

May 13, 2010
Yerevan, Armenia

Thank you Mr. President and esteemed guests.

Along with Dr. William Schabas, the President of the IAGS who sends his apologies that he could not be here, I am delighted to receive the President of the Republic of Armenia Prize on behalf of the International Association of Genocide Scholars today -- roughly 95 years after the Young Turks revealed their genocidal plans by arresting scores of Armenian community leaders in Constantinople, a key event that preceded the annihilation of 1.5 million Armenians by the Young Turk's Ottoman Empire in 1915.

The effects of such genocides are incalculable and overwhelming, including not just the immediate massive loss of life, but strong ripples of suffering, individual and intergenerational trauma, families torn asunder, the destruction of cultural institutions and traditions, and diaspora, as survivors scatter throughout the world. Yet another legacy of genocide that we all too often encounter is silence and denial, a legacy that perhaps has nowhere been taken to the extreme that we find in the case of the Armenian genocide.

In response to such denials, in 1997, after a thorough scholarly review, the International Association of Genocide Scholars, the foremost international academic association in the field of genocide studies, passed a resolution affirming the reality of the Armenian genocide.

The resolution reads:

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.

Over the years, the Association has issued related statements, including open letters to Prime Minister Erdoyan and, most recently, a March 9, 2009 letter to President Obama urging him to publicly refer to the mass slaughter of Armenians as what is it: a genocide.

These statements seem particularly important at this moment in time as the Turkish government and related groups continue to deny the genocide -- as illustrated by the Turkish government's recent recall of its Ambassador and threat to expel 100,000 Armenian living in Turkey after the U.S. House Foreign Affairs committee passed a resolution acknowledging the Armenian genocide.

Such denial is problematic in so many ways, ranging from the re-victimization of survivors and their descendants to the encouragement it provides to other genocidal regimes in the making. Consider Hitler's infamous statement, given in 1939 as he was plotting his own campaign of

mass murder: “[W]ho, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?” We could answer: “The survivors remember.” Raphael Lemkin, the man who coined the term genocide and pushed for its criminalization in international law, also remembered. The Armenian genocide deeply informed his scholarship and activism and was one of the key cases he had in mind when he invented the term.

Fortunately, the tide appears to have turned against this campaign of denial. The mass murder of Armenians is now widely recognized as a genocide. Even in Turkey, an increasing number of brave scholars and citizens have begun to acknowledge the genocide, despite the possibility of being jailed.

We are pleased if the resolution and subsequent statements of the International Association of Genocide Scholars have contributed to the process of recognition of the Armenian genocide.

And we are deeply honored to receive this award today.

Thank you, Mr. President.

On behalf of the International Association of Genocide Scholars,

Alex Hinton

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