A TALE OF TWO STATEMENTS

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Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu issued a statement in eight different languages including Armenian, three days after President Sargsyans letter to president Erdoğan, on the remembrance of Hrant Dink, an eminent Armenian-Turkish journalist and the founder of the Armenian-Turkish bilingual weekly Agos, who was assassinated eight years ago in İstanbul on January 19th. This statement is the most recent one in the chain that displays Turkeys approach to the Armenian question.

Prime Minister Davutoğlu underlines the 800 years-old common history of Armenians and Turks. He expresses the determination of Turkey to press ahead with resolve to give due recognition to the Armenian cultural heritage in Turkey and to those Armenian personalities who made inestimable contributions to Ottoman/Turkish culture. Prime Minister Davutoğlu salutes Dink for striving mind, heart and soul, to shed light on one of the major issues that the Ottoman Empire passed down to the Republic of Turkey. He states:

"Having already underscored the inhumane consequences of the relocation policies essentially enforced under wartime circumstances, including that of 1915, Turkey shares the suffering of Armenians..."

These statements are of crucial importance for demonstrating where Turkey stands vis-à-vis the Armenian question.

One of the main features of the widespread Armenian political discourse is the claim that

Turkey seeks to erase traces of the Armenians in Anatolia and Ottoman-Turkish history as the final stage of the genocide. The above mentioned statements that were made by the Prime Minister of Turkey are the most powerful refutation of such accusations. Prime Minister Davutoğlu not only acknowledges the presence of Armenians in Anatolia throughout the history but appreciates contributions of the Armenians to the cultural richness of Turkey.

While the widespread Armenian political discourse propagates that Turkey refuses even to publicly acknowledge that there are issues to be solved between Armenia and Turkey and Turkey is indifferent to the sufferings of the Armenians during the World War I, Prime Minister Davutoğlu not only openly acknowledges the problems between the two nations, he, in the official website of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, declares Turkeys regret of the deep-rooted sufferings of the Armenians in the World War. Prime Minister Davutoğlu highlights the omni-importance of human interaction and dialogue to foster a sense of mutual trust and cooperation. He invites Armenians to pay visits to Turkey that would help to erase stereotypes and prejudices.

Juxtaposing the two recent statements of President Sargsyan and Prime Minister Davutoğlu, we would like to draw attention to the radically different approach and rhetoric of the two. Whereas, President Sargsyan shows no indication of a willingness to revise the decades old approach of the Armenians which since long ago proved to be ineffectual, Prime Minister Davutoğlu, even with some self-criticism, declares Turkeys willingness for new and mutually worthwhile approach. Whereas, President Sargsyan employs a sarcastic rhetoric to make insinuation and utilizes manipulative arguments, Prime Minister Davutoğlus statement is lenient and intimate.

Given those two statements, it is on individual Armenians and Turks and any other concerned parties to judge where the obstacles and opportunities for the reconciliation between the two nations lie.

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