FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

AVİM

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Three Turkish citizens of Armenian descent were elected as a member of parliament at the recent general elections.

It is understood that all three of them share the same opinion that the events of 1915 constitute genocide, although two of the parties of which they are a member have a different opinion on the matter. A large majority of the Turkish public opinion reject genocide allegations; some even believe that these allegations are an insult to the Turks.

Nevertheless, no one questions the fact that Armenians were elected as members of the parliament. Although they will face some opposition when they voice these genocide allegations both inside and outside the parliament, their attitude will not affect their position as MPs or their party memberships since they will be using their freedom of expression being chosen by the will of the people.

However, this cannot be said for every country. In Belgium, a country which is claimed to respect democracy in every sense, Mahinur Özdemir, a MP of Turkish origin elected from the Brussels region, was expelled from her party for not characterizing the events of 1915 as genocide despite all kinds of pressure. Furthermore, there was not much opposition to the partys decision. One has to ask: if she had been a non-Turk or a non-Muslim, would she have been exposed to the same treatment?

One cannot help but wonder: Who is more democratic? Who respects freedom of expression more?

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