

WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO A WORLD FREE FROM THE CRUEL AND ODIOUS CRIME OF GENOCIDE

AVİM

Analysis No : 2017 / 32

18.12.2017

On 11 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly established 9 December as the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime through its Resolution 69/323. In adopting the resolution, without any dissenting vote, the 193-member Assembly reiterated the responsibility of each individual sovereign state in the international system to protect its populations from genocide, which entails the prevention of such a crime, including preventing incitement to it. In fact, the 9 December is the anniversary of the adoption of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which is shortly known as the Genocide Convention. The said Convention was also adopted unanimously in the General Assembly.

The Convention was originally signed by 41 state parties. Currently, 149 states are parties to the Convention. According to its Article XIII, the Convention is deemed to come into force on the ninetieth day following the date of deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession to the UN Secretary-General. The Convention took force on 12 January 1951. It should be underlined that Turkey is among the pioneering twenty countries that deposited the notification of ratification or accession to the Convention and secured its official entry into force. The Convention was ratified by Turkey on 23 March 1950 by the Law No: 5630 and the said law was published in the Official Gazette No: 7469 on 29 March 1950. Unlike number of other state parties, Turkey did not declare any reservation to the Genocide Convention.[1]

It should be noted that adoption of the Convention came immediately after the horrific Holocaust and the Second World War. The Convention embodied a collective determination to protect people from brutality and to prevent any such future horror.[2]

At this point, there is a need to seriously dwell on and consider the importance of fighting destructive cultures of intolerance, discrimination, and otherization. Exclusionary or

superior views of identity create divisive thinking and separate people into us and them who are different from us. These modes of thinking breed intolerance, discrimination, and otherization that pave the way for the development of prejudice against the them. Such attitudes, at the later stages, easily develop into hostility towards them. It should be emphasized that the horrors of racism and potentially a subsequent genocide come into being through the pathways of exclusionary or superior views of identity.

As a hot topic, todays resurgent xenophobia that we are witnessing around the world, even in Western countries that are supposedly the bastions of democracy, may in certain cases heavily involve aggression and collective violence. Hate speech against certain groups and ethnicities breed hostility, reopen the old wounds, provoke young generations, and bring about additional hostilities into the scene. These provocative approaches bear the serious risk of bringing into existence past tragedies that humanity should most definitely avoid. Ethnic cleansing, hostility against immigrants, various phobias developed especially against weak, underprivileged, or helpless people and groups prepare a fertile ground for future unwanted crimes. In such a bleak environment, there is a need to uphold our moral and legal responsibility to protect populations against the recurrence of past tragedies.

In order to prevent such happenings, we must pay due attention to early warning signs and avoid applying double standards to the miseries of weak and helpless groups. Tragic developments we are witnessing regarding the plight of Rohingya Muslims might be considered as an example in this respect. Rohingya Muslims had been subjected to discriminatory policies for decades, but it was only when such policies reached extreme heights that the world public began to take serious notice of the Rohingyas plight.

It is noteworthy to mention at this point the statements riddled with distortions made by certain diaspora Armenian leaders concerning this years 9 December. Through such statements, the said leaders tried to not only circulate once again their unfounded claims regarding the 1915 events that took place during the turbulent days of the First World War, but also tried to drag in the other fabricated claims concerning the Pontus Greeks and Assyrians.[3] It is interesting, however, that the said statements do not give any place to the consideration made by Raphael Lemkin, who first coined the term genocide (the UN, however, adopted a different definition of genocide) that the Greeks had committed genocide against the Turks. Considering that the proponents of branding the 1915 events as genocide like to frequently throw around Lemkins name to make their arguments appear more credible, one would have expected the said statements to include Lemkins conviction that Turks had been subjected to genocide by the Greeks.

It is also very interesting that these the above-mentioned Armenian leaders have forgotten to list the extermination orders proclaimed against the Herero and Nama people in todays Namibia by the then colonial South West Africa administration commander. If they review their list, they may remember the name of the country which is accused by Herero and Nama people for committing the first genocide of the 20th century in the period of 1904-1908.[4] Considering the rather loose personal definition employed by the said Armenian leaders concerning the concept of genocide (which is in reality a strictly, legally defined concept), the accusations of the Herero and Nama people should have

definitely made their list. However, years pass by, yet double standards and unfounded claims unfortunately prevail regarding the concept of genocide. When put under scrutiny, such an omission reveals that the statements made by the above-mentioned Armenian leaders are geared towards doing politics rather than pursing historical justice.

As mentioned in the UN Secretary □□□□□□□ António Guterres message for this years International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime, the sixty-ninth anniversary of the Genocide Convention coincides with the upcoming closure of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the first international criminal tribunal with jurisdiction over genocide. The convictions and jurisprudence of the ICTY and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, as well as the ongoing work of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, reflect a welcome resolve to punish this crime of all crimes. We are looking forward to a world free from this cruel and odious crime.[5]

*Photo: http://www.un.org/en

[1] Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, United Nations Treaty Collection, n.d., https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-1&chapter=4&clang=_en.

[2] International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of This Crime, The Auschwitz Institute For Peace and Reconciliation, December 9, 2017, http://www.auschwitzinstitute.org/news/international-day-commemoration-dignity-victims-crime-genocide-prevention-crime/.

[3] December 9 - International Day of Commemoration and Dignity, *ArmenPress*, December 9, 2017, https://armenpress.am/eng/news/915502/december-9---international-day-of-commemoration-and-dignity-of-victims-of-crime-of-genocide-and-prevention.html.

[4] Mehmet Oğuzhan TULUN, GENOCIDE AND GERMANY II, *Center For Eurasian Studies Analysis*, October 31, 2017, http://avim.org.tr/en/Analiz/GENOCIDE-AND-GERMANY-II.

[5] Message on the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of This Crime (United Nations Infornmation Service, December 8, 2017), UNIS/SGSM/848, http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/en/pressrels/2017/unissgsm848.html.

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To cite this article: AVİM, . 2026. "WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO A WORLD FREE FROM THE CRUEL AND ODIOUS CRIME OF GENOCIDE." Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Analysis No.2017 / 32. December 18. Accessed November 08, 2026. https://www.avimbulten.org/en/Analiz/WE-ARE-LOOKING-FORWARD-TO-A-WORLD-FREE-FROM-THE-CRUEL-AND-ODIOUS-CRIME-OF-GENOCIDE

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