in Turkey, dozens of U.S. Senators and hundreds of Congressmen would be punished simply for having voted for Armenian Genocide resolutions, spoken about the lessons of this crime against humanity or commemorated the victims of the atrocity. So, too, would the American academic establishment, human rights groups, the mainstream media and just about everyone else aside from the Turkish Embassy and its paid lobbyists here in Washington, D.C.

### **Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA):**

“The decision to hold a conference at Bogazici University to discuss the Armenian Genocide held out promise that Turkey would begin confronting all aspects of its Ottoman past. Cancellation of the conference, and the Justice Minister’s inflammatory accusation of ‘treason,’ shows that Turkey’s intellectual freedom and academic independence has taken one step forward and two giant steps back. How much longer will it take modern Turkey to recognize the facts of a genocide now 90 years old.”

### **Rep. Thaddeus McCotter (R-MI):**

“Only honesty can begin to ease the ache of this evil perpetrated upon the Armenian people, and to further guard against a recrudescence of genocide anywhere in our world. Thus, any delay in acknowledging and apologizing for their nation’s abhorrent historical crime only serves to embolden other proponents of genocide, and to implicate this generation of Turks in the sins of the past.”

### **Rep. Steve Rothman (D-NJ):**

“I condemn the recent action taken by the Turkish government to censor academic debate about the Armenian Genocide. Democracy and truth were thrown out the window when Turkish Justice Minister Cemil Cicek accused historians at three prestigious Turkish universities of treason when they attempted to debate the issue of the Armenian Genocide. Turkey does not deserve to be granted membership in the European Union if they continue to shut down educated discussion about this issue.”