

## THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE: FROM INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AND CONDEMNATION TO REPARATIONS AND RESTITUTION

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During the last decades recognition and condemnation of the gravest crime of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Armenian Genocide by different states and international, religious and non-governmental organizations have become a continuous process.

For all Armenians<sup>1</sup> the Armenian Genocide continues to be the cause of recognition, condemnation and the demand<sup>2</sup> for return of Western Armenia - the western part of the Armenian Motherland to Armenians<sup>3</sup>.

After restoring Armenian statehood on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, 1918, the Armenian Question included the issue of security of the newly-declared Republic of Armenia. At the end of May, 1918, in its Declaration of Independence the Armenian National Council declared itself the only and supreme power of all the Armenian provinces. It means that the problem of Western Armenia was so important for the Armenianhood that the Araratian Republic (as the Republic of Armenia was often called at that time) expressed its intentions in regard to the Armenian Question, even in extremely grave circumstances conditioned by the genocide committed by the Ottoman Empire against Western Armenians and its planned continuation by the Turkish invasion into Eastern

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<sup>1</sup> See: Pan-Armenian Declaration on the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide

<http://www.genocide-museum.am/arm/29.01.2015-hrchakagir.php>

<sup>2</sup> Hay Dat (The Armenian Cause) is demanding the acknowledgement of the fact of Armenian Genocide and struggles for the return of Armenian historical lands to Armenians, <http://news.am/eng/news/233948.html>

<sup>3</sup> About the issue of the return of Western Armenia to Armenians Harut Sassounian noted: "The recently announced demand for lands from Turkey by the Prosecutor General of Armenia attracted much attention from Armenians worldwide and harsh criticism from the Turkish government. While this was the first time that an Armenian official had raised this issue since the country's independence in 1991, the demand itself is not new. Armenians have been seeking the return of their historic territories from Turkey for decades. A confidential 1943 document, declassified by the Central Intelligence Agency, reveals that the US government was well aware of the Armenian demands for recognition of the *atrocities* and return of Turkish occupied (Armenian-A.M.) *provinces*" (Harut Sassounian, 1943 US Intelligence Report: All Armenians Demand Return of Lands from Turkey. - The Armenian Weekly, July 30, 2013) <http://armenianweekly.com/2013/07/30/1943-us-intelligence-report-all-armenians-demand-return-of-lands-from-turkey/>; "It is noteworthy that the Pan-Armenian Declaration counters the persistent Turkish lie that claims against Turkey are being advanced by the Diaspora and not the Republic of Armenia. The unanimously adopted declaration clearly reflects that Armenians worldwide, both in the Homeland and Diaspora, are firmly committed to pursuing their just demands from the Republic of Turkey!" (Sassounian: Pan-Armenian Declaration Reveals Plans for Legal Claims against Turkey <http://armenianweekly.com/2015/02/05/pan-armenian/>)

Armenia<sup>4</sup>, the Treaty of Batumi, etc. The Prime Minister Hovh. Kajaznuni said the following in the Parliament: *“Yes, our Republic is small with narrow boundaries. It has been bereaved of its most valuable territories and cannot contain all its population within its boundaries... But I think that the boundaries of the country cannot remain unchanged forever: I believe that the boundaries of our country will expand due to the iron power of life”*<sup>5</sup>.

After the defeat of Turkey in World War I<sup>6</sup>, the Armenian government, taking into consideration the will of thousands of Armenian Genocide survivors from Western Armenia (who found refuge in the Republic of Armenia), and, particularly, in realization of the resolutions made in February at the Second Congress of Western Armenians, on May 28, 1919 - the anniversary of the Independence, passed the Declaration of “Free, Independent and United Armenia”<sup>7</sup> by which the authorities of the Republic of Armenia announced themselves also the government of Western Armenia, aiming to start to realize that vital issue with the support of the Entente Powers. As is well-known the solution of the Armenian Question found its documentary formulation in the San Remo Resolution (April 25, 1920)<sup>8</sup>, the Sèvres Peace Treaty of August 10, 1920 and US President Woodrow Wilson’s Arbitral Award of November 22, 1920<sup>9</sup>.

But, as a result of the Turkish aggression and unleashing of the war against the Republic of Armenia in the autumn of 1920, the Kemalist-Bolshevik cooperation and predatory treaties (1921), and the double-faced policy of the Western European states, the Armenian Question was removed from the agenda of international diplomacy, particularly, after the conference of Lausanne (1922-1923).

<sup>4</sup> At this stage of its aggression the Turkish army was fully defeated by the Armenian regular troops and volunteer detachments in several battles (Sardarapat, Aparan, Vanadzor). The May heroic fights were crowned by the victory of the Armenian forces at the Battle of Sardarapat (21-28, May, 1918).

<sup>5</sup> Վրացյան Ա., Հայաստանի Հանրապետություն, Երևան, 1998, էջ 194:

<sup>6</sup> Soon the Armenian army liberated and restored some Armenian territories (Kars, Igdir and its surrounding territory, Mount Ararat, Nakhijevan, etc.) within the boundaries of the Republic of Armenia.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Khatisian read the Declaration: *“To restore the integrity of Armenia and to secure the complete freedom and prosperity of its people, the Government of Armenia, abiding by the solid will and desire of the entire Armenian people, declares that from this day forward the separated parts of Armenia are everlastingly united as an independent political entity. Now in promulgating this act of unification and independence of the ancestral Armenian lands (Eastern and Western parts of the Armenian Highland-A.M.) located in Transcaucasia and the Ottoman Empire, the Government of Armenia declares that the political system of United Armenia is a Democratic Republic and that it has become the Government of the United Republic of Armenia. Thus, the people of Armenia are henceforth the supreme lord and master of their unified Fatherland, and the Parliament and Government of Armenia stand as the supreme legislative and executive authority conjoining the free people of United Armenia”* (Խատիսյան Ա., Հայաստանի Հանրապետության ծագումն ու զարգացումը, Աթենք, 1930, էջ 129-130).

<sup>8</sup> <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=DOM19200427.2.44>

<sup>9</sup> Arbitral Award of the President of the United States of America Woodrow Wilson. Full Report of the Committee upon the Arbitration of the Boundary between Turkey and Armenia. Washington, November 22nd, 1920. Prepared with an introduction by Ara Papian. Published in Armenia, 2011.

During the following decades the Armenian Diaspora remained the main promoter of the *Hay Dat* (Armenian Cause) in the international arena. In fact, the question of the Armenian Cause in the Soviet state was an extremely dangerous and closed topic. We can probably remember only the mid-1940s when in the context of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union the issue of the return of historical Armenian lands was put forward in the international arena. But it met the strong resistance of the Anglo-American side and it was soon consigned to oblivion by the USSR too. Moreover, on May 30, 1953 Khrushchev's government renounced its territorial claims on Turkey.

In 1965 after commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> Year of the Armenian Genocide, Soviet Armenia indirectly became a part of the realization of the Armenian Cause. Several patriotic leaders of Soviet Armenia, particularly Yakov (Hakob) Zarobyan, played a key role in it. Under conditions of the Armenian national awakening in the Diaspora and the Motherland, faraway Uruguay was the first to recognize and condemn the Armenian Genocide.

Meanwhile, on the one hand the Soviet leaders did not openly recognize the Armenian Genocide in order not to strain relations with Turkey (a member of NATO), and on the other hand it was officially allowed in Armenia to respect the memory of the Genocide victims and build a special memorial in Yerevan, etc.

On June 18, 1987 in order to impose pressure on Turkey, the European Parliament remembered the Armenian Question. It required the Turkish government to recognize and condemn the Armenian Genocide, among other questions, in order to become a member of the European Union. In particular, it noted: *“Turkish state rejects the charge of genocide as unfounded, whereas, to date, the Turkish government, by refusing to recognize the genocide of 1915, continues to deprive the Armenian people of the right to their own history; whereas, the historically proven Armenian genocide has so far neither been the object of political condemnation nor received due compensation”*<sup>10</sup>.

The next year (February, 1988) the mighty Artsakh (Karabakh) movement began, during which, particularly because of the Sumgait genocidal actions sanctioned by the Azerbaijani criminal leadership, simultaneously the question of the Genocide became an issue of public discussions. In conditions of stormy public activity the problem reached the Supreme Council of the Armenian SSR. On November 22, 1988, the Supreme Council of the Armenian SSR, under the pressure of deputies elected by democratic forces and representing patriotic ideas, signed into law the legislative act regarding the Armenian Genocide: “The Armenian SSR Supreme Council's Law Condemning the Armenian Genocide in Ottoman Turkey in 1915”. April 24 was declared

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<sup>10</sup> Resolution on a Political Solution to the Armenian Question. – Official Journal of the European Communities, No C 190/119.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/euro/pcc/aag/pcc\\_meeting/resolutions/1987\\_07\\_20.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/euro/pcc/aag/pcc_meeting/resolutions/1987_07_20.pdf)

as the Day of the official Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, as one of the most heinous crimes against humanity.

In the Armenian Declaration of Independence adopted by the Supreme Council on August 23, 1990 it is said: "The Armenian SSR is renamed the Republic of Armenia (Armenia). The Republic of Armenia shall have its flag, coat of arms, and anthem... The Republic of Armenia stands in support of the task of achieving international recognition of the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia"<sup>11</sup>.

Since 1965 until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Armenian Genocide had been recognized and condemned by six countries: Uruguay, Cyprus, Argentina, Armenia, Russia and Greece.

The President of the Republic of Armenia R. Kocharyan raised the issue of the Armenian Genocide in September 1998 at the UN General Assembly session<sup>12</sup> and a year later, in October 1999, at the OSCE Summit. Then the issue of the Armenian Genocide several times was raised in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The question was also touched on in different speeches of the RA Minister of Foreign Affairs and other officials. The activation of the official approach of the Republic of Armenia contributed to the condemnation of the Genocide at the highest state level in the world.

From 1998 until the present the Armenian Genocide has been recognized and condemned by Belgium, France, Canada, Italy, Vatican<sup>13</sup>, Lebanon, Switzerland, Netherlands, Slovakia, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Venezuela, Chile, Sweden, Bolivia<sup>14</sup>. Regions or provinces recognizing the Armenian Genocide include: parliaments of several regions of Spain (Basque Country, Catalonia, Balearic Islands, Navarre, and the city of Burjassot), United Kingdom (Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland) and Australia (New South Wales, South Australia); the city councils of Aleppo and Deir ez-Zor of the Syrian Arab Republic; the Tehran regional government; the State Assembly of São Paulo, the Legislative Councils of States of Ceará and Paraná (Brazil); Quindío department (Colombia)<sup>15</sup>; 43 U.S. states; 5 provinces of Bulgaria (Plovdiv, Burgas, Ruse, Stara Zagora, Pazardzhik)<sup>16</sup>, etc.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://gov.am/en/independence/>

<sup>12</sup> The President denoted in his speech: "The fact that some of the parliaments have recognized that the Armenians were subjected to genocide and condemned it is a sign of the growing realization that this evil should be fought against" ([http://www.ca-c.org/journal/2000/journal\\_eng/eng06\\_2000/14.shah.shtml](http://www.ca-c.org/journal/2000/journal_eng/eng06_2000/14.shah.shtml)).

<sup>13</sup> "Pope Francis, during a meeting Monday with a delegation led by Nerses Bedros XIX, Catholicos Patriarch of Cilicia of the Armenian Catholics at the Vatican reiterated his earlier recognition of the Armenian Genocide... This recognition of the Armenian Genocide as the first genocide of the twentieth century reaffirms the statements of John Paul II [which were made] upon his arrival in Armenia on September 25, 2001, demonstrating that more and more states, parliaments and international organizations are adopting this position against the denial of history perpetrated by the Turkish State" (<http://asbarez.com/110442/in-vatican-pope-recognizes-genocide/>)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.horizonweekly.ca/news/details/54170>

<sup>15</sup> Its current capital city formerly was named "Viila Holguín" (at its foundation act in 1889). It has been renamed Armenia as tribute to the genocide victims ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenia,\\_Colombia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenia,_Colombia)).

<sup>16</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian\\_Genocide\\_recognition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_Genocide_recognition)

Among the resolutions adopted by more than twenty countries, the document passed by the State Duma of the Russian Federation in April 1995 mentions the historical Homeland of Armenians - Western Armenia: "Resolution by the State Duma of Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, April 14, 1995.

**Based on irrefutable historic facts which attest to the extermination of Armenians on the territory of Western Armenia** from 1915 to 1922, and, in accordance with the following Conventions adopted by the United Nations: Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, December 9, 1948 and Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity (November 26, 1968); aspiring to restore the humanitarian traditions of the Russian State and, emphasizing that through the initiative of Russia, the Great European Powers already in 1915 characterized the actions of the Turkish Empire against the Armenian people as a "crime against humanity" and, noting that the physical extermination of the fraternal **Armenian people in its historic Homeland** aimed at destroying Russia, The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation: Condemns the perpetrators of the extermination of Armenians from 1915 to 1922, expresses its deep sympathy to the Armenian people and recognizes April 24 as a day of remembrance for the victims of the Genocide"<sup>17</sup>.

Thus, it is evident that the existence of independent Armenian statehood and its activities in foreign policy along with the organizational activities of Hay Dat (the Armenian Cause) have had a paramount importance in international recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide. As follows from the "Pan-Armenian Declaration on the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide" the State Commission on the Coordination of Events Dedicated to the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide, in consultation with its regional committees in the Diaspora, "Considers the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide an important milestone in the ongoing struggle for historical justice under the motto "I remember and demand"<sup>18</sup>.

The following tactics and strategy are important in regard to the issue of the Armenian Genocide:

1. It is necessary to continue to take steps for international recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide, up to the recognition by the USA, UN and Turkey.
2. Territorial and property reparations and restitution from Turkey for the Armenian Genocide will in perspective ensure the Armenian national system's security.
3. While realizing the Armenian Cause, the unification of all Armenian national potential becomes imperative.

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<sup>17</sup>[http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.151/current\\_category.7/affirmation\\_detail.html](http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.151/current_category.7/affirmation_detail.html)

[http://www.genocide-museum.am/rus/Russia\\_Duma\\_Resolution.php](http://www.genocide-museum.am/rus/Russia_Duma_Resolution.php)

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/29.01.2015-hrchakagir.php>

4. The Armenian Cause is an important factor that will ensure convincing international security guarantees for the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh.
5. The realization of the Armenian Cause, as the all Armenian national concept, is in the intensification process determined by the Armenian state level coordinated activities of the Motherland and Armenian Diaspora.

***Translated from Armenian  
by S.E. Chraghyan***